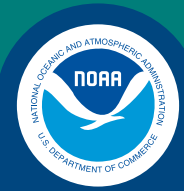


Hawaiian Monk Seal PEIS



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

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Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

This is a revised version of Newsletter #2 for the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). The revision was made to clarify text on page 2 describing the proposed alternatives evaluated in the PEIS.

This newsletter is the second in a series of newsletters regarding the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions PEIS. Since distribution of the first newsletter in October 2010, the Draft PEIS was completed and is currently available for public review and comment. Newsletters and the Draft PEIS can be found on the project website at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/hawaiianmonkseal.htm>. The purpose of this newsletter is to announce the availability of the Draft PEIS and to invite you to participate in the formal public hearings and open house to provide feedback on the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions PEIS. This newsletter also provides a summary of alternatives considered in the document and guidance for providing comments.

Availability of Draft PEIS and Public Hearings Announced

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) Pacific Islands Regional Office is preparing a PEIS to assess the impacts of implementing specific research and management actions and administering the associated research and enhancement program for Hawaiian monk seals (*Monachus schauinslandi*) in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI).

The Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register on August 19, 2011, which began the official 60-day public comment period for this PEIS. The Draft PEIS public comment period is a part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that invites affected and interested people, agencies, and groups to provide comments on the PEIS. The Draft PEIS public comment period deadline is October 17, 2011. The public hearings schedule is presented on page 4 of this newsletter.

PEIS Development

Public scoping conducted in October and November 2010 provided NOAA Fisheries with insight about community perspectives on Hawaiian monk seals and the proposed action. The information shared during scoping helped shape the alternatives considered in the PEIS as well as issues that were analyzed. After the scoping period ended, the PEIS project team evaluated the feasibility of the shared ideas and finalized a reasonable range of alternatives for analysis in the PEIS. Summaries of the four alternatives evaluated, as well as those eliminated, are presented here. For a complete description of alternatives, please see Chapter 2 of the Draft PEIS.



Alternative 1: Status Quo. Under the Status Quo Alternative, the current NOAA Fisheries Research and Enhancement Permit (permit number 10137) would continue until its expiration in 2014. Only those activities that have been permitted previously would be allowed to continue through the issuance of new permits or amendments.

Research and enhancement could include:

- Currently permitted translocation to aid nursing pups, mitigate shark predation or human interaction, or mitigate male aggression.
- Land-based surveys
- Temporary marking
- De-worming studies
- Disentanglement

Under Alternative 1 NOAA Fisheries:

- Would NOT conduct supplemental feeding.
- Would NOT allow new, or previously unpermitted, activities.
- Would NOT approve new permits or amendments if it were determined that issuance would bring more harm than good to Hawaiian monk seals (or more specifically, exceed ESA jeopardy or adverse modification thresholds).

Alternative 2: No Action (no new permits authorized).

The No Action Alternative would not allow new permits or amendments to be issued after the current permit (permit number 10137) expires.

Research and enhancement could include:

- Hawaiian monk seal research and enhancement activities would continue until the existing permit expires in 2014.

Under Alternative 2 NOAA Fisheries:

- Would NOT conduct research and enhancement activities requiring a permit on Hawaiian monk seals after 2014.
- Would NOT achieve the objectives of the Monk Seal Recovery Plan after 2014.

Alternative 3: Limited Translocation. Alternative 3 would incorporate all currently permitted activities as well as some new research and enhancement activities not currently permitted.

Research and enhancement could include:

- Expanded population surveys using new tools (such as remote cameras, and unmanned remotely operated aircraft).
- Vaccination studies and potentially using vaccines that could mitigate infectious disease.
- De-worming to improve juvenile Hawaiian monk seal survival.
- Moving seals of any age past weaning with unmanageable human interactions from the MHI to NWHI.
- Moving seals age 3 years and older from the MHI to NWHI to examine their survival.
- Implementing a two-stage translocation program where weaned pups are taken from areas of lower survival to areas of higher survival (excluding from the NWHI to the MHI). Translocated seals could be returned to their birth location or nearest appropriate site at age 3 years and older.
- Supplement monk seal diet using feeding stations in NWHI locations where seals are released after being cared for in captivity.
- Research to develop techniques for modifying undesirable Hawaiian monk seal behavior (referred to as behavior modification) related to interactions with humans and fishing gear in the MHI. If proven effective by research, these techniques would be implemented.
- Using drugs to alter aggressive male monk seal behavior.

Under Alternative 3 NOAA Fisheries:

- Would NOT translocate Hawaiian monk seals from the NWHI to the MHI.





Alternative 4: Enhanced Implementation (Preferred Alternative). The Enhanced Implementation Alternative includes the range of actions considered most promising to prevent the extinction of Hawaiian monk seals. This alternative covers a very broad and ambitious research and enhancement program, including research on population biology, ecology, health studies, foraging research, and activities designed to mitigate existing and emerging threats to the species. Full implementation of this alternative would require more funding and additional support from new and existing partners in monk seal recovery.

