

# Eskimo Walrus Commission

## Quarterly Report 01/01/18-03/31/18

### Cooperative Agreement Award F14AC01135



**Eskimo Walrus Commission**  
"To protect the pacific walrus population."

Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) represents 19 walrus hunting coastal communities in Western and Northern Alaska. Due to budget constraints, EWC currently employs 1 staff position (Director) to maintain daily office operations.

#### The following highlights administrative activities to date:

- EWC continues to provide walrus ivory brochures to the general public and meets with an ivory ban working group to protect the rights of Alaska Natives to carve and sell legitimate walrus ivory arts and crafts. Director testified at January 29 and April 3 hearings in Juneau on Senate Joint Resolution 4 "urging Congress to exempt legally obtained walrus, mammoth, & mastodon ivory" from other laws banning ivory.
- Submitted raw ivory sale report to USFWS in January 2018.
- Provided electronic copy of EWC's updated report to Qayassiq's post-hunt meeting in Dillingham on April 4, 2018. Provided authorization letter to Helen Aderman to represent EWC at an ivory sale in Dillingham during Beaver Round-Up on March 24, 2018.
- Met with SIWO (Sea Ice & Walrus Outlook) team to plan pre-season activities with observers in 5 communities and schedule start-end project during spring 2018 harvesting season. An observer from Diomede was added to existing 5 communities where local observations are shared/posted on SIWO website every Friday.
- Received/distributed ICC Wildlife Management Summit report from the Ottawa, Ontario-Canada workshop on Nov. 6-8, 2017.
- January-February period, worked with Gambell IRA's tribal coordinator and Kawerak accounting to submit final report to NFWF on a 2-year funded "Supporting Tribal Marine Mammal Councils on St. Lawrence Island" project. Request for remaining funds to NFWF will be submitted soon.
- Met with USFWS and MAP-UAF late January 2018 to work out walrus sampling concerns, collection authorization, and rules/regulations including current sampling process and how to improve existing sampling program.
- Consulted and worked with USFWS to finalize the draft "Co-management priorities for Pacific walrus" workshop report from Dec. 6 facilitated meeting in Anchorage with EWC E-board.
- Provided a written EWC activity summary report to Kawerak's Natural Resources Committee meeting in Nome on March 26, 2018.
- In late Feb.-early March, collaborated with Kawerak's Subsistence Director and UAF-MAP on 2017 walrus/seabird die-offs, saxitoxin and harmful algal bloom issues, and how to inform the general public on these emerging health concerns.
- Worked with Kawerak's Communication/Outreach Coordinator to submit a PSA supporting Kawerak, Inc's. opposing BOEM's oil and gas leasing/exploration in the Hope, Navarin, St. Mathew Hall, and Norton Basins.
- Attended the first Steering Committee for Marine Mammal Commission's "Co-Management Review" project in Anchorage with other members on March 15-16 review project and proposed interview questions for selected co-management organizations: EWC, Aleut Community of St. Paul Island & Aleut Marine Mammal Commission including broadly looking at AEWC.
- Arranged travel for EWC members for an ICC Food Sovereignty focus group session in Nome on March 29-30 (EWC is involved in the NSF funded project with ICC Alaska).
- Worked with Kawerak's Social Science program to plan for 1 ANSEP-UAA intern to work in EWC during summer 2018.
- Collaborated with USFWS to tentatively schedule hunter meetings in Savoonga and Gambell for early April 2018 season.

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

- Continue to discuss and work with USFWS and Kawerak leadership to resolve yearly cooperative agreement budget deficit and work on financially stabilizing EWC by seeking other funding sources.
- Continue to respond to inquiries on marine mammal strandings in Nome area with MAP-UAF and Kawerak Subsistence program including other emerging health concerns (algal bloom, saxitoxin, etc.) and climate change challenges.
- Remain proactive in discussions/meetings on increased vessel traffic in the Arctic through AMMC, AWSC, and other forums to continue discussions on potential impacts to walrus and subsistence communities.
- 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. Share draft 'ordinance' template with Gambell and Savoonga before distribution.
- Contact other marine mammal commissions to coordinate EWC attendance at their annual meetings and communicate with EWC Commissioners on potential issues for EWC to further collaborate.
- Continue working with Strategies 360 on EWC website and Facebook work including additional media training.

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

EWC continues to inform local hunters and communities on ivory ban and other issues of concern that will or can impact the food security of subsistence users, and advocate for protecting the livelihood of Alaska Native residents and artists who rely on marine mammal product such as walrus ivory.

### **Conclusion**

EWC is 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. Communicate/coordinate with federal agencies and other organizations on potential research opportunities for EWC member communities, and remain an effective organization in a changing political, environmental, and social Arctic environment.

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