

**FEDERAL AID
FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

STATE WILDLIFE GRANT (SWG)

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: T-1-19

PROJECT NR.: 1

WORK LOCATION: Juneau, Alaska

PROJECT DURATION: 20 September 2005 – 30 June 2006

PROJECT REPORTING PERIOD: 20 September 2005 – 30 June 2006

PROJECT TITLE: Marine Mammal Conservation Planning Coordination

Project Objectives:

Objective 1: Participate on marine mammal advisory committees and provide information to commissions for use in updates or revisions to marine mammal conservation plans.

Job/Activity a: Serve on advisory committees and chair the Steller sea lion Recovery Team to provide information on the biology and ecology of sea lions and to cooperatively revise the National Marine Fisheries Service's Recovery Plan for the Steller Sea Lion.

Job/Activity b: Serve on advisory committees to provide information on the biology and ecology of sea lions and information about marine mammal/fish interactions and coexistence and help the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council Steller sea lion mitigation committee develop revised Reasonable and Prudent Alternative plans to implement fisheries.

Job/Activity c: Provide information and advise the ADF&G Commissioner's staff on the Marine Mammal Protection Act reauthorization, ESA listed Southwest stock of sea otters, new proposals for state-water fisheries in Steller sea lion critical habitat, marine mammal observer program, and list of fisheries.

Job/Activity d: Serve on the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee and provide information on the biology and ecology of beluga whales, and assist in revision of the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Conservation Plan and other beluga whale plans that may be developed.

Job/Activity e: Provide information on harbor seal conservation and management issues to various groups and commissions; e.g., Alaska Scientific Review Group, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission, and contribute to developing a research plan for harbor seals in Alaska.

Job/Activity f: Monitor and provide input into other marine mammal programs, especially those of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Alaska, and Alaska SeaLife Center, and assist in the selection and direction of research and monitoring for the Gulf Ecosystem Monitoring Program in the Gulf of Alaska.

Objective 2: Supervise and coordinate marine mammal staff in development of ADF&G research and contributing to development of state wildlife conservation plans.

Job/Activity a: Supervise one Wildlife Biologist IV, two Wildlife Biologist IIIs, and a Biometrician III that lead marine mammal research programs giving guidance on research objectives, methods, and analyses and helping them to develop annual and multi-year research plans for the marine mammal program.

Job/Activity b: Provide information on marine mammal conservation and management issues for ADF&G staff developing the state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan.

Summary of Project Accomplishments for entire project:

1. a. Chaired one meeting of the Steller Sea Lion (SSL) Recovery Team in which the revised draft recovery plan for the eastern and western populations of SSL was completed. Additionally, met with a subgroup of the Team twice to discuss and develop the recovery criteria for the revised plan. Assisted in further development of the new Ice Seal Committee, helping identify research and management priorities in a draft research plan. Attended the first meeting of the Recovery Team for sea otters, and presented an overview of the SSL recovery process. Served on the 'Marine Mammal Expert Group' that provided information needed to assess the current status of marine mammals impacted by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill.
1. b. Represented the SSL Recovery Team in discussions on possible interactions between SSLs and fisheries. Attended 1 meeting held by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) SSL Mitigation Committee, specifically to present and discuss the revised draft recovery plan.
1. c. Prepared documents for the ADF&G Commissioner's office on priority issues for the State regarding reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, specifically the 'Zero Mortality Rate Goal'. Also briefed or prepared documents for Commissioner's office staff on issues related to (1) right whale critical habitat, (2) the proposed ESA listing of polar bears, (3) the oil spill from the Selendang Ayu, and (4) proposed oil and gas leases.
1. d. Participated in the annual meeting of the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee, and discussed recent population assessment results, harvest monitoring, and development of research priorities. Reviewed and provided comment on new information on the population structure and lack of recovery of the Cook Inlet stock of beluga whales.
1. e. Met with members of the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission (ANHSC), NMFS, and the Alaska SeaLife Center to revise the Alaska Harbor Seal Research Plan and developed a revised joint proposal for cooperative research. Attended the annual meeting of the Alaska Scientific Review Group, to review and discuss the status of marine mammals in Alaska.
1. f. Attended the 16th Biennial meeting of the Society for Marine Mammalogy, and made a presentation on the population decline of harbor seals in the Aleutian Islands. Reviewed research proposals for the NPRB, and manuscripts submitted for publication to the Journals Marine Mammal Science and Ecological Applications. No involvement with the Gulf Ecosystem Monitoring Program, because the Program was not developed further during project period.

2. a. Supervised the three program leaders (two Wildlife Biologist IIIs and one Wildlife Physiologist III) of the principal marine mammal programs of ADF&G, and a Biometrician III, which including the review of research priorities, improvements in administrative support, and acquisition of funding.
2. b. No direct involvement with the ADF&G Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), because it was completed prior to the reporting period. Discussed project ideas and reviewed proposals for marine mammals under the CWCS.

Project Costs:

Total costs: Federal share \$41,987.65 + state share \$13,995.88 = total cost \$ 55,983.53

Prepared By: Robert Small

Date: September 6, 2006