



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office
4700 BLM Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/AFES/AFWFO

September 1, 2015

EMAILED TO:

Dr. James W. Balsiger
Alaska Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Re: Reinitiation of the Programmatic Consultation on the Effects of the Fishery Management Plans in Alaskan Waters (*Consultation # 2015-0145*)

Dear Dr. Balsiger:

This letter acknowledges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) receipt of your August 12, 2015, letter requesting re-initiation of formal section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The consultation will address potential effects of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish fisheries and the parallel groundfish fisheries in the State of Alaska on short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) and Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*).

All information required of you to initiate consultation was either included with your letter or is otherwise accessible for our consideration and reference. We have assigned consultation number 2015-0145 to this consultation. Please refer to that number in future correspondence on this consultation.

Section 7 of the ESA allows the Service up to 90 calendar days to conclude formal consultation with your agency and an additional 45 calendar days to prepare our biological opinion (unless we mutually agree to an extension). Therefore, we expect to provide you with our biological opinion no later than December 25, 2015.

As a reminder, the ESA requires that after initiation of formal consultation, the Federal action agency may not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that limits future options. This practice insures agency actions do not preclude the formulation or implementation of reasonable and prudent alternatives that avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of endangered and threatened species.

Dr. James Balsiger

2

If you have any questions or concerns about this consultation or the consultation process in general, please feel free to contact me at 907-271-2787 or Ms. Erin Knoll, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at 907-271-3063 or erin_knoll@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Socheata Lor, Ph.D.
Field Office Supervisor