



Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Northern Right Whale Research in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

Scoping Meeting
San Diego, CA

December 10, 2005



Welcome & Introduction



Photo Credit: NEFSC



Photo Credit: I. Kerr



Photo Credit: IFAW



Photo Credit:
National
Geographic Today

MODERATOR:
Lewis Michaelson



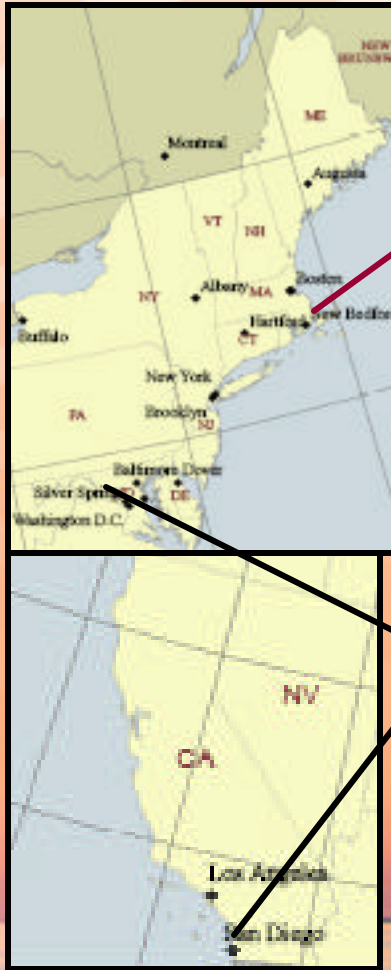


Scoping Meetings: Purpose

- ***Allow for Early Public Notification of a Proposed Federal Action***
- Provide the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) the Opportunity to Present Proposed Action
- Seek Input on Scope of EIS



Scoping Meetings: Locations



- November 3:
New Bedford, MA (*North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium Meeting*)
- December 10:
San Diego, CA
(*16th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals*)
- January 19:
Silver Spring, MD





Scoping Meetings: Agenda

- **Information on Scoping**
- **Background on the NEPA Process**
- **Overview of Right Whale Research**
- **Review of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**
- **Public Comment Period**
 - Research needs and techniques, Proposed Action and alternatives, and environmental considerations to be addressed



Photo Credit: FWC





Scoping Meetings: Layout

- **Registration Area**
- **Staffed Exhibit Area**
- **NMFS Formal Presentation**
- **Oral Comment Period**



Photo Credit: USACE



Administrative Points

- 1. Please Sign in at the Registration Table to Present Oral Comments**
- 2. Written Comments may be Turned in Tonight**
- 3. Transcripts of Tonight's Meeting are being Captured by a Court Reporter, as well as Audio Taped**





The NEPA Process

Mr. Stephen L. Leathery

Chief

Permits, Conservation, and Education Division

Office of Protected Resources

National Marine Fisheries Service

Silver Spring, MD





Purposes of the NEPA

- Encourage Harmony between Man and the Environment
- Promote Efforts to Prevent or Eliminate Environmental Damage
- Enrich Man's Understanding of Important Ecological Systems and Natural Systems





Requirements of the NEPA

- ***Analysis of Potential Environmental Consequences that Could Result if an Agency Undertakes a Planned Action***
 - Consider Environmental Consequences Before Deciding to Proceed
 - Provide for Public Involvement in Key Phases of the EIS





Components of the EIS

- Proposed Action and Alternatives
- Affected Environment
- Potential Environmental Consequences
- Mitigations
- Consideration of Public Input and Comments





Environmental Factors Typically Considered in an EIS

- Wildlife
 - Protected Species
 - Threatened and Endangered Species
 - Marine Mammals
 - Migratory Birds
 - Non-protected Species
- Special Biological Resource Areas
 - National Marine Sanctuaries
 - Essential Fish Habitat
 - Designated Critical Habitat
- Coastal, Marine, and Benthic Communities
- Coastal Zone Management
- Water Resources
- Human Safety
- Socioeconomics
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Cumulative Impacts





EIS Process

- Includes several phases
 - Scoping
 - Development & Publication of Draft EIS
 - Comment (Includes review, public hearings)
 - Issuance of Final EIS
 - Decision (ROD)

Each phase includes opportunities for public involvement and input



Tentative EIS Schedule

Phase	Schedule
Scoping	November 2005 – January 2006
Development Draft EIS complete	February 2005 – November 2006 November 2006
Comment Public Hearings	December 2006 – January 2007 January 2007
Decision Final EIS complete Record of Decision	February 2007 – August 2007 July 2007 August 2007





