



December 19, 2008

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: H. Dale Hall, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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SUBJECT: Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

I. SUMMARY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries and the State Department have had the lead in cooperative efforts to support U.S. ratification of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses (ACAP) and to draft implementing legislation.

II. DISCUSSION

ACAP is an international, multilateral agreement that seeks to conserve albatrosses and petrels by coordinating international activities to mitigate known threats to these populations. Development of ACAP began in 1999 under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). ACAP came into force in February 2004. Current parties to ACAP include: Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, Ecuador, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of South Africa, Spain, Norway and the United Kingdom. The U.S. is not a party to CMS or ACAP.

Albatrosses and petrels are among the most threatened birds in the world. The greatest threats to the survival of these species -- which typically come to land only when nesting and spend most of their lives in the open ocean -- include incidental mortality (bycatch) from ocean fisheries. Birds are killed in longline and gillnet fisheries. American fishing vessels interact with some of these species within their range. Invasive species, pollutants and marine debris are also threats.

U.S. ratification of ACAP and implementing legislation will enable us to proactively work to ensure self-sustaining populations of albatross and petrels that nest in U.S. territory or use U.S. waters for feeding or resting. It will also enable the United States to work in partnership with other treaty partners to conserve albatross and petrels in need of conservation in international waters. A treaty transmittal package has been forwarded by the White House to the Senate Foreign Relations committee. In addition, the Department of Interior, Department of Commerce and the State Department have drafted implementing legislation which is currently going through review by the Office of Management and Budget.

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