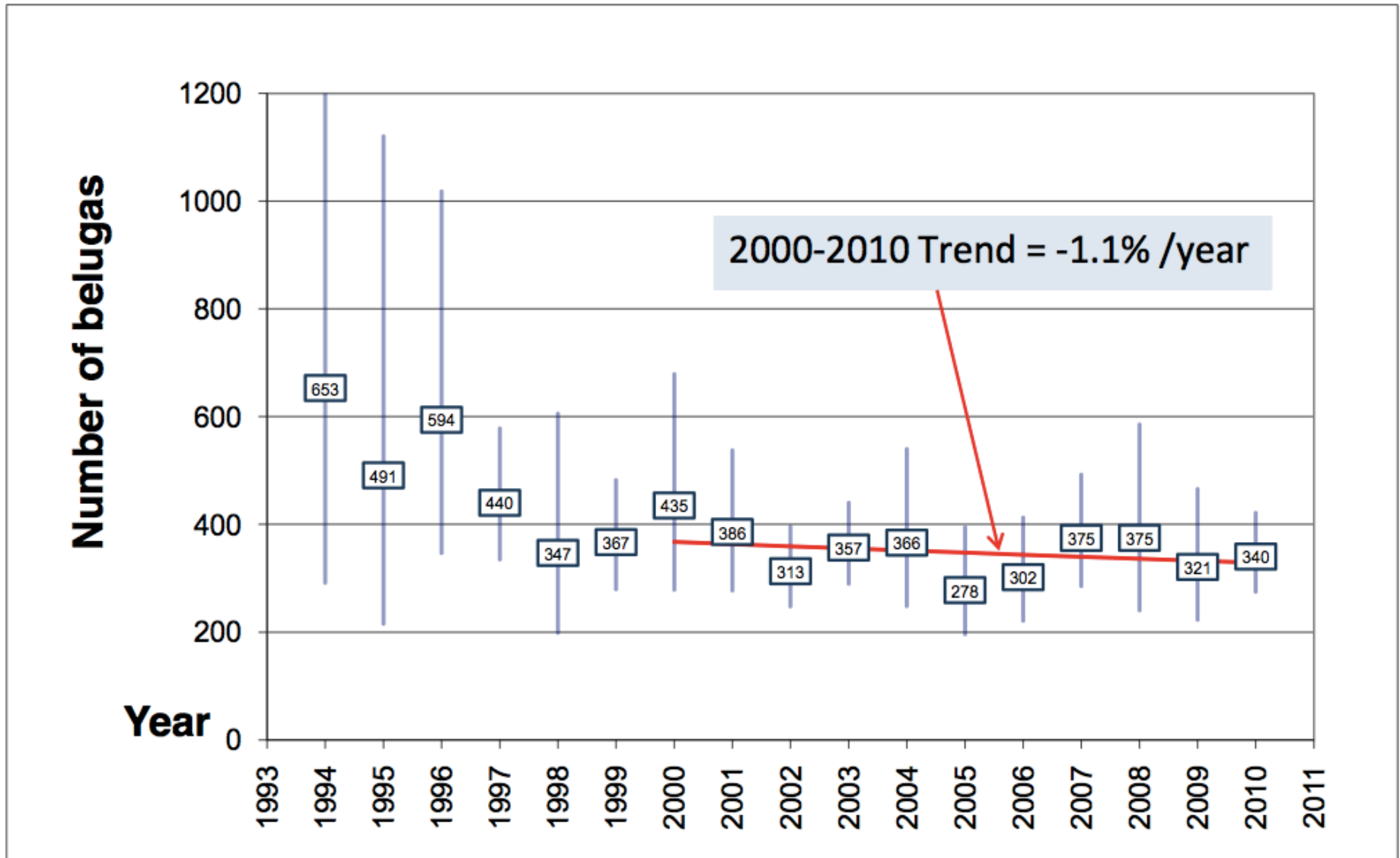


Endangered Species Listing and Proposed Critical Habitat for Cook Inlet Beluga Whales



