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

MAY 3 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: *Issuance of an Incidental Harassment Authorization to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography to Take Marine Mammals by Harassment Incidental to a Low-Energy Marine Geophysical Survey in the South-Eastern Pacific Ocean, May, 2012*

LOCATION: South-Eastern Pacific Ocean, within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Chile

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to issue an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) for the take, by Level B harassment only, of marine mammals during a low-energy marine geophysical (seismic) survey in the south-eastern Pacific Ocean, May, 2012.

NMFS has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) titled *Environmental Assessment on the Issuance of an Incidental Harassment Authorization to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography to Take Marine Mammals by Harassment to a Low-Energy Marine Geophysical Survey in the South-Eastern Pacific Ocean, May, 2012*, and prepared an independent Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In the EA, NMFS incorporated by reference the National Science Foundation's *National Environmental Policy Act Analysis Pursuant to Executive Order 12114, Marine Geophysical Survey by the R/V Melville in the South-Eastern Pacific Ocean, May 2012*. NSF's analysis is based on an *Final Environmental Analysis of a Marine Geophysical Survey by the R/V Melville in the South-Eastern Pacific Ocean off Chile, May 2012*, prepared by LGL Ltd., Environmental Research Associates and NMFS's EA also incorporates this document by reference. NMFS has determined that the impact of conducting the seismic survey in the south-eastern Pacific Ocean, within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Chile may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior of small numbers of species of marine mammals. No injury, serious injury, or mortality is anticipated to result from this activity, nor is it authorized. NMFS has further determined that this activity will result in a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks.

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RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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The environmental review process including the analysis and determinations made during the IHA application and issuance process has 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 FONSI prepared by NMFS, the supporting EA, and NSF document incorporated by NMFS, are enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this 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