



Marine Conservation Alliance

promoting sustainable fisheries to feed the world

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Adak Community Development Corporation

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Alaska Longline Co.

Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

Alaska Scallop Association

Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association

Akutan, Atka, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski, St. George

Arctic Storm Management Group

Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation

Aleknagik, Clark's Point, Dillingham, Egegik, Ekuak, Ekwok, King Salmon, Levelock, Manokotak, Naknek, Pilot Point, Fort Heiden, Portage Creek, South Naknek, Toziak, Twin Hills, Ugashik

Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

St. Paul

City of Unalaska

Coastal Villages Region Fund

Chefornak, Chevak, Esk, Goodnews Bay, Hopper Bay, Kipruk, Kongiganak, Kwigillingok, Mekoryuk, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Newtok, Nightmute, Oscarville, Platinum, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Toksook Bay, Tuntutuliak, Tununak

Glacier Fish Company

Groundfish Forum

High Seas Vessels

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Icicle Seafoods

International Seafoods of Alaska

North Pacific Seafoods

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

Brevig Mission, Diomedea, Elm, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Nome, Saint Michael, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, White Mountain

Trident

United Catcher Boats

Akutan Catcher Vessel Association
Mothership Fleet Cooperative
Northern Victor Fleet
Peter Pan Fleet Cooperative
Unalaska Co-op
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FV Arctic Wind, FV Caitlin Ann, FV Dona Marita, FV Pacific Prince

U.S. Seafoods

Waterfront Associates

Western Alaska Fisheries, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2012

MCA applauds portion of ruling in Steller sea lion case

Ruling viewed as victory for open and transparent fishery management process

The [Marine Conservation Alliance](#) (MCA) applauds a judge's ruling in the Steller Sea Lion lawsuit this week as a victory for those seeking a more open decision-making process in application of the Endangered Species Act. In his [ruling](#) Thursday, U.S. District Judge Timothy Burgess found that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by failing to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and provide the public with sufficient opportunity to comment when the agency determined additional fishery closures were required to protect endangered Steller sea lions.

"Although western Aleutian Islands fisheries involved in this lawsuit begin the season with fishing restrictions in place, we are pleased that the court acknowledged that there were flaws in the NMFS' process which should now be corrected," said [Merrick Burden](#), executive director of the Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA), a coalition of harvesters, processors and communities involved in Alaska Groundfish and crab fisheries.

The court deferred to the technical expertise of the federal agency in finding that it had properly applied Endangered Species Act standards in its determination that some of the

fisheries conducted in the Aleutian Islands region of Alaska could jeopardize the recovery of endangered Steller sea lions. The State of Alaska and affected fishing companies initiated legal action to halt additional fishery closures because endangered Steller sea lion populations overall have been increasing and are estimated to exceed 50,000 animals in the US and another



Judge rules on endangered Steller sea lion case.

Photo courtesy of U.S. FWS.

25,000 animals in Russia. The legal action challenged the scientific basis for the agency determination and the process used to make that decision.

With regard to the NEPA violation, Judge Burgess has indicated he will enter an injunction requiring NMFS to prepare an EIS in compliance with NEPA procedures, allow for public comment and provide meaningful responses to comments on the draft EIS. The court will set a deadline for that action. All parties in the case have until February 8, 2012 to file further briefs to address remedies in the case.

Considerable debate remains about the cause of the population decline, including predation by killer whales and nutritional stress caused by climate change or competition for prey with fisheries.

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For further information from plaintiffs in the case contact attorney Linda Larson at 206-292-2612.

About the Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA): MCA is a Juneau and Seattle-based coalition of seafood processors, harvesters, support industries, coastal communities and CDQ groups that are active in Alaska fisheries. More information at www.marineconservationalliance.org.