Abundance 1994-2010



Cause of the Decline

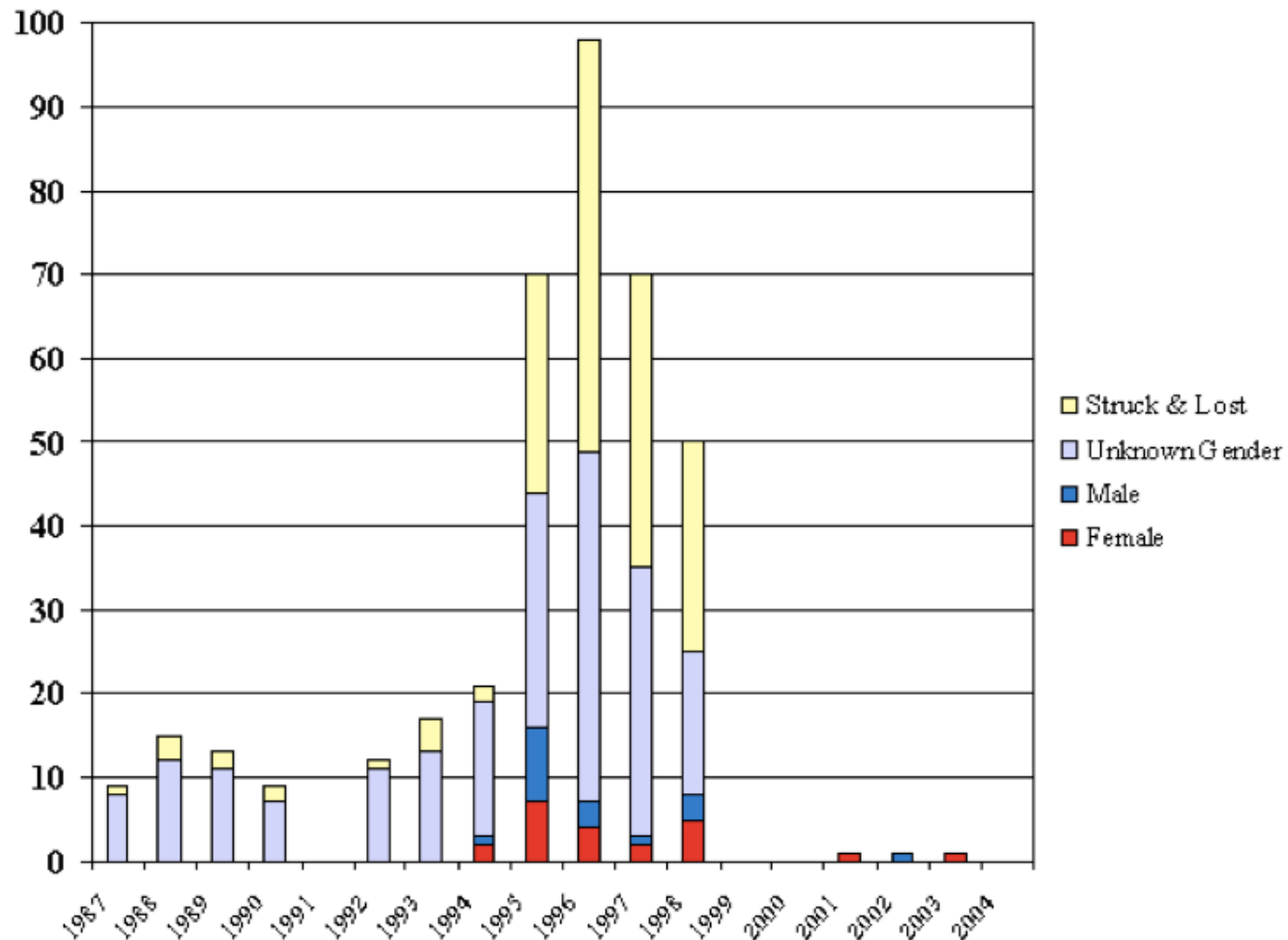
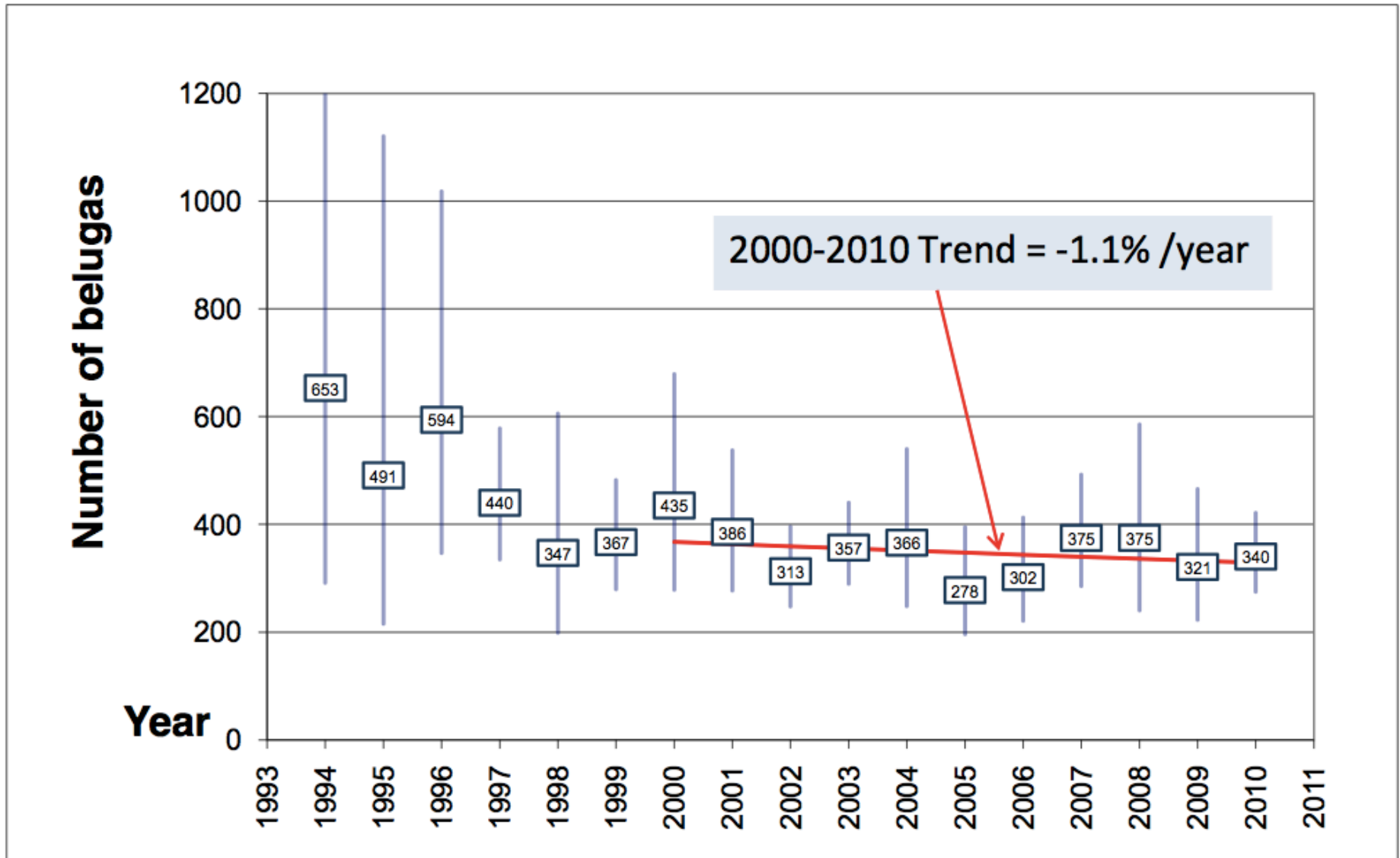


