UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

MAY 13 2014

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures for Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FEIS).*

This FEIS is prepared pursuant to NEPA to assess the environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with NOAA proceeding with revisions to the Steller sea lion protection measures. NOAA listed the western distinct population segment of Steller sea lions as endangered under the Endangered Species Act and has designated critical habitat to protect haulout, rookery, and foraging locations throughout Alaska waters. This proposed action would implement management measures for the Aleutian Islands Atka mackerel, Pacific cod, and pollock fisheries that minimize the potential fishery impacts on Steller sea lions while minimizing economic impacts on the fisheries, to the extent practicable. These management measures would disperse fishing effort over time and area to minimize potential competition for important Steller sea lion prey species. The protection measures are focused on the fisheries that may affect Steller sea lions or their critical habitat in the Aleutian Islands because that is where Steller sea lions are experiencing population declines.

The FEIS is available electronically on the NMFS Alaska Region website at http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/sslpm/eis/default.htm or from www.regulations.gov and enter docket number "NOAA-NMFS-2012-0013" in the search bar. A printed copy of the FEIS may be obtained from the Responsible Program Official identified below.

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received during the agency's 30 day comment period as a result of the issuance of the FEIS. However, NOAA will review and consider comments received by June 27, 2014, for their impact on issuance of a record of decision (ROD). The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action on or after November 1, 2014. Written comments on the FEIS may be submitted by mail or facsimile (fax) to the Responsible Program Official identified below or electronically to the www.regulations.gov portal.

Responsible Program Official:

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National Marine Fisheries Service
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www.regulations.gov, enter docket number
"NOAA-NMFS-2012-0013" in the search bar.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

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