



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife
450 Main Street
Oregon City, OR 97405



November 1, 2023

Jennifer Quan
Regional Administrator, West Coast Region
National Marine Fisheries Service
1201 Northeast Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Ms. Quan ,

The following information comprises our 2023 annual report to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), documenting compliance with the terms and conditions of our authorization for the lethal removal of predatory California sea lions (CSLs) in the vicinity of Willamette Falls (Oregon City, Oregon) under §120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). This authorization was granted November 14, 2018, for a 5-year period until November 14, 2023; this report covers the period from November 1, 2022, through October 31, 2023.

Terms and Conditions

No. 1

No management was conducted in this reporting period due to the lack of animals or trap use.

No. 2

Under our concurrent MMPA §120(f) authorization, CSLs are not required to meet the removal criteria defined in condition 1 of our Willamette Falls MMPA §120 authorization. We therefore did not request that any new CSLs be added to the Appendix of individuals meeting the criteria for removal at this location.

No. 3

No. 4

The State of Oregon consulted with our Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) prior to conducting work during the 2022-2023 field season in order to review protocols for capture, holding, and euthanasia of individually identifiable predatory CSLs.

No. 5

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No. 6

No. 7

No. 8

The State of Oregon developed and continued the multi-year monitoring plan to evaluate 1) the impacts of CSL predation on UWR spring-run Chinook salmon and UWR winter steelhead; and 2) the effectiveness of permanent removal of individually identifiable predator CSLs as a method to reduce adult salmonid mortality. The State has or will perform by the end of the authorization period, the following actions:

- a) monitored and reported specific CSLs observed, including when animals were removed and residence time at Willamette Falls;
- b) monitored and reported the number of prey observed and estimated to have been taken;
- c) monitored, evaluated, and reported on expedience (number of days animal present before removal) of removal;
- d) monitored and reported key population parameters for UWR spring-run Chinook salmon and UWR winter steelhead populations so that changes in population status can be detected;
- e) ensured that monitoring efforts included other pinnipeds that occurred in the vicinity of Willamette Falls;
- f) will update the population viability analysis for UWR spring-run Chinook salmon and UWR winter steelhead after 5 years of implementation (after December 2023) to determine, to the extent possible, any changes in the estimated extinction risk to the salmonid stocks in question.

No. 9

This letter describing our compliance with the terms and conditions of the 2018 LOA. The attached report on work conducted in 2022-2023 represents our annual monitoring report to NMFS.

No 10

See condition 2.

No. 11

We understand that the authorization may be modified, suspended, or revoked by NMFS at any time given 72 hours' notice to the State.

No. 12

We understand that this authorization is valid until November 14, 2023, at which time it may be extended by NMFS for an additional period to be determined by NMFS. Please note, however, that we do not intend to request an extension given that we have also started conducting concurrent removals under the broader Columbia River Basin MMPA §120(f) authorization granted on August 14, 2020.

The State of Oregon remains committed to pursuing all reasonable approaches to reduce pinniped predation on threatened Willamette River salmonids. As you know, however, existing non-lethal tools have proven ineffective, and no effective new options have been identified. While we would prefer to find and implement successful non-lethal methods for reducing predation, permanent removal of some number of habituated predatory sea lions may continue to be necessary for the foreseeable future.

We thank you for your assistance and support of our work to monitor and reduce sea lion predation on threatened salmonids below Willamette Falls and elsewhere in the lower Columbia River basin. Please let us know if we can provide further information related to our annual reporting obligations.

Sincerely,



Michael Brown
Marine Mammal Program Leader

Attached:

ANNUAL REPORT: PINNIPED MONITORING AT WILLAMETTE FALLS, 2022-2023