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Dated: January 27, 2012.

Willie E. May,

Associate Director for Laboratory Programs.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA977

Endangered and Threatened Species; Initiation of 5-Year Review for Sei Whales

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of initiation of 5-year review; request for information.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a 5-year review of sei whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*) under the Endangered Species

Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). A 5-year review is based on the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of the review; therefore, we are requesting submission of any such information on sei whales that has become available since that has become available since their last status review in 1999.

DATES: To allow us adequate time to conduct this review, we must receive your information no later than April 3, 2012. However, we will continue to accept new information about any listed species at any time.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2012-0014, by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal www.regulations.gov. To submit comments via the e-Rulemaking Portal, first click the "submit a comment" icon, then enter NOAA-NMFS-2012-0014 in the keyword search. Locate the document you wish to comment on from the resulting list and click on the "Submit a Comment" icon on the right of that line.

- **Mail or hand-delivery:** Angela Somma, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources, Endangered Species Division, 1325 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Instructions: Comments must be submitted by one of the above methods to ensure that the comments are received, documented, and considered by NMFS. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.) submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shannon Bettridge, Office of Protected Resources, (301) 427-8437; or Larissa Plants, Office of Protected Resources, (301) 427-8471.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 4(c)(2)(A) of the ESA requires that we conduct a review of listed species at least once every five years. The regulations in 50 CFR 424.21 require that we publish a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing those species currently under active review. This notice announces our active review of the sei whale currently listed as endangered.

Public Solicitation of New Information

To ensure that the 5-year review is complete and based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we are soliciting new information from the public, governmental agencies, Tribes, the scientific community, industry, environmental entities, and any other interested parties concerning the status of sei whales. The 5-year review considers the best scientific and commercial data and all new information that has become available since the listing determination or most recent status review. Categories of requested information include: (1) Species biology including, but not limited to, population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics; (2) habitat conditions including, but not limited to, amount, distribution, and suitability; (3) conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species; (4) status and trends of threats; and (5) other new information, data, or corrections including, but not limited to, taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the list, and improved analytical methods.

Any new information will be considered during the 5-year review and will also be useful in evaluating the ongoing recovery program for sei whales. For example, information on conservation measures will assist in tracking implementation of recovery actions.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: January 30, 2012.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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