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Commissioner

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Department of
Fish and Game

Division of Wildlife Conservation

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

State Applauds Decision Not to List Tufted Puffin under the Endangered Species Act

Dec. 2, 2020 (Juneau) – The State of Alaska is pleased with the “not warranted” finding issued today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS or Service), finding that listing the Tufted Puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not justified by the best available science. This finding is the culmination of a range-wide status review of the species, which was triggered by a 2014 petition from the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The Tufted Puffin is a colorful, medium-sized seabird that breeds in the coastal U.S. states and Canada from California north to Alaska, as well as in Russia and Japan. Citing threats such as a declining prey base, oil spills, and climate change, the petition focused on apparent declines in the contiguous U.S. or “Lower 48” population. The petitioners requested listing of the entire species if the contiguous U.S. population did not meet the definition of a Distinct Population Segment. The Service found that it did not and proceeded to evaluate listing the species across its range.

The majority of Tufted Puffins nest in Alaska. A listing under the ESA would have resulted in regulations that likely would have affected Alaska coastal communities, commercial fisheries, and tourism activities. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) helped collect, collate, and provide population and other data to the Service and reviewed the Service’s Species Status Assessment, which was the basis for their not warranted decision.

“The Service appropriately recognized that current scientific evidence shows that Tufted Puffin populations are and will continue to be widespread throughout their range in populations that are relatively abundant and healthy,” said Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner of ADF&G. “This species status review shows how threats and declines in a species in areas far from Alaska have the potential to affect our economy.”

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