Northern Right Whale Research

Dr. Tammy Adams

Permits, Conservation, and Education Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
Silver Spring, MD



Current Permits

- Number of Active Permits = 13
 - Includes Atlantic and Pacific research as well as stranding/entanglement response
 - Expiration dates range between 2006 and 2010
- Authorize over 70 Researchers (Principal Investigators and Co-investigators)



Photo Credit: PCCS

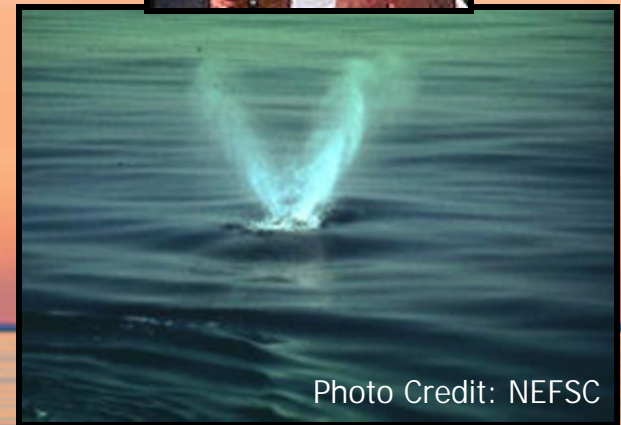
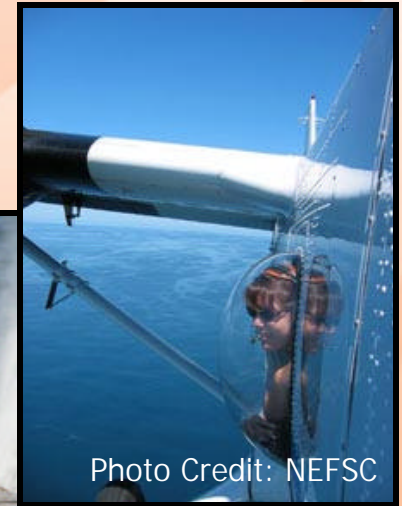


Photo Credit: NEFSC



Categories of Northern Right Whale Research

- Approach and Observation
- Sampling
- Tagging
- Population Monitoring and Assessment
- Acoustic Playback/ Controlled Exposure Experiments (CEEs)
- Disentanglement Response





Research Needs for Recovery

- Recovery Plan Research Categories:
 - Detection
 - Entanglement/ Stranding Response
 - Contaminant
 - Reproduction and Health
 - Habitat Use Patterns
 - Monitoring Status/ Trends in Abundance and Distribution





EIS Study Area: Atlantic Ocean

- Known Summering Grounds
 - Waters off New England states
- Known Migratory Corridors
 - Waters off Mid-Atlantic
- Known Calving Grounds
 - Waters off Georgia and Florida
- Unknown Locations
 - Waters off all East Coast states





EIS Study Area: Pacific Ocean

- Potential Summering Grounds
 - Waters off Alaska
- Opportunistic Survey Locations
 - Waters off California, Washington, and Oregon





Proposed Action and Alternatives

Ms. Carrie Hubbard

Permits, Conservation, and Education Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
Silver Spring, MD





Purpose and Need

- Purpose
 - To provide an exemption to MMPA and ESA prohibition on “takes” through issuance of permits for scientific purposes related to recovery.
- Need
 - To facilitate research activities likely to result in collection of information needed by NMFS to recover northern right whales.



Proposed Action

- To issue permits to qualified individuals and institutions to conduct those research activities determined critical or essential to NMFS' conservation and recovery of right whales (*or minimum take level*)



Photo Credit: David Wiley



Action Alternative: Alternative 1

- *Maximum Allowable Take Level*
 - Based on a combination of current and future proposed research
 - Permits issued until limit is just below jeopardy threshold



Photo Credit: WCNE



No Action Alternative

- Conduct Research Already Allowed under Existing Permits
 - No new permits issued to replace expired permits
 - No amendments granted to existing permits to allow modifications
 - Upon expiration of current permits in 2010, authorizations for research would not be renewed
- NEPA Requires NMFS to Evaluate a No Action Alternative



Alternatives Considered That May Not Be Carried Forward

- Permit Moratorium
- Suspension of Intrusive Research
- *Status Quo* (renew only existing permits)

THESE ALTERNATIVES DO NOT: Meet the purpose of the Proposed Action. Furthermore, they would not allow information critical to the survival of the species to be obtained.



