

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 15, 2004

TO: Academic Community Seismic Vessel Users

FROM: Michael R. Reeve, Head, Integrative Programs Section (Ship Acquisitions and Operations), Division of Ocean Sciences

RE: NEW PROPOSALS FOR PROJECTS INVOLVING SEISMIC SURVEY CRUISES BEYOND 2005

The National Science Foundation has entered into a Cooperative Agreement with Columbia University Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) to acquire and convert an industry seismic survey vessel with significantly improved scientific capabilities, including improved capabilities for marine mammal mitigation measures. The R/V EWING will complete its current schedule and will be taken out of service in early 2005. Following an acceptance inspection and transit to the U.S., the replacement vessel will undergo shipyard modifications and sea trials and should enter into service in early 2006.

Although most seismic surveys supported by NSF have been conducted on R/V EWING and will be conducted on its replacement, a significant number of cruises using smaller sources will continue to be conducted from other UNOLS ships. In order to obtain the required permits and authorizations for seismic research in a timely fashion, it has become necessary to increase cruise scheduling lead times and thus proposal submission target dates/deadlines. I have prepared the following statement of guidance for NSF science Program Managers and P.I.s, as the NSF Officer with oversight to ship scheduling, which applies to all cruises involving the use of seismic sources on any ship:

“Recent experience has shown that considerably more effort and lead time are required to secure the appropriate approvals for cruises that involve seismic surveys and that therefore require NOAA-issued Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHA) and, if within foreign EEZs, diplomatic and possibly foreign environmental clearances. Failure to secure these documents in a timely fashion causes undesirable and often costly problems for P.I.s, schedulers, and the agencies involved.

Effective immediately, all such cruises must be recommended for potential scheduling by the cognizant Program Officer no later than December of the year prior to the UNOLS summer ship scheduling meeting for operations in the following calendar year. Review panels typically occur about three months following proposal submission target dates (Division of Ocean Sciences - OCE) and deadlines (Division of Earth Sciences - EAR). For proposals submitted to OCE this means that a proposal that could formerly be submitted, at the latest for the May panel, for a cruise in the following calendar year, must now be submitted at the latest, for the November panel of the previous year.

Thus, in immediate practical terms, any proposal which includes a seismic survey cruise for calendar 2006 on any ship must be submitted, in the case of an OCE program, for the August 15, 2004 target date. The P.I. is responsible to determine the proposal deadline for an EAR or other program outside OCE which will satisfy these requirements.”