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

MAR 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: Marine Seismic Survey in the Northwest Pacific Ocean, March - May, 2012.

LOCATION: International waters offshore of Japan, in the northwest Pacific Ocean

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to issue an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory for the taking, by Level B harassment, of small numbers of marine mammals, incidental to conducting a marine geophysical (seismic) survey in the northwest Pacific Ocean, March-May, 2012.

NMFS has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) titled "*Issuance of an Incidental Harassment Authorization to the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory to Take Marine Mammals by Harassment Incidental to a Marine Geophysical Survey in the Northwest Pacific Ocean March - May, 2012*," and prepared an independent Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). NMFS has determined that the impact of conducting the seismic survey in the central Pacific Ocean may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior of small numbers of several species of marine mammals. Based on its review of the record, including the EA and FONSI, NMFS has determined that issuance of the IHA will not result in any significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact to any element of the human environment. NMFS does not anticipate that take by injury (Level A harassment), serious injury, or death will occur; nor has NMFS authorized take by Level A harassment. NMFS has further determined that this activity will result in a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

James H. Lecky
Director
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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Silver Spring, MD 20910
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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 EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) prepared by the NMFS, and the supporting NSF EA and Report, is enclosed for your information.

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Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this 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

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