Major Environmental Issues to be addressed in the EIS

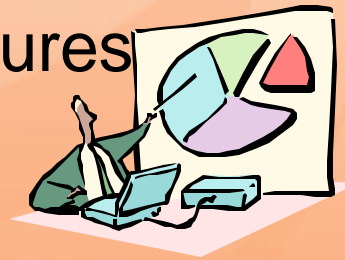
- NMFS' Information Needs for Conservation and Recovery of the Species
- Types of Research Activities to be Permitted
- Mitigation Measures
- Cumulative Impacts of Research Activities on Right Whales and the Environment





Advantages of this EIS

- Full Disclosure of Potential Effects Related to All Research That May Be Authorized
- Comprehensive Evaluation of Cumulative Effects
- Assist in the Development of Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices
- Reduce Need to Address Environmental Impacts at Permit-specific Level





Some Specific Information You Can Provide to NMFS

- *Types of Research*

- Are there critical research needs not already identified in the Recovery Plan? If so, what are they and how will they benefit the species?
- What are the most appropriate methods to obtain the information required by the Recovery Plan?



Some Specific Information You Can Provide to NMFS

- *Level of Research Effort*

- How much of a specific activity (e.g., biopsy sampling) is enough for management and conservation needs? Can there be too much?
- Should NMFS set limits on these activities?
- Should there be different standards or more restrictions for research on certain age/sex/reproductive classes or life history stages? If so, what classes/stages and what should the limitations be?



Some Specific Information You Can Provide to NMFS

- *Coordination of Research*
 - What are the most appropriate mechanisms to ensure that research is coordinated?
 - Should NMFS limit the number of permits to increase coordination? If so, how should this be accomplished?
 - Should researchers operating under different permits be required to use the same or similar methods? If so, what methods are the most appropriate for different research categories?



Some Specific Information You Can Provide to NMFS

- *Qualifications of Researchers*
 - How much prior experience should a permit applicant, Principal Investigator, or anyone else have with the specific methods for which they seek a permit?





Some Specific Information You Can Provide to NMFS

- *Effects of Research*

- NMFS will be assessing possible effects of the various research methods. Anyone having relevant information they believe NMFS should consider should provide a complete reference or citation.
- NMFS is also seeking recommendations for study designs that could detect or predict the effects of research activities on right whales





Oral Comments

Oral Comment Time



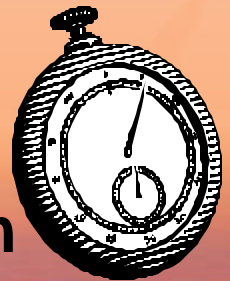


Oral Comments



- Please sign in at the registration table
- You will have 4 minutes to offer your oral comments
- This meeting is being recorded, on audio tape and by a court reporter to ensure an accurate and complete record of your comments

4 Min



Written Comments

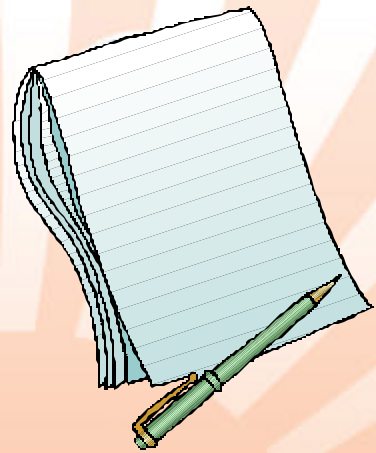
Your Options Are:

1. Hand in prepared written comments tonight,
2. Use written comment sheets provided tonight and turn them in, and/or
3. Submit written comments for receipt by 31 January 2006 to:

**Stephen L. Leathery; Permits, Conservation, and Education Division;
Office of Protected Resources, NMFS; 1315 East West Highway, Room 13705
Silver Spring, MD 20910**

Email: rweis.comments@noaa.gov

Fax: 301-427-2582





Additional Information

1. Information available for review at public libraries
2. Available on NMFS home page
3. To receive future copies of the Draft EIS, please register here and/or check availability on the website

