



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

11 May 2010

Mr. Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director, National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
301 7th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20407-0001

Dear Mr. Jarvis:

In December 2009 the Marine Mammal Commission held its annual meeting in Honolulu to review efforts by the National Marine Fisheries Service and its partner agencies to recover the Hawaiian monk seal. This species numbers fewer than 1,200 animals and is declining at a rate of 4.5 percent annually. Recently a small but growing number of seals has been hauling out and pupping on beaches of the Kalaupapa National Historical Park on Molokai, Hawaii. These seals appear to be forming a new colony, and they produce about one-third of all pups born in the main Hawaiian Islands. Conservation of this species appears to depend on its reoccupation of the main Hawaiian Islands, and the growth of this new colony at Kalaupapa is a vital part of that process.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for protecting Hawaiian monk seals, but it relies on cooperation from other federal and state agencies. Mr. Eric Brown, marine ecologist at the Kalaupapa Park, summarized research and management activities by park staff to promote Hawaiian monk seal recovery. Among other things, they help tag seals, conduct weekly surveys to monitor seals and pupping activity on the Kalaupapa Park beaches, provide outreach for Molokai residents and visitors, and ensure that park visitors behave appropriately near seals.

The Marine Mammal Commission commends the National Park Service and the staff of the Kalaupapa National Historical Park for recognizing the importance of park habitat for Hawaiian monk seals and for its valuable help with monk seal recovery. Because Kalaupapa's coastal habitat appears to be particularly important for Hawaiian monk seals, the Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Park Service provide sufficient funding for the Kalaupapa National Historical Park to ensure that its staff can continue and expand activities to monitor and promote the growth of the new Hawaiian monk seal colony. Such activities will contribute significantly toward recovery and conservation of the species in the main Hawaiian Islands.

Please contact me if you have questions or if the Commission can help with your Hawaiian monk seal-related efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen".

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Cc: Mr. Eric Brown
Mr. George Turnbull, Acting Director, Pacific West Region