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April 1, 2010

Eileen Maher
Assistant Environmental Director
Environmental Services Department
San Diego Unified Port District
PO Box 120488
San Diego, CA 92112-0488

Dear Ms. Maher,

This letter serves as our progress report for the first quarter of 2010 for our project “Movement and population size of spiny lobsters in San Diego Bay” (Hovel and Neilson).

Since December of 2009, we have visited our acoustic receivers stationed around San Diego Bay to download data (February 2010). This also served as an opportunity to replace the batteries in our receivers. Though our original proposal did not call for extending our acoustic tracking component beyond the life of the first set of batteries, we had an opportunity to acquire replacements and wished to extend the monitoring to at least a year if possible (allowing us to better gauge if directional movement might be seasonal). Sonotronics specifies a 9 month battery life for their SUR receivers, which suggests that the batteries would be nearing the end of their lives in February 2009. After replacing the batteries and downloading data from the receivers, we were surprised to find that most of the batteries had ceased to function in late December to early January, a period of approximately 7 months. Thus, our receivers are once again functioning to detect acoustically tagged lobsters, but we will be missing approximately 6 – 7 weeks of data in our time series. This also means that at this time, we have no new acoustic tracking data to provide.

We will be sampling in the Bay in early April (planned for April 5 – 7, weather permitting) and will be acquiring a new set of data on acoustically tagged lobsters at that time. I will provide a supplemental report to your office later in the month to describe the trends we observe in those data. We hope to still detect lobsters, but potential movement from the study site, as well as tag loss from molting or battery failure, will certainly reduce the number of detections compared to previous surveys. Our supplemental report also will contain more information on lobster population size estimates from the Bay, as we refine our preliminary estimates using more sophisticated models and the information we continue to acquire on lobster movement rates.

You requested that we report on turtle detections from our receivers. Though for the reasons described above we are unable to determine if our receivers detected acoustically tagged turtles between December and February, we have reviewed data from the past surveys and have not found any turtle detections. We will continue to search our receiver detection logs for signals from turtle tags and will report on any turtles detected in our supplemental report.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin A. Hovel
Associate Professor of Biology