



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Anchorage Fish & Wildlife Field Office
605 West 4th Avenue, Room G-61
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2249



In reply, refer to:
AFWFO

Agenda Item B-5: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
October 1, 2009

Pacific Walrus

On September 10, 2009, the FWS made a positive 90 day finding on the walrus ESA petition. The document can be found on the Federal Register website at: <http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/PDFgate.cgi?WAISdocID=91173232064+0+2+0&WASAction=retrieve>

The Federal Register document summary follows:

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce a 90-day finding on a petition to list the Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), and to designate critical habitat. Following a review of the petition, we find that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing this subspecies may be warranted. Therefore, with the publication of this notice, we are initiating a status review to determine if listing the Pacific walrus is warranted. To ensure that the status review is comprehensive, we are soliciting scientific and commercial data and other information regarding this subspecies.

DATES: We made the finding announced in this document on September 10, 2009. To allow us adequate time to conduct this review, we request that you send us information on or before November 9, 2009.

ADDRESSES: You may submit information by one of the following methods:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/leaving.cgi>

Search for docket FWS-R7-ES-2009-0051 and then follow the instructions for submitting comments. U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R7-ES-2009-0051; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rosa Meehan, Alaska Regional Office, Marine Mammals Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503; by telephone (800-362-5148); or by facsimile (907-786-3816). Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

Sea Otters

In May 2009, the USFWS reopened the public comment period on the Agency's proposal to designate critical habitat for the southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment of the northern sea otter under the Endangered Species Act. This action was in response to public comments received during the previous

comment period. The Agency held a public hearing on this action on June 18, 2009 in Anchorage. About 9 people attended, and one provided testimony.

The Final Rule to designate critical habitat for the Sea Otter will likely be published on October 8th, 2009.

Yukon River Salmon

Yukon River salmon have been exhibiting less than average productivity since 1998. Management of both the 2009 summer and fall salmon seasons was challenging due to the low Chinook salmon run size and the unexpected low fall chum salmon return. Many subsistence fishermen lowered their harvest goals, increased their effort, and/or shifted effort to other species to provide for households subsistence salmon needs this year. Many subsistence fishermen did not meet harvest goals this year, despite these efforts. Overall, 2009 was a difficult fishing season in the Yukon drainage, with unprecedented in-river management actions taken to achieve Chinook salmon escapement goals for Canada and for ADF&G to provide limited commercial opportunities for summer chum, fall chum, and coho salmon. The Service remains concerned about the bycatch of chum and Chinook salmon in the groundfish fisheries because this mortality contributes to the difficulty for meeting in-river spawning escapement and providing for federally qualified subsistence users to meet their harvest goals.

Short-tailed Albatross

We still have contact with all 7 satellite-tagged translocated short-tailed albatross chicks from Mukojima. Two of these that spent much of the summer in the Sea of Okhotsk finally emerged and headed to Alaska. As of early September, seven of the 10 fledglings (from both Mukojima and Torishima) are in the Bering Sea. FWS observers at sea reported seeing one of these birds near Pribilof Canyon.

Other Albatrosses

Laysan and black-footed albatross status review

The U.S. Geological Survey recently released *Status Assessment of Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses, North Pacific Ocean, 1923-2005*. This report, released in the Fall 2009 was sent to Council members. It reviews both species taxonomy, legal status, distribution, habitat requirements, threats, management and research activities, and population status and trends.

On September 25th, FWS closed its comment period for additional information relative to the black-footed albatross 12 month finding. Region 1 of the FWS is now working on this 12 month finding.

Other Seabirds

Several FWS representatives participated in a NOAA-sponsored workshop from September 9-11, 2009, convened at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The meeting goal was to build a national plan for NMFS to improve the state of knowledge and reduce fisheries impacts on seabirds.