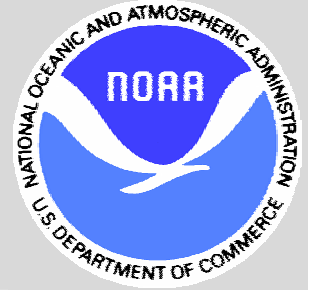


# Steller Sea Lion and Northern Fur Seal Research

## Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement



## NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service April 2007

This newsletter is the fourth and final in a series of newsletters regarding the Steller Sea Lion (SSL) and Northern Fur Seal (NFS) Research Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). Since distribution of the third newsletter in February 2007, the Draft PEIS was completed and distributed and public comments were reviewed and incorporated. All four newsletters, the Draft PEIS, and related documents can be found on the project website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/steller.htm>.

### Overview

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has prepared a Final PEIS for SSL and NFS Research. This newsletter provides information on distribution of the Draft PEIS, the comments received on the Draft PEIS, the distribution of the Final PEIS, and issuance of the Record of Decision.

### Distribution of the Draft PEIS

A copy of the Draft PEIS was sent to everyone on the project mailing list on February 16, 2007. The document was posted on the project website at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/steller.htm> and copies were made available at libraries in Anchorage, Juneau, and Seward, AK; Seattle, WA; Washington, DC; and Silver Spring, MD.

### Public Comments

Public participation was essential to the development of the Final PEIS. The public was provided a 45-day review period from February 16 to April 2, 2007 to review and comment on the Draft PEIS. During that time, three public hearings were held to provide additional opportunities for public comment on March 13, 15, and 18 in Silver Spring, MD; Seattle, WA; and Anchorage, AK, respectively.

During the public comment period, NMFS received 200 comments from the public and agencies. Comments were received via the U.S. mail, fax, e-mail, and verbally at public meetings. The comments were categorized under issue topics that are based on: 1) the factors of analysis that NMFS is required to address in preparing an EIS, and 2) additional issues raised by the public, both during scoping and review of the Draft PEIS. Each comment was carefully reviewed, categorized by major theme, and entered into a scoping comments database to facilitate retrieval and tracking. A Comment Analysis Report was prepared and will be included in Appendix C of the Final PEIS.

Some comments pointed out perceived shortcomings in the Draft PEIS and suggested changes or clarifications. These comments were helpful in making improvements to the Final PEIS.

### NMFS Preferred Alternative

NMFS has chosen Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative in the Final PEIS. The approach outlined in Alternative 4 allows the agency to fully implement the recommendations in the species' conservation and recovery plans. Full implementation of the plans would lead to a better understanding of these species, well-informed management decisions, and improved prospect of recovery.

### Issuance of the Final PEIS

After analyzing public comments received on the Draft PEIS, NMFS made revisions to the document and has prepared the Final PEIS for public release. A copy of the Final PEIS will be sent to everyone on the project mailing list in mid-May 2007. The document will also be posted on the project website at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/steller.htm>.

Additionally, copies will be available for public review at the following libraries:

Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (ARLIS) and Z.J. Loussac Public Library Anchorage, AK	Downtown and Valley branches of the Juneau Public Library Juneau, AK	Seward Community Library Seward, AK
NOAA Seattle Regional Library Seattle, WA	Seattle Public Library – Central Library Seattle, WA	The Library of Congress Washington, DC
Montgomery County Public Library – Silver Spring Branch Silver Spring, MD		

## Record of Decision

The Final PEIS will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency, which will publish a notice in the *Federal Register*. NMFS is required to wait 30 days from the date of this notice before a Record of Decision (ROD) is signed or the selected alternative can be implemented. At the end of this 30-day “cooling off” period NMFS will prepare a ROD identifying the selected alternative and any alternatives that were considered environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2). The ROD will outline the plan for implementation of the federal actions that were addressed in the Final PEIS, including any mitigation and monitoring requirements deemed appropriate. The ROD will be posted on the project website at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/steller.htm>.

Written comments on the Final PEIS should be directed to NMFS (see Contact Information). Please note that NMFS is not required to respond to any comments received as a result of issuance of the Final PEIS. However, comments will be reviewed and considered for their impact on issuance of a ROD.

### **Contact Information:**

Please direct comments about the Final PEIS to:

Permits, Conservation and Education Division (F/PR1)  
Office of Protected Resources  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Attention: Mike Payne  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226

Phone: 301-713-2289

Fax: 301-427-2583

Email: [ssleis.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:ssleis.comments@noaa.gov)

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