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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Brian Fadely, National Marine Mammal Laboratory

SUBJECT: Minutes of 2010 Steller sea lion research coordination workshop held in Anchorage, Alaska

Researchers possessing Endangered Species Act (ESA)/Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) permits to conduct scientific studies on Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) in Alaska meet at least annually to coordinate field study plans for the subsequent year, and these annual meetings also include researchers conducting studies in Canada and Russia. The primary objectives are to minimize potential disturbance to wild sea lions and maximize collaboration and sharing of samples or data, but the meeting is also a forum to discuss other research-related topics, such as national or regional Steller sea lion management issues with research implications. This meeting also partly meets coordination requirements stipulated in the issued permits. Minutes of meetings from 2007-2009 are available at: http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/nmml/species/species_steller.php.

The 2010 meeting was held on January 23rd in Anchorage, Alaska (Attachment 1). Prior to the meeting researchers holding permits to conduct directed Steller sea lion studies in 2010 were asked to outline their field research plans for the calendar year. Responses were combined (Table 1) and researchers in attendance (Attachment 2) provided brief overviews, which were followed by group discussions to improve coordination and data compatibility.

Management issues related to Steller sea lion research were presented by Lisa Rotterman (Steller Sea Lion Recovery Coordinator, NMFS Alaska Regional Office Protected Resources Division). Researchers were advised they may be contacted for information to be incorporated into a formal status review of the eastern DPS, which will start in 2010. She stressed that better information is needed on female reproductive rates, and suggested coordinating with the Regional Office to assist with support. Researchers were encouraged to read the NMFS ESA Section 7 Biological Opinion for Steller Sea Lion Research issued on July 29, 2009, in particular the conservation recommendations discussing protocols to reduce potential for disease transmission, the development of a research prioritization and implementation plan, and development of 'best practices' protocols for research methods. The Alaska Regional Office has the lead to develop a research prioritization and implementation plan and will initiate efforts sometime in the next year. Recommendations for this plan include establishing a formalized and transparent process to identify research essential for recovery and conservation, and also



that researchers should be required to demonstrate recovery links of their proposed research. Regarding the development of best-practices protocols, considerable enthusiasm was expressed among the researchers present to participate in that process, and they urged moving forward with this effort regardless of other priorities. There was consensus that researchers must be involved to provide guidance, and creation of this document must be outside of NMFS, perhaps shepherded by an organization such as Alaska SeaGrant. Development of best-practices should be coordinated with other efforts (for example standard operating procedures that are developed for use with an institution's IACUC) and provisions must be made to maintain flexibility in updating such a document.

Few permit holders (NMML, ASLC-captive) anticipated they would submit permit modification requests when the eligibility window opens. All agreed that the timing and location of this coordination meeting (coinciding with the Alaska Marine Science Symposium) is acceptable.

Table 1. Steller sea lion planned 2010 field studies, Russia-Alaska¹

Date Range	Region	Description
<i>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</i>		
15 Jan – 31 Dec	SEAK BC	Vessel-based resight/scat collections at Southeast Alaska and possibly northern British Columbia (with UBC) haul-outs and rookeries for vital rates estimation and scat collection. Annual summer vessel trips will take place during 10 June – 31 July; opportunistic resights may be conducted throughout the year.
1 Feb – 31 Dec	SEAK	Development of remote tagging methods will primarily be conducted at Gran Point and Benjamin Island in northern Southeast Alaska; work will be conducted opportunistically throughout the year.
1 May – 31 Jul	SEAK	Land-based and skiff-based observations of Forrester complex rookery for data to estimate vital rates, scat collection, and breeding behavior.
1-31 July	EGULF	Vessel-based and land-based resights at Prince William Sound haul-outs and rookeries for vital rates estimation.
1 Jul – 10 Aug	CGULF	Land-based observations of Sugarloaf Island rookery for vital rates estimation and breeding behavior.
<i>Alaska Sea Life Center</i>		
1 Jan – 31 Dec	EGULF	Remote video-based observations of Chiswell Island rookery and Nataoa Island, Seal Rocks (Kenai), and Cape Resurrection haulouts for vital rates estimation, behavior, and disturbance monitoring (continuous during daylight hours).
01 Feb – 31 May	EGULF	Vessel and land-based biopsy darting of juvenile and adult male/female for contaminants and fatty acid analysis of blubber tissue, and genetics of skin tissue at haulout sites in Kenai Fjords and perhaps PWS (10 – 20 days as weather allows).
26 Jun – 05 Jul	EGULF	Branding and sampling of pups at Chiswell Island (1 day).
16 Jul – 31 Dec	EGULF	Vessel and land-based biopsy darting of juvenile and adult male/female for contaminants and fatty acid analysis of blubber tissue, and genetics of skin tissue at haulout sites in Kenai Fjords (5 – 10 days as weather allows).
<i>NMML/Pacific Institute of Geography Russian Academy of Sciences/Alaska Sea Life Center</i>		
Feb		Captures of 10-15 juveniles at Sakhalin Is to investigate fisheries interactions and migrations around northern Japan.
May 1 – Sep 1	OKHOT KURIL KAMCH COMM	Land-based observations of Medny, Kozlova, Antsiferov, Lovushki, Raykoke, Brat Chirpoev, Tuleny, Yamsky rookeries for vital rates estimation, breeding behavior, and disturbance monitoring. Vessel-based survey, resight/scat collections at Eastern Kamchatka, Commander Islands, western Bering Sea and northern part the Sea of Okhotsk Island.

