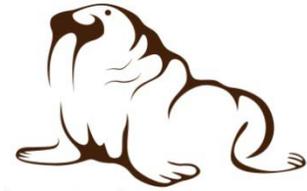


# Eskimo Walrus Commission

## Quarterly Report-1/1/15-3/1/15



Eskimo Walrus Commission

"To protect the pacific walrus population."

The Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) represents 19 walrus hunting coastal communities in Western and Northern Alaska. EWC has 2 staff positions (Director and EWC Specialist) that maintain daily office operations.

### The following highlights administrative activities to date:

- Follow-Up from 2014 EWC Annual Meeting December 17-18, 2014: EWC staff wrote letters to Geoffrey Haskett- USFWS Alaska Regional Director, Governor Walker, Alaska State Rural Legislators, Alaska Congressional delegation, and President Obama explaining EWC Resolution 2014-01 and including a copy of the resolution. These letters were also sent to other marine mammal commissions, AFN, and ICC. Supporting resolutions have been passed by the ICC Executive Committee, the Native Village of Savoonga, and the Kawerak, Inc. Board of Directors, and a letter of support has been received from the Alaska Nanuq Commission.
- Drafted and submitted request/justification for additional funding for EWC to USFWS, following meeting with Karen Clark in December.
- EWC staff has worked with the Native Village of Diomede on their disaster declaration following poor walrus harvests for the past several seasons. The Native Village of Diomede sent a letter, along with a resolution declaring a harvest disaster, to the EWC, and EWC staff forwarded this information to Kawerak's Community Services department and the Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs to provide support to the community.
- EWC received preliminary funding from ConocoPhillips to begin planning Traditional Ecological Knowledge about Pacific walrus research. ConocoPhillips has thus far provided \$50,000 for this project, but notice of full funding has not yet been received. EWC staff has begun planning for this project, reached out to the tribal governments of participating communities, and begun conducting interviews.
- EWC was awarded a grant from the Alaska Community Foundation to contract with the Foraker Group to develop a sustainable business plan for the EWC. EWC staff has begun meeting with the Foraker Group to work on this document, and it is expected to be completed by June 2015.
- EWC was awarded a 3-year grant from the National Park Service's Shared Beringian Heritage Program to conduct Pacific walrus TEK research in Chukotka and compile a Chukchi/Yupik/Russian/English walrus dictionary. This project will also involve conducting workshops in Nome and Provideniya to create dialogue between walrus hunters and managers on both sides of the Bering Strait about walrus related issues, concerns, and management priorities. EWC staff has been working with NPS staff since late February to establish agreement details for this grant.
- Drafted, finalized, and submitted a grant proposal to the Alaska Native Fund for funding to support EWC collaboration with other marine mammal commissions.
- Drafted, finalized, and submitted a grant proposal to the Oak Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts for funding to support work on strengthening tribal marine mammal ordinances on St. Lawrence Island and replicating them in other communities, increasing capacity of the EWC to collaborate with other marine mammal commissions, and increasing EWC communication capacity via enhanced internet presence, newsletter, etc.
- EWC staff attended the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee Meeting in Juneau March 9-10, 2015.
- EWC staff attended meeting with Environmental Law Institute on draft consultation procedures March 16<sup>th</sup>
- EWC staff attended the Indigenous People's Council on Marine Mammals meeting March 17-18, 2015.
- EWC staff is working with staff from NOAA's Ocean Acidification Program in Washington State to write an article for submission to Earthzine on the impacts of ocean acidification on walrus hunting communities.
- Held Spring Pre-Hunt Meetings in Gambell and Savoonga February 5 & 6 with representation from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
- Reported to Kawerak Natural Resources Committee prior to Kawerak Full Board Meeting March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **On-going Tasks:**

- Remain proactive in discussions or meetings regarding increased vessel traffic in the Arctic through participation in the Arctic Marine Mammal Coalition and the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee and other forums.
- Continue seeking support for EWC Resolution 2014-01 and communicating with relevant entities to push for reductions in carbon emissions.
- Plan for and conduct Pacific walrus TEK research in EWC communities through ConocoPhillips funding.
- Work with the Foraker Group to develop EWC sustainable business plan by June 2015.
- Work with National Park Service to establish agreement for Shared Beringian Heritage Program project and begin planning workshop for fall of 2015.
- Continue to communicate with potential funders on submitted proposals.
- Continue building the capacity of the EWC as an organization through improved communication via Facebook, greater collaboration with other marine mammal commissions and related entities, increased funding for the EWC, etc.

### **Significant Impacts to the Region**

A significant impact to EWC member communities is that the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee was formed and the EWC and other organizations representing subsistence hunters, as well as tribal entities, have a seat at the table in that forum. Another impact is that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation granted the Native Villages of Gambell and Savoonga funding to continue their Tribal Monitoring program to enforce their Tribal Marine Mammal Ordinances (TMMO), and to create a history document on the formation of the TMMOs so that other tribes can gain from their experiences. Organizations such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Arctic Marine Mammal Coalition, the Indigenous People's Council on Marine Mammals, Kawerak, Inc. and UAF's Marine Advisory Program continue to support the EWC and subsistence users throughout the region in their concerns over increased arctic shipping, oiled wildlife, Unusual Mortality Events, Avian Cholera, and other issues that have been increasingly occurring in the region.

### **Conclusion**

The EWC continues to seek better collaboration and communication with other groups, especially with our member tribes, on issues and concerns related walrus management and wellbeing. The EWC is also continually working to make progress on the strategic initiatives identified in the 2013 EWC Vision Navigation workshop, and remain an effective organization in a changing political, environmental, and social arctic environment.

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“To protect the pacific walrus population.”