

## **PRESS RELEASE**



### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **More Seismic Ocean Blasting to come This August and September, and Again Next Year**

#### ***If Authorized, Takes of 19,497 Marine Mammals by Harassment Expected***

Amid great public outcry about Rutgers' ocean blasting experiment off Barnegat Light, NJ and President Obama's opening up of the East Coast to seismic testing and oil drilling, yet another dangerous ocean blasting survey is coming New Jersey's way.

"New Jersey's marine life, fisheries and coastal economy can't get a break," said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS), Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (L-DEO) of Columbia University, and the National Science Foundation propose to conduct a 2-D seismic vessel survey in the Atlantic Ocean off the Eastern Seaboard between August and September 2014 and April and August 2015 to identify the outer limits of the United States continental shelf and study potential tsunami-related hazards. The project includes the use of an array of 36 airguns. The airguns will blast the ocean at 236-265 decibels every 20 to 24 seconds, 24 hours a day for at least 17 days each year of the survey.

Clean Ocean Action submitted comments Wednesday (see attached PDF) on the proposed Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service, which outlined several concerns about potential impacts to marine mammals:

- The proposed project threatens serious harm to numerous species of marine mammals and is therefore contrary to the goals, mandates, and prohibitions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.
- A full environmental impact statement (EIS) should be completed prior to the consideration of the IHA, to remedy issues of incomplete information and inadequate assessment of impacts.
- There are insufficient evaluations of alternatives and mitigation measures.

- The Proposed Project should not be conducted during the spring and summer months, which is the peak of marine mammal (and other marine species) feeding, breeding, and/or calving activity off the mid-Atlantic.
- NMFS should ensure that best available science and regulatory review are incorporated into the EIS and IHA, require stronger mitigation measures, and consider different times of year for the Proposed Project.

“We shouldn’t repeat mistakes of the past,” said Cassandra Ornell, Clean Ocean Action’s Staff Scientist. “Back in 2002, a similar seismic expedition in the Gulf of California – also led by LDEO – resulted in beaked whale strandings, and a federal judge responded by ordering the ship to cease operations.”

The Marine Mammal Protection Act places a “moratorium on the taking” of marine mammals. Any authorization to take marine mammals must result in the incidental take of only “small numbers of marine mammals of a species or population stock,” and can have no more than a “negligible impact” on species and stocks.

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