Table 1, continued

Date Range	Region	Description
<i>Oregon State University/Alaska SeaLife Center</i>		
August	EGULF	Juvenile captures in Prince William Sound for transients with rapid release
<i>National Marine Mammal Laboratory</i>		
Mar	CGULF	Scat collections and aerial surveys at sites around Kodiak Island (Wynne)
27 May-1 Aug	EALEU EGULF	Land-based observations of Ugamak and Marmot Island rookeries for vital rates estimation, breeding behavior, and disturbance monitoring.
Late May	EGULF	Vessel-based resights in Prince William Sound and Seal Rocks (with ADFG, ~ 4-5 days)
Jun	CGULF	Scat collections and aerial surveys at sites around Kodiak Island (Wynne)
Jun 7-11	EGULF	Kayak Island land-based observations of marked animals for movement and vital rates studies (~4 days)
6 Jun-14 Jul	SEAK- WALEU	Aerial survey for non-pups; all known terrestrial haulouts and rookeries; will survey CGULF, EGULF, SEAK twice, 6-13 June, and 7-14 July to get early and late counts to examine trans-boundary movements.
21 Jun-2 Jul	EALEU WGULF	Vessel-based resight/scat collections at Eastern Aleutian Island and Western Gulf of Alaska haul-outs for vital rates estimation and scat collection (Dutch-Kodiak)
4-6 Jul	CGULF	Pup branding and condition at Marmot and Sugarloaf Islands (Kodiak-Homer)
15-29 Jul	CGULF EGULF	Vessel-based resight/scat collections at Central and Eastern Gulf of Alaska haul-outs for vital rates estimation and scat collection (Kodiak-Seward)
Sep	CGULF	Scat collections and aerial surveys at sites around Kodiak Island (Wynne)
Sep	CGULF	Adult captures in Kodiak harbor using floating pen (likely will be delayed until Mar 2011)
Oct-Dec	CGULF	Two visits per month at Long Island for visual observations (Wynne)
Nov	SEAK	Adult female captures (with ADFG)
Dec	CGULF	Scat collections and aerial surveys at sites around Kodiak Island (Wynne)

¹Regions: WALEU, CALEU, EALEU-western, central and eastern Aleutian Islands; WGULF, CGULF, EGULF-western, central and eastern Gulf of Alaska; SEAK-Southeastern Alaska; OKHOT-Sea of Okhotsk; KURIL-Kuril Islands; KAMCH-Kamchatka Peninsula; COMM-Commander Islands.

Attachment 1. Agenda of workshop in Anchorage, Alaska

Steller Sea Lion Researcher Coordination Meeting Agenda
Hotel Captain Cook Voyager Room, Anchorage
January 23, 2010, 9 am-noon

1. Welcome/Introductions
2. Review agenda
3. Overview of 2010 field research plans and coordination needs
4. Steller sea lion/northern fur seal research Biological Opinion
5. Added items
 - Permits
 - Meeting scheduling
 - Feedback
6. Wrap-up

Attachment 2. Participants of the 2010 Steller sea lion research coordination meeting, Anchorage, Alaska, January 22, 2010.

Name	Affiliation
Russ Andrews	ASLC
Shannon Atkinson	UAF
John Bengtson	NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/NMML
Doug DeMaster	NOAA/NMFS/AFSC
Brian Fadely	NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/NMML
Lowell Fritz	NOAA/NMFS/AFSC/NMML
Tom Gemmell	MCA
Jeannie Heltzel	NPFMC
Markus Horning	OSU
Lauri Jemison	ADFG
Justin Jenniges	ASLC
Terry Johnson	UAF/MAP
John Maniscalco	ASLC
Lori Polasek	ASLC/UAF
Jill Prewitt	ASLC
Lorrie Rea	ADFG
Michael Rehberg	ADFG
Dave Rosen	UBC
Lisa Rotterman	NOAA/NMFS/AKR
Bill Wilson	NPFMC
Kate Wynne	UAF