Appendix 6-Memorandum on the Appointment of new NMFS National Seabird Coordinator (November 2, 2015)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

NOV - 2 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: Eileen Sobeck
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

Samuel D. Rauch III
Deputy Assistant Administrator
for Regulatory Programs

Richard Merrick, Ph.D.
Director
Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor

FROM: Ned Cyr, Ph.D.
Director
Office of Science & Technology

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Administrator
Alaska Region

Francisco Werner, Ph.D.
Science and Research Director
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

SUBJECT: Selection of a National Seabird Coordinator, Roles and Responsibilities, and Updates on the National Seabird Program

This memorandum serves to identify the next national seabird coordinator for NOAA Fisheries, clarify roles and responsibilities of that position, and provide updates regarding the National Seabird Program (NSP). Related is the memorandum from January 2011 (included here) that documented the transfer of the NSP to the Office of Science and Technology (ST), and outlined the function of the NSP and the associated roles and responsibilities.

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National Seabird Coordinator & Funding for the Position

With the retirement of Kim Rivera (Alaska Region), effective 1 December 2015, Dr. Lisa T. Ballance, Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) will become NOAA Fisheries' national seabird coordinator, and the second person in this position since the NSP was formed in 2001. The NSP will continue to be housed in ST, and the coordinator will continue to lead the NSP from their field location. AKR will coordinate with the Office of Management and Budget to transfer salary support for the NSP Coordinator position as a permanent allocation to SWFSC. Specifically, in FY16, AKR will permanently transfer $84,998 to SWFSC who will, in turn, return a one-time pro-rated amount ($14,166) to AKR for Rivera's FY16 time in office (October and November 2015).

National Seabird Program Focus Areas

There are two key focus areas for the NSP:

- Mitigation of bycatch (i.e., incidental catch)
- Promoting seabirds as ecosystem indicators

Bycatch-related work has dominated NSP activities for many years, particularly for Pacific-based fisheries. This focus has been driven by fishery interactions with an ESA-listed species, the short-tailed albatross, and its congeners (Laysan albatross, black-footed albatross) that occur in the Pacific. These fishery interactions have been major drivers of: ongoing rulemaking for mandatory seabird-avoidance gear requirements in Alaska, West Coast, and Hawaii longline fisheries; fishermen outreach; extensive data collection through observer programs; and research into additional bycatch mitigation tools. Associated activities of the NSP also include engagement in international efforts to mitigate seabird bycatch in fora such as the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Committee on Fisheries, regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). NOAA Fisheries' Atlantic-based regions and science centers have also made great progress in assessing seabird bycatch.

Seabirds as Ecosystem Indicators—The health of marine ecosystems directly affects living marine resources for which NOAA Fisheries has trust responsibility. Spatial and/or temporal changes in marine ecosystems, at a variety of scales (e.g., pollution events, over-fishing, oceanographic oscillations, climate change), can be driven by anthropogenic perturbations, or result from other factors. Seabird distribution, abundance, and reproductive output can reflect physical and biological oceanographic conditions, and abundance and distribution of mid-trophic level organisms and other apex predators. Because seabirds are relatively easy to detect, identify, and sample, and because they are ecosystem integrators, they provide a means to assess the state of marine ecosystems and their changes through time. A wide array of seabird data are currently collected on NOAA and other platforms (e.g., observers on commercial fishing vessels; stock assessment surveys), and these data are of broad use to NOAA and other agencies (including the US Fish & Wildlife Service) with direct trust responsibility for seabirds.

