

Mary Colligan
Assistant Administrator for Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service- Northeast Region
1 Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Ms. Colligan:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the “Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amending the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP): Broad Based Gear Modifications” (DEIS) (CEQ # 050076).

EPA expressed a lack of objections (LO rating) to the Draft EIS due to the overall benefit of the proposed action. However, EPA requested that the FEIS clarify a couple issues. Specifically, the DEIS stated reasonable and prudent measures were developed and incorporated into the current ALWTRP that avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to right whales. It was not clear whether the proposed changes to the ALWTRP would alter these previously consulted upon reasonable and prudent measures. In reviewing the FEIS, we found that our questions have been sufficiently addressed. Additionally, neither the proposed action nor the resulting potential environmental impacts have changed. Accordingly, we continue to have no objections to the action as proposed.

EPA commends the efforts the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has undertaken to produce a more analytical and reader friendly NEPA document. We appreciate the opportunity to review this Final EIS. We also look forward to reviewing future documents related to this project. The staff contact for this review is Matthew Harrington and he can be reached at (202) 564-7148.

Sincerely,

Anne Norton Miller
Director
Office of Federal Activities

cc: Steve Kokkinakis; NOAA Office of Strategic Planning