STELLER SEA LION ADULT COUNT DATABASE
Last Update: April 5, 2006

The file NMML.SSL.ZIP is a zip archive. To obtain the raw files it is necessary to unzip the archive with a program such as pkzip, winzip, or zipwiz. The archive contains the following files:

NMML.SSL.COUNTS.TXT the data file, described in more detail below
NMML.SSL.README.TXT a text version of this file
NMML.SSL.README.PDF a pdf version of this file

The file NMML.SSL.COUNTS.TXT contains counts from Alaska of non-pup (adult and juvenile) Steller sea lions in the NMML database. The counts were made between 1904 and 2005. This file includes counts obtained during breeding season aerial surveys, as well as counts obtained during winter aerial surveys, boat surveys, cliff counts, and other miscellaneous counts.

It is requested that users contact the director of the National Marine Mammal Laboratory before using these data in publications. Please report errors to the Director:

Director
National Marine Mammal Laboratory
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115-0070
(206) 526 - 4049

This file is in ASCII text format. It contains the following fields:

SITENAME
REGION: 1 = California
2 = Oregon
3 = Washington
4 = British Columbia, Canada
5 = Southeast Alaska,
6 = Eastern Gulf of Alaska
7 = Central Gulf of Alaska
8 = Western Gulf of Alaska
9 = Eastern Aleutian Islands
10 = Central Aleutian Islands
11 = Western Aleutian Islands
12 = Bering Sea
13 = Commander Islands
14 = Kamchatka Peninsula
15 = Kuril Islands
16 = Sea of Okhotsk

TRENDSITE 0 - not a trend site, 1 - is a trend site
ROOKERY 0 - not a rookery, 1 - is a rookery, 2 - special case, rookery but not a trend rookery.

MONTH 1-12, 99 is unknown/missing
DAY 1-31, 99 is unknown/missing
YEAR

COUNT (Does not include newborn pups during the breeding season)
COUNTTYPE: 1 = aerial photo (35mm)
2 = medium-format (5 inch) aerial photo
3 = aerial photo (digital)
4 = aerial, visual estimate
5 = beach/ground count
6 = viewpoint observations
7 = count from skiff nearshore
8 = count from ship offshore
9 = other (explain in comments)
99 = unknown or not specified
SOURCE: 1 = NMFS/National Marine Mammal Laboratory
2 = Alaska Department of Fish and Game
3 = Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
4 = Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
5 = NMFS/Southwest Fisheries Science Center
6 = Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans
7 = other (explain in comments)
99 = unknown or not specified
COMMENTS (Clarification of COUNTTYPE, SOURCE, or COUNT as necessary)

DATA ISSUES

There are several issues with the data that users need to be aware of before using this database.

1. This database is continually being updated and modified. Users should check for the date the database was last modified.

2. This data set includes counts from all times of year, some of which may not be appropriate for particular analyses. The number of sea lions at a given site is extremely seasonally dependent. Comparison of counts from November in one year and from July in another year is likely to produce confounded results. Population trend analyses typically are performed using data only from the breeding season June and July.

3. The most precise counts, and thus the counts preferred for population trend analyses, are aerial survey counts made from photographs. Counts made from skiffs or ships may be very accurate for small numbers of sea lions but imprecise for large groups. Visual estimates made from the air are best used as qualitative not quantitative data.

4. In general, this database includes counts of non-pup (adult and juvenile) Steller sea lions. This means that counts made during the breeding season (June and July) do not include newborn pups. After pups undergo their first molt in the fall or early winter, however, they are the same color as older sea lions and they are difficult or impossible to distinguish from juveniles. For this reason, counts made outside of the breeding season do include pups of the year that are 4 to 12 months old.

5. A zero in the COUNT field means the site was surveyed and no sea lions were present. If a site was not surveyed in a given year it is not included in the database; there are no records with the COUNT field blank.

6. Throughout the database "99" indicates that a day, month, platform, or source is unknown.

7. There are blanks in the COMMENT field. This may cause problems when end users import the ASCII text file into their preferred software format.

8. Site names are not consistent throughout the database. Surveys prior to 1990 frequently combined separate haul-out sites on an island into a single count, whereas more recent surveys usually list sites separately (e.g., Agattu versus Agattu/Cape Sabak and Agattu/Gillon Point). Also, the NMML continues to refine the definition of individual sites and occasionally adds new sites.