National Seabird Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

The Coordinator's primary role is to lead the NSP, the latter comprising at least one staff contact at each of the five NOAA Fisheries regional offices, the six science centers, and six headquarters offices (Table 1). The Coordinator's activities include, but are not limited to:

- Develop and implement the NSP budget;
- Implement and/or provide guidance and advice to NOAA Fisheries offices on seabird components of applicable statutes and policies, such as:
    - Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation Management Act (Section 316),
    - Endangered Species Act (particularly section 7 consultations and implementation of biological opinions for listed seabird species),
    - Memorandum of Understanding between NMFS and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, under Executive Order 13186 (MOU); signed 14 June 2012,
    - United States National Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries,
    - FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries: Best Practices to reduce incidental catch of seabirds in capture fisheries;
- Conduct periodic and regular meetings/teleconferences of the NOAA Fisheries' seabird team to share information and progress the work of the NSP;
- Brief the NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator for annual meetings of the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds (Bird Council) and participate in related staff committee activities, such as:
    - Prepare annual submission of NOAA Fisheries highlights and accomplishments of seabird activities relating to MOU implementation and the Bird Council,
    - Participate in periodic multi-agency staff teleconferences on Bird Council activities,
    - Facilitate NOAA Fisheries staff participating in Bird Council survey;
- Address Migratory Bird Treaty Act issues (e.g., salvage permits for observer programs and science centers conducting research surveys, and an eventual USFWS proposal for authorization of incidental take of migratory birds for federal actions);
- Coordinate with the Office of International Affairs (IA) on international seabird issues, including:
    - ACAP—possible US accession and participation at ACAP meetings,
    - Implementation of and/or adoption of seabird conservation measures at RFMOs (IATTC, ICCAT, WCPFC);
- Participate on various teams, committees to represent seabird topics (e.g., Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program, National Bycatch Report, National Bycatch Strategy, National Observer Program Advisory Team);
- Address NOAA Fisheries seabird data issues [e.g., establish best practices for data collection, documentation, archiving and access (via Public Access to Research Results)];
- Serve as source of seabird information for NOAA Fisheries management purposes
- Maintain/coordinate upkeep of NSP webpages that will be housed on the ST website;

- Prepare responses and/or brief leadership on seabird-related queries made to NOAA Fisheries.

Regions, Science Centers, Headquarter Offices Roles and Responsibilities
As appropriate, the impacts of NOAA Fisheries actions (e.g., Fishery Management Plans, science and research surveys and cruises, regulation of fisheries, aquaculture) will be evaluated for impacts to seabirds through requirements of the ESA (e.g., section 7 consultations) or National Environmental Policy Act (e.g., environmental assessments or environmental impact statements). This work is best conducted by the seabird point of contact in the relevant region, with assistance from the national seabird coordinator, as needed or requested.

Data/information/analyses to inform these evaluations are often provided by NOAA Fisheries observer programs and/or science centers. Non-government, academic, and Sea Grant partners may also be involved with these activities.

FY2016-2019 General Priorities of the National Seabird Program

- Continue seabird bycatch assessments of fisheries and any associated activities (e.g., mitigation research, promulgation of regulations for mitigation gear or avoidance measures), as needed
- Identify opportunistic funding opportunities and secure stable funding
- Continue to conduct NEPA evaluations and ESA consultations as needed
- Promote the concept of seabirds as ecosystem indicators, and support associated activities (e.g., seabird data collection and management and use of such data in a broader context by NOAA Fisheries)

Budget (see Table 2)
The NSP received its first direct budget in FY04 as a line item in NOAA Fisheries' 'Reducing Bycatch' initiative to support needs and priorities identified through NOAA Fisheries' National Bycatch Strategy. With the inclusion of the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) in the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act in 2007, subsequent funding for the NSP was allocated through the BREP funding line item (as one of two 'permanent' allocations). BREP also encouraged funding of international seabird projects through an internal competitive process of cooperation and assistance related to MSA's defined Protected Living Marine Resources as administered by IA. In 2008, 2009, and 2015, IA supported several seabird projects. Beginning in FY12 a Congressional mandate significantly altered the BREP structure, and it became a

competitive grant program for non-Federal researchers working with US fishermen on bycatch reduction. This change virtually eliminated the NSP budget. In FY12, NOAA Fisheries' Office of Sustainable Fisheries covered the FTE portion ($85K) of the budget and continued to do so until this amount was made a permanent allocation to AKR (home office of coordinator). The Office of Sustainable Fisheries also covered the project portion ($163K) in FY12 and ST/National Observer Program covered the project portion (observer-related projects) for FY13, 14, and 15. The NSP budget has ranged from $197K (FY13) to $306K (FY08) with an average annual amount of $238K over a twelve year period. A more predictable funding stream is desirable.

