



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

August 30, 2019

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the Management of the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals on St. Paul Island, Alaska*.

This FSEIS is prepared pursuant to NEPA to assess the environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proceeding with changes to the management of the subsistence use on St. Paul Island, Alaska. The NMFS proposes to change the management of the subsistence use of the Eastern Pacific stock of northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) based on a petition from the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island (ACSPI), Tribal Government. NMFS has evaluated alternatives, which consider balancing the use of federal regulations and cooperative management with ACSPI to co-manage fur seal subsistence use. NMFS evaluated changes in the subsistence harvest range setting process, allowing a portion of the harvest to be comprised of male fur seal pups, hunting seals using firearms, accidental mortality of females, and shared management with ACSPI in the Co-Management Council. NMFS received comments on the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), and responded to those substantive comments in preparing the Final SEIS. Alternative 2 Option B is the Preferred Alternative, and it includes broad regulation of subsistence use under the Fur Seal Act. The Preferred Alternative also includes the Co-management Council to share specific decision-making between ACSPI and NMFS for management consistent with the requirements of Marine Mammal Protection Act to provide greater flexibility in subsistence use, conservation, and food security. This FSEIS supplements the 2005 Final Environmental Impact Statement for Setting the Annual Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals on the Pribilof Islands.

The FSEIS is available electronically on the NMFS Alaska Region website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/marine-mammal-protection/northern-fur-seal-subsistence-harvest-estimates-and-reports> or from www.regulations.gov and enter docket number "NOAA-NMFS-2015-0073" in the search bar. You may obtain a printed copy of the FSEIS from the Responsible Program Official identified below.

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received during the agency's 20 day comment period as a result of the issuance of the FSEIS. However, NOAA will review and consider comments received by September 26, 2019, for their impact on issuance of a record of decision (ROD). The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action on or after September 26, 2019. Written comments on the FSEIS may be submitted by mail or facsimile (fax) to the Responsible Program Official identified below or electronically to the www.regulations.gov portal.



Responsible Program Official:

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Web portal for electronic submission of comments: www.regulations.gov, enter docket number "NOAA-NMFS-2015-0073" in the search bar.

Sincerely,



James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Administrator, Alaska Region

for

Enclosure