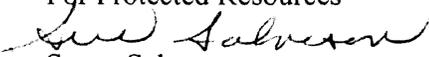




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

June 23, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: Kaja Brix
Assistant Regional Administrator
For Protected Resources

FROM: 
Susan Salveson
Assistant Regional Administrator
For Sustainable Fisheries

SUBJECT: Reinitiation of Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7
Consultation for the Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plans

This memorandum responds to your June 21, 2006, memorandum regarding reinitiation of ESA Section 7 formal consultation on the effects of the Alaska groundfish fisheries on ESA-listed cetaceans, sea turtles, Steller sea lions, and proposed and designated critical habitats. We acknowledge your request to extend the consultation period into late 2007, but we believe a better approach at this time would be to continue to plan for completion of the consultation in August 2007. If we find that more time is required to coordinate between our divisions and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's process for developing proposed changes to Steller Sea lion conservation measures, we can consult with the Council to adjust the current schedule.

Based on your explanation in the June 21, 2006, memorandum regarding the potential effects on fin and North Pacific right whales, we have determined that the Alaska groundfish fisheries are not likely to adversely affect either of these whale species. We look forward to consulting with you on the remaining ESA-listed species that may be adversely affected by the Alaska groundfish fisheries: eastern and western distinct population segments of Steller sea lions and their designated critical habitat, sperm whales, and humpback whales.

