

**FEDERAL AID  
INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
PO Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
State Wildlife Grant**

**Grant Number:** T-1 **Segment Number:** 3  
**Project Number:** 7.11  
**Project Title:** Developing an ice seal harvest monitoring program  
**Project Duration:** July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2009  
**Report Period:** 1 July 2006 – 30 June 2007  
**Report Due Date:** September 30, 2007  
**Partner:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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**Project Objectives**

- (a) Determine the best method to collect harvest information for ice seals (ringed, bearded, spotted, ribbon) throughout their range. The method will be flexible to accommodate specific regional and community needs. The method will also be effective, inexpensive and voluntary.
- (b) After three years this project will result in a viable harvest monitoring program or significant recommendations for how to develop such a program. The recommendation will consider the interests of subsistence hunters, local and regional representatives, and the co-managers of ice seals: the Ice Seal Committee and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

**Summary of Accomplishments**

A long-term nonpermanent Fish and Wildlife Technician IV (Mark Nelson) was hired in October 2006. Mark attended the annual Ice Seal Committee meeting, in October, where he met with committee members and introduced his position and project goals. Mark traveled to Barrow, Kotzebue, Togiak, Hooper Bay and Mekoryuk during this reporting period. He met with community representatives to discuss past, current, and future harvest monitoring programs.

North Slope Region: In Barrow, Mark met with the North Slope Borough (NSB) Department of Wildlife Management. The NSB uses annual household surveys to record all species harvested for subsistence. Discussions included how effective household surveys were, and if there were other methods that should be considered. The NSB is satisfied with the household surveys although they have difficulty analyzing the data and preparing the reports in a timely manner.

Northwest Arctic Region: In Kotzebue, Mark met with the Kotzebue IRA where he discussed harvest monitoring with the IRA wildlife management representative and with a Maniilaq representative. The IRA has recently completed a comprehensive harvest survey of Kotzebue, using household survey methods, the report is in preparation. Once this report is released we will be able to see how it is received by the community. The acceptance of the report by the community will likely affect plans to continue this type of survey in the future.

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region: In Hooper Bay, Mark delivered a presentation on harvest monitoring, which included the use of a seal harvest calendar. A community discussion followed revealing that people were interested and would like to participate; therefore we distributed harvest calendars to everyone at the meeting. The calendars allow hunters to record the number of seals harvested each week by species and sex, and the monthly record is designed to be torn out each month and mailed in postage free. Turning in calendar pages makes participants eligible for prizes.

In Mekoryuk, Mark visited with the village administrator and a nonprofit group called NPT. Plans were made for future visits and various methods of harvest monitoring surveys were discussed.

Bristol Bay Region: Mark is working with the Bristol Bay Native Association, ADFG Division of Subsistence and the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission to determine the best way to approach harvest monitoring in this region. Adding ice seals to the existing harbor seal/sea lion survey appears to be the preferred method of surveying by all parties involved.

Summary: Most regions are using household surveys for collecting harvest information. Survey time intervals vary based on the availability of money for different species. The preferred method is to combine surveys to do one complete survey of all subsistence species to avoid 'survey burnout,' which happens when different agencies conduct similar surveys in the same timeframe. For example, there could be as many as five agencies or local governments interested in obtaining harvest information.

Although some regions have been successful in conducting household surveys as often as once a year, the difficulty appears to be in analyzing the data and preparing the reports in a timely manner due to the volume of the data, personnel availability, and/or the funding available. We are exploring different survey tools, especially in areas that are not covered by household surveys. The harvest calendar is one tool that has been well received in the communities, however, the return rate has been low; we are attempting different prize strategies to boost returns. Further evaluation of survey methods already in place and exploring and developing other methods will be the main tasks for the second year of the project.

**Significant Deviations:** No significant deviations to date.

**Project Leader:** Lori Quakenbush / Mark Nelson (ADFG AMMP)

**Additional Information:** Although ice seal harvest monitoring is a sensitive issue among subsistence hunters the general consensus from village meetings and the Ice Seal Committee is that harvest monitoring is important to hunters. Different regions have different survey tools in place and to avoid 'survey burnout' we are attempting to work with interested organizations to combine surveys and share information.