

Agency extends comment period on sea otter policy

The public comment period concerning the proposed clarification of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's policy on sea otters has been extended for 90 days.

The comment period, which was scheduled to close Jan. 13, will now end April 13.

The proposal, published in the *Federal Register* interprets the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to "prohibit the taking of sea otters by Alaska Natives for use in creating and selling handicrafts and clothing."

While the proposal stipulates that Alaska Natives would still be permitted to take sea otters for subsistence

purposes for personal use, it would not allow sea otters to be taken and made into products for sale to others.

The proposal applies only to sea otters and not to any other species of marine mammals protected in the federal law.

Public comments concerning the service's proposed effort to clarify existing policy concerning sea otters must be submitted by March 14 to: Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Box 28006, Washington, D.C. 20038-8006.

Those who want further information may contact Jon Nickels in Anchorage at 786-3492.