


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members
FROM: Chris Oliver 
Executive Director
DATE: March 24, 2008
SUBJECT: Protected Resources Report

ESTIMATED TIME 1 HOUR

ACTION REQUIRED

Receive report on Protected Resources issues (other than Steller sea lion issues, and take action as necessary.

BACKGROUND

A. Petition to List the Pacific Walrus

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity to list the Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The petition was sent out in a Council mailing in late February 2008. Upon receiving a petition, the Service's first responsibility is to evaluate the document to determine whether it contains "substantial information" indicating that a listing "may be warranted." The Service reports that it currently has numerous listing actions that are driven by court orders or court-approved settlement agreements and that require funding in fiscal year 2008. According to the USFWS, the remaining available funds in the Agency's listing program for fiscal year 2008 have already been allocated to the Service's highest priority listing actions; as a result, there are no listing funds available to evaluate the walrus petition in fiscal year 2008.

B. Short-tailed Albatross Update

Conservation efforts for the endangered short-tailed albatross include relocation of chicks from the currently-used breeding island offshore of Japan, Torishima Island, to a non-volcanic island nearby. Recently, a group of scientists from Japan, Alaska, and Oregon successfully trans-located 10 downy short-tailed albatross chicks from Torishima Island to Mukojima Island. On Mukojima, they will be hand-reared to fledging, and hopefully plant the seeds of a new colony on that non-volcanic island. According to Greg Balogh with the USFWS, this is the culmination of a tremendous amount of preparatory work on the part of many individuals and agencies, particularly many individuals who hand-reared Laysan and black-footed albatross chicks during 2006 and 2007 in preparation for the process of hand-rearing short-tailed albatross chicks. The intent is to repeat this effort annually over the next 5 years.

C. Exempted Fishing Permit for Adak Area Pollock Fishery

Under an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) issued in 2007, the Aleut Enterprise Corporation conducted acoustic surveys of pollock in the Aleutian Islands between 174 ° and 178 ° W longitude during 2007. The purpose of the study was to determine if small commercial fishing vessels could be used to perform acoustic surveys of pollock and if this information may be used in fisheries management. The EFP study was developed and conducted in cooperation with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC). Acoustic surveys of pollock in this area will be conducted in 2008 under North Pacific Research Board funding due to insufficient pollock biomass to support pollock fishing under an EFP. The results of the EFP study will be presented by Steve Barbeaux of the AFSC.