

ALASKA REGIONAL SCIENTIFIC REVIEW GROUP

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November 16, 2007

Dr. Bill Hogarth
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Room 14564
Silver Spring, MD 20910

11-21-07 10:10:13 ROVD

Dear Dr. Hogarth:

The Alaska Scientific Review Group (AKSRG), one of three advisory groups created by the 1994 amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, is charged with advising the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the assessment and status of marine mammal stocks. From our last meeting in January we have three recommendations for the NMFS. Our intent is to support the agency's mission by bringing to your attention issues that have not been addressed or that have received inadequate attention. We are also writing to commend you and your staff for your ongoing efforts that support good science, conservation, and management of marine mammals.

We recommend that:

(1) The NMFS Office of Protected Resources annually compile reports of mortalities of and serious injuries to marine mammals that occur during marine mammal research activities and provide those data to NMFS Regional Offices for inclusion in the Stock Assessment Reports. The data should include all state, federal, and other research activities.

(2) The NMFS should establish a system to collect and report incidences of mortalities and serious injuries of marine mammals that result from fisheries research (e.g., the Prince William Sound humpback whale that was entangled and died during

experimental fishing), and this information needs to be in the Stock Assessment Reports. State, federal, and any other types of research should be reported.

(3) The NMFS should take steps to identify the sources of fishing gear involved in strandings and entanglements whenever possible. Such information can help identify problem areas and possibly lead to take reductions in specific fisheries.

During our meeting, Dr. Peter Boveng (NMML) provided an update on the status of their work on harbor seals. We commend Dr. Boveng and his NMML team for evaluating new survey and analytical designs for monitoring harbor seals in Alaska. We support their efforts to ensure that survey data and metadata are archived and shared to maximize their utility and longevity.

The Alaska SRG has long felt that there is much to be done to improve our cataloging of seriously injured marine mammals. We were, thus, pleased to learn that the Serious Injury Technical Workshop was held in September. We look forward to learning about and applying information from the workshop.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Mathews". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Elizabeth A. Mathews, AKSRG Chair

cc: John Bengtson, NMFS; Kaja Brix, NMFS