



MAR 12 2014

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) *Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions*.

The NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service is the Federal agency responsible for management, conservation, and recovery of Hawaiian monk seals (*Monachus schauinslandi*) under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Hawaiian monk seal is the most endangered pinniped species in U.S. waters and the second most endangered pinniped in the world. Only about 1,200 individuals remain and the population is declining.

This Final PEIS is prepared pursuant to NEPA to assess the environmental impacts associated with NOAA proceeding with funding, permitting, and conducting research and enhancement activities identified in the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Plan with the goal of conserving and recovering the species. This Final PEIS provides decision-makers and the public with an evaluation of the environmental, social, and economic effects of the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action. The agency's Preferred Alternative is Alternative 3 (Limited Translocation). Alternative 3 encompasses a broad scope of activities including but not limited to Hawaiian monk seal population monitoring, health and foraging research, mitigating entanglement in marine debris, mitigating adult male aggression, vaccinating seals to prevent or slow the spread of infectious disease outbreaks, developing behavioral modification techniques to mitigate undesirable human-seal interactions, and conducting two-stage translocations to improve juvenile survival. Alternative 3 does not include any translocation option that would involve taking weaned pups born in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and releasing them in the main Hawaiian Islands.

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received as a result of issuance of the Final PEIS. However, comments will be reviewed and considered for their impact on issuance of a record of decision (ROD). Please send comments to the responsible official identified below. The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action on or after May 12, 2014.

Responsible Official: Eileen Sobeck
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National Marine Fisheries Service
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Sincerely,


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NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure



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