Figure 7. Subsistence Harvest of Cook Inlet Beluga Whales (ADFG 1993; CIMMC 1996 and 1997; NMFS unpublished data).

Background Knowledge

- Gestation: 15 Months
- Nursing: 18 months
- Parental Involvement is app. 3 years
- NMFS Conducts Only One Annual Survey
 - Flying at 140 Knots
 - Juvenile Belugas are the color of Cook Inlet Waters and are hard to count

Abundance 1994-2010



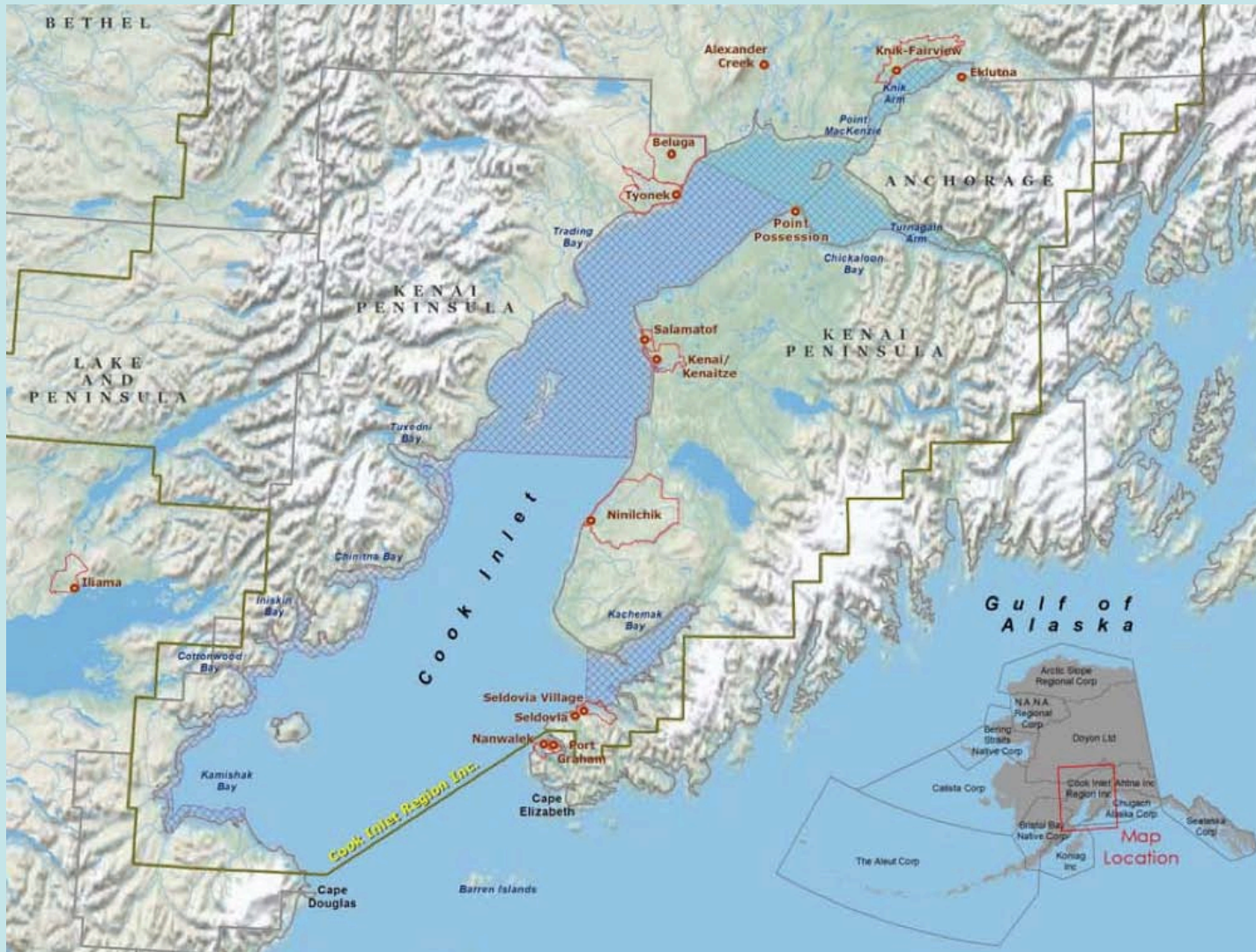
Recent History

- Co-Management Agreement Developed to limit subsistence take to maximum of 2 animals per year in 1999
- Listed as depleted under Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) in 2000
- Litigated at that time to list under ESA, intervention by RDC, AOGA, and Communities of Anchorage, Kenai, and Mat-Su
- Courts ruled in favor of maintaining listing under MMPA in 2001

Recent History

- Endangered Species Act listing in 10/08
- Critical Habitat Proposed (3,000 sq. miles) (Decision pending); economic analysis completed, but very inadequate (RDC completed additional economic analysis)

Proposed Critical Habitat Designation



Comments Received

- NMFS received 135,463 individual submissions (including public testimony during the four hearings) in response to the proposed rule.

