

**NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS  
CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

28 September 2010

Ms. T. 'Aulani Wilhelm  
Reserve Superintendent, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands  
Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve  
6600 Kalaniana'ole Highway, Suite 300  
Honolulu, HI 96825

Dear Ms. Wilhelm:

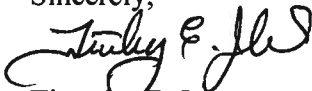
At the 6 January 2010 meeting, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council (RAC) heard presentations given by Frank Parrish, Charles Littnan, and Lloyd Lowry for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM). According to Dr. Littnan's presentation, the monk seal population is declining by 4.5 % each year and is less than ½ of what it was in 1996/97. Apparently one of the reasons for the decline is increased predation by sharks on young seals at French Frigate Shoals and scientists are urging the culling of some of those sharks to decrease the predation.

Concerned about the continuing decline of the Hawaiian monk seal and supportive of ongoing research and efforts that might lead to the recovery of this species, the RAC discussed options that might help stop the decline of the Hawaiian monk seal population. However, because RAC members had not yet had a chance to consult with their constituents regarding their position on the culling of sharks as a management method, they felt they could not take a position on that method.

However the RAC recommends that priority be given to research and management activities that address the causes of mortality in the Hawaiian monk seal population, which should include assessments of the individual and cumulative impacts (risks) to the seals by research and management actions. Impact monitoring protocols and appropriate safeguards should be implemented in all phases of any activity.

The RAC further recommends that NOAA take those measures found to be necessary to restore this rare and unique species to a population level at which the Hawaiian monk seal no longer needs to be listed as an endangered species.

Sincerely,



Timothy E. Johns  
Northwestern Hawaiian Islands  
Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve  
Advisory Council Chair