



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

AUG 22 2008

Ms. Beth Mathews
Chair, Alaska Regional Scientific
Review Group
University of Alaska Southeast
Natural Sciences Department
11120 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Ms. Mathews:

Thank you for your letter transmitting recommendations of the Alaska Regional Scientific Review Group regarding the use of the best available information to identify stock structure of harbor seals in Alaska.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has used a wide range of information, including molecular genetics, to identify stocks of marine mammals and will continue to do so in the future. NMFS also continues to support the co-management process for making management decisions that may affect subsistence use of marine mammals by Alaska Natives. At the most recent meeting of the co-management committee, members made substantial progress toward updating the stock structure of harbor seals in Alaska. I anticipate additional progress in the future.

I appreciate your interest in the conservation of marine mammals in Alaska, and value the continued scientific advice from the Alaska and other regional scientific review groups.

Sincerely,

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Acting Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries



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FOR FISHERIES

