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

JAN 08 2014

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: *Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the Issuance of a Modification to Scientific Research Permit (SRP) No. 15661 to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) to Conduct Research on Listed Sea Turtles*

LOCATION: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)

SUMMARY: Under the authority of the Endangered Species Act, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to issue a modification to Permit No. 15661. Permit No. 15661 authorizes the take of green and hawksbill sea turtles that results from the scientific research on these species that is conducted in the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) by CNMI's DLNR. The purpose of the research is to characterize each species' population structure, size class composition, foraging ecology, and migration patterns to identify potential conservation or critical habitat areas for immature and adult sea turtles in nearshore waters. The permit modification will authorize blood and scute sampling of a subset of captured sea turtles to allow analysis of a broad suite of environmental pollutants that may be threatening the health of sea turtles in the NMI. All other aspects of the authorized research would remain unchanged. The proposed action to modify the SRP is not expected to have more than short-term and minor effects on the sea turtles and will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Donna S. Wieting, Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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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 SEA is enclosed for your information. Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed SEA/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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