TABLE 4: FORM LETTER SUBMISSIONS BY ORGANIZATION

Form Letter	Number of Submissions	Percentage of Form Submissions
Care 2	7615	5.64%
Center for Biological Diversity	27,478	20.36%
Cook Inlet Keeper	13	0.01%
Defenders of Wildlife	9,712	7.20%
EEIS Consulting Engineers	12	0.01%
National Audubon Society	38	0.03%
Natural Resource Defense Council	39,955	29.61%
North Star Terminal & Stevedore Co. 1	12	0.01%
North Star Terminal & Stevedore Co. 2	3	0.00%
Ocean River Institute	3458	2.56%
Sierra Club	46,403	34.38%
Letter Unknown Source	16	0.01%
Postcard Unknown Source	244	0.18%

One of the Biggest Challenges:

Misinformation

But Bush's friends in the fossil fuel industry, who wish to build offshore oil rigs in the beluga's critical habitat, are adamantly opposed to the whale's protection. Please write today to support the listing of the Cook Inlet beluga whale and to urge the government to take quick action to protect the species and its critical habitat.

•*Center for Biological Diversity Website 6/11/07*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No. 10-033

State Objects to Expansive Critical Habitat Designation for Belugas

March 4, 2010, Juneau, Alaska – The State of Alaska filed comments with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration objecting to a proposal to designate more than one-third of Cook Inlet as critical habitat for beluga whales.

The proposed areas of critical habitat cover all of Anchorage and Mat-Su Borough's tidal waters and extend down Cook Inlet past the City of Kenai. The habitat also includes parts of Kachemak Bay near Homer and areas across the inlet from the Kenai Peninsula.

"While we understand that the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires designation of critical habitat for beluga whales in Cook Inlet, we have concluded that this designation is unnecessarily broad and ignores protections already in place," Governor Sean Parnell said. "It has great potential for needlessly delaying or stopping responsible development projects throughout Cook Inlet."



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2010

2010-046

Contact: Julie Hasquet, Press Secretary

(907) 258-9304 office

(907) 350-4846 cell

Begich Urges Beluga Habitat Exemption for Port of Anchorage ***Continues Focus on Protecting Essential Habitat While Permitting Development***

Citing the Port of Anchorage's vital importance to Alaska's economy and to America's national security, Sen. Mark Begich today urged the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to exclude certain areas in Cook Inlet from critical habitat designation for beluga whales.

In a letter to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco, Begich called NOAA's proposal to establish more than 3,000 square miles of critical habitat in Cook Inlet "an unnecessary overreach which could jeopardize responsible development in the Inlet."

"I am particularly concerned this proposal could halt use and expansion of the Port of Anchorage, which is vital to the economy of our state and our nation's national security," Begich said in his comments.

NMFS' Economic Analysis

- In its economic analysis, NMFS estimates the proposed designation will cost local communities and businesses \$600,000 over the next decade in additional regulatory oversight.
- This estimate is grossly inadequate as it does not factor in additional costs existing and future operations will have to pay to meet unnecessary regulatory requirements

- The Economic Analysis considers only incremental administrative cost of considering critical habitat in a Section 7 consultation.
- While administrative expenses are no doubt a cost, *they are certainly not the only cost of the designation, nor are they the only cost that is capable of being readily quantified.*

- RDC conducted a study that gathered information from its members on the anticipated impacts of critical habitat designation. That analysis identified a number of other economic impacts of the critical habitat designation including:
 - monitoring requirements
 - project slippage
 - loss of production
 - uncertainty
 - non-market costs
 - Project modification costs

Results from RDC's Economic Analysis

- The independent study demonstrates that the beluga whale critical habitat designation has the potential to result in economic impacts on RDC's members ranging from \$39.9 million and \$399 million annually (up to \$3.4 billion over the next decade.)

