



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

19 April 2018

Ms. Angela Somma
National Marine Fisheries Service
Office of Protected Resources
1325 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Somma:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission) has reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) request for information related to the 5-year status reviews of fin whale, gray whale Western North Pacific distinct population segment (DPS), and sei whale under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (83 Fed. Reg. 4033). The *Federal Register* notice requested information on these whale species since the last reviews in 1991, 2011, and 2012, respectively.

The Commission is confident that NMFS has access to the relevant and recent literature and scientific expertise to conduct these reviews in a thorough and rigorous manner. Nevertheless, the Commission has been advised by Dr. Randall Reeves, Chair of its Committee of Scientific Advisors, who also serves as Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cetacean Specialist Group, that draft updates to the IUCN Red List global (species-level) assessments of fin and sei whales and the subpopulation assessment of western North Pacific gray whales (IUCN's equivalent of the Western North Pacific DPS as defined under the ESA) are undergoing review and will be finalized and published by the end of 2018 or earlier. The Commission believes it would be appropriate and efficient for NMFS to arrange its review timelines to take advantage of the syntheses and literature reviews that will be contained in these forthcoming assessments.

I hope this information is helpful. We look forward to the results of the ESA status reviews.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter O. Thomas".

Peter O. Thomas, Ph.D.,
Executive Director