

Alaska Oil and Gas Association



121 W. Fireweed Lane, Suite 207
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-2035
Phone: (907) 272-1481 Fax: (907) 279-8114

Alaska Oil and Gas Association: National Marine Fisheries Service's decision to list ringed and bearded seals as threatened is not consistent with the Endangered Species Act or the best available science

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 21, 2012

Contact: Sarah Erkmann, AOGA, 272-1481 or 441-1899

ANCHORAGE- The Alaska Oil and Gas Association (AOGA) announced today its strong disagreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) decision to list two distinct population segments (DPS) of bearded seals and three subspecies of ringed seals as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and one ringed seal subspecies as endangered under the ESA.

AOGA bases its opinion on several factors, including:

- The ESA and the scientific record do not support such listings. Ringed and bearded seals are currently healthy and very abundant, particularly the Arctic subspecies of the ringed seal and the Beringia DPS of the bearded seal.
- NMFS' use of a 100-year foreseeable future to forecast population decline is inconsistent with recent listing decisions for other Arctic species and far exceeds the reliability of the best available climate models and forecasts.
- Oil and gas exploration, development and production are not a threat to ringed and bearded seals. The oil and gas industry has been operating in the Alaska Arctic Ocean and adjacent shoreline for more than 30 years with no more than negligible impact on ice seals or other marine mammals.

"NMFS' decision is, in our opinion, not consistent with the text and policy of the ESA or the best available science," said Kara Moriarty, executive director for the Alaska Oil and Gas Association. "The decision to list ringed and bearded seals is based on how climate change might affect these species 100 years from now, despite their populations currently being healthy and abundant. That's bad precedent for making evidence-based decisions that have real impacts for Alaska."

AOGA members are the principal industry stakeholders that operate within the range of and incidentally interact with ringed and bearded seals in Alaska waters and in adjacent waters of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, and are longstanding supporters of wildlife conservation, management and research in the Arctic.

"AOGA members have always been committed to protecting all the species of wildlife we interact with during the course of doing business, but restrictions on activity must be based on the scientific record and consistent with the law," said Moriarty. "Unfortunately, we believe this listing is flawed and misguided."

AOGA opposes the listing because it will drive up costs and increase the amount of time it takes to develop important energy resources, despite robust seal populations and stringent environmental regulations already being in effect.

The Alaska Oil & Gas Association is a private, business trade association. Its member companies represent the majority of oil and gas exploration, production, transportation, refining and marketing activities in Alaska. More information about the organization is available at www.aoga.org.

#