

**Marine Mammal Commission**  
4340 East-West Highway, Room 700  
Bethesda, MD 20814-4447

10 April 2008

Charles H. Johnson, Chair  
Indigenous Peoples' Council for Marine Mammals  
800 East Dimond Boulevard  
Anchorage AK 99515

Dear Mr. Johnson:

With your participation, the Marine Mammal Commission recently reviewed progress toward co-management of subsistence harvests of marine mammals in Alaska pursuant to section 119 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The purpose of the review was to recognize the accomplishments realized over the past 14 years and to discuss objectives for the next decade. Considerable progress has been made: a number of co-management agreements have been completed, the agreements have fostered a variety of monitoring efforts by Alaska Natives, cooperative research has been or is being conducted, and education and outreach projects are being developed. The capacity of Alaska Native organizations as co-management partners is clearly growing.

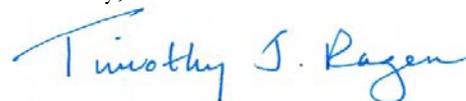
Continued development of that capacity will enhance the conservation of marine mammals in Alaska and the maintenance of subsistence cultures. Despite good intentions, co-management cannot work on a volunteer basis. Inadequate funding is an impediment to further progress, and existing funding is simply insufficient for many Alaska Native organizations.

Funding shortfalls were discussed at length during the Commission's review. In the end, participants recognized that affected Alaska Native organizations and their agency partners should develop a joint plan for future co-management efforts. The plan should identify and integrate the needs of the Alaska Native organizations and their federal agency partners, the objectives to be accomplished in the coming decade, the amount of funding needed, and the mechanisms to hold co-management partners accountable for those objectives.

Participants at the review also recognized that such a plan could not be developed in time for fiscal year 2009. They suggested using existing funding requests developed by Alaska Native organizations to solicit support for fiscal year 2009, followed by development of the comprehensive plan for fiscal year 2010 and beyond. The Marine Mammal Commission supports this approach with two caveats. The first is that the existing documents should be updated, as they are presently out of date. The second is that funding should be for activities pertinent to co-management efforts only. We believe that funding for the Indigenous Peoples' Council for Marine Mammals should be included as the Council plays an important central role for Alaska Native organizations.

Finally, the Commission would be pleased to help facilitate the development of the comprehensive plan for future funding. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.  
Executive Director