

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

Grant Number: T-3 **Segment Number:** 1
Project Number: 7.11
Project Title: Developing an ice seal harvest monitoring program
Project Duration: July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2010
Report Period: July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009
Report Due Date: September 30, 2009
Principal Investigator: Mark Nelson, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Project Objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1: Develop a harvest-monitoring program that is flexible enough to accommodate different villages and is effective, inexpensive and voluntary. After three years this project will result in a viable harvest monitoring program or significant recommendations for how to develop such a program.

JOB/ACTIVITY 1A: A long-term nonpermanent Fish and Wildlife Technician IV (Mark Nelson) will work with 10 villages to develop monitoring methods that can be expanded to other villages in the future. Those villages may include Barrow, Pt. Hope, Kivalina, Kotzebue, Nome, Shishmaref, Gambell or Savoonga, Hooper Bay, Mekoryuk, and Togiak.

Summary of Project Accomplishments:

OBJECTIVE 1: Mark travelled to Anchorage, Tununak, Quinhagak, Bethel, and Hooper Bay during FY09 to assist in the development of two ice seal harvest monitoring programs and to attend meetings about ice seal harvest monitoring. The Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K) Delta region has been least involved in harvest monitoring of any of the five regions, therefore we have made this region a priority. Mark developed a draft report for the Ice Seal Committee (ISC) that summarizes the results of existing ice seal harvest monitoring programs across the state from 2000 to 2006. The report provided basic information about seal harvest by region and shows where current harvest monitoring efforts are and where they are needed.

JOB/ACTIVITY 1A: In the Y-K Delta region, Mark worked with Jennifer Hooper from the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) to hold a meeting of the Imapigmiut Ungungsiit Murillkestiit (IUM), which consists of a member from each of the 26 coastal tribes in the region. The IUM agreed that harvest monitoring was important, however, the individual communities should decide whether or not to participate in the projects. Jennifer and Mark attended meetings in Hooper Bay, Tununak, and Quinhagak to seek approval to conduct the surveys, all communities agreed to the surveys. Mark then traveled back to the

communities in early winter to train a locally appointed surveyor from each community. The surveyors collected the information and the results will be presented to the communities this fall before distributing or sharing the information.

In Bristol Bay, Mark coordinated with Molly Chythlook from Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) to add ice seals to a survey that was already being conducted for harbor seals and sea lions. The Togiak Traditional council approved the pilot project as did the nearby village of Twin Hills. The ice seal species were added to these surveys and the results from 2008 are available. In Togiak 104 of 110 (95%) households were surveyed and in Twin Hills all 20 (100%) households were sampled. Togiak harvested an estimated 71 spotted, 1 bearded, 2 ringed, and no ribbon seals in 2008, Twin Hills harvested 4 spotted seals and no other ice seals during 2008. We will continue to monitor Togiak and Twin Hills in the future to determine if the low number of harvested ice seals in 2008 is stable or fluctuates from year to year.

Prepared By: Mark Nelson