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

APR 18 2013

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 Effects of Issuing Marine Mammal Scientific Research Permit No. 16388

LOCATION: North Atlantic Ocean, North Pacific Ocean, and Arctic Ocean

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes to issue a scientific research permit for takes of marine mammals during vessel surveys, passive acoustic recording, dermal and suction cup tagging, behavioral observations, photo-id, and tracking. The purposes of the research are to: 1) characterize diving and foraging behavior in the context of the oceanographic and acoustic environment to support improved management of baleen whales, 2) elucidate day-night cycles of foraging behavior, 3) study the environmental factors that influence diving behavior of all demographic groups, and 4) identify preferred prey species, but also elucidate the oceanographic conditions that help to concentrate prey to develop a predictive model of baleen whale distribution. Research would be conducted on humpback, fin, blue, sei, bowhead, North Atlantic right and North Pacific right, and Eastern North Pacific gray whales. Impacts from these activities would be short-term and minimal to individual animals and negligible to the species. A biological opinion concluded that the proposed action would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the species and would not likely destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. The permit would be valid for five years from the date of issuance.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

Helen M. Golde
Acting Director, Office of Protected Resources
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 finding of no significant impact (FONSI) including the supporting environmental assessment (EA) is enclosed for your information.

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