

the requirements of Executive Order 12114, "Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions". Alternatives addressed in this EA consist of a corresponding seismic survey at a different time, along with issuance of an associated IHA; and the no action alternative, with no IHA and no seismic survey.

Numerous species of marine mammals occur off Central America. Several of the cetacean species are listed as *endangered* under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA), including humpback, sei, fin, blue, and sperm whales. In addition, the *endangered* West Indian manatee is known to occur in shallow waters along the Caribbean coast of Central America. Sea turtle species known to occur in Central America include the *endangered* leatherback and hawksbill turtles, the *threatened* loggerhead turtle, the green turtle (considered *endangered* in the breeding colony of Florida and the Pacific coast of Mexico and *threatened* elsewhere), and the olive ridley turtle (designated as *endangered* in the breeding colony of the Pacific coast of Mexico and *threatened* elsewhere). The Kemp's ridley turtle may also occur in the Caribbean.

The potential impacts of the seismic surveys would be primarily a result of the operation of airguns, although a multi-beam sonar and a sub-bottom profiler will also be operated. Impacts may include increased marine noise and resultant avoidance behavior by marine mammals, sea turtles, and fish; and other forms of disturbance. The operations of the project vessel during the study would also a minor increase in the amount of vessel traffic. An integral part of the planned survey is a monitoring and mitigation program designed to minimize the impacts of the proposed activities on marine mammals and sea turtles that may be present during the proposed research, and to document the nature and extent of any effects. Injurious impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles have not been proven to occur near airgun arrays; however the planned monitoring and mitigation measures would minimize the possibility of such effects should they otherwise occur.

Protection measures designed to mitigate the potential environmental impacts will include the following: A minimum of one dedicated marine mammal observer maintaining a visual watch during all daytime airgun operations, and two observers for 30 min before start up. A passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) array will be monitored 24 h per day while at the survey area during airgun operations

and during most times when the *Langseth* is underway while the airguns are not operating. The use of ramp-up, as well as implementation of power-down or shut-down procedures when animals approach a designated exclusion zone (EZ) are also important mitigation measures. LDEO and its contractors are committed to apply those measures in order to minimize disturbance of marine mammals and sea turtles, and also to minimize the risk of injuries or of other environmental impacts.

With the planned monitoring and mitigation measures, unavoidable impacts to each of the species of marine mammal that might be encountered are expected to be limited to short-term localized changes in behavior and distribution near the seismic vessel. At most, such effects may be interpreted as falling within the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) definition of "Level B Harassment" for those species managed by NMFS. No long-term or significant effects are expected on individual marine mammals, or the populations to which they belong, or their habitats. The agency is currently consulting with the NMFS regarding species within their jurisdiction potentially affected by this proposed activity.

Copies of the draft EA, titled "Environmental Assessment of a Marine Geophysical Survey by the R/V *Marcus G. Langseth* off Central America, January–March 2008," are available upon request from: Dr. William Lang, National Science Foundation, Division of Ocean Sciences, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Suite 725, Arlington, VA 22230. Telephone: (703) 292–7857 or at the agency's Web site at: http://www.nsf.gov/geo/oce/pubs/MGI_Central_America_2008_EA.pdf. The NSF invites interested members of the public to provide written comments on this draft EA.

Dated: August 27, 2007.

Dr. Alexander Shor,

Program Director, Oceanographic Instrumentation and Technical Services, Division of Ocean Sciences, National Science Foundation.

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NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education; Notice of Meeting

In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92–463, as amended), the National Science

Foundation announces the following meeting:

Name: Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education (9487).

Dates: October 17, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. and October 18, 2007, 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Place: Stafford I, Room 1235, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia 22230.

Type of Meeting: Open.

For Further Information Contact: Alan Tessier, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Suite 635, Arlington, Virginia 22230, Phone: 703–292–7198.

If you are attending the meeting and need access to the NSF, please contact the individual listed above so your name may be added to the building access list.

Minutes: May be obtained from the contact person listed above.

Purpose of Meeting: To provide advice, recommendations, and oversight concerning support for environmental research and education.

Agenda:

October 17

Introduction of New Members

Update on recent NSF environmental activities

Joint Session with NSF Advisory Committee on Geosciences

October 18

Discussion of Future AC/ERE activities

Meeting with the Director (or Representative)

Establishment of AC/ERE Task Groups

Dated: August 28, 2007.

Susanne Bolton,

Committee Management Officer.

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NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Advisory Committee for Geosciences; Notice of Meeting

In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92–463, as amended), the National Science Foundation announces the following meeting:

Name: Advisory Committee for Geosciences (1755).

Dates: October 17, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. and October 18, 2007, 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Place: Stafford I, Room 375, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia 22230.

Type of Meeting: Open.

For Further Information Contact: Melissa Lane, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Suite 705, Arlington, Virginia 22230, Phone: 703–292–8500.

If you are attending the meeting and need access to the NSF, please contact the individual listed above so your name may be added to the building access list.

Minutes: May be obtained from the contact person listed above.