



For Immediate Release
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Endangered Species at Risk

Atlantic Sturgeon ignored in Ocean Blasting Study

Today, as the R/V Marcus Langseth leaves the docks, Clean Ocean Action again calls on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to stop the seismic survey to be conducted by Rutgers University off the coast of New Jersey. Having previously alerted NOAA that the number of dolphins 18,321 to be harmed by the survey had not been publicly vetted, COA has learned that the Atlantic Sturgeon, a federally listed endangered species, was not evaluated for survey impacts to its fragile population. The agency erroneously determined that the Atlantic Sturgeon is not found in the survey area. COA has now supplied NOAA with ample documentation and research proving they are present in the area.

“The Atlantic Sturgeon is the oldest and most fascinating fish in the world,” **said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action.** “They look like a dinosaur, have a mouth on the bottom of their body like a skate, spawn in fresh water and then move to the open sea. They can grow to 14 feet and weigh 800 pounds and live for 60 years. These amazing creatures must be provided all protections so as to ensure their survival for future generations.”

The National Marine Fisheries Service in its Biological Opinion on the survey, did not consider effects on the Atlantic Sturgeon, stating they did not “believe” the Atlantic Sturgeon will likely be in the area. This “belief” was based on tagging data, which indicated the presence of Atlantic Sturgeon near the shore. Clean Ocean Action has found studies that demonstrate and establish that the Atlantic Sturgeons are present in the proposed area of study.

“Clean Ocean Action has located several studies on Atlantic Sturgeon, which clearly show them inhabiting and migrating through the survey area that were never looked at or considered in the original Endangered Species Act process. Because of the potential impacts from the use of airguns, echosounders, and sub-bottom profilers on the behavior and physiology of the Atlantic Sturgeon, and the clear evidence that Atlantic Sturgeon will be in the study area, the government agencies responsible for carrying out their duties under the Endangered Species Act should feel compelled to go back to the drawing board and ensure that the seismic survey will not put this amazing and endangered species of fish in further jeopardy,” **said Zachary Lees, Ocean Policy Attorney for Clean Ocean Action.**

“It has been my experience with Atlantic Sturgeon research that there will be interaction with the Sturgeon where the testing is taking place. Especially in the month of June while they are

still moving around and traveling,” said **Captain Kevin Wark, owner and captain of the commercial vessel Dana Christine.**

This is the second letter written to NOAA regarding the proposed seismic study. Clean Ocean Action, as well as US Senator Cory Booker, wrote to NOAA alerting them of the substantial increase of marine mammal takes, 26 times more than previously stated, and that there was no public review of the revised numbers 18,457 marine mammals.

Attached is a copy of our Letter to Dr. Sullivan.