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

MAY 2 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 Incidental Harassment Authorizations for the Take of Marine Mammals by Harassment Incidental to Conducting Exploratory Drilling Programs in the U.S. Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

LOCATION: Chukchi Sea, Alaska

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service proposes to issue an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to Shell Gulf of Mexico Inc. for the taking, by Level B harassment, of small numbers of marine mammals, incidental to conducting an exploratory drilling program in the Chukchi Sea, Alaska, during the 2012 open-water season.

NMFS has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) titled "Issuance of Incidental Harassment Authorizations for the Take of Marine Mammals by Harassment Incidental to Conducting Exploratory Drilling Programs in the U.S. Beaufort and Chukchi Seas," and prepared an independent Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). NMFS has determined that the impact of conducting the exploratory drilling program in the U.S. Chukchi Sea may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior of small numbers of 12 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 and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of affected species or stocks for taking for subsistence uses.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Helen M. Golde
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National Marine Fisheries Service
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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 FONSI prepared by NMFS is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA or 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