

## **Pinniped research needs in Prince William Sound**

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There are two prominent resident pinnipeds in Prince William Sound: Steller sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) and the harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina richardsi*). Both species utilize all of the Sound during the entire year. Sea lions are seasonally more abundant in late winter through mid-summer. Sea lions which are born at rookeries in the northern Kodiak and southern Kenai areas utilize Prince William Sound as juveniles. Harbor seal numbers may fluctuate, with some animals moving from the Sound proper to the Copper River Delta in the spring. Both harbor seal and sea lion populations are declining. Sea lions have declined from the Kenai to the western Aleutian Islands by 86% since 1960 while harbor seals declined by 48% in Prince William Sound alone between 1984 and 1988. Oil spill assessment projects on both of these pinnipeds are attempting to measure population changes due to the oil spill and reproductive and productivity changes. Tissues will be analyzed for hydrocarbon contamination and histological damage.

Suggested research needs for sea lions are: continue to monitor population in Prince William Sound for decline, investigate diseases, determine reproductive parameters, investigate food habits, monitor body condition, and monitor incidental take in conjunction with fisheries.

Suggested research needs for harbor seals are: continue to monitor population status, determine if changes have occurred in growth and condition, food habits, diseases and environmental contaminants, and investigate movements of seals from Prince William Sound to the Copper River Delta as well as investigate movements within Prince William Sound. Also, incidental take of harbor seals should be monitored.

**Research for the 1990's  
in Prince William Sound  
and the Copper River Delta**

Proceedings of a 2-day conference held May 1-3, 1990  
at the Masonic Hall in Cordova, Alaska

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