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To: Randy Fisher  
From: Brad Gilman  
Re: Update on Seals and Sea Lions  
Date: January 18, 2016

The Commission adopted a resolution in the August meeting requesting staff to provide updates on the status of California and Steller sea lions, and harbor seals. The following is a summary of the most recent information—

**California Sea Lions**

The National Marine Mammal Laboratory and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center are currently collaborating on an Optimum Sustainable Population (“OSP”) analysis for the California sea lion population. The draft analysis will be released at some point this Spring and will be forwarded to NOAA’s Scientific Review Group (“SRG”). The SRG will make a final recommendation on the OSP Determination in its February, 2017 meeting for inclusion into the California Sea Lion Stock Assessment Report.

**Puget Sound Harbor Seals**

NOAA, the State of Washington, and the Navy have collaborated on recent population surveys in the Puget Sound region. NMFS believes that scientific evidence exists to divide the current population into three distinct population segments (“DPS”). Establishing the geographic delineation lines for the three DPS is before the NOAA SRG this February. Once the SRG has made a final geographic delineation determination, the National Marine Mammal Laboratory and the State of Washington will move forward with an analysis of each of the three harbor seal populations.

## **Steller Sea Lions**

The NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center is continuing to conduct surveys to re-sight branded animals and develop population estimates on both the eastern and western Distinct Population Segments of Steller sea lions. Current information will be submitted to the Scientific Review Group for comment in February, 2016.

The agency is also working on a revision of the critical habitat designation for the western DPS of Stellers. NMFS last designated critical habitat for Stellers in 1993. NMFS is seeking to revise the designation to take into account the de-listing of the eastern DPS and account for the scientific data gathered since 1993. A critical habitat designation will not be provided only for the eastern DPS due to the de-listing. There will be a proposed rule issued for public comment at some point in 2016.