



LGL Alaska Research Associates, Inc.

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Memorandum

To: Heather McCarty
From: Steve A. MacLean for M. Williams and J.E. Mellish
Date: 16 December 2003
CC: Jo-Ann Mellish, Shannon Atkinson, Mike Williams, Phil Zavadil
Re: PCCRC Award #62392-361274 2003 Annual Report

Dear Ms. McCarty,

Following is the 2003 annual report for the PCCRC project # 62392-361274 entitled "Integrating science and tradition: Ecosystem monitoring through the subsistence harvests of the Pribilof Islands, Alaska", which is a collaborative effort between the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), LGL Alaska Research Associates, Inc. (LGL), and the Aleut Community of St Paul Island Tribal Government Ecosystem Conservation Office (ECO). The abstract from the PCCRC application follows:

This proposal presents an integration of traditional subsistence harvest skills and scientific method. We propose to enhance current research efforts investigating the decline of multiple apex species in the Bering Sea ecosystem, including seals, sea lions, and seabirds. Subsistence harvests will provide critical tissue samples, such as are needed for the investigation of the current role of contaminants in species declines. The Pribilof Islands are remote, and therefore it is extremely difficult for researchers to collect important samples from native species. It is equally difficult for members of the local community to access scientific information regarding their environment. This project will allow for an enhanced scientific and community level understanding of the ongoing changes in the complex Bering Sea ecosystem.

We have made significant progress toward completing our objectives for this project. We have obtained the approval and support of the subsistence hunters on St. Paul Island. We have received or applied for necessary federal permits to sample, transport, and analyze samples. We have purchased sampling equipment and assembled sampling kits that are designed for ease of use during subsistence hunts. ECO staff members have collected and stored samples in St. Paul. While bad weather on the Pribilof Islands prevented our planned trip in the summer of 2003, we have made preparations to quickly and efficiently meet our objectives in the spring of 2004.

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Summary of Activity to date

We have completed the following project tasks:

1. Identified specific tissue needs for collection
2. Identified and outlined protocol for the collection of samples
3. Presented project proposal to local subsistence hunters on St. Paul Island (M. Williams, April 2003)
4. Received authorization for collection of Steller sea lion and northern fur seal tissue samples under NMFS permits # 881-1668 and # 481-1623
5. Received authorization for contaminants analysis of Steller sea lion tissues under NMFS permit # 881-1668
6. Received authorization for contaminants analysis of northern fur seal tissues under NMFS permit # 881-1709
7. Submitted application for authorization to collect, transport and analyze migratory bird samples (USFWS permit in review)
8. Obtained sampling equipment and prepared sampling kits for use by samplers on St. Paul Island
9. ECO staff collected northern fur seal, Steller sea lion, Red-legged kittiwake, and Black-legged kittiwake samples from subsistence harvests on St. Paul Island.

Early in 2003, we identified the tissues that were needed for the planned analyses, and identified protocols to collect appropriate tissues during the subsistence harvests on St. Paul Island. In April, 2003 M. Williams (LGL Alaska Research Associates, Inc.) traveled to St. Paul Island where he presented our project, and solicited the input and support of subsistence hunters on St. Paul during a regularly scheduled meeting of the Steller sea lion hunters on St. Paul. The hunters have pledged their support for our project.

We received NMFS permit # 881-1709 for analysis of northern fur seal tissues. NMFS permit # 881-1668 and # 481-1623 were preexisting permits. We have applied for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit for the collection, transport and analysis of migratory bird samples. Current regulations prohibit the transport of migratory bird samples or parts except between Native Alaskan subsistence hunters in the same village. Revisions to these regulations are currently under review, and are expected to be announced in the Federal Register in mid-December.

In April and May, 2003, sampling supplies were purchased and sampling kits were constructed. Kits were designed for ease of use during the subsistence harvest, to ensure that harvests were not disrupted by sampling procedures. Sampling kits were transported to St. Paul Island in July 2003 and stored at the Tribal Government of St. Paul Island Ecosystem Conservation Office.

During July, August, September and October 2003, ECO staff collected samples from 3 northern fur seals, 3 Steller sea lions, 5 Black-legged kittiwakes, and 5 Red-legged kittiwakes taken during the subsistence harvests. All samples are currently stored at the ECO office on St. Paul Island.

Summary of Activities not completed

We were unable to travel to St. Paul Island during the summer of 2003, as we had planned. Inclement weather on the Pribilof Islands prevented air travel to the islands. We have received an extension of this award until October 2004, and are planning to travel to St. Paul Island during April, 2004 to coincide with the beginning of the seabird and Steller sea lion hunts.

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As we were unable to travel to the Pribilof Islands during 2003, we will not be presenting our results at the Marine Science Symposium in January 2004. We will present the results of our project at the next scheduled Marine Science Symposium.

Budget Status

The summary of expenses to date has not been received at the time of this report. We will submit an addendum to this report in early January 2004 to report the status of the budget.

Please feel free to contact me at the address above or at smaclean@igl.com if you have any questions, or require further information.

Sincerely,

Signed,

Steve A. MacLean

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