



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

March 6, 2006

Diane Noda, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, CA 93003-7726

Subject: Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS), Translocation of Southern Sea Otters, California (CEQ # 20050401)

Dear Ms. Noda:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The DSEIS evaluates options for continuing, revising, or terminating the program of translocating threatened southern sea otters to San Nicolas Island, Channel Islands, and California. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) proposed action (Alternative 3C) is to terminate the translocation program, allow sea otters existing in the former translocation and management zones to remain there, and to allow for the natural range expansion of sea otters in the future.

EPA supports Alternative 3C and the Service's shift in recovery strategy from translocation to natural range expansion due to the observed degree of sea otter dispersal and mortality from translocation. This alternative provides for the maximum benefit to the southern sea otter and the best opportunity for the Service to meet its mandate to bring the southern sea otter to recovery and an optimum sustainable population. Alternative 3C is also consistent with the Service's 2000 Biological Opinion which determined that "containment" (capturing and moving otters out of the management zone) would likely jeopardize the species' continued existence. For these reasons, we have rated the DSEIS as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "Summary of Rating Definitions").

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review this DSEIS. When the Final SEIS is released for public review, please send one copy to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have

any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3988 or Karen Vitulano, the lead reviewer for this project, at 415-947-4178 or vitulano.karen@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Duane James, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

Enclosure: Summary of EPA Rating Definitions