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

FEB 1 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: National Science Foundation's *Environmental Assessment Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. and Executive Order 12114 Marine Seismic Survey in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, 2012*

LOCATION: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) (Exclusive Economic Zone [EEZ] of the U.S. and in International Waters)

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 marine geophysical survey in the CNMI, February to March, 2012. In 2012, NMFS adopted the National Science Foundation's (NSF) *Environmental Assessment Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. and Executive Order 12114 Marine Seismic Survey in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, 2012*. NSF's EA is based on an *Environmental Assessment of a Marine Geophysical Survey by the R/V Marcus G. Langseth in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, February-March 2012*, which was prepared by LGL Ltd., Environmental Research Associates. NMFS has determined that the impact of conducting the marine seismic survey in the EEZ of the U.S. and International Waters in the CNMI 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. 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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Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
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) prepared by the NMFS and the supporting NSF EA, adopted by the NMFS, is 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