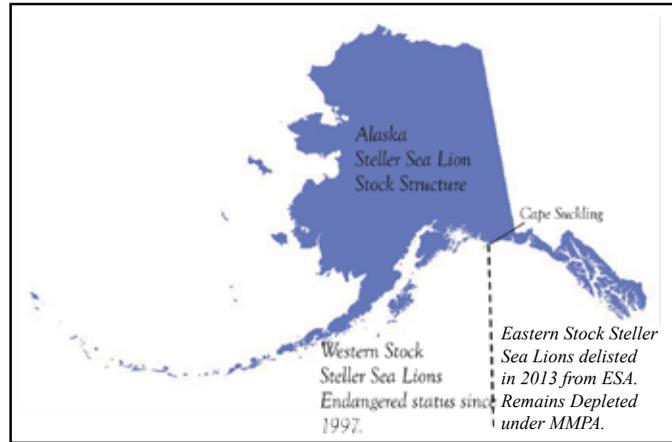


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS : ALASKA NATIVE SUBSISTENCE, STELLER SEA LIONS AND THE ESA

JUNE 2015

How are Steller sea lion populations doing in Alaska?

Two populations are currently recognized for Steller sea lions. Both were listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Western population is listed as endangered, but in 2013 the Eastern population was delisted due to consistent population increases. It still is considered Depleted under the MMPA while post-delisting monitoring occurs.



Recent surveys of the Western stock indicate a stable population from since 2000. However it remains significantly reduced from population levels in the 1960's/1970's. The decline continued at a slower rate during the 1990's. Within the Western population, different subregions show different trends since 2000:

- Sea lions in the Eastern and Western Gulf of Alaska show the greatest increases per year, approximately +5% and +4% respectively
- Sea lions numbers in the Eastern Aleutians and Central Gulf of Alaska have increased between 2-3% per year
- The Central and Western Aleutians have both seen yearly declines, with the most severe declines in the Western Aleutians (~ 8.5% per year). The causes of these declines is unknown.

It is estimated that there is a minimum of more than 46,000 sea lions in the Western population, and at least 59,000 sea lions in the Eastern population, with at least 36,500 Steller sea lions in U.S. waters.

Can I still hunt sea lion even though they are ESA listed?

Yes. Like the MMPA, the ESA has an Alaska Native exemption (Section 10(e)) that provides for harvest of a listed species for subsistence, provided that the take is not wasteful. The ESA listed status does not presently alter subsistence rights, since it has not been shown that coastal Alaska Native subsistence take is "materially and negatively" affecting the population.

However, because conservation concerns exist for both populations, and especially with reduced population levels in the Western stock, any harvests must be done wisely. Some tribes exercise harvest reporting methods, set biosampling priorities, and may have

local Steller sea lion harvest time and/or areas defined. Prior to hunting it is respectful to know if any tribal priorities exist. Likewise, it is also important to know if any firearm restrictions are in place.

Do I need a permit or hunting license from the State of Alaska or the Federal Government?

There are no state or federal permit or license requirements for Alaska Native marine mammal hunters. Some tribes may have developed management plans, regulations/ordinances or permitting programs. We suggest that hunters check with the local tribe.

Is there a hunting season or limits on sea lion subsistence?

No. There are no hunting seasons nor bag limits for take of Steller sea lions for coastal Alaska Native subsistence so long as such practices do not contribute to the demise of species, are not done in a wasteful manner and are consistent with the ESA and MMPA provisions.

Secretarial Order 3225, Endangered Species Act and Subsistence Uses in Alaska (Supplemental to Sec. Order 3206) was signed on January 19, 2001 in recognition that an ESA listed species may be important for Alaska Native subsistence. It establishes a consultation framework and reiterates the government-to-government requirements for ESA implementation in Alaska. Government-to-government consultation with NMFS is guaranteed if hunting seasons or quotas are deemed necessary and/or proposed by NMFS.

Do I need to have my sea lion tagged or certified?

No, NMFS does not require sea lion parts from animals taken for subsistence to be tagged or certified. The Marking, Tagging and Reporting Program, otherwise known as the MTRP, is only for those species under jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (sea otter, walrus and polar bear). NMFS has no comparable program and does not require subsistence harvested marine mammal parts to be tagged, marked, registered or certified by the hunter.

Unaltered pelts, in the raw or tanned form, can be sold or traded only to other Alaska Natives or to registered agents for resale or transfer to Alaska Natives within Alaska. Unaltered pelts cannot be sold, given, loaned, traded nor transferred to non-natives.

