

Comments: None received. *Decision:* Approved. No instrument of equivalent scientific value to the foreign instrument, for such purposes as it is intended to be used, is being manufactured in the United States.

Reasons: The foreign instrument provides: (1) high neutral beam current (3 to 5A), (2) low beam divergence (0.8 degree) and (3) duration of 3 ms for fluctuation and confinement studies with plasma. These capabilities are pertinent to the applicant's intended purposes and we know of no other instrument or apparatus of equivalent scientific value to the foreign instrument which is being manufactured in the United States.

Frank W. Creel,

Director, Statutory Import Programs Staff.

[FR Doc. 99-21842 Filed 8-20-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

International Trade Administration

University of Southern California; Notice of Decision on Application for Duty-Free Entry of Scientific Instrument

This decision is made pursuant to Section 6(c) of the Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Materials Importation Act of 1966 (Pub. L. 89-651, 80 Stat. 897; 15 CFR part 301). Related records can be viewed between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. in Room 4211, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

Docket Number: 99-015. *Applicant:* University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-1340. *Instrument:* Automated Microscope Workstation, Series 200. *Manufacturer:* Singer Instruments, United Kingdom. *Intended Use:* See notice at 64 FR 35630, July 1, 1999.

Comments: None received. *Decision:* Approved. No instrument of equivalent scientific value to the foreign instrument, for such purposes as it is intended to be used, is being manufactured in the United States.

Reasons: The foreign instrument provides a stage-mounted micromanipulator and a manually driven detenting stage designed specifically for genetic experiments in yeast cells. The National Institutes of Health advises in its memorandum of July 14, 1999 that (1) this capability is pertinent to the applicant's intended purpose and (2) it knows of no domestic instrument or apparatus of equivalent scientific value to the foreign

instrument for the applicant's intended use.

We know of no other instrument or apparatus of equivalent scientific value to the foreign instrument which is being manufactured in the United States.

Frank W. Creel,

Director, Statutory Import Programs Staff.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Proposed MFS Globenet, Inc. Monterey Bay Fiber Optic Cable Installation Project Within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS)

AGENCY: Marine Sanctuaries Division (MSD), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice of intent; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NOAA announces its intention to prepare an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for the authorization of the proposed installation of a fiber optic cable through Monterey Bay, California within the MBNMS. The action to be evaluated by this EIS is the proposal to install a submarine fiber optic telecommunications cable from New Zealand to Hawaii to California, with a focus on that part of the ocean route within the boundaries of the MBNMS and the terrestrial route within Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.

The EIS will be prepared in cooperation with the County of Santa Cruz, which issued a Notice of Preparation on March 29, 1999, regarding its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIS prepared under this notice will be combined with the EIR and a joint EIR/EIS will be published.

DATES: Written comments on the intent to prepare an EIS and the scope of the EIS will be accepted on or before September 22, 1999. A public scoping meeting to inform interested parties of the proposed action and to receive public comments on the scope of the EIS is scheduled as follows:

September 1, 1999, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Moss Landing Chamber of Commerce,
8045 Moss Landing Road, Moss
Landing, California

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of the EIS, suggested alternatives and potential impacts should be sent to William Douros, Responsible Program Manager, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, 299 Foam Street, Monterey, California 93940. Comments may be submitted by FAX at (831) 647-4250. Comments received will be available for public inspection at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

William Douros, Responsible Program Manager, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, 299 Foam Street, Monterey, California 93940.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Proposed Action

The proposed action would involve the authorization of installation of approximately 58.5 miles of submarine cable within the boundaries of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary as part of a larger project for a cable that would link New Zealand to Hawaii and the continental United States. Sanctuary regulations at 15 CFR Part 922, Subpart M, require authorization by the Sanctuary for installation and continued operation of the proposed cable within the MBNMS. The applicant (MFS Globenet, Inc. and Worldcom Network Services, Inc.) anticipates the cable would operate for a minimum of 25 years. The scope of the EIS will address the offshore area from shore to the seaward boundary of the MBNMS.

The seaward component of the project includes the seaward portions of two directionally bored conduits (approximately 950 meters out to sea to a water depth of 15 meters) and one two-inch wide submarine cable extending westward from one of the conduits to deep ocean. The offshore cable would extend along the submarine ridge ("Smooth Ridge") to the western boundary of the MBNMS (and then onward to New Zealand via Hawaii).

The applicant proposes to bury the cable to a depth of one meter out to a water depth of 2,000 meters, where feasible and where sensitive areas are not prohibitive. In general, the cable would be laid directly onto the ocean floor at ocean depths greater than 2,000 meters, where the potential for conflict with other marine uses is likely to be minimal.

Two cable burial methods are proposed. Where feasible, an underwater plow deployed from the cable ship would cut a narrow trench

for the cable and bury the cable. In sensitive areas or areas where the plow cannot operate safely, the cable would be laid directly on the sea floor and buried using a post lay jetting system in which a remotely operated vehicle with high-volume, low-pressure water jets would jet the cable into the sediment. This system would liquefy the substrate directly beneath the cable, causing the cable to sink into the substrate.

