Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on the Protection of Important Seabird Nesting Islands on Maine's Coast

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to gather information necessary for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the protection of important seabird, wading bird, shorebird and bald eagle nesting islands on Maine's coast. This notice is being furnished as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (40 CFR 1501.7) to obtain suggestions and information from other agencies and the public on the scope of issues to be addressed in the

SCOPING INFORMATION: Private island owners, other individuals, organizations of all sorts and other interested parties are encouraged to participate in the scoping process in order to identify and discuss the major issues that should be addressed in the EIS. A series of public scoping meetings (meetings) will be held in Ellsworth, Machias, Rockland, Brunswick, Wells and Augusta in November, 1995. These meetings will (1) provide a brief description of the project, (2) solicit advice about the scope of issues that should be addressed, what the significant issues are, and potential alternative courses of action, (3) seek input about review, consultation, coordination, clearance or permit requirements, and (4) describe the role of the Service in the planning and decision-making process. The major tool used to collect public comment will be an issues workbook which will be available at the meetings. The dates, times and locations of these meetings will be announced in area newspapers and through direct mailings. Those who are unable to attend one of the meetings can request a copy of the issues workbook from the contact person identified below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Stan Skutek, Refuge Manager, Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 279, Milbridge, Maine 04658 or telephone (207) 546–2124.

written comments and completed workbooks should be sent to the contact person listed above by January, 1996, or no later than 30 days after the last meeting is held.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge has

been acquiring islands in Maine over the past decade, through donations and purchases from willing sellers. The majority of the Refuge islands support nesting seabirds habitat. In addition, the Service has been actively involved in providing technical assistance and promoting efforts to protect coastal nesting island habitat in partnership with private landowners, nongovernmental organizations (e.g. land trusts and statewide conservative groups) and state agencies. During the last two years, the Service has worked with partners to discuss the importance of island nesting birds and to explore voluntary tools available to promote island wildlife habitat protection. In recent years, the number of landowners interested in selling their islands to the Service has increased, and the Service has recognized the need to solicit public input in directing future habitat protection work on coastal nesting islands. In order for the Service to continue to acquire seabird, wading bird, shorebird and eagle habitat on Maine's coastal islands, the Service has decided to pursue an EIS. The EIS process will allow the public to continue to provide input and direction to the Service for protection of these important habitats.

A range of alternative actions including no action, the Service's proposed action, and other reasonable actions—will be presented in the EIS. All viable actions, including those that may be taken by others outside the federal government, are open for consideration. No final decision will be made until all interested parties, organizations and individuals have had the opportunity to review and comment on the EIS. The environmental review of the project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of NEPA as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.), NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1300-1508), other appropriate federal regulations and Service procedures for compliance with those regulations. It is estimated that a Draft EIS will be available for public review and comment in April 1995.

Ronald E. Lambertson, *Regional Director.*

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Marine Mammals; Stock Assessment Reports

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of completion and availability of final marine mammal

stock assessments and guidelines for preparing stock assessments.

SUMMARY: Section 117 of the 1994 amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) requires the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to prepare stock assessments for each marine mammal stock that occurs in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Service made draft stock assessments and preliminary guidelines available for public review and comment on August 23, 1994. Comments received from the public and from scientific review groups (established according to section 117) were reviewed and incorporated into the reports and guidelines, as appropriate. Final stock assessments have been completed and are now available for polar bears, walrus, and northern sea otters in Alaska: southern sea otters in California and northern sea otters in Washington State; and two West Indian manatee stocks in the southeastern United States and Puerto Rico. Final guidelines for preparing these stock assessments are also available.

ADDRESSES: Copies of these final stock assessments and final guidelines are available from the Division of Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mail Stop 840–ARLSQ, 1849 C Street NW., Washington, D.C. 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeff Horwath, Division of Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance, Arlington, Virginia, at 703/358–1718. For specific information about stock assessments for polar bears, walrus, and northern sea otters in Alaska, contact David McGillivary in the Service's Office of Marine Mammals Management, Anchorage, Alaska, at 907/786-3800. For specific information about stock assessments for southern sea otters in California and northern sea otters in Washington State, contact Carl Benz in the Service's field office in Ventura, California, Telephone 805/644-1766. For specific information about stock assessments for West Indian manatees in the southeastern United States and Puerto Rico, contact Robert Turner in the Service's field office in Jacksonville, Florida, Telephone 904/232-2580.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On April 30, 1994, the MMPA Amendments of 1994 were enacted into law (Public Law 103–238). New section 117 of the MMPA required the Service and the NMFS (as appropriate) to prepare and periodically revise stock assessments for marine mammals that occur in waters