UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Margo Schulze-Haugen, Deputy Director

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SUBJECT: Categorical Exclusion for administrative activities covered by the G1 categorical exclusion

NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6A, Environmental Review Procedures, requires all proposed projects be reviewed with respect to environmental consequences to the environment. This memorandum addresses the determination that the following activities described below are "office setting only" activities and qualify to be categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, under the G1 categorical exclusion.

Environmental Compliance Approach
To be valid, this memorandum must be accompanied by a signed project specific checklist that confirms the applicability of a specific project under the G1 categorical exclusion. This memorandum alone does not qualify a project to be categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Categorical Exclusion Determination
Based on this environmental review and the associated project specific checklist, NCCOS determines that these activities qualify to be categorically excluded under the G1 Categorical Exclusion: Defined in the NAO 216-6A Companion Manual; G1 includes routine administrative actions such as (1) program planning, direction, and evaluation, (2) administrative tasks, services, and support including personnel and fiscal management, advisory services, document and policy preparation, and records management, and (3) development, establishment, and revisions to documents including, but not limited to interagency agreements, memoranda of understanding, memoranda of agreement, cooperative agreements, and university agreements.

Purpose and Need
In order to support coastal management and decision making, NCCOS conducts and funds exclusively administrative, operational, and program planning projects. These types of projects support critical decision making processes that involve solving managerial and analytical hurdles, forming written agreements among different stakeholder groups, and assessing existing information on effectiveness of strategies and plans.

NCCOS also supports projects funded through the Competitive Research Program and RESTORE Science Programs that employ programmatic strategic planning to provide critical information and predictive capabilities required to manage coastal resources in an ecosystem context. Communities, state and Federal stewards, and industries such as aquaculture, offshore energy, and tourism benefit from effective

programmatic planning to make informed coastal management decisions to balance economy prosperity, energy independence, human health and conservation.

Activity Description

Activities covered by this categorical exclusion include executive direction, strategic, operational, and program planning, budgeting, and administrative services, such as personnel, fiscal, management, and administrative activities (e.g., processing, record keeping, resource management, training, and travel).

Extraordinary Circumstances and Environmental Statutes

Routine activities described above will be conducted within an office or virtual setting, using existing data and infrastructure to synthesize, collate, and compile the existing data to inform management and strategic planning and provide administrative support for research projects. There would be no field work or laboratory activities conducted as part of these activities. Thus, there would be no uncertain adverse environmental impacts, unknown risks or cumulative impacts associated with them. Further, the proposed projects would not involve air, noise, or water quality impacts; and would not otherwise have a significant impact on the human environment. These activities are not the subject of controversy based on potential environmental consequences and do not establish a precedent or decision in principle about future proposals. In addition, as there are no field activities, there is no impact on geographically- or ecologically-critical areas, (sanctuaries, wetlands, watersheds), National Historic Sites, and no adverse impacts to marine mammals, essential fish habitat or threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat. Therefore, this project does not trigger any further consultations for other environmental statutes such as the Endangered Species Act, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, National Historic Preservation Act or National Marine Sanctuaries Act. No low-income or minority populations would be adversely affected by project activities and there is no potential to contribute to the introduction or spread of a non-native, invasive species. Therefore, there is no requirement for further NEPA review in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.