The applicant proposes to land the cable onshore in Santa Cruz County at the Monterey Bay Academy approximately two miles south of La Selva Beach. A cable landing facility would be located at the Monterey Bay Academy and the cable would continue onshore buried for 8.7 miles to a cable equipment building to be located within the unincorporated community of Pajaro. The cable would be connected to the existing network facilities at the cable termination station.

II. Alternatives

Pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, the EIR/EIS will evaluate the No Action Alternative and alternative routes for placement and landing of the fiber optic cable. Six preliminary alternatives to the proposed action have been developed based on initial discussions with state and local agencies, as well as the local commercial fishing industry.

Additional alternatives to the proposed action may be developed as part of the public scoping phase for inclusion in the Draft EIR/EIS. The possible alternatives include:

No Action Alternative—Under the No Action Alternative, MFS Globenet would not construct the proposed fiber optic cable.

Alternative 1 Route—This alternative route follows along the northern edge of Soquel and Cabrillo canyons to minimize potential conflicts with commercial fishing. A re-route of the transition between inner shelf and smooth ridge between 120–400 meter depth contours also minimizes impacts to hard-bottom benthic habitat. The route would traverse approximately 62.4 miles of the MBNMS. The onshore landing area would be the same as the proposed action.

Alternative 2 Route—The cable would be routed up the length of Monterey Canyon and through Soquel Canyon for a distance of 75.5 miles across the MBNMS. This alternative is intended to reduce potential impacts to commercial trawl fishing. The onshore landing area would be the same as the proposed action.

Alternative 3 Route—This alternative considers a combined landing at a beach

proposed by another cable project proponent. Fiber optic cables would generally follow the proposed action route, but would land at La Selva Beach instead of Monterey Bay Academy.

Alternative 4 Route—The cable would generally follow the ridge of Año Nuevo Canyon and would traverse approximately 47.3 miles of the MBNMS. The landing site would be located at Davenport Beach, just south of El Jarro Point. This alternative reduces linear encroachment into MBNMS and reduces encroachment onto the continental shelf.

Alternative 5 Route—The offshore segment of the cable would be routed across a narrower section of the MBNMS (compared to the proposed action) and along the northern rim of Ascension Canyon to Davenport Beach, just south of El Jarro Point (same landing as Alternative 4). The route would traverse approximately 35.8 miles of the MBNMS. This alternative would reduce linear encroachment into the Sanctuary.

Alternative 6 Route—The cable would be constructed outside the boundaries of the MBNMS to avoid impacts to Sanctuary resources. The nearshore cable route and landing site would be consolidated with the applicant's other proposed cable landings in Morro Bay, California.

III. Summary of Environmental Issues

The installation, maintenance, and eventual decommissioning and removal of the cable pose potentially significant impacts upon Sanctuary resources and qualities. The EIR/EIS will address onshore and offshore environmental effects of cable construction, operation, maintenance and repair, and removal. Potential onshore impacts have been identified in the separate Notice of Preparation, issued by the County of Santa Cruz, as the EIR lead agency. Specific offshore environmental issues that have been identified for analysis in the EIR/EIS include:

- Effects on commercial and recreational fisheries and fisheries operations, including construction interference with fishing activities, potential loss of catch, and potential accidents (e.g., fishing net entanglement);
- Trenching effects (e.g., sediment plume, benthic disruption, and siltation) on the water column, marine water quality, and flora and fauna;
- Effects on kelp beds, benthic communities, rocky hard-bottom communities, plankton, fish, marine birds, marine mammals, and marine turtles from construction disturbances and/or release of contaminants,

including boats anchoring, increased turbidity, sediment contamination, boat and construction-related noise, and introduction of exotic species from foreign vessels;

- Potential for bentonite spills and spill effects on water quality and aquatic habitats and species;
- Potential entanglements by cetaceans (whales) including sperm whales where the cable is exposed and gray whales that feed on the ocean bottom;
- "Strumming" (lateral movement of the cable along the seafloor due to ocean currents) impacts on the marine environment;
- Geologic hazards and physical effects on the cable (e.g., submarine landslides and erosion);
- Electromagnetic field effects on marine species;
- Impacts on submerged cultural resources;
- Direct or indirect effects on sensitive species and habitats;
- Cable installation vessel interference with commercial and recreational vessel navigation; and
- Short-term air quality effects from construction equipment, vehicle, and vessel emissions.

IV. Future Public Involvement

Additional opportunities for public review will be provided when the Draft EIR/EIS is completed. A notice of availability of the Draft EIR/EIS will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, release of the Draft EIR/EIS for public comment and public meetings on the Draft EIR/EIS will be announced in the local news media, as the dates are established. According to the current schedule, which is subject to change, the Draft EIR/EIS is expected to be released in December 1999.

V. Special Accommodations

The public scoping meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Scott Kathey at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, (831) 647-4251, at least five days prior to the meeting date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. Section 1431 *et seq.* (Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog Number 11.429 Marine Sanctuary Program)

Dated: August 17, 1999.

Ted Lillestolen,

Deputy Assistant Administrator, Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management.

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