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

APR 16 2012

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 on the Effects of Issuing a Permit for Scientific Research on Endangered Leatherback Sea Turtles in the Pacific Ocean

LOCATION: U.S. West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone from California to Washington

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to issue Permit No. 15634 to NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center. The purpose of the research is to evaluate modifications to determine the abundance, distribution, size ranges, sex ratio, health status, diving behavior, local movements, habitat use, and migration routes of leatherback sea turtles. Researchers would conduct aerial surveys to spot sea turtles for subsequent approach by vessel for remote suction-cup tag attachment and pole tissue sampling if not captured. A subset of animals would be captured by hoop net and have a suite of procedures performed including biological sampling and tagging. Effects to sea turtles would be short-term and minimal.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Helen M. Golde
Acting Director, Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13821
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 427-8400

The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) including the supporting environmental assessment (EA) 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,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure