



# NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 21, 2005

## **NOAA SEEKS COMMENTS ON APPLICATION TO HARASS MARINE MAMMALS** ***Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory Wants to Conduct Ocean Surveys off Alaska***

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) is seeking comments on a proposal by the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory (L-DEO) of Columbia University (undergoing a permitting process to comply with the Marine Mammal Protection Act) that may result in harassment of marine mammals. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The Observatory is requesting a permit to conduct studies aimed at understanding the processes that underlie volcanic eruptions. The studies will involve conducting a low-energy, shallow-penetrating seismic survey and scientific rock dredging program around the Aleutian Islands area of Alaska, during July, 2005.

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine the east-to-west change in the angle of the convergence of the Pacific-North America plates, which implies systematic westward decreases in the rate of subduction and sediment delivery to the Aleutian trench. These studies are aimed at understanding the processes that underlie volcanic eruptions, and are thus relevant to the broad goals of understanding volcano behavior and hazard assessment in the Aleutians and elsewhere.

Scientists will use either the *R/V Kilo Moana* or a similar research vessel. The research vessel will deploy one Generator-injector (GI) airgun as an energy source. As the airgun is operated along survey lines, the hydrophone receiving system will receive and record the returning acoustic signals. Because the noise generated by an airgun has the potential to disrupt behaviour patterns of marine mammals in the vicinity of the ship, the L-DEO has requested an authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

While the number of potential "incidental harassment takes" will depend on the distribution and abundance of marine mammals in the vicinity of this seismic operation, NOAA Fisheries Service believes the number of potential harassment takings will not have more than a negligible impact on affected marine mammal stocks. Low numbers of marine mammals are expected in the area of the Aleutian Islands, where the activities will take place. Also, the activities will take place for a relatively short period of time. The scientists involved in this activity would incorporate mitigation measures to ensure no marine mammals are within established safety zones, through monitoring by trained biologists.

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NOAA Fisheries Service will accept comments on the application and proposed authorization through **April 20, 2005**. Comments should be addressed to:

Steve Leathery, Chief of the Permits, Conservation and Education Division  
Office of Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries Service  
1315 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Comments may be sent via e-mail to [PR1.020405A@noaa.gov](mailto:PR1.020405A@noaa.gov). A copy of the application and federal register notice may be obtained by contacting the same office or online at:

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot\\_res/PR2/Small\\_Take/smalltake\\_info.htm#applications](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Small_Take/smalltake_info.htm#applications).

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources, and the habitat on which they depend, through scientific research, management and enforcement. Stewardship of these resources benefits the nation by supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, while helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of America's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

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