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United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



Agenda Item B-6: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report
March 28, 2012

Seabirds Bycatch Data Collaboration:

Modeled on the earlier work of Kathy Kuletz (USFWS, member of the NPFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee), the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center Observer Program has developed a relational database platform to systematically capture and deliver seabird information. The Service began collaborating with Observer Program staff in 1993 to address seabird bycatch and fishery interaction issues. Over the years, the program has responded to our requests for: 1) data pertaining to seabird bycatch, 2) incidental observations from observer notes, and 3) modifications to data collection formats. These responses were useful but their written format proved cumbersome and time consuming. In 2009, the Observer Program initiated a project to collect seabird information systematically and enter it into a more accessible database format. The changes were successfully implemented in the field in 2010, and the Service is now working with those data. These changes have reduced costs and delivery time, while expanding the information available to us. The new system has proven to be especially useful in response to short-tailed albatross bycatch events over the past several years. The Service appreciates the work of the NOAA Observer Program in this collaboration.

Aleutian Seabird Risk Assessment:

Over 10 million seabirds of 26 species nest in the Aleutian Islands region and millions more forage and stage there. The Aleutians are also a major shipping route between North America and Asia, with oil spills and other accidents occurring annually and presenting significant risks to marine birds. Because the Service's ability to protect seabird resources from these accidents could be improved by integrating multiple data sets, our Migratory Bird Management program has recently awarded funds to assess season-specific risks to seabirds in the Aleutian Islands from shipping activities. This project will integrate existing seabird data sets with data on vessel traffic, fishing activity, and environmental parameters, and will include seasonal shifts in activity and seabird distribution. The resulting assessment (specific to AI seabirds) will be web-accessible and available to inform seasonally appropriate management activities as well as to assist in management of shipping routes and placement of response capabilities. Principal Investigators are Kathy Kuletz (Kathy_Kuletz@fws.gov) and David Irons (David_Irons@fws.gov).



Federal Subsistence Board:

A 2010 review of the federal subsistence program recommended that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) be expanded from its then existing structure (a public Chair and five directors of Alaska federal agencies) to include additional public members representing rural subsistence users. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar with concurrence from Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack recently announced the appointment of two public members to the Board – Anthony Christianson of Hydaburg and Charles Brower of Barrow. Mr. Christianson and Mr. Brower are life-long Alaskans with deep personal knowledge and experience with subsistence. The Secretaries believe that these appointments will go far in bringing increased knowledge of subsistence users and uses to the decision-making process of the Board.

Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands Landscape Conservation Cooperative (ABSI LCC):

The charter for the ABSI LCC was finalized and adopted on March 5, 2012. The mission of this LCC is to promote coordination, dissemination, and development of applied science to inform conservation of natural and cultural resources in the face of climate change and other landscape-scale stressors. Commonly-identified conservation issues within the Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands region included climate change, fishery management, contaminants, oil spills, and invasive species. For further information on this or other LCCs in Alaska, visit:

<http://alaska.fws.gov/lcc/index.htm>. For ABSI-specific information, contact Doug Burn, ABSI LCC Coordinator at: (907) 786-3807 or Douglas_Burn@fws.gov.