Potential Impacts

The following is not meant to imply these activities will not occur; however there will be additional costs, time, etc. and these projects could be stalled or stopped

- Port Expansion
- Knik Arm Bridge
- AWWU discharges
- Commercial Fishing
- Sport Fishing
- Chuitna Coal Project
- Pebble Mine
- Military
- Oil and Gas Development
- Seismic Exploration
- Community Development
- Vessel Traffic (large and small)
- Tourism
- Others

Table 19. Summary of Direct & Total Output – Cook Inlet Region (2008)

Direct Output					Total Output				
	Scenario 1	Loss Scenario 2	Loss Scenario 2	Loss Scenario 2		Scenario 1	Loss Scenario 2	Loss Scenario 2	Loss Scenario 2
Industry	Status Quo	1.0%	5.0%	10.0%	Industry	Status Quo	1.0%	5.0%	10.0%
Oil & Gas Production	\$1,388,329,767	\$13,883,298	\$69,416,488	\$138,832,977	Oil & Gas Production	\$2,047,081,921	\$20,470,819	\$102,354,096	\$204,708,192
Salmon Fishing	\$22,263,028	\$222,630	\$1,113,151	\$2,226,303	Salmon Fishing	\$39,009,958	\$390,100	\$1,950,498	\$3,900,996
Seafood Processing (1)	\$182,253,980	\$1,822,540	\$9,112,699	\$18,225,398	Seafood Processing (1)	\$377,090,121	\$3,770,901	\$18,854,506	\$37,709,012
Sport Fishing	\$193,320,711	\$1,933,207	\$9,666,036	\$19,332,071	Sport Fishing	\$319,097,403	\$3,190,974	\$15,954,870	\$31,909,740
Port of Anchorage	\$132,712,604	\$1,327,126	\$6,635,630	\$13,271,260	Port of Anchorage	\$208,371,018	\$2,083,710	\$10,418,551	\$20,837,102
Subtotal Current	\$1,918,880,090	\$19,188,801	\$95,944,005	\$191,888,009	Subtotal Current	\$2,990,650,421	\$29,906,504	\$149,532,521	\$299,065,042
Chuitna Coal Project	\$141,775,296	\$1,417,753	\$7,088,765	\$14,177,530	Chuitna Coal Project	\$212,251,244	\$2,122,512	\$10,612,562	\$21,225,124
Pebble Project	\$571,846,976	\$5,718,470	\$28,592,349	\$57,184,698	Pebble Project	\$787,143,363	\$7,871,434	\$39,357,168	\$78,714,336
Subtotal Potential	\$713,622,272	\$7,136,223	\$35,681,114	\$71,362,227	Subtotal Potential	\$999,394,607	\$9,993,946	\$49,969,730	\$99,939,461
Grand Total	\$2,632,502,362	\$26,325,024	\$131,625,118	\$263,250,236	Grand Total	\$3,990,045,028	\$39,900,450	\$199,502,251	\$399,004,503

(1) Net of Salmon Fishing - Since the impact estimates for Seafood Processing includes the backward linkage to fishing, it is expressed as the net of salmon fishing to avoid double counting.

Sources: IMPLAN 2008; RDC study models, 2010.

Table 20. Summary of Total Employment & Total Labor Income – Cook Inlet Region (2008)

Total Employment					Total Labor Income				
Industry	Scenario 1	Loss	Loss	Loss	Industry	Scenario 1	Loss	Loss	Loss
	Status Quo	Scenario 2	Scenario 2	Scenario 2		Status Quo	Scenario 3	Scenario 3	Scenario 3
		1.0%	5.0%	10.0%			1.0%	5.0%	10.0%
Oil & Gas Production	5,153	52	258	515	Oil & Gas Production	\$504,503,187	\$5,045,032	\$25,225,159	\$50,450,319
Salmon Fishing	709	7	35	71	Salmon Fishing	\$8,720,507	\$87,205	\$436,025	\$872,051
Seafood Processing (1)	2,453	25	123	245	Seafood Processing (1)	\$68,435,155	\$684,352	\$3,421,758	\$6,843,515
Sport Fishing	2,345	23	117	234	Sport Fishing	\$75,985,152	\$759,852	\$3,799,258	\$7,598,515
Port of Anchorage	1,034	10	52	103	Port of Anchorage	\$59,738,090	\$597,381	\$2,986,905	\$5,973,809
Subtotal Current	11,693	117	585	1,169	Subtotal Current	\$717,382,090	\$7,173,821	\$35,869,105	\$71,738,209
Chuitna Coal Project	823	8	41	82	Chuitna Coal Project	\$62,384,006	\$623,840	\$3,119,200	\$6,238,401
Pebble Project	2,351	24	118	235	Pebble Project	\$177,109,496	\$1,771,095	\$8,855,475	\$17,710,950
Subtotal Potential	3,174	32	159	317	Subtotal Potential	\$239,493,502	\$2,394,935	\$11,974,675	\$23,949,350
Grand Total	14,868	149	743	1,487	Grand Total	\$956,875,592	\$9,568,756	\$47,843,780	\$95,687,559

