

B-6 U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report

Southwestern stock of the northern sea otter

In response to precipitous declines in abundance, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a proposal on February 11, 2004, to list the southwest Alaska distinct population segment of the northern sea otter as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The public comment period closes on June 10, 2004. A public hearing on the proposal was held in Kodiak, Alaska on May 19, 2004. Public meetings were also held in Anchorage, Cold Bay, King Cove, Kodiak, Sand Point and Unalaska during the public comment period. A final rule on the proposed listing will be published within one year of the proposal date. For more information contact Douglas Burn at (907) 786-3807.

Kittlitz's murrelet

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently recognized the Kittlitz's murrelet as a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. The Kittlitz's murrelet is a small, little-known seabird that is widely distributed in nearshore waters of Alaska during the summer. Its population is believed to number between 9,000 and 25,000 individuals and it has undergone substantial population declines in several of its population centers in southcentral and southeast Alaska in recent years. The Kittlitz's murrelet tends to forage in glacially-fed waters during the breeding season and some scientists speculate their decline is linked to the loss of tidewater glaciers.

Candidate species are not subject to the regulatory protections of the ESA and human activities that may affect candidate species are not restricted. Candidate status, however, does signal there are conservation concerns about a species and the Fish and Wildlife Service encourages agencies, organizations, and individuals to participate in research and conservation activities that may preclude the need to list the species. For more information contact Sue Detwiler at 786-3868. The Fish and Wildlife Service intends to brief the Council on the status of the Kittlitz's murrelet at a fall 2004 meeting.