



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number: REP 14-105

Agenda Date 12/8/2014

Agenda Number: B8

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

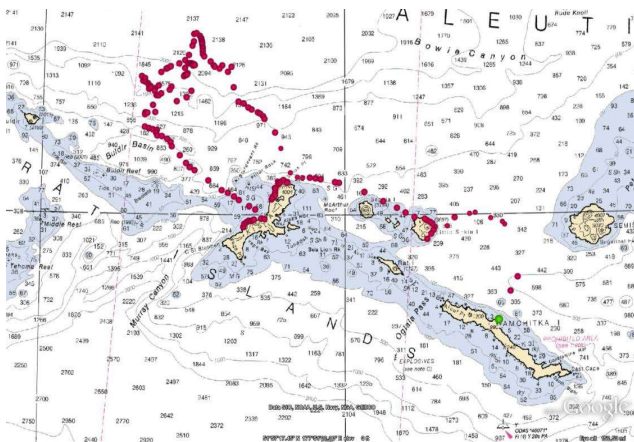
SUBJECT:
Protected Species Report

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review Protected Species report, take action as necessary

BACKGROUND

Steller sea lion critical habitat

NMFS Alaska Region Protected Resources Division hosted two informational meetings designed to solicit external scientific information relevant to the ongoing review of Steller sea lion critical habitat. Those meetings took place in September and October, 2014. The “team is evaluating available information, including comments raised during those meetings”.



Female Steller sea lions in the Aleutian Islands

As part of a continuing study to understand adult female Steller sea lion foraging ecology and movements around the western and western-central Aleutian Islands, researchers from the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the Vancouver Aquarium outfitted three adult female Steller sea lions with satellite-linked location and behavioral data transmitters during October 2014. These supplement previous deployments in 2012 (5 animals) and 2011 (1 animal). The researchers have been sending regular, weekly updates on the movements of the tagged sea lions. The attached image shows the movements of Kiska sea lion “=31” between November 7 and November 14, 2014. To receive these updates, please contact Steve MacLean at steve.maclean@noaa.gov.

Lease Sale in Cook Inlet Program Area

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The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is announcing its intent to prepare an EIS for proposed Lease Sale 244 in the Cook Inlet Program Area. The EIS will focus on the potential effects of leasing, exploration, development and production of oil and natural gas in the proposed lease sale area. The proposed lease sale area excludes the majority of designated critical habitat areas for beluga whale and northern sea otter, and excludes the critical habitat areas for Steller sea lions and the North Pacific right whale. For further information, contact Michael Roland, Regional Supervisor, BOEM, Alaska OCS Region, at (907) 334-5271.

Pacific Walrus lawsuit

Earthjustice, on behalf of the Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, Greenpeace, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands, Sierra Club, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, has brought a suit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over a rule that would allow oil exploration in the Chukchi Sea. Royal Dutch Shell aims to resume exploration drilling in 2015 after their 2012 season ended with the wreck of a drilling rig grounded in a storm. The environmental groups argue that a rule finalized in June 2013 to allow exploratory drilling failed to properly analyze the threat to walrus.

Pacific sleeper shark

According to the Nome Nugget, a Pacific sleeper shark was harvested on October 19 by an Alaska Native subsistence hunter, about 8 miles northeast of Shishmaref. This is thought to be the only live Pacific sleeper shark to be harvested in the Chukchi Sea. The 8-foot long specimen was transported to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks for study and preservation. Pacific sleeper sharks are typically sluggish, live near the seafloor and eat a variety of slow-moving prey. Pacific sleeper sharks have also been hypothesized to prey on Steller sea lions in the Gulf of Alaska.