

Fur seal convention extended

A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration official today termed "unfortunate" the failure of delegates to the Interim Convention on Conservation of North Pacific Fur Seals to adopt U.S.-proposed management concepts designed to give more protection to North Pacific fur seals.

Carmen Blondin, assistant director for International Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, said the group agreed to recommend to their governments that the convention be extended for another four years but missed an opportunity to adopt the concept of optimum sustainable population which is included as a management objective in the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972.

Under the new concept proposed by the United States, consideration would have been given to the esthetic and recreational value of the fur seals and the necessity of maintain-

ing the health and stability of the marine ecosystem.

The present management concept provides for maintaining populations at levels which permit maximum productivity, taking into account the relationship of fur seals to other marine resources.

The delegates will recommend to their governments that they approve a Protocol providing:

- that Natives, living on the islands where seals breed, be permitted to take seals for food when the meat obtained from the commercial harvest and research is not sufficient for their needs;

- that the parties ensure that the methods used to capture, mark and harvest the seals, on land or at sea, spare the seals pain and suffering to the greatest extent possible;

- for a suspension or reduction of the fur seal harvest on any island or group of islands

where the total number of seals falls below the level necessary to maintain the population at maximum productivity;

- for research on the relationship between fur seals and other living marine resources and the effect of commercial fisheries on fur seals;

- for a termination of the convention one year after any of the parties gives written notice to the other parties of any intention to end the convention; and

- for representatives of the parties to meet within 90 days of a request by any of the parties to consider modifications of the convention.

The Interim Convention on the Conservation of North Pacific Fur Seals was entered into in 1957 by the United States, Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union to regulate the harvest of fur seals in the North Pacific.

Nearly 80% of the northern fur seal resource is currently associated with the Pribilof Islands of the United States, located off the coast of Alaska.