



WHAT'S NEW?

Center for Independent Experts Review Panel Meeting Steller Sea Lion 2010 BiOp

AFSC

Seattle, Washington

August 1-2, 2010

Purpose of the Meeting

Federal Register Notice June 11, 2012

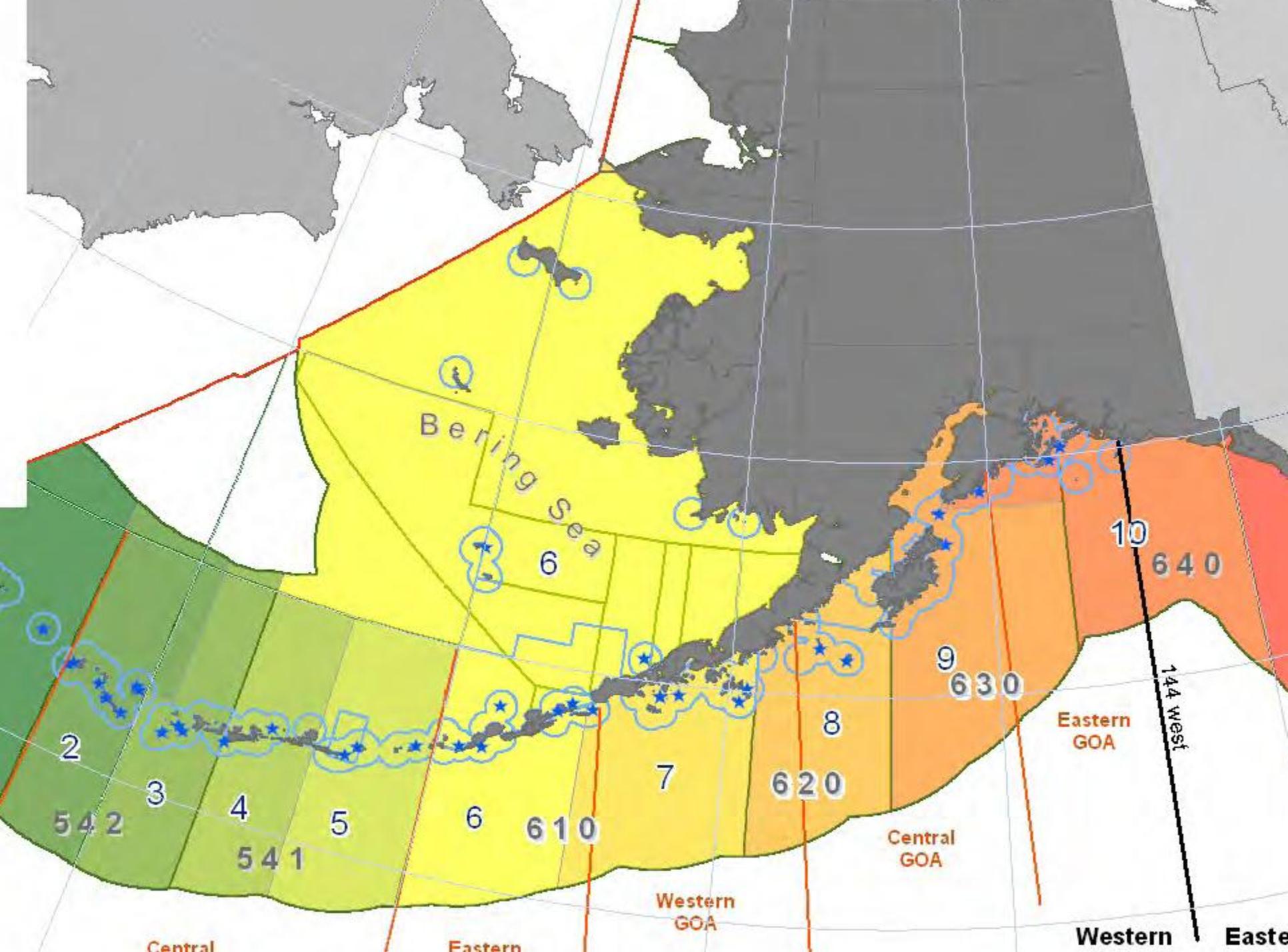
Review by CIE of NMFS 9/10 BiOp of relevant scientific information that has become available **since** NMFS issued the Final BiOp



