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

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups: SEP 9 2013

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: *Environmental Assessment on the 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 Tropical Western Pacific Ocean, September to October 2013*

LOCATION: Tropical Western Pacific Ocean in International Waters and within the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Indonesia, and the Republic of the Philippines (approximately 4° South to 8° North and 126.5 to 144.5° East)

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 (i.e., seismic) survey in the tropical western Pacific Ocean, September to October 2013. 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 Incidental to a Low-Energy Marine Geophysical Survey in the Tropical Western Pacific Ocean, September to October 2013*, and an independent Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In its EA, NMFS incorporated by reference the National Science Foundation's *Environmental Analysis of a Low-Energy Marine Geophysical Survey by the R/V Roger Revelle in the Tropical Western Pacific Ocean, September-October 2013*. NMFS determined that Scripps Institution of Oceanography (Scripps) seismic survey may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior of small numbers of species or stocks of marine mammals. No injury, serious injury, or mortality is anticipated to result from this activity, nor is it authorized by the IHA. NMFS has further determined that this activity will result in a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks of marine mammals.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Donna S. Wieting, Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS
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The NEPA environmental review process has led us to conclude that NMFS' issuance of an IHA to Scripps will not have a significant effect on the human environment and thus an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. A copy of NMFS' FONSI, supporting EA, and the incorporated National Science Foundation Environmental Analysis document are enclosed for your information.

Although NMFS 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,

for Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

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