

New Seal Hunting and Safety Student Guide and Workbook

Hot off the press is the new Seal Hunting and Safety Student Guide –Yup'ik Region.

This education material was created primarily for grade 4 through 6 students in seal hunting communities. The material within this guide is culturally and geographically relevant, interdisciplinary, and correlated with the AK State Education Content Standards. We hope that all educators find this student guide and workbook useful for teaching required skills while recognizing the importance of traditional and cultural activities. Whether it is done as a stand-alone activity or as part of a larger unit is up to each educator.

Ringed, bearded, spotted, and ribbon seals are the species of Alaska's seals collectively called "**ice seals**" because they rely on sea ice for feeding, resting, and pupping. Alaska Natives living along the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas are highly reliant on ice seals for food, equipment, and handicrafts. There are concerns regarding the status, health, and availability of ice seals due to changes occurring in thickness, persistence, and distribution of sea ice.

Ice seals have received little scientific attention compared to other marine animals known to be in decline. Current population estimates for ice seals are not available and not easily attainable due to their wide distribution and the problems related to marine mammal surveys in remote, ice-covered waters. Due to concerns of subsistence hunters, the Ice Seal Working Group, now called Ice Seal Committee (ISC) was formed in October of 2003 to "**ensure the conservation of ice seals and their habitats that sustain Alaska Native cultures**".

The ISC is made up of one representative from each of the five general regions of Alaska that harvest ice seals (North Slope, Bering Strait, Northwest Arctic, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Bristol Bay). A statewide meeting of the ISC was held in March 2004 to elect officers and discuss priorities. One of their priorities, ***Develop Hunter Education Programs*** is the focus of this student guide and accompanying workbook. A regional meeting of the marine mammal hunting village representatives in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region (Imarpigmiut Ungungsiit Murilkestiit) held in August 2004 also identified a hunter education program for schools as a high priority project.

This project is a cooperative effort of the Ice Seal Committee (ISC), the Imarpigmiut Ungungsiit Murilkestiit (IUM), the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and cooperating villages.

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