



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:REP 16-029

Agenda Date6/6/2016

Agenda Number:B7

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
Protected Species Report

STAFF CONTACT: Steve MacLean

ACTION REQUIRED:
Receive protected species report; action as necessary.

BACKGROUND:

Ringed seal listing appeal

In April 2016, NMFS informed the Council of the U.S. District Court's decision to vacate the final rule listing the Arctic subspecies of ringed seal as threatened under the U.S. ESA. On May 3, 2016, NMFS published notice to appeal the decision to the 9th Circuit.

ESA: Revisions to regulations for petitions

On April 21, 2016, the USFWS and NMFS published revisions to the May 21, 2015 proposed rule that would revise the regulations pertaining to submission of ESA petitions to list, de-list, or change status of species, based on comments received during the initial comment period. In May 2015, the Services proposed revising regulations to improve the content and specificity of ESA petitions to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the petition process to better focus the Services' resources. Based on comments and information received during the initial comment period, the Services are revising the proposed rule to reduce the amount of information that would need to be submitted with petitions. A complete list of changes is available from the Federal Register (FR 81(77):23448).

Ribbon seals

Ribbon seals have begun showing the same symptoms of an unknown and, sometimes, fatal disease that struck ringed seals and walrus in the Alaskan Arctic five years ago. The disease causes seals to lose their fur or develop bleeding lesions. Several ribbon seals with bald patches, including one that was completely bald, were found during a NOAA cruise through the Bering Sea. NOAA and the USFWS declared an "unusual mortality event" (UME) in 2011 and 2012 when ringed seals and walrus were afflicted, but no UME has been declared for ribbon seals. The cause or causes of the outbreak in 2011 and 2012 were never determined.

Walrus at new Bristol Bay haulout

In spring 2016, walrus have been observed hauling out at Cape Grieg on the Alaska Peninsula. As many as 2000 walrus have been seen hauling out on the beach, which is not a known haulout location for walrus. It is not known whether the new haulout is temporary or permanent. Cape Grieg is located between Ugashik and Egegik (see map below), which is a busy transit spot for marine vessels during the Bristol Bay salmon season.