Research and enhancement could include:

- All activities included in Alternative 3.
- Temporary translocation of weaned pups from the NWHI to the MHI. At age 3 years, surviving seals that had been translocated to the MHI would be returned to the NWHI.

Alternatives Not Carried Forward for Analysis

Two alternatives were considered that were not carried forward for analysis in this PEIS including:

- To reduce populations of large predatory fish in the NWHI (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument) as a way to increase survival of Hawaiian monk seals.
- To construct a research facility or aquarium for breeding, rearing, and feeding monk seals in the NWHI.

Neither of these alternatives were considered reasonable because they lacked sufficient information or were infeasible due to cost or logistics.

Availability of the Draft PEIS

The Draft PEIS may be viewed online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/hawaiianmonkseal.htm>. Paper copies of the Draft PEIS are available for review at the following public libraries:

- Hawai'i State Library (808) 586-3615
478 South King Street
Honolulu, HI
- Moloka'i Public Library (808) 553-1765
15 Ala Malama Avenue

Kaunakakai, Moloka'i

- Hilo Public Library (808) 933-8888
300 Waianuenue Aveune
Hilo, HI (808) 933-8888
- Kihei Public Library (808) 875-6833
35 Waimahaihai Street
Kihei, HI
- Wailuku Public Library (808) 243-5766
251 High Street
Wailuku, HI
- Līhu'e Public Library (808) 241-3222
4344 Hardy Street
Līhu'e, HI
- Princeville Public Library (808) 826-4310
4343 Emmalani Drive
Princeville, HI

How Can I Participate in the Process?

Public Hearing and Open House

The purpose of the public hearings is to provide an opportunity for you to offer comments on the Draft PEIS. Public hearings will be held September 12 through 17, 2011.

The public hearings will begin with an open house session, which will allow the public to view project information and speak with members of the project team in preparation for verbal testimony. A formal public hearing will follow, and individuals and groups can sign up to provide testimony beginning 30 minutes prior to and during a hearing.



Each individual or group must sign up in person to testify, and will have one opportunity to testify as an individual and one opportunity to testify as a group. Public hearings will continue until the end time listed. If people who have signed up have not had an opportunity to testify by the end time of the hearing, the hearing officer may announce the continuation of the hearing. All open houses will be identical in content and all public hearings will follow the same protocol to provide equal opportunity to those who attend.

These hearings are accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Rachel Sprague, (808) 944-2200 (phone) or (808) 973-2941 (fax), at least 5 days before the scheduled hearing date.

Other Ways to Participate

Email comments to: monkseal@noaa.gov

Mail comments to:

NOAA Fisheries
Office of Protected Resources, Pacific Islands Regional Office
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Ste. 1110
Honolulu, HI 96814

Check updates on our website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/hawaiianmonkseal.htm>

Town Hall Meetings

Prior to the public hearings, NOAA Fisheries will hold informal “town hall” meetings to discuss the Draft PEIS, answer questions, and promote dialogue and information sharing. Please note that these are informational meetings; public comment for the record will not be taken at these meetings. For information about providing public comment for the record, please see the preceding section. Please visit the following website to view the town hall meeting schedule: http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_hms_peis_townhall_schedule.html.

Next Steps

After analyzing public comments received on the Draft PEIS, NOAA Fisheries will make revisions to the document and prepare the Final PEIS. The Final PEIS will incorporate necessary changes as well as present responses to the substantive comments received.

This step will also include public notice of the availability of the Final PEIS, distribution of the document, and a 30-day comment period. After submittal of the Final PEIS, NOAA Fisheries will prepare a Record of Decision (ROD) to present the chosen course of action (40 CFR 1505.2). The ROD will discuss all mitigation measures included in the Final PEIS. NOAA Fisheries anticipates the ROD will be published in winter 2012.

Public Hearing Schedule

Honolulu, O’ahu
Monday, September 12, 2011
Central Union Church
1660 South Beretania St.

Open House: 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm
Public Hearing: 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Kaunakakai, Moloka’i
Tuesday, September 13, 2011
Hale Mahaolu Home Pemehana
290 Kolapa Place

Open House: 6:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Public Hearing: 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Hilo, Hawai’i
Wednesday, September 14, 2011
Mokupāpapa Discovery Center
308 Kamehameha Avenue, Suite 109

Open House: 6:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Public Hearing: 6:30 pm - 9 pm

Kihei, Maui
Thursday, September 15, 2011
Kihei Community Recreation Center
303 East Lipoa Road

Open House: 6:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Public Hearing: 6:30 pm - 9 pm

Līhu’e, Kaua’i
Saturday, September 17, 2011
Wilcox Elementary School
4319 Hardy Street

Open House: 9:00 am - 9:30 am
Public Hearing: 9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Open House: 4:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Public Hearing: 4:30 pm - 7:00 pm