Image from Wikipedia

Background

- # Status of Steller sea lions (SSL) in the Western Bering Sea and Aleutians has declined and this population is listed as Endangered.**
- # Biological Opinion issued November 2010.**
- # NMFS is taking management measures to reverse the decline and to recover populations.**
- # Are these management measures based on the Best Available Science? If not, why not?**



CIE Review

- **Peer review contracted by NOAA through the Center of Independent Experts (CIE)**
- **CIE is engaged to ensure the quality, relevance, and independence of the reviews.**
- **CIE selects three experts to perform a peer review --- We have three experts appointed:**

Kevin Stokes, Wellington, New Zealand

Don Bowen, Bedford Institute of Oceanography

**Brent Steward, Hubbs-Sea World Research
Institute**

What/Who is the CIE?

- **Since 1998, the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) an independent peer review program, has conducted over 150 peer reviews of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) assessments and products. The CIE peer review process has contributed to NMFS' efforts in improving the reliability and integrity of the agency's scientific information, and it is expected that NMFS' use of the CIE will increase in the future.**



Thanks to NOAA NMML Pictures

Terms of Reference

The CIE review consists of two elements:

- A desk review of the Final BiOp including information available to NMFS through 9/3/10. (Wouldn't we like to know what the CIE experts found?)
- **CIE expert panel review of information of new information that became available subsequent to the Final BiOp. [Why we're here]**
- Final report expected September 7, 2012

Process – Completed So Far

Already the peer reviewers have made conclusions based on the 2010 BiOp and information available then with regard to:

- A. Are the findings contradicted by any scientific information available as of Sept. 3, 2010?**
- B. Reviewers shall also assess whether factors other than fishing are negatively affecting SSL population status**

Process – WHY WE'RE HERE

- ReExamine the Final BiOp and **new** information to be included in the scientific record.
- Revisit the conclusions of the BiOp national report in light of **new** information regarding nutritional stress, its impact, if any, on survival and recovery of the SSL, including magnitude and direction of change.

Process – WHY WE'RE HERE

- **Comment on the Reasonable Prudent Alternative and its availability to test the response of fisheries and SSL to fisheries closures – especially to perform an adaptive experiment.**
- **In addition, evaluate metrics from the BiOp, e.g., trends in SSL abundance, biomass of prey species, etc. and to suggest other metrics ensuring that the efficacy of actions for groundfish do not adversely affect SSL survival and recovery of western distinct population segment of the SSL.**

Standard for Peer Review

- Assessment under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act:
- Does the action **jeopardize** the continued existence of the listed species, i.e., appreciably reduce the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers or distribution of the species
- Does the action destroy or **adversely modify** critical habitat, i.e., diminish the conservation value of the habitat

Standard for Peer Review

Endangered Species Act section 7 consultation process is not required to employ a “prove-disprove” approach or evaluate statistical significance of findings [but it can].

Instead it may evaluate the best available information in a “weight of evidence” approach.

NMFS may need to draw on inferences and is expected by law/regulation to provide the benefit of the doubt to listed species. This may differ from traditional scientific analyses.



Photo by Carolyn Kurle, 2001, NMML

Moderator Selection

NOAA: “We are looking for someone who is independent from, but knowledgeable of, fisheries management and Steller sea lions, and who has the skills to run this public meeting.”

They twisted my arm – how could I resist!?

What you can expect from the Moderator

I'll do my best to:

- Use time effectively and keep to the time schedule**
- Provide adequate opportunity for CIE presenter interactions**
- Reinforce the focus on new scientific information since September 2010**

Let's get started!