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/rightwhale>





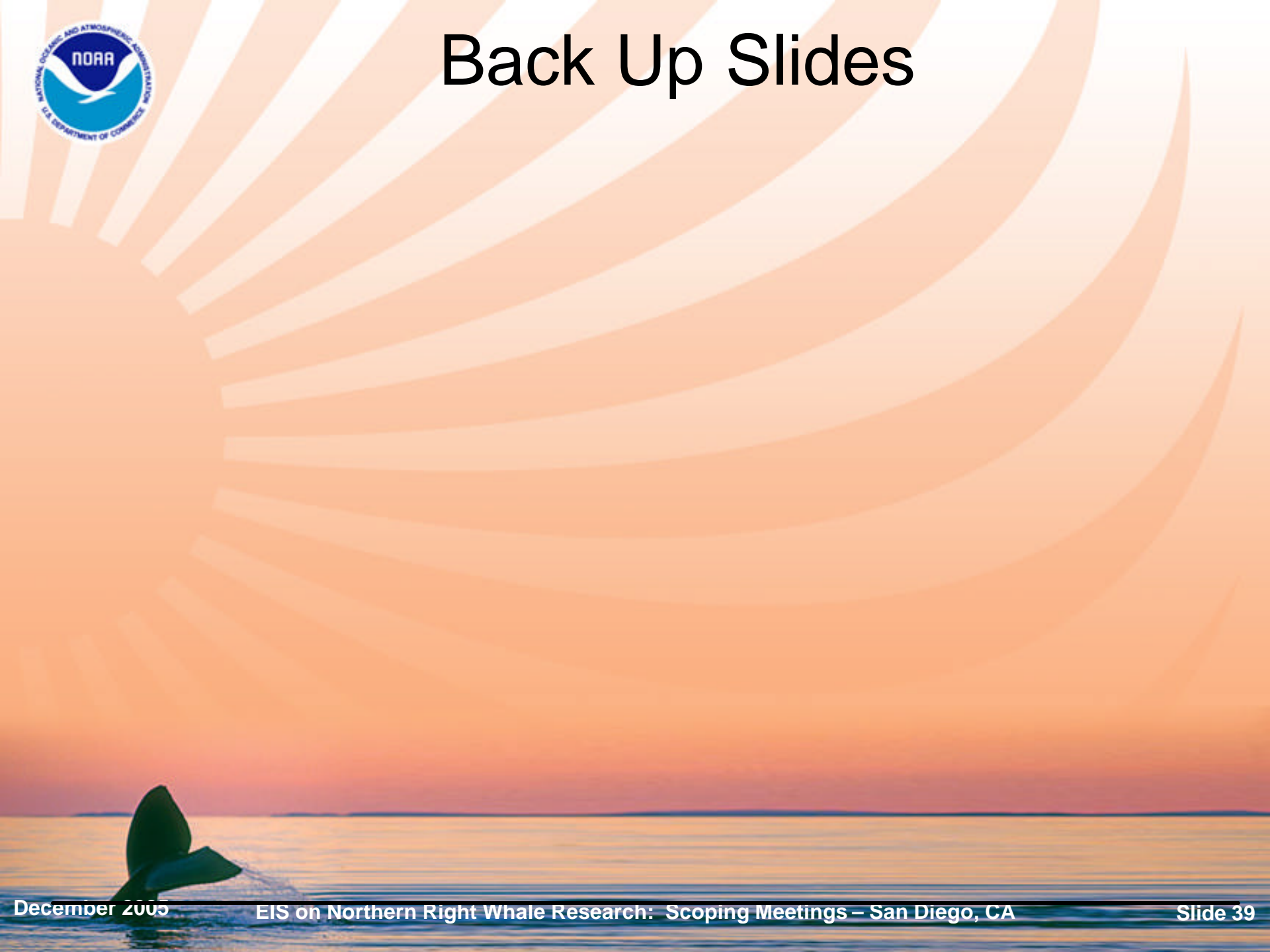
5 Minute Break



Collating Sign-Up Cards
for Oral Public Presentations



Back Up Slides





Current Research

- Aerial Surveys
- Vessel Surveys
- Photo-identification
- Behavioral Observation
- Ultrasound Blubber Measurements
- Genetic Sampling
 - Sloughed skin collection
 - Remote biopsy darting
- Tagging
- Import/Export of Parts
- Stranding Response/Disentanglement
- Passive/Active Acoustics
- Other
 - Habitat Sampling
 - Oceanographic Data



Examples of Research Methods Needed to Fulfill Recovery Plan

- Aerial Surveys
- Vessel Surveys
- Tagging
- Biopsy
- Photo-identification
- Disentanglement/Stranding Response
- Acoustic Playback/CEEs