(1) Net of Salmon Fishing - Since the impact estimates for Seafood Processing includes the backward linkage to fishing, it is expressed as the net of salmon fishing to avoid double counting.

Sources: IMPLAN 2008; RDC study models, 2010.

- NMFS has previously stated: “No information exists that beluga habitat has been modified or curtailed to an extent that it is likely to have caused the population declines observed within Cook Inlet.”
- Three thousand square miles of critical habitat will not change this fact.



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Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Proposals from States for FY 2011 Endangered Species Grants

Contact:

Vanessa Kauffman

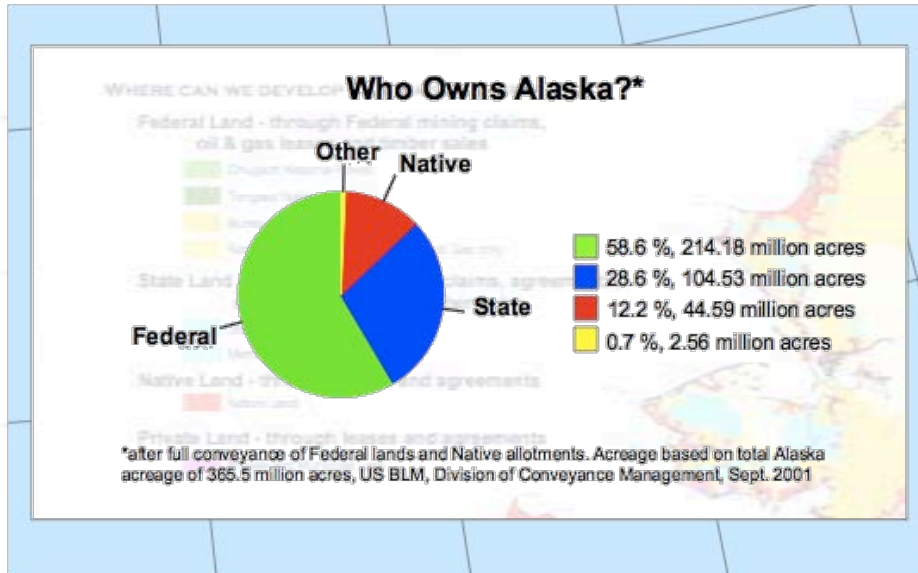
703-358-2138

vanessa_kauffman@fws.gov

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking proposals from states and U.S. territories interested in obtaining federal financial assistance to acquire land or conduct planning efforts for endangered species conservation. For fiscal year (FY) 2011, the President's budget request for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund includes approximately \$85 million in grant funding for conservation planning activities and habitat acquisition benefitting federally protected species. Proposals must be submitted to the appropriate Service regional offices by January 18, 2011.

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and provides grants to states and territories to support participation in a wide array of voluntary conservation projects for species on the federal list of threatened and endangered species, as well as for species that are either candidates or have been proposed for listing. These projects range from species status surveys, public education and outreach, habitat acquisition and restoration, captive propagation and reintroduction to nesting surveys, genetic studies and development of conservation plans.

The Service is seeking proposals under the following three Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund categories:



•Land Ownership in Alaska

–365 Million Acres

- Federal 210 Million Acres
- State 104.5 Million Acres
- Native Corporations 44.5 Million Acres
- Conventional Private 2.7 Million Acres

•Federal Wilderness in Alaska

–58 million acres (56% of national total of 105.7 million acres)