



Alaska SeaLife Center
windows to the sea

ARE JUVENILE STELLER SEA LIONS FAILING TO THRIVE?

The Alaska SeaLife Center (ASLC) has created a world-class, unique research facility for juvenile Steller sea lions. This facility is part of the federally funded Steller sea lion research effort at the ASLC.

Why is a Facility Necessary?

The western stock of Steller sea lions has declined by 80% since the mid-1970s and is currently listed as an endangered species. Juveniles (1 – 4 years old) are thought to be the largest age group at risk. Many difficulties exist in studying free-ranging juvenile Steller sea lions because they spend the majority of their time at sea and haul out at remote locations. This new facility enables scientists from many institutions to work together to gain critical information.

RESEARCH PLAN



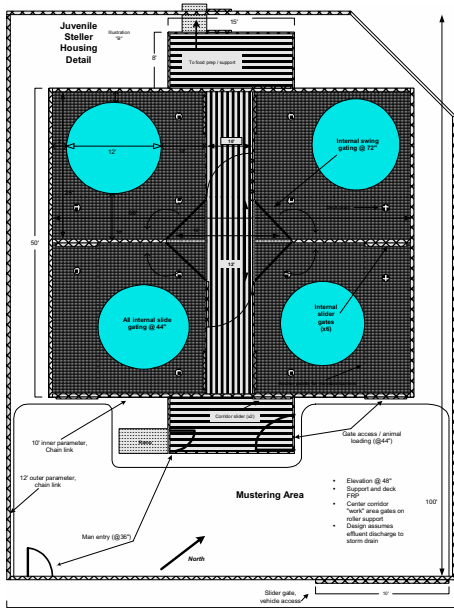
1) Capture: Each year, up to 16 juveniles will be brought from selected rookeries and haulouts in their western range to the ASLC facility.

2) Transport: Animals will be closely monitored by biologists and wildlife veterinarians as they are transported from their



haulout on a support vessel to the ASLC.

3) Habitat: The juvenile facility is completely self-contained to ensure a strict quarantine environment. The facility has four animal pools, a food preparation area, office space, and a decontamination area.



4) Research: These animals will provide critical information on: health status, nutrition, stress response, body condition, metal toxicity, and contaminant loads.

5) Release: After three months of research and a clean bill of health, the juveniles are released in the same area where they were captured. We continue to study and monitor the animals after their release through the use of external and internal tracking devices.



Partners in this research include the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Mystic Aquarium, Texas A&M University, and University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information, please contact Dr. Jo-Ann Mellish, Steller sea lion scientist, at joann_mellish@alaskasealife.org, (907) 224-6324, or the Alaska SeaLife Center, P.O. Box 1329, Seward, AK 99664.