



## CO-MANAGEMENT IN A CHANGING ARCTIC

The federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) acknowledges the importance of having “full and equal participation by Alaska Natives in decisions affecting the management of marine mammals taken for subsistence purposes” – a voice in the management of the species Alaska Native hunters have relied on for centuries.

The framework of co-management of marine mammals continues to be reviewed and assessed for effectiveness as it has not significantly changed since 1994. Without diligent commitment to frequent and meaningful consultation and communication, neither EWC nor USFWS will experience a responsible, properly-informed co-management decision-making structure.

EWC actively makes efforts to serve as an equal and effective partner jointly with the USFWS through:

- **The conservation and collection of walrus harvest data and biological samples;**
- **Support for the self-regulation efforts of walrus hunting communities**
- **Convening annual commission member meetings.**

EWC consistently looks for more opportunities to engage federal co-management agencies including the co-production and recognition of indigenous knowledge. EWC also takes appropriate steps to protect the overall food security of member communities by responding to ongoing challenges such as ESA status for Pacific walrus and emerging issues impacting harvesting of healthy marine mammals (harmful algal blooms).



Photo Credit: Joel Garlich-Miller, USFWS



## FUNDING

EWC continues to pursue stable, long-term funding as fiscal support for Cooperative agreements has plummeted – in turn decreasing EWC’s capacity to operate at an effective level and to respond comprehensively to the many changes in the new Arctic. Without secured funding for adequate staffing, EWC lacks sufficient capacity to provide:

- **Increased advocacy support to hunters in member communities, e.g., the Endangered Species Act (ESA) determination and process,**
- **Improved co-management collaboration,**
- **Research coordination with other marine mammal commissions,**
- **Fully developed and ongoing community education and outreach.**

Without EWC, Commission members in the 19 respective communities lack a unified voice and representation in the responsible management of the Pacific walrus.

Photo Credit: Joel Garlich-Miller, USFWS

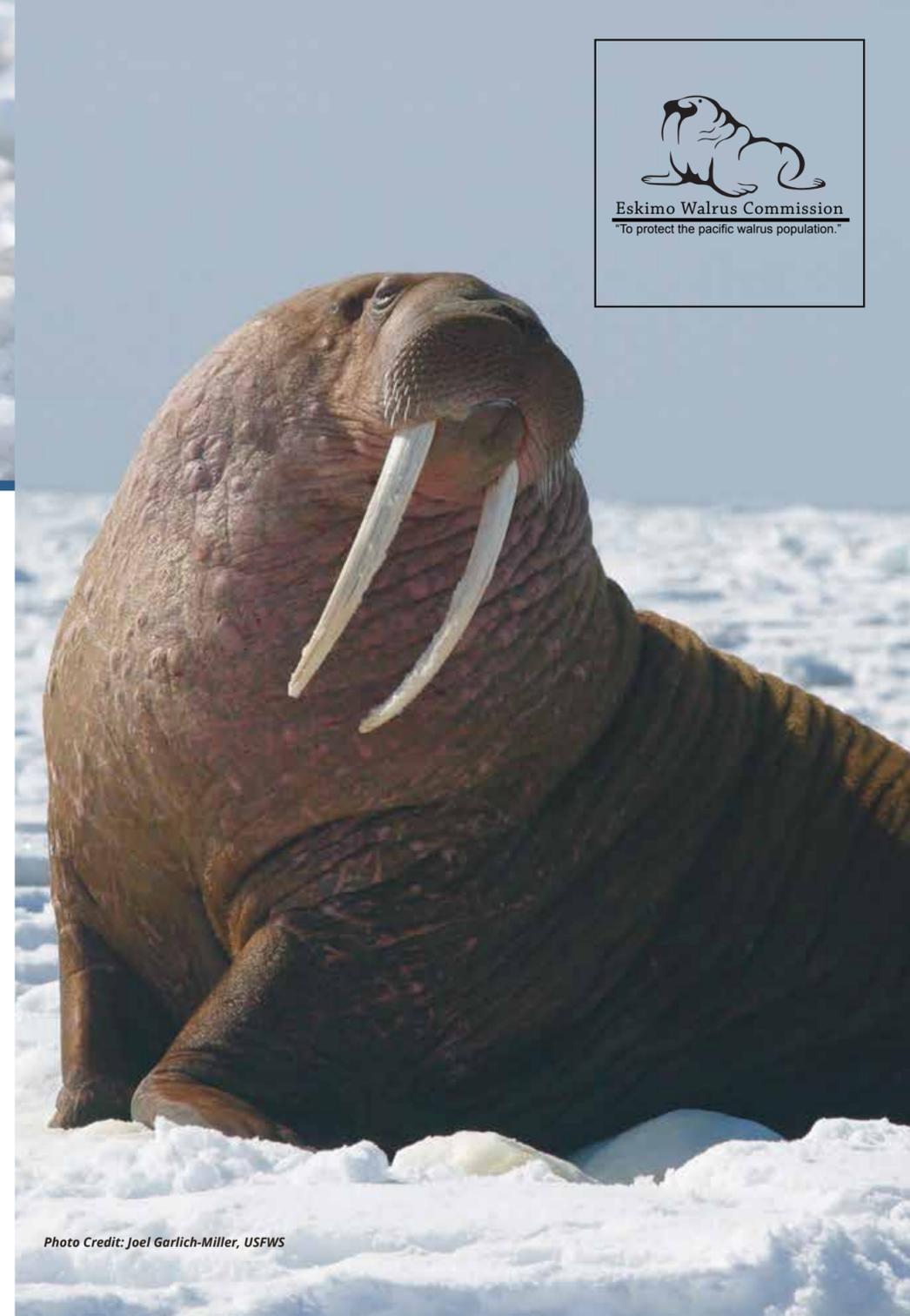
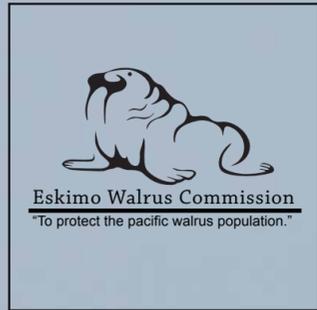


Photo Credit: Joel Garlich-Miller, USFWS

## EWC MEMBER COMMUNITIES:

Utqiagvik (Barrow), Brevig Mission, Gambell, King Island, Kivalina, Kotzebue, Kwigillingok, Little Diomed, Manokotak, Mekoryuk, Nome, Point Hope, Point Lay, Savoonga, Shishmaref, Stebbins, Unalakleet, Wainwright, Wales

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For more information, please visit EWC’s website: [eskimowalruscommission.org](http://eskimowalruscommission.org)

Look for us on Facebook @EskimoWalrusCommission!

(EWC is an independent organization currently housed at Kawerak, Inc.)



## OUR WORK & OUR ORIGINS

Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) is a recognized voice for walrus hunters in the management of the Pacific walrus population. EWC represents tribal communities along Alaska's coast from Utqiaqvik (Barrow) to Bristol Bay as walrus is an essential cultural, natural, and subsistence resource to St. Lawrence Island Yupik, Central Yup'ik and Iñupiaq people.

Established by Kawerak in 1978, EWC has since partnered with government agencies and researchers, to ensure that the Pacific walrus population remains healthy and available to Alaska Native communities.

EWC plays a vital role in the management of walrus harvesting through inclusion of the voice of hunters in the decision-making process, and by providing an avenue for the member communities to express priorities and concerns regarding walrus-related research.

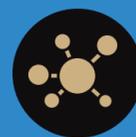
Since 1997, EWC has agreed to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the co-management of the Pacific walrus population through cooperative agreements authorized under Section 119 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Through co-management with USFWS, EWC has made important contributions of Indigenous Knowledge research projects, including documentation of interviews with hunters and elders and through bilateral research efforts with partners in Chukotka, Russia.

Despite decreased funding levels in recent years, EWC remains committed to its mission, and continues to deliver valuable projects critical to the communities including coordinating annual meetings, working with researchers, and educating the public and walrus hunters.



Photo Credit: Joel Garlich-Miller, USFWS



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

EWC is the statewide advocate dedicated to co-managing with the U.S. federal government for the shared purpose of protecting the Pacific walrus population. In 2016, EWC commissioners identified seven strategic initiatives to meet Core Vision priorities for 2025:

1. *Secure long-term funding for EWC*
2. *Undertake commission role strengthening*
3. *Provide better advocacy support to hunters*
4. *Improve co-management*
5. *Improve research coordination*
6. *Improve coordination with other commissions*
7. *Conduct walrus population assessments*



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Actively engage in, lobby, and advocate for a sustainable-well funded EWC** and more equitable participation from federal partners. Highlight EWC's management role at international conferences, forums/presentations on critical issues such as climate change, health concerns from environmental changes in marine waters, increased ship traffic in Arctic waters, and other impacts that will affect the well-being of Alaska Native coastal communities
- **Educate media, scientists, industry, and environmental advocates** about indigenous knowledge of the Pacific walrus. Provide guidance to federal agencies and interested researchers about conducting community-based research in culturally appropriate and respectful manner
- **Facilitate annual hunter meetings** to share and improve communication of ground-level information between hunters and management bodies such as NOAA, USCG, USGS, NPS, NSF, UAF, and others interested in conducting research activities in communities
- **Conduct Indigenous Knowledge research** on the use of walrus by Alaska Native people and highlight traditional methods of conservation to help assist and inform the management process.
- **Convene joint meetings with industry** to minimize disturbances to walrus haulout areas and assist in facilitated community-based haulout management efforts at Point Lay, distribute walrus ivory brochures to general public and participate in an ivory ban working group to protect the rights of Alaska Natives to carve and sell legitimate walrus ivory arts and crafts
- **Educate Alaska's Delegation** and support their advocacy to protect Alaska Native uses of legitimately harvested walrus ivory which provides economic and cultural value to Western Alaska's rural communities
- **Cultivate ongoing partnerships** and international gatherings with Russian biologists and marine mammal hunters in Chukotka
- **Support community efforts** to revitalize and develop local marine mammal hunting ordinances
- **Attend and provide EWC updates at pre-post hunt meetings** of Qayassiq Walrus Commission
- **Produce traditional walrus hunter education video** "Neqniighvigput -Where We Get Our Food From"
- **Perform annual monitoring of subsistence harvest** of walrus alongside USFWS; assessing size and demographics of spring harvest through hunter interviews and biological samplings
- **Develop, update, and translate walrus wasteful take** policy into three Alaska Native languages (St. Lawrence Island Yupik, Inupiaq, and Central Yup'ik)
- **Assisted in biomonitoring and sampling programs** in two communities including walrus harvest monitoring
- **Promote documenting traditional walrus management practices**
- **Arrange for coastal marine mammal carcass surveys** with US Coast Guard
- **Founding member** of the Arctic Marine Mammal Coalition and Arctic Waterway Safety Committee



Photo Credit: Marc Webber, USFWS



Photo Credit: Joel Garlich-Miller, USFWS