



2150 Allston Way, ste 460
Berkeley, CA 94704
510-859-9145



3010 Kerner Boulevard
San Rafael, CA 94901
415-488-0048

Ms. Deborah Fauquier
Office of Protected Species
US National Marine Fisheries Service

November 30, 2017

Dear Ms. Fauquier:

We are writing as experts who have had extensive experience with free-ranging and captive belugas and cetaceans, as well as successful cetacean rehabilitation and release efforts. We would like to contribute our expertise and advice to the discussion as to whether the beluga calf “Tyonek”, currently being housed at the Alaska Sealife Center, is a good candidate for release, retirement to a seaside sanctuary, or retaining in captivity at a captive facility.

Upon receiving more detailed information as to the physical and psychological condition of the individual, we anticipate being able to formulate a recommendation as to how his future should be handled.

We note that public information suggests the calf’s condition is stabilizing, which reflects well on the efforts of NMFS, the Alaska Sealife Center, and your private consultants in tending to the health and welfare of this calf. Additionally, this information – including reported weight gain, robust appetite, and energy that the calf has been exhibiting; the short period of time in which the calf has been subjected to captivity; the known location of the calf’s pod; and the fact that the calf is from an endangered population – contributes to our initial assessment is that he could be a good candidate for release.

However, we do call into question the decision to put this individual on public display ahead of your assessment as to whether he will permanently remain in captivity. We believe efforts should be made to reduce his involvement and contact with humans at this stage in order to keep all possible options for his future open.

May we ask that we be included (either in person or via Skype) with your discussions on the calf in December?

We look forward to your timely response and to contributing to this important discussion.

Sincerely,

Dr. Toni Frohoff
Cetacean Scientist
In Defense of Animals

David Phillips
Executive Director
International Marine Mammal Project