

Public Hearings

Joint Commerce-Interior ESA implementing regulations state that the Secretary shall promptly hold at least one public hearing if any person requests one within 45 days of publication of a proposed regulation to list a species or to designate critical habitat (see 50 CFR 424.16(c)(3)). In response to requests from various parties to hold public hearings in a number of locations in Alaska, we published a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing public hearings to be held in Anchorage and Barrow, AK (76 FR 9733, February 22, 2011). We are announcing a separate hearing in Nome, AK, to provide greater opportunity for public comment. We will accept oral and written comments on both the proposed rule for ringed seals and the proposed rule for bearded seals (75 FR 77496; December 10, 2010) during these hearings.

People wishing to make an oral statement for the record at a public hearing are encouraged to provide a written copy of their statement and present it to us at the hearing. In the event that attendance at the public hearings is large, the time allotted for oral statements may be limited. Oral and written statements receive equal consideration. There are no limits on the length of written comments submitted to us.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1533 *et seq.*

Dated: March 15, 2011.

James H. Lecky,

*Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 223**

RIN 0648-XZ58

Endangered and Threatened Species; Proposed Threatened Status for Distinct Population Segments of the Bearded Seal

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: On December 10, 2010, we, NMFS, published a proposed rule to list the Beringia and Okhotsk Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) of the

bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). As part of that proposal, we announced a public comment period to end on February 8, 2011, and then extended the comment period to March 25, 2011. NMFS has received requests for public hearings on this issue. In response, in a previous notice we announced public hearings to be held in Anchorage and Barrow, AK. In addition, in this notice NMFS is announcing a separate hearing that will be held in Nome, AK, to provide greater opportunity for public comment.

DATES: A hearing will be held on April 5, 2011, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in Nome, AK. Written comments must be received on or before March 25, 2011, or during the hearing in Nome.

ADDRESSES: The April 5, 2011, hearing will be held at the Mini-Convention Center, 409 River Street, Nome, AK.

Send written comments to Kaja Brix, Assistant Regional Administrator, Protected Resources Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. You may submit comments, identified by RIN 0648-XZ59, by any one of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.
- **Mail:** P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802.
- **Fax:** (907) 586-7557.
- **Hand delivery to the Federal Building:** 709 West 9th Street, Room 420A, Juneau, AK.

All comments received are a part of the public record. Comments will generally be posted without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

We will accept anonymous comments (enter N/A in the required fields, if you wish to remain anonymous). You may submit attachments to electronic comments in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

The proposed rule, status review report, and other materials relating to this proposal can be found on the Alaska Region Web site at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tamara Olson, NMFS Alaska Region, (907) 271-5006; Kaja Brix, NMFS Alaska Region, (907) 586-7235; or Marta Nammack, Office of Protected

Resources, Silver Spring, MD (301) 713-1401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

On December 10, 2010 (75 FR 77496), we published a proposed rule to list the Beringia and Okhotsk Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) of the bearded seal as threatened under the ESA. Based on the status of these DPSs, we also proposed protective regulations pursuant to section 4(d) of the ESA for these DPSs to include all of the prohibitions in section 9(a)(1) of the ESA. The original due date for comments on these proposed actions (February 8, 2011) was extended to March 25, 2011 (76 FR 6755; February 8, 2011).

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People wishing to make an oral statement for the record at a public hearing are encouraged to provide a written copy of their statement and present it to us at the hearing. In the event that attendance at the public hearings is large, the time allotted for oral statements may be limited. Oral and written statements receive equal consideration. There are no limits on the length of written comments submitted to us.

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