

Response Statement - Northern Fur Seal

December 8, 2011

Common Name: Northern Fur Seal

Scientific Name: *Callorhinus ursinus*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Threatened

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations with the government of British Columbia, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Northern Fur Seal should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Threatened. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Northern Fur Seal to the Governor in Council upon completion of consultations.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: Most of the animals that winter in Canadian waters breed at four islands, of which three are in Alaska (two in the Pribilof Islands – St Paul, St George - plus Bogoslof) and one in California (San Miguel). Pup production is used as an index of population size. Pup production at the two largest breeding colonies, both in the Pribilof Islands, which presently account for 90% of all fur seals in the eastern Pacific, has been declining for the last 45 years and pup numbers at these colonies have declined by 38% over the last 30 years (3 generations). Numbers of pups have been increasing in the much smaller colony at Bogoslof Island. Taken together, these trends in pup production mean it is likely that numbers of mature individuals will continue to decline. In 2008 there were approximately 650,000 fur seals in the eastern Pacific compared with more than 2 million in the 1950s. There is potential for rescue from Asian colonies in the western Pacific, although little is known about dispersal in mature females. The causes of the declines are unknown, but continuing and potential threats include entanglement, prey limitation, oil spills and the effects of contaminants.

Occurrence: British Columbia, Pacific Ocean

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:

British Columbia

Applicable federal legislation: Protected under the federal *Marine Mammal Regulations* under the *Fisheries Act*. Habitat protected under section 35 of the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: Marine mammals are protected under the federal *Marine Mammal Regulations* of the *Fisheries Act*. No species-specific activities are underway in Canadian waters.