UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

AUG 25 2011

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Environmental Assessment for Issuing an Exempted Fishing Permit for the Purpose of Testing a Salmon Excluder Device in the Eastern Bering Sea Pollock Fishery, August 2011

LOCATION: Bering Sea Subarea, Exclusive Economic Zone

SUMMARY: This Environmental Assessment provides an analysis of alternatives to issue an exempted fishing permit for the purpose of testing a salmon excluder device in the pollock trawl fishery of the Bering Sea. The experiment would be conducted from fall 2011 through fall 2012. The pollock trawl industry has experienced high numbers of salmon bycatch even though salmon bycatch measures are in place. New methods are needed to reduce salmon bycatch in the Alaska groundfish fisheries because of its potential effects on the salmon stocks important to Alaska and Canada and the cost to the pollock fishing industry. The successful development of a salmon excluder device for pollock trawl gear may reduce salmon bycatch, thereby reducing costs associated with the harvest of pollock and reducing the potential impact on the salmon stocks. The proposed action is not expected to have significant impacts on the human environment.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: James W. Balsiger, Ph.D, Regional Administrator
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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement was not prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI), including the environmental assessment, is enclosed for your information.

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Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI we will consider any comments submitted that would assist us in preparing future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the Responsible Official named above.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Doremus
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

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