UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Silver Spring, MD 20910
OFFICE OF OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH

January 26, 2010

Mr. Jeff Ruch
Executive Director
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)
2000 P Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Ruch,

Thank you for your "Data Quality Act Challenge: Assessment of Potential Tsunami Impact for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii" addressed to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (hereafter "request"), received December 9, 2009, requesting correction of information under Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act (Public Law 106-554) (hereafter "Section 515"). The referenced document, originally disseminated electronically and in print in August 2006, titled "Assessment of Potential Tsunami Impact for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, NOAA Technical Memorandum OAR PMEL-131" (hereafter the Technical Memorandum). Based on our review, your request is denied because, in accordance with NOAA Information Quality Guidelines (IQG), 1) appropriate pre-dissemination review of the Technical Memorandum was conducted, and 2) the Technical Memorandum is not Influential Scientific Information (ISI). The NOAA IQG can be found at: http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/IQ_Guidelines_110606.html

A pre-dissemination review of the Technical Memorandum was conducted as called for by the NOAA IQG. In advance of publication, the Technical Memorandum was reviewed by NOAA Pacific Marine Laboratory (PMEL) scientists, PMEL management, and the PMEL editor. Furthermore, in advance of publication, supplementary review was provided by Professor Fai Chung, University of Hawaii ocean engineer and tsunami specialist.

In accordance with the IQG, the review process assured the utility, integrity and objectivity of the Technical Memorandum. The intended users for the Technical Memorandum were the NOAA Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The utility of the Technical Memorandum was achieved by providing the CAO one component of their overall analytical/due diligence effort in determining any constraints on siting, planning and design of the NOAA Pacific Region Center (PRC). Other information from other sources included information on wind loading, weather conditions, seismic zone, bearing capacity of soils and substrate, lightning, site topography, utility infrastructure availability, historical considerations, environmental site conditions, etc. Such information ultimately assisted the NOAA CAO in structuring engineering and mitigating solutions for civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, lightning protection, and architectural/historical compatibility, etc. for the project.

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To ensure the integrity of all electronic information disseminated by NOAA, including the Technical Memorandum at issue, NOAA adheres to the standards set out in Appendix III, "Security of Automated Information Resources," OMB Circular A-130; the Computer Security Act; and the Government Information Security Reform Act.

The objectivity of the Technical Memorandum was ensured by applying the guidelines for interpreted products outlined in the NOAA IQG. The Technical Memorandum identified and used data and information sources of known quality, explained the methods used, and provided context for the assessment. Technically qualified individuals peer reviewed the Technical Memorandum prior to dissemination to ensure that the document was valid, complete, unbiased, objective, and relevant.

The Technical Memorandum, whose scope was limited to providing technical information relevant to the siting, planning and design of a NOAA facility, was evaluated and determined to not have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or private sector decisions. Based upon this finding, the Technical Memorandum was determined not to be Influential Scientific Information (ISI), and is therefore not subject to the requirements for ISI included in OMB's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review (OMB Peer Review Bulletin), issued December 16, 2004 (70 FR 2664, Jan. 14, 2005).

You may file a written appeal of this denial, as outlined in Part III.D.1. of the NOAA IQG, within 30 calendar days of the date of this correspondence. An appeal of an initial denial must include: a. the requester's name, current home or business address, and telephone number or electronic mail address (in order to ensure timely communication); b. a copy of the original request and any correspondence regarding the initial denial; and c. a statement of the reasons why the requester believes the initial denial was in error.

The complete appeal must be submitted to:

NOAA Section 515 Officer
NOAA Executive Secretariat
Herbert C. Hoover Building B Room 5230
14th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Sincerely,

Alan Leonardi, Ph.D.
Acting Director
Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation

cc: Glenn Tallia, NOAA
Carla Steinborn, NOAA
Nancy Huang, NOAA