



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
December 6, 2008

Northern Sea Otters

- The Draft Northern Sea Otter Recovery Plan is due out for public comment around April, 2009. We will be taking public comment for 60 days upon publication of the notice of availability in the Federal Register.
- The Northern Sea Otter Critical Habitat proposed rule continues to progress following the recent meeting of the Otter Recovery Team. Publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register is imminent. Proposed critical habitat will include a narrow region of the nearshore marine waters from the mean high tide line seaward to the 20m depth contour within the range of the listed entity (roughly west of the middle of Cook inlet).

Salmon Bycatch

- **Yukon River Salmon Management:** The 2008 Yukon River Chinook salmon return was below average. No directed commercial opportunity was provided and restrictions occurred in both Alaska and Canada for subsistence and aboriginal harvest opportunities. The Canadian escapement goal was not met for the second year in a row. The Service remains concerned about the bycatch of Chinook salmon in the groundfish fisheries because of the increasing difficulty of meeting our domestic agency responsibilities in Title VIII of ANILCA. The outlook for the upcoming 2009 fishing season appears to present similar or greater challenges in providing for escapements and subsistence and aboriginal fishing opportunities may be reduced more than 2008.

All sixteen National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska were established in part for the purpose of conserving fish and wildlife populations in their natural diversity. The Service is also responsible to provide for the continuation of subsistence opportunities and uses for federally qualified fishermen on federal public waters. We recognize that NOAA Fisheries and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, through the Council, are responsible for minimizing salmon bycatch. Ensuring decreased salmon bycatch would improve spawning ground natural diversity, increase the potential that salmon escapement targets are met, and decrease the time subsistence harvests are restricted for federally qualified fishermen.

Short-tailed Albatross

- Field crews just returned from satellite tagging 6 incubating short-tailed albatross on Torishima Island. Initial indications are that incubating birds may use different foraging habitat than they

use later in the season when they are brooding chicks. Breeding birds have not yet come into any US EEZ during incubation or brood-rearing (October-May).

Pacific Walrus

- The Center for Biological Diversity filed suit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on December 3rd for failing to make a 90-day finding on their petition to list the Pacific walrus. The petition was filed by the Center on Feb. 8th, 2008. The Service was required to issue an initial determination within 90 days, by May 8th, 2008. The Service has not yet addressed the petition due to tight listing action funding constraints.