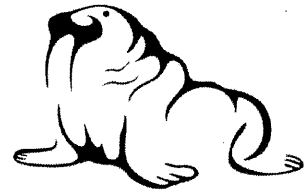


Eskimo Walrus Commission

Quarterly Report 04/1/17-06/30/17

Cooperative Agreement Award F14AC01135



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 employs 2 staff positions (Director and EWC Specialist) to maintain daily office operations.

The following highlights administrative activities to date:

- EWC staff worked with Kawerak, Indian Arts & Crafts Board, and Alaska State Council on the Arts to develop/finalize an "Alaska Native Ivory" brochure, and provided assistance in making copies. The brochure will be publicly distributed in different locations and businesses in Nome including other organizations and agencies. EWC continues to work with others on this critical issue and remains committed to protect the rights of Alaska Natives to carve and sell legitimate walrus ivory arts and crafts.
- EWC staff worked with SEARCH, ARCUS, and NOAA personnel on a grant proposal to Alaska Sea Grant to help fund the Sea Ice and Walrus Outlook (SIWO) project and work with local observers in Nome, Gambell, Savoonga, Wales, and Shishmaref in 2018 (proposal included funds for EWC's staff time). This spring, with small funds from ARCUS, SIWO operated from late March to mid-June providing 5-day weather forecasts to the 5 communities and receiving reports from the observers on local weather conditions and observations. On June 2, Director presented on SIWO at "Blue Planet Symposium" sponsored by various organizations and universities – NOAA paid for my travel-related expenses. Director also presented on SIWO at a "Community-Based Monitoring" workshop in Fairbanks on May 10-12-UAF sponsored this trip.
- EWC staff worked with National Park Service (NPS) staff and lead consultant to review existing 3-year agreement between EWC/Kawerak and marine mammal organization in Chukotka. Draft revisions to agreement scope of work was modified due to administrative changes with partner organization, submitted to NPS early June and currently waiting for approval for the 2nd and 3rd year scopes.
- In late April, Director attended NPRB board meeting in Anchorage to review various NPRB proposals for 2018 focused on Arctic, Bering Sea/Strait, Aleutians, and Gulf of Alaska research areas.
- EWC staff met in early May with Oak Foundation Arctic program director to discuss current 3-year funded project for communication and outreach activities, continue working with St. Lawrence Island marine mammal ordinance advisory members & local monitors, and with Strategies 360 in Anchorage on social media audit to improve EWC outreach efforts. Received first EWC newsletter from Strategies and mailed to Commission members and others throughout the state.
- Worked with program staff at NFWF to request remaining \$50K for Native Village of Gambell for April-June local monitor work and marine mammal advisory council joint meetings. Project was extended to June 30, but is the final year of the \$100K funds.
- Worked with Kawerak's Social Science program to have 2 ANSEP interns working in Nome for the summer with funds from Oak.
- In early April, EWC provided a cover letter with additional comments based on 2 reviewers that identified some deficiencies and informational gaps in various sections of the draft Species Assessment walrus report.
- Submitted draft 2017 Cooperative Agreement in May to FWS for \$143,500.
- Responded with UAF's MAP on walrus calf hauled out on a Nome gold dredge and contacted local hunter for his input on the overall health of the calf.

On-going Tasks:

- Continue to work with USFWS and Kawerak leadership to resolve yearly cooperative agreement budget deficit and work on financially stabilizing EWC with requests to Kawerak board for compact funds to cover salary/fringe for 2 employees that Agreement does not cover.
- Currently waiting on further news from USFWS on their ESA listing determination for Pacific walrus.
- Continue to respond to inquiries on marine mammal strandings in Nome area
- with Kawerak Subsistence Program and UAF-MAP.

- Remain proactive in discussions/meetings regarding increased vessel traffic in the Arctic through AMMC, AWSC, and other forums to continue discussions on other impacts to walrus and subsistence communities, including climate change and ocean acidification
- Continue working with the Native Villages of Gambell and Savoonga to seek multi-year funds to discuss capacity building for the local management structure and the potential expansion of the Tribal Marine Mammal Ordinances
- Contact other marine mammal commissions to coordinate EWC attendance at their annual meetings and communicate with EWC Commissioners on potential issues on which EWC can propose to collaborate
- Continue working with Strategies 360 on an updated EWC website and communications infrastructure including media training

Significant Impacts to the Region

EWC remains committed to insure that local hunters and their voices are included within the full ESA regulatory process of Pacific walrus so that the final result or findings does not impact the food security of subsistence users. EWC continues to advocate for protecting the livelihood of Alaska Native residents and artists who rely on marine mammal products including walrus ivory in their arts and handicrafts as it is critical to Alaska cultural and economic dependence on Arctic marine mammals.

Conclusion

EWC remains committed to be actively involved in co-management activities related to the Pacific walrus, including seeking adequate funds to incorporate the full interests of Alaska Natives to self-manage, and coordinate with federal agencies and other organizations on potential research opportunities for EWC member communities. EWC is 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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