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

AUG 20 2010

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 the Effects of the Issuance of a Scientific Research Permit (File No. 14759) to Conduct Scientific Research on Shortnose Sturgeon in North Carolina Rivers.

LOCATION: Netting would take place within North Carolina river basins (Chowan, Roanoke, and Cape Fear Rivers) and estuaries (Albemarle Sound). Researchers would also travel by boat to receivers in the passive telemetry array positions in river and marine locations.

SUMMARY: The current EA analyzed the effects of shortnose sturgeon research on the environment within North Carolina river basins (Chowan, Roanoke, and Cape Fear) and estuaries (Albemarle Sound) using non-lethal sampling methods with goals of assessing the presence, abundance, and distribution of shortnose sturgeon. The researcher proposes to combine hydroacoustic surveys (using side-scan and DIDSON sonar) and gill nets, to annually capture, measure, weigh, genetic tissue sample, PIT tag and Floy tag up to 15 shortnose sturgeon annually from the Chowan and Cape Fear River Basins and Albemarle Sound. He also proposes similar activity capturing up to 25 shortnose sturgeon annually from the Roanoke River Basin. A sub-set of up to five sub-adults or adults from each river basin and Albemarle Sound would be anesthetized and implanted with internal sonic transmitters each year. Manual tracking and passive detections of telemetered sturgeon at fixed receiver stations would provide information about shortnose sturgeon movement, seasonal distribution and habitat use.

The proposed action analyzed in the EA would not have significant environmental effects on the target or non-target species; public health and safety would not affected; no unique geographic area would be affected; and the effects of this study would not be highly uncertain, nor would they involve unique or unknown risks. Issuance of this permit would not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor would it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. There would not be individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts associated with the proposed action, and there would not be adverse effects on historic resources. The permit would contain mitigating measures to avoid unnecessary stress to the subject animals.

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RESPONSIBLE
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The environmental review process led us to conclude 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 EA is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI, we will consider any comments submitted assisting us to prepare future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure