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North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Meeting
January 8-9, 2007
Anchorage Hilton Hotel

Minutes

The Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) convened in Anchorage at the Hilton Hotel on January 8-9, 2007. Committee members present were: Larry Cotter (Chairman), Jerry Bongen, Julie Bonney, Sam Cotten, Ed Dersham, John Henderschedt, Dan Hennen, Sue Hills, Frank Kelty (via telephone), Dave Little, Steve MacLean, Max Malavansky Jr, and Art Nelson. Also present were Earl Krygier (ADF&G), Bill Wilson (Council staff); Doug DeMaster (NMFS AFSC); Kristin Mabry and Melanie Brown (NMFS AK Region staff); John LePore (NOAA General Counsel AKR); Shane Capron (NMFS AK Region PR), and several members of the public. The primary focus of this meeting was to review the revised Proposal Ranking Tool (PRT), develop procedures for reviewing proposals with the PRT and other data sets, prepare a draft report on the PRT for SSC review of the PRT at the February 2007 meeting, and set a future SSLMC meeting schedule in light of recent changes in the FMP consultation schedule.

Chairman Cotter reviewed the agenda (attached), the work schedule for the coming several days, and Kristin Mabry reviewed the handout materials provided to each committee member. The minutes of the SSLMC's October 30-November 1 meeting were reviewed. These minutes capture the rationale for the structure and weightings of the elements in the PRT and most of this text will go into the draft report for PRT. Mr. Wilson used these to update the PRT report (version dated Dec. 2006) which was provided to SSLMC members. The draft October SSLMC minutes were revised to reflect the SSLMC's revoting on type of site based on Ken Pitcher's season discussion from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The minutes from the October 30 (Halloween) meeting were approved with those edits.

Board of Fisheries Actions

The Committee received reports on recent Board of Fisheries actions. Art Nelson reviewed the Board of Fisheries' (BOF) action on the Aleutian Islands State waters pollock fishery. The BOF clarified the start date of the fishery to 7 days after the federal exempted fishing permit (EFP) is effective, if the authorized harvest amount of the EFP is less than 3,000 mt, or by March 1 if no EFP is authorized. The guideline harvest level is based on the authorized amount in the EFP, not the federally harvested amount. Shane Capron, NMFS Protected Resources Division (PR), stated that a no jeopardy or adverse modification determination was made for the EFP.

FMP Consultation Update

Mr. Capron reported that the draft biological opinion (BiOp) will be available by June 1. The Council is expecting final alternatives for revisions to the SSL protection measures in December 2007. The four draft chapters of the BiOp previously released are likely to

change in the final draft based on feedback received by the agency. Committee members should retain the four draft BiOp chapters they received earlier. Mr. Capron stated that NMFS is on the schedule for peer review by the Council of Independent Experts (CIE), but this review depends on funding and scheduling. NMFS is not sure where this project falls in the priorities for the CIE. NMFS may be able to steer the review to certain types of reviewers but may not be able to control who does the peer review. There was some discussion about the SSLMC reviewing the statement of work for the peer review, but it was decided that this was not a responsibility of the SSLMC.

Mr. Capron recommended that PR's limited resources will be focused on the BiOp. They will address concerns with the draft chapter 1-4 in the June 1 draft of the BiOp. He recommended that a range of alternatives could be developed now even though the BiOp is not ready yet. Mr. Capron stated that new information is constantly available and wants the new draft BiOp to be comprehensive. The BiOp will cite peer reviewed and published information. Mr. Capron stated that NMFS is developing a summary of comments it has received on the draft SSL Recovery Plan and determining how to respond. NMFS needs to decide on the amount of work needed to complete the plan. If major work is needed, the plan may need to be put to the side until the BiOp is completed. NMFS will know the schedule in the next few weeks. The public will be updated on the schedule when it is finalized.

Schedule for SSL Protection Measures Development

The SSLMC reviewed their schedule of activities for the next few months:

- The draft BiOp is released June 1, 2007. The committee would like to have the BiOp as soon as it is ready and well before the meeting.
- The SSLMC will review proposals and develop recommendations for changes in fishing regulations by the October 2007 Council meeting. The SSLMC may decide to alter the weightings of the model elements based on the BiOp and may need to reevaluate proposals.
- NMFS will prepare the NEPA document (EA or EIS) based on the preliminary alternatives recommended by the Council.
- A preliminary preferred alternative should be selected in December 2007.
- Final Council action would be April 2008.

The SSLMC noted that this is a very aggressive schedule. Because of this, the SSLMC decided that they should start the proposal evaluation process now and develop recommendations sooner instead of waiting for the draft BiOp to trigger this process. The SSC recommended that the final PRT be reviewed by NMFS PR. The SSLMC discussed whether the PRT should be reviewed by PR or the AFSC and the purpose of such review. If PR does the review of the PRT, it will likely result in a one page review. The AFSC could review the PRT to determine if it is a scientifically valid method to support the work of the SSLMC. Mr. Cotter asked PR to determine if the tool is flawed and identify what those flaws may be. The SSLMC would like to have PR determine if the right structure for scoring was used and are the right elements being looked at. The SSLMC may need to revote on their weightings based on the June 1 draft BiOp. Ms. Mabry stated that PR's review of the PRT should concentrate on whether the PRT is

meeting the conclusions of the BiOp. The SSLMC discussed this issue later in the meeting (see below).

New Proposal Discussion

The SSLMC discussed whether to allow new proposals to be submitted. The Committee decided that no new request for proposals would be issued. No one has been approached by the public requesting an additional opportunity to submit proposals, and there are enough proposals now before the committee to work on. Also, the SSLMC was concerned that any new proposals may be written to ensure the results from the PRT are as favorable as possible.

The SSLMC may base its recommendations on one or more proposals, and may combine or change features of the proposals. Julie Bonney stated that the fishers in the GOA may want to look at Pacific cod seasonality and gear splits after the draft BiOp is available in June.

Atka Mackerel, Pacific cod, and Pollock Fisheries Actual Fishing Periods

As requested at the last SSLMC meeting, Ms. Bonney and Mr. Henderschedt provided information to the SSLMC on actual fishing time periods compared to regulatory fishing seasons. These data will be used by the SSLMC during the proposal review process. Ms. Bonney provided data for the GOA, and Mr. Henderschedt provided data for the BSAI. The AI Atka mackerel fishery information was reported by subarea. There are large differences in pollock fishing time periods among areas in the GOA and Ms. Bonney will revise the GOA information to be in a similar format to the BSAI information.

One important finding was to not assume the fishery starts on the opening day. In the GOA, the pollock roe fishery has a gentleman's agreement to wait until the middle of February for the roe to ripen, but this behavior may change with rationalization. Mr. Krygier requested the data be reported by average length of the fishery or listing the closure dates, as done for the BSAI fisheries. It was determined that average length is not as good a representation of future fishing behavior because the fisheries durations seem to be getting shorter. This shortening of the fisheries may be from improved CPUE or smaller TACs. In the Bering Sea the pollock A season fishing starts on January 20 and the fishery may continue into April. The BSAI Pacific cod fishery is on less fish in a more intense and shorter fishing period.

The SSLMC discussed data sources for this issue and other ways of looking at catch information. Mr. Ken Stump (public) recommended using NMFS inseason management reports on fishing seasons which is what was used for the BSAI fisheries information provided by Mr. Henderschedt. The use of daily and weekly removals was discussed but Dr. Hennen recommended that it was not appropriate for the PRT because it is not designed to use that level of detail. The PRT inputs should include if the season is shorter or longer than status quo. This general approach is sufficient for what is needed for the model. Mr. Cotter recommended that the extraction rates over time are important and should be included in the other datasets for consideration outside of the PRT.

The information provided by Mr. Henderschedt shows how long fisheries take to prosecute. This information covers a short period and should be considered the worst case scenario but is likely most reflective of what the fisheries will look like for the next few years. Ms. Mabry suggested that the fishing period information informs the model. Temporal distribution would be a good dataset to look at. She reminded the SSLMC that the model is their expert judgment. In the model, there are four seasons. The fishing period information is intended to allow the SSLMC to associate dates with how the model looks at the four seasons.

Subcommittee Reports

The SSLMC Subcommittees on Proposal Input and Status Quo Scoring have not met yet. However, John Henderschedt and Dan Hennen reported that the proposals have been read and it is likely that some won't "fit" the PRT. He noted that some proposals may also not address SSL mitigation issues. Of the 29 proposals, Mr. Henderschedt and Dr. Hennen believe that 23 will "fit" and can be scored by the SSLMC using the PRT. The SSLMC should not try to change the model structure to fit the proposals that cannot be evaluated with the PRT.

Mr. Cotter asked all Committee members to review the draft report prepared by Bill Wilson and reconvene in the afternoon to begin working through the revised PRT. Mr. Cotter also asked the three Subcommittees to morph into a single committee and work on proposal scoring and proposal review issues and report back in the afternoon.

Public Comment

Mr. Cotter provided an opportunity for questions or comments from the public. Ken Stump noted that in his view the PRT is only a tool and doesn't have the resolution to provide a sound basis for making decisions. He suggested that the SSLMC should look beyond this model for additional information for evaluating proposals.

Updated Subcommittee Reports

Members of the three subcommittees (Dan Hennen, Kristin Mabry, Doug DeMaster, and John Henderschedt) met together during the break and suggested a procedure for scoring and ranking proposals. Dr. Hennen reported for these subcommittees since their activities and memberships are interrelated. He noted that the SSLMC recommended that proposals should be initially scored at a subcommittee level through an objective process and the end results would be brought to the SSLMC. The SSLMC has an obligation to use the PRT as a component of the evaluation process. The goal is a qualitative, and, when possible, a quantitative, look at proposals to rationalize the decision-making process. Mr. Henderschedt noted that the SSLMC will not be able to get to a fine level of detail on the economic impacts of proposals.

The Subcommittee suggests a three step proposal review process:

1) Work through each proposal to unravel its basic components that will fit the model. The subcommittee believes that all but three proposals can be run through the PRT. Plug those components into the PRT to score the proposal.

2) Score status quo for each proposal. Status quo will be defined as only those elements of a proposal that would change from how the current fishery is prosecuted and managed. Thus a proposal will receive a status quo score and a proposal score, the difference between which will be the metric for ranking the proposal.
3) Identify the components of each proposal that lie outside the model. This step also includes identifying areas of a proposal that are unclear and will require additional information from proposers. Some proposals may need to be re-scored based on additional information or clarification received during this step in the process.

Mr. Cotter added that, after this process is completed, the full SSLMC would receive a report from the Subcommittee on proposal scores, status quo scores, and the difference metric. The SSLMC would then discuss this with the Subcommittee, ask questions, and clarify and eventually score the proposals. If the full Committee cannot agree, then further discussions and alternative scoring might be pursued. The overall goal will be to achieve SSLMC consensus on the scores for all proposals. Mr. Cotter appointed Dan Hennen, Sue Hills, Kristin Mabry, and Doug DeMaster as the subcommittee that will initially score the proposals; these individuals would be considered neutral and not connected or to benefit from any of the proposals.

Dr. Hennen noted that the Subcommittee also suggested that after the BiOp is released for public review, the SSLMC may wish to re-visit the PRT and weightings for some of the elements in the PRT based on information presented in the BiOp. Mr. Cotter also noted that once the proposals are scored, they will be reviewed by the full SSLMC; proposers will need to attend that meeting as well to respond to questions, clarify proposals, and to hear the scores of their proposals. A second SSLMC meeting will be convened shortly thereafter to do additional work on the proposals, consider "outside the model" data sets, and proceed with a preliminary analysis of the proposals. Mr. Cotter suggested that proposals that stray too far from SSL issues may be set aside; some proposals may be subsumed or integrated into others, and some may morph into a Committee-generated measure based on the PRT results, proposal clarification, or the draft BiOp. All of these deliberations will be aided by public input.

Draft PRT Report Comments

Mr. Wilson provided the SSLMC with a December 2006 version of the PRT report for review. He reviewed the history of interactions with the SSC regarding the PRT and the current status of addressing their concerns. A third version of the report on the PRT is scheduled for SSC review in February 2007. The report has been updated with new information that addresses the SSC concerns for documentation of the model. Updates include the rationale for elements and for weighting of elements which start on page 17 of the report. Pages 19-25 are detailed discussions of each of the model elements. The report is intended to describe the reasoning for the structure and weighting of the PRT. The model structure is done for now and ready to use. The SSLMC reviewed the responses to the SSC to make sure they are correct and provided edits to Mr. Wilson.

The SSLMC suggested changes to pages 29-30 in the draft report (drafted by Mr. Wilson):

- The language for steps 1 and 2 on "Implementation of the Proposal Review Process" will need updating based on the Subcommittee's work discussed above. Dr. Hennen will help with that language.
- The SSLMC suggested splitting out gear type issues into two areas: fish removal rate and direct effects on SSLs. Considerable discussion on effects of gear on SSLs continued. Some were concerned that gear effects (entanglement, injury, etc.) would be beyond the purview of the SSLMC and would be dealt with in the NEPA analysis. And some felt that current fishery practices have almost negligible gear impacts and needn't be considered by the SSLMC. Others noted that gear impacts could be considered outside the model, which the Committee eventually agreed to do.
- The SSLMC discussed how to evaluate economic or social impacts of a proposal. Economic data can be complex and difficult to address, and may not be the purview of this Committee. The SSLMC concluded that where socio-economic data should be considered, it would be outside the model.
- The term "historic" as related to SSL count data should be revised to read "all recorded data" on SSL site counts and trends.
- The issue of fishery practice change as a result of a proposal should read "will the means in which the fishery is conducted be improved or otherwise affected".
- And an additional consideration should be added – are there components of a proposal that may mitigate or minimize effects on SSLs.

In compiling this list of the elements of the proposal review process, the SSLMC felt that the public should consider these elements as examples of the kinds of considerations the Committee will take into account in the proposal review process. The Committee does not want to lead the public by providing a specific formula, yet it wants to give examples to help proposers prepare for presentations of their proposals. The SSLMC also noted that, since new proposals will not be solicited, and we currently have in hand all of the proposals we will have to review, articulating the above process should not impact proposers other than to give them ideas on how to come prepared for discussing their proposals with the Committee.

Sue Hills noted that the SSLMC will have to develop the process for how to use these data sets which are considered to be "outside the model" and how to weight these considerations along with the PRT scores. Dr. Hills noted that the Committee's job is to assemble a package of proposed changes in fishing regulations that, when considered together, minimize effects on SSLs.

Mr. Cotter asked that, when this "Implementation of the Proposal Review Process" section of the report is re-drafted, that Dr. Hennen and Mr. Henderschedt review the new language before the next draft of the report is circulated for review.

Public Comment

Mr. Cotter provided opportunity for public comments early on Tuesday January 9. Dave Fraser suggested that, in addition to the "outside the model" data sets listed above, the SSLMC should also consider TAC harvested inside and outside SSL critical habitat. Earl Krygier concurred. Mr. Fraser was concerned that in some fisheries there is not a limit on the amount of TAC that can be taken inside critical habitat (e. g. Pacific cod) and in other fisheries there is a limit (e.g. pollock in the Steller sea lion conservation area). This issue was addressed by adding a catch-all question under 4: Are there other components of the proposal that may mitigate or minimize effects on SSL?

PRT Review and Update

Kristin Mabry reported to the SSLMC that she and Dr. Peggy Merritt met over the weekend to review a revised PRT based on Committee suggestions at the last meeting. The only substantive structural change made was to add "other" to the category of Target Species harvested – to allow for consideration of what other elements in the diet of SSLs occur in the scat data, by region. The revised PRT also now includes the revised weightings the Committee gave to elements in the Site Type, Proximity, % of Sites, and Season categories. Ms. Mabry led the Committee through all of these changes, most of which were minor. She also reviewed the SSC comments, particularly the comments on the Structural Adjust feature of the model.

The Committee reviewed some proposals that were run through the last version of the model to see how this new PRT would score these same proposals. The SSLMC also ran sensitivity tests using these proposals as examples to see how scores might change if different elements were assigned to the proposals. Additional sensitivity tests were run later in the meeting.

Mr. Fraser's concerns were illustrated with Ms. Mabry's high impact example, allowing Atka mackerel harvest to the shore around rookeries in the AI. The amount of weight on proximity masks any effect from changing the species from Atka mackerel to pollock in this example. The Committee felt that this can be addressed outside the model. If a proposal applies to two areas, the SSLMC will need to add the effects together from each area. The proposal will need to be broken into areas first and then the subcommittee would sum the scores of status quo and sum the scores of the proposals. If a proposal is to open all sites in one area, this would get a higher score than if the proposal is to open half the sites from two areas.

The SSLMC also discussed which elements in the model might affect scores more than other elements. Some suggested we prepare a "gradient chart" that would show which elements had the most effect on a score down to those that had the least. A suggestion was made to develop a spreadsheet showing all 206 "bins" and the weightings each bin gives to the model scoring calculus. Some felt that the most important part of this process is to see how a proposal stacks up against the status quo for that specific proposal. It would be helpful to look at several proposals, some that are obviously of higher impact on SSLs and some that have obvious less impact on SSLs, and score them and their status quo conditions to see how each would end up on a scale of potential SSL

impact; this would allow the SSLMC to see if the model provides results that make sense. And, doing this would be more like how the SSLMC intends to score proposals.

The SSLMC discussed the "synthesis" bar charts that can be developed within the model and reviewed whether the gradient of impact in these charts makes sense based on how the model was developed. Many felt that the position in the chart of the various elements matches their thoughts on where those should occur in such a hierarchy. The Committee tested additional proposal examples – a high impact and a low impact proposal – and changed various elements and weightings to see the resultant effect on the proposal score. Some noted that each proposal will be unique, and comparisons of raw scores between proposals are inappropriate; rather, these scores are a means to "rank" the proposals in a continuum and are not a score of impact on SSLs. A better way to look at this is that a score for a proposal can be "weighed" against the score for that proposal's status quo to see how this difference, or departure from status quo, stacks up against another proposal's departure from status quo. Again, the SSLMC noted that there is no absolute meaning of a specific score; that score reflects that proposal's rank relative to another proposal's score. The SSLMC will not be able to determine a specific score that is "okay", below which all higher scores are "not okay".

Dave Little suggested that the SSLMC could run the model with the worst combination of elements (highest SSL impact) and again run the model with the best possible combination (least SSL impact) to see the extremes of the range of possible PRT scores. Others suggested that the SSLMC needs to get familiar with the model by running more tests on a variety of proposal examples. Mr. Little added that a proposal could be run through the model multiple times, each time only changing one element to compile a list of score outputs.

Next Steps for Proposal Review

Mr. Cotter convened a subcommittee of the SSLMC during the lunch period to discuss and recommend how the SSLMC should proceed with application of the PRT to proposals. There might be two routes to follow from this point on. Either go back, run several proposal examples, and "tweak" the model's elements and weightings, in some cases re-vote on some elements, to develop a model that might generate proposal scores that better match scores that the members might expect. Others felt that the Committee has already done that, principally in the Halloween meeting, and we should retain the model's elements and weightings as they are, and that it would be inappropriate to further change model structure just to try to get results that more closely match expected output. The PRT's internal working structure is complex, and to attempt to rework that structure to attain some expected output will not likely be possible. Dr. DeMaster reminded that the PRT output is only a relative ranking score, not an absolute score of SSL impact, and that the SSLMC should trust in their previous work and trust in the PRT procedures that are based on the theory in the Analytic Hierarchy Process methodology and the Decision Support software used to prepare the Committee's PRT.

The Subcommittee also noted that with 206 variables in the PRT, it may be impossible to fully understand their interactions. Some noted that if the SSLMC decides to re-visit the model, and open it to revision, then this must be done systematically and will take time –

and would likely repeat the work that has already been accomplished, with the potential for no real benefit. The Committee would have to have considerable justification to do this, and would have to develop the basis for making changes; to "crack the model" and revise its structure would essentially return the process to the beginning and would likely only lead to a repeat of all the work that has been accomplished to date. John LePore also noted that the SSLMC should be careful about reworking the model since it has been built based on expert judgment and the AHP process has been followed and there would be little justification for adjusting the Committee's judgments contained in the model. He also noted that the Committee members have already made decisions and expressed their expert opinions based on available information, and thus the Committee should feel comfortable with their work.

Ms. Mabry also noted that if some elements in the PRT were revisited at this meeting, and if the SSLMC decided to revote on some elements, this could be a source of error since some members are not present today who were present in past meetings. Some noted that based on some earlier model runs today of hypothetical proposals, even fairly dramatic changes in weighting factors had little consequence to model output. Dr. Hennen noted that the SSLMC has already revisited all elements in the model – at the Halloween meeting – and if the Committee continually decides to revisit their voting, this could continue for a very long time.

Mr. Cotter summarized: The consensus of the Subcommittee is to recommend leaving the PRT as it is, but that the full SSLMC should work through a variety of proposal scenarios to get a better feel for how it operates. By ranking a series of hypothetical proposals, the SSLMC can then discuss and evaluate how the ranking scores for each compare. This kind of process would allow the SSLMC to gain a better sense of how the model scoring works and help the Committee become more comfortable with the model.

Mr. Cotter also noted that when new information is available, such as the upcoming draft BiOp, then the SSLMC could revisit the PRT and perhaps revisit portions of the hierarchy and weighting factors and make adjustments if it felt the new information justified this.

SSLMC Discussion

Mr. Cotter reported to the SSLMC the recommendations of the Subcommittee. The SSLMC should not revisit the PRT weighting factors and proceed with proposal scoring with the model structured as it is. The SSLMC should spend some time "gaming" with the model, testing a variety of hypothetical proposals, and working on the Structural Adjust feature to better understand when it is applied. The SSLMC also should run some worst case and best case hypothetical proposals to get a sense for the outer bounds of model output. He recommended that the remainder of the meeting focus on the report and a schedule for future meetings.

The SSLMC proceeded with some additional testing of the PRT. The two proposals tested at the last meeting, the Puale Bay and Marmot Island proposals, were compared – scores using the model from the last meeting and scores from the updated model at this meeting. Scores were very similar. A high impact hypothetical proposal was run and

compared with status quo; the proposal score was .041 compared to the status quo score for that proposal of .018 - the higher the score, the more impact that proposal would have. Another proposal where fishing would be allowed around a rookery up to 3 n mi versus only up to 10 n mi resulted in scores of .028 versus .018. The SSLMC discussed these kinds of model output and felt comfortable with the relative scores – they made sense.

The Structural Adjust feature was discussed and tested. This feature preserves the hierarchical weightings the SSLMC has given to the main elements - the "mother" elements - in the model. The Structural Adjust is applied when one mother element will affect a disparately different number of "children" compared with another "mother" element. Model runs were made with and without the Structural Adjust; the SSLMC observed how this feature preserves the weightings the Committee established for the mother elements; that is, it preserves the relative weightings of the mothers throughout the hierarchy beneath these main elements.

For the PRT, it is not going to matter because the proposals will be compared to status quo. When revising the PRT, Ms. Mabry reported that many of the structural adjustments were very small because the structure was already balanced in most cases. For comparing the 'sensitivity to fishing' and the 'target species' occurrence in SSL diet, the structural adjust was large for the 'sensitivity to fishing because there were so many children under this category. If a proposal triggers only one of the branches, the structural adjustment is important to preserve the higher level judgments. The SSC requested a structural adjustment sensitivity analysis which was done by Ms. Mabry. The model will be more likely to meet the intent if structural adjustment is used when there are an uneven number of children. The SSLMC is comfortable using the structural adjustment in the hierarchical location of the model Ms. Mabry demonstrated.

PRT Documentation

The SSLMC discussed how best to provide a thorough documentation of the model and the rationale the SSLMC used to develop the model elements and weightings. Dr. Hills reminded that the SSC recommends strongly a thoroughly documented model, and an option might be to develop a NOAA Technical Memorandum or similar peer-reviewed paper on the model. In that paper the model and how it works could be thoroughly presented and discussed. She suggested that for the upcoming February 2007 SSC meeting, the more brief report developed by Mr. Wilson and the SSLMC at this meeting might serve as an adequate progress report.

The SSLMC discussed the report and provided editorial suggestions, which will be incorporated into the next draft. Some specific discussions relevant to model documentation and some SSC comments followed.

The SSC recommended that the PRT documentation report be provided to Protected Resources Division, NMFS, for their review and comment. Some believe that the SSLMC's judgments in the PRT should not conflict with PR's view of the available scientific information. For example, the SSLMC currently ranks summer about equally with winter in terms of seasonal sensitivity of SSLs to fishery effects. Dr. DeMaster countered that perhaps the PRT is more of a science issue and that the Alaska Fisheries

Science Center might be more appropriate for a review. Mr. Henderschedt suggested that it might be good to be sure PR has input on whether the PRT has the appropriate elements. Dr. Hills noted that, in the past, some comments from PR suggested a difference in opinion on some parts of the PRT, and that perhaps their review would be appropriate given past comments from PR. Mr. Cotter noted that we are already subjecting the PRT to scientific review before the SSC. Dr. DeMaster concurred that the SSC review would likely accomplish any need for a scientific review, and that the SSC has already commented on whether the PRT is appropriate, adequate, and are we applying it correctly, and that the upcoming additional review in February will give the SSC the opportunity to again review the model as it is now configured. The consensus is to subject the PRT to another round of SSC review and then use the model after that has been completed.

Dr. Hills asked that the PRT documentation report contain more discussion of how the Committee voting occurred. She suggested we provide more on what the members used to make judgments and what process was used to prepare members for voting. The process involved a lot of back and forth discussion and debate on each element in the PRT hierarchy. SSLMC members questioned each other, the scientists, and the available data. Alternative explanations were raised and explored, and perhaps conclusions were changed based on this debate. The Committee also discussed all the available data, the limitations of the data bases, and how differing opinions on the meaning of these data sets could be derived. This process raised the level of understanding of the available information and prepared committee members for voting on weighting factors for the various elements in the hierarchy.

Proposal Ranking Process and Schedule

The SSLMC will meet next to discuss the proposals and to score them. Before the SSLMC meets, however, a Subcommittee on Proposal Scoring will meet to work through the proposals. This subcommittee (DeMaster, Mabry, Hills, Hennen) will determine what elements in the PRT each proposal would affect, input them to the PRT, develop scores for each, and then run a status quo scenario through the PRT for each proposal. These dual scores, and the difference between scores, will be placed in a data table for the full SSLMC to review.

The SSLMC will then meet to discuss each proposal and how it was scored by the Subcommittee. Proposers will be invited to this meeting to hear their proposal scores. Proposers will be asked to make a brief presentation of their proposal. Proposers will be provided with a list of the issues the SSLMC will consider when evaluating each proposal. These considerations will include not only the elements in the PRT but also the data sets the Committee will use that are considered "outside the model" considerations. Proposers may wish to provide their own comments on these issues. The SSLMC will prepare a document for proposers to help them prepare for their presentations. At a follow-up meeting, the SSLMC will receive reports on any new information that has been developed since the PRT was built, such as new SSL counts from the 2006 survey, new killer whale information, updated SSL natality information, fishery interaction study results, etc. The PRT may be revisited based on this new information. Proposals will be

further evaluated based on all available data. And when the BiOp is released, the SSLMC will convene to review the draft BiOp.

The schedule of future (2007) meetings is:

April 16 (8:30 am) - Subcommittee on Proposal Scoring - Juneau – Subcommittee meets to review and score all proposals against their individual status quo scores; develop table of scores for SSLMC review.

April 17-19 (8:30 am daily) - SSLMC meeting - Juneau – SSLMC meets to review proposal scores, discuss proposals, etc. At this meeting the SSLMC will receive proposal presentations from proposers. The SSLMC may request additional information from proposers.

May 7-9 (8:30 am daily) – SSLMC meeting - Seattle, AFSC - This meeting will be structured into two time-certain parts: May 7-8 will focus on proposal work, and May 9 will focus on receiving new scientific information. The overall goals for this meeting are to continue work on proposals, review new proposal information, receive and discuss new scientific information, review the PRT in light of new information, and adjust proposal rankings based on information requested or new scientific information.

June 19-21 (8:30 am daily) – SSLMC meeting - Seattle, AFSC – This meeting will likely be wholly focused on receiving a presentation on the draft BiOp and working through the BiOp. The Committee may also discuss the PRT in light of information contained in the draft BiOp. The SSLMC intends to continue its review of proposals based on the information provided in the BiOp at a subsequent meeting (TBA).

Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at 4:50 PM Tuesday January 9, 2007. The next meeting will be in the NMFS Alaska Region Regional Administrator's Conference Room in Juneau on April 17-19, 2007, starting at 8:30 AM on April 17. The Proposal Scoring Subcommittee will meet April 16 at 8:30 AM at the NMFS AK Region offices in Juneau, same location.

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North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee Meeting
Anchorage Hilton Hotel, Dillingham Room
January 8-9, 2007

Purpose: Review Proposal Ranking Tool; develop procedure for reviewing proposals with the PRT. Review draft report on the PRT and prepare for SSC review of the PRT at the February 2007 meeting. Discuss future SSLMC meeting schedule in light of recent change in FMP consultation schedule.

AGENDA

January 8 – 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

1. Introductions and Opening Remarks, Announcements, Agenda Approval (Cotter)
2. Minutes of Last Meeting, Report on Alaska Board of Fisheries' December 3 Meeting (Wilson)
3. Discuss December 2006 Council Meeting and New FMP Consultation Schedule (Wilson)
4. Review Progress on Revising Proposal Ranking Tool (PRT)(Mabry, Wilson)
5. Review Data on Actual Fishing Periods (Bonney, Henderschedt)
6. Receive Report from Proposal Input Subcommittee (Hills, Hennen, DeMaster)
7. Receive Report from Status Quo Scoring Subcommittee (Hennen et al.)
8. Receive Report from "Outside the Model" Subcommittee (Henderschedt, Hennen)
9. Test Proposals and Conduct Sensitivity Tests of Revised PRT

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10. Continue Testing PRT
11. Develop Procedures for Reviewing Proposals
12. Review Draft Report on Documentation of PRT for SSC
13. Discuss Future Schedule of SSLMC Meetings
14. Action Items, Closing Remarks, Adjourn (Cotter)

Public comment periods will be provided during the meeting.

Contact Bill Wilson at the Council offices if you have questions: 907-271-2809 or bill.wilson@noaa.gov