



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/IR11/AFES

Report # B-7: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, December 2019.

The following information is a summary of the major updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that the Service is involved in related to the affairs of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

I. Marine Mammals Management

Update on Sea Otter Stakeholder Meeting

A Southeast Sea Otter Stakeholder Meeting occurred in Juneau, Alaska on November 6, 2019, focusing on the subject of Sea Otter population growth. This is a subject of interest to a variety of stakeholders in Southeast Alaska. The purpose of the meeting was to create a forum for stakeholders to review and discuss information about sea otter biology and management issues, and to share recommendations to address resource conflict issues. A steering committee consisting of Federal and State managers, sea otter researchers, commercial fisheries and Tribal representatives helped frame and organize the meeting.

Information concerning: the biology and ecology of sea otters; the status and trend of sea otters in Southeast Alaska; subsistence use of sea otters by Alaska Natives; and the status of impacted subsistence and commercial shellfish fisheries was prepared and presented at the meeting (available at: <https://www.seaotterstakeholders.com>). Meeting participants participated in several breakout sessions on a number of subjects including: management options under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA); the respective roles of Federal and State managers; co-management options for the subsistence use of sea otters; and the identification of information and research needs to inform management decisions.

Recommendations generated at the stakeholder meeting will be compiled into a report to help inform future management actions and collaborative efforts to be taken by stakeholder groups. The identification of areas of conflict over sea otter management makes it clear that a careful and inclusive dialogue is necessary to find solutions. Solutions to identified problems will likely revolve around finding acceptable compromises that lead to mutually agreeable management plans and practices.

For further information, contact the Office of Marine Mammals Management Wildlife Biologist Mr. Joel Garlich-Miller, at joel_garlichmiller@fws.gov or 907-786-3820.

II. Migratory Bird Management

Update on Seabird Mortality Events and Monitoring

In southeast Alaska, exposure to saxitoxin (a biotoxin associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning) was linked in June to a localized die off of breeding Arctic Terns reported in the October B-Report. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Alaska Science Center received additional samples in October and November. They continue to analyze tissue samples for harmful algal bloom toxins, and results will be shared as they become available. To date there has been no evidence of disease. While starvation has been determined to be the cause of death for all carcasses examined by the USGS during these recent events, exposure to biotoxins associated with harmful algal blooms may also be a contributing factor. The USGS is actively investigating how algal bloom biotoxins like saxitoxin affect birds. Little is known about the occurrence or effects of these toxins on wild seabirds, and it is difficult to detect the toxins in emaciated, dead birds.

For further information, contact Dr. Kathy Kuletz, Seabird Coordinator, at kathy_kuletz@fws.gov or 907-786-3453 within the Division of Migratory Bird Management.