



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-6: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
December 9, 2009

Northern Sea Otter

Final designation of critical habitat for the southwest Alaska DPS of the northern sea otter was published in the Federal Register on October 8, 2009 (74 FR 51988). The designated area is approximately 15,000 square kilometers of nearshore, marine waters extending from the mean high tide line seaward for 100 meters or to the 20-meter depth contour. This designation is what the Service originally proposed in December 2008, and took effect on November 9, 2009. Consultations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) will now consider both standards of: 1) jeopardy; and 2) adverse modification or destruction of critical habitat. The final rule, economic analysis, and other information can be found at <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/seaotters/criticalhabitat.htm>

The southwest Alaska sea otter recovery team is nearing completion of a draft recovery plan for the southwest Alaska DPS. The team anticipates submitting the completed draft plan to the Regional Director in early 2010. The Service will then review the plan, and make it available for public review and comment.

Pacific walrus

The Service published a 90-day finding on a petition to list the Pacific walrus as threatened or endangered under the ESA in the Federal Register on September 10, 2009 (74 FR 46548). At that time, we initiated a comprehensive status review that will be completed by within one year.

The Service also submitted a manuscript for publication in the peer-reviewed journal *Marine Mammal Science* presenting the results of the 2006 survey of the Pacific walrus population. We estimate the area surveyed in April 2006 contained approximately 129,000 walrus (95% confidence limits = 55,000 – 507,000). Because we were unable to survey some portions of the study area known to have walrus present during the survey period, this is a minimum estimate of total population size. This minimum population estimate in a final Pacific walrus stock assessment report scheduled for publication in the Federal Register December 2009. Surveys, conducted between 1975 and 1990 produced population estimates ranging from 200,000 to 300,000, walrus. Due to concerns about reliability of these previous surveys and differences in survey techniques we are unable to use this new estimate to make determinations on Pacific walrus population trends.

Eiders

The Spectacled and Steller's Eider Recovery teams are meeting concurrent with this meeting at the FWS Regional Office.