Attachment

Cc: Alan D. Risenhoover (SF)
Donna Wieting (PR)
John Henderschedt (IA)

Table 1. NOAA Fisheries Seabird Points of Contacts and Staff that Work on Seabird Activities (August 2015).

REGION/CENTER/OFFICE	STAFF WORKING ON SEABIRDS (primary contact in **bold**)
Alaska Region	Kim Rivera (national coordinator), **Anne Marie Eich**, Kristin Mabry, Sadie Wright, Gretchen Harrington (NEPA)
Alaska Fisheries Science Center	**Shannon Fitzgerald**, Stephani Zador
West Coast Region	**Sarah Williams**, Yvonne de Reynier, Amilee Wilson, Lyle Enriquez
Northwest Fisheries Science Center	**Tom Good**, Jen Zamon, Ryan Shama
Southwest Fisheries Science Center	**Lisa Ballance** (national coordinator as of December 1, 2015)
Pacific Islands Region	**Bob Harman**, Melanie Brown, Sarah Ellgen, Tom Graham, Ariel Jacobs, John Peschon, Andrew Torres, Stuart Arceneaux, Mary Wunderlich, Samantha Brooke
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center	**Kyle van Houtan**, Summer Martin, Marti McCracken
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	**Ryan Silva**, Sarah Gurtman (NEPA)
Northeast Fisheries Science Center	**Debra Palka**, Gina Shield, Joshua Hatch, Kimberly Murray, Mark Renkawitz
Southeast Region	**Jennifer Lee**
Southeast Fisheries Science Center	**Joan Browder**
Office of Sustainable Fisheries	**Karen Abrams**, Derek Orner
Office of Protected Resources	**Therese Conant**
Office of Science and Technology	**Lee Benaka**, Mridula Srinivasan
Office of International Affairs	**Mi Ae Kim**

Office of Habitat Conservation	**Jeff Shenot**
Office of General Counsel-Fisheries & Protected Resources	**Stacey Nathanson**, Caroline Park

Table 2. Chronology of budget for NOAA Fisheries' National Seabird Program

FISCAL YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET ($ x 1000)	PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDS	SALARY COMPONENT (NSP Coordinator; $ x 1000)	TRAVEL COMPONENT ($ x 1000)	PROJECT COMPONENT ($ x 1000)

04	**213**	'Reducing Bycatch' Initiative	80	26	107
05	**231**	'Reducing Bycatch' Initiative	77	30	124
06	**227**	'Reducing Bycatch' Initiative	77	30	120
07	**227**	BREP	77	30	120
08	**306**	BREP (+AKR & IA funds)	76	32	198
09	**227**	BREP (+AKR & IA funds)	76		151
10	**236**	BREP	76	26	134
11	**294**	BREP (+AKR funds)	77	12	205
12	**248**	SF/F	85		163
13	**197**	SF/ST-NOP	85		112
14	**202**	SF/ST-NOP	85		117
15	**242**	ST-NOP	85		157
Annual average	**238**				

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DATE
10/23/2015

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Ned Cyr	F/OST	1	EC 10/22/15
Richard Merrick	F/Suite	1	DM 10/24
Sam Rauch	F/Suite	1	10/28
Eileen Sobeck	F/Suite	1	11/2/15
Stephen Brown	F/ST4	12	

ACTION ITEMS

1. APPROVAL/SIGNATURE
2. CLEARANCE/INITIALS
3. RECOMMENDATION OR COMMENT
4. RETURN WITH MORE DETAILS
5. INVESTIGATE AND REPORT
6. NOTE AND SEE ME
7. NOTE AND RETURN
8. NOTE AND FILE
9. YOUR INFORMATION
10. PER OUR CONVERSATION
11. AS REQUESTED
12. NECESSARY ACTION
13. CIRCULATE AMONG STAFF
14. ANSWER DIRECTLY
15. PREPARE REPLY FOR SIGNATURE

OF: _____

COMMENTS

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Camille Jones	12435	301-427-8152

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