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

NOV 10 2011

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 Effects of Issuing Marine Mammal Scientific Research Permit No. 15274

LOCATION: Hawaii, primarily Kona Coast and Maui County near-Lanai waters, Kalohi Channel, and Pailolo Channel. Research would also occur in Southeast Alaska and Kachemak Bay area.

SUMMARY: The proposed action is issuance of a scientific research permit that would authorize vessel surveys, photo-identification, underwater photography and videography, passive acoustics, and collect sloughed skin and feces of humpback whales and other marine mammals. The purpose of the research is to: (1) continue and expand a study of humpback whales, (2) examine the role and function of competitive groups as they relate to the mating system of humpback whales, (3) study the life histories of known individual humpback whales, and (4) opportunistically study the stock structure and abundance of other cetaceans. Impacts from these activities would be short-term and minimal to individual animals and negligible to the species. A biological opinion concluded that the proposed action would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of listed species and would not likely destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. The permit would be valid for five years from the date of issuance.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

James H. Lecky
Director, Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13821
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 427-8400

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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 environmental assessment (EA) is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed 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,

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

Enclosure