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

July 24, 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 Modified Scientific Research Permit (File No. 16436-01) to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, to Conduct Scientific Research on Endangered Shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon in the Hudson River.

LOCATION: Concurrent sampling of Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon with gill and trawl nets will occur in the Hudson River estuary and its tidal influences along its entire 245 km length from New York Harbor to the Federal Dam at Troy, New York. The upper two-thirds of the river is freshwater with saltwater intrusion penetrating the lower third as far north as West Point (km 83) in the late spring. During the summer months it can move as far north as Poughkeepsie (km 122). The river is classified as a 'drowned' river valley, straight and fairly deep in some sections, especially in the Hudson Highlands near West Point, where the river is greater than 60 m in depth. In the lower 70 km, the river opens into two large wide, shallow "bays", Haverstraw Bay and the Tappan Zee, before narrowing down to a deep section just above New York Harbor.

SUMMARY: The Permit Holder's modification proposes separate actions affecting the environment differently. These are: (1) Consolidating currently authorized take of shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon permitted for concurrent sampling in the Hudson River and Estuary; subsequently, the shortnose sturgeon Permit No. 16439 would be terminated; (2) Increasing the numbers of take for procedures authorized for both shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon, reflecting more intensive sampling; (3) Adding a laparoscopic procedure to biopsy liver samples associated with contaminant research; (4) Adding a electronarcosis procedure associated with anesthesia in freshwater during surgical or other research activities; (5) Increasing the number of incidental (accidental) mortality to three animals of each species annually; and (6) Changing the start date for the annual reporting period for research beginning and ending on the calendar year, or January 1 to December 31.

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RESPONSIBLE
OFFICIAL: Donna S. Wieting
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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 supplemental environmental assessment (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,

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Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure