



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:REP 14-082

Agenda Date10/6/2014

Agenda Number:B6

John Henderschedt, Acting Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Protected Species Report (including SSL Critical Habitat update)

ACTION REQUIRED:

Review Protected Species report, take action as necessary

BACKGROUND

Bearded seals

On September 25, 2014, the Department of Justice, on behalf of the National Marine Fisheries Service, filed a notice of appeal of the July 25, 2014 U.S. District Court decision vacating the listing of bearded seals under the ESA. The Center for Biological Diversity filed a similar notice on September 26.

The Alaska Oil and Gas Association, North Slope Borough, and State of Alaska had previously challenged the agency's decision to list the Beringia and Okhotsk DPS of bearded seals as threatened.

Steller sea lion Critical Habitat

On September 22, 2014, NMFS hosted a public meeting at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, WA to elicit external scientific information regarding the ongoing review of Steller sea lion critical habitat, and to hear what information the public thinks is relevant to the Agency's review of SSL CH. A second meeting is scheduled for the evening of October 8, 2014 in the King Salmon/Iliamna room. The agency's SSL CH review team is composed of:

1. Lisa Rotterman - SSL Coordinator, AKR
2. Lisa Manning - Protected Resources, Silver Spring
3. Tom Gelatt - NMML
4. Lowell Fritz - NMML
5. Brandee Gerke - SF, AKR
6. Libby Logerwell - REFM, AFSC

The review team will consider all available scientific and commercial information to determine whether modifications to the existing critical habitat designation are warranted, and if so, to describe new critical habitat features and elements and use those to define new critical habitat for the western DPS of Steller sea lions. According to the schedule provided on September 22, a proposed rule would be expected in fall, 2015.

Short-tailed albatross

On September 16, 2014 the National Marine Fisheries Service reported the incidental take of a short-tailed albatross in the hook-and-line groundfish fishery of the BSAI, and the take of a second unidentified albatross in the same haul. The birds were taken on September 7, 2014 at 58°47' 54" N and 177°43'36" W. This is the first take in the two-year reporting period that began on September 17, 2013. A take of four albatross during the two year period would result in reinitiation of formal ESA consultation.

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