



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

April 18, 2012

Mr. Kevin Moynahan
USACE, Portland District Regulatory Office
333 SW First Ave., P.O. Box 2946
Portland, OR 97204-3495

Dear Mr. Moynahan:

We request your assistance in obtaining any information in possession of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers which may contribute to our understanding of a stranding event involving a dead juvenile killer whale that was discovered in the surf 0.9 miles north of the Cranberry approach on the Long Beach Peninsula, Pacific County, Washington on February 11, 2012. Representatives from the Northwest Marine Mammal Stranding Network responded to the stranding event and transported the carcass to a secure area at Cape Disappointment, Washington for post-mortem examination.

The animal was tentatively identified from external examination as L112, a member of the "L" pod of the Southern Resident killer whale population, a species listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Under the direction of Dr. Deborah Duffield, Portland State University, the primary responder for the Long Beach area, a post-mortem examination was conducted on February 12, 2012 with assistance from Cascadia Research Collective and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The team collected morphometric data, photographs and tissues for analysis. The head was collected, frozen and later scanned at a diagnostic imaging service in Washington. Further forensic examination of the head was conducted by Dr. Joe Gaydos, University of California Sea-Doc Society, and the Whale Museum, March 6 and 7th.

We have yet to determine a cause for the loss of this animal but examiners found extensive hemorrhage in the soft tissues of the chest, head and right side of the body. Observations indicate the animal was moderately decomposed, but likely dead for less than a week when found.

We have reviewed environmental data between February 1 and February 11 and found that prevailing wind and currents, in the days prior to the stranding, were predominantly from the south. In addition, local current conditions are largely influenced by eddies flowing northward



from the mouth of the Columbia River. This would indicate that the animal likely died in the Columbia River plume or to the south and may have drifted a substantial distance before being cast ashore on Long Beach.

We are seeking information from a variety of sources in an attempt to identify whether human activities may have contributed to the injuries we observed. We do not have any information linking the L112 stranding to a specific event, but we are seeking information on civilian activities such as in-water construction, offshore surveys, or resource extraction along the Oregon coast to as far north as Ledbetter Point, Washington that may have been permitted by or reported to your agency between February 1 and 11, 2012 prior to the stranding. Of particular interest are any activities involving explosives (ordnance, blasting, dynamite) or intense impulsive sounds (air guns, pile driving), but we have not ruled out other factors, such as a vessel strike, as a contributing factor. We would appreciate your assistance in compiling any such reports.

Please contact Brent Norberg of my staff at (206) 526-6550 or brent.norberg@noaa.gov if you would like additional information from the analysis of the stranding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynne Barre', written in a cursive style.

Lynne Barre, Chief
Puget Sound Ecosystem
and Marine Mammals Branch