

*Arctic Ocean – Living Marine Resources*

**Satellite Tracking of Western Arctic Bowhead Whales**

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The western Arctic stock of bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) are of high importance due to their nutritional and cultural role in Alaska Native subsistence lifestyle, their role in the marine ecosystem, and because their summer range overlaps areas with the potential for oil and gas development. Movement patterns and feeding areas of this stock of bowhead whales, however, are not well understood in some regions. Increasing our understanding of bowhead whale behavior will aid in planning and resource conservation. This study will attempt to attach up to 25 satellite transmitters to bowhead whales each year for the next five years. The study was designed cooperatively with subsistence whalers and with local, state, and federal agencies and uses tags developed by the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources. Alaska Native subsistence whalers have been important in the field component of this project during tagging efforts. Six Barrow whalers have been trained to deploy tags, which will greatly expand our opportunities for tagging. Two transmitters are reporting locations and one whale has been tracked over 2,500 km from Barrow east to Amundsen Gulf, Canada and then west beyond Barrow into the Chukchi Sea. As of 1 November 2006 both whales were near the northern coast of Chukotka, west of 179 degrees W longitude. Several areas appear to have been used for feeding based on movement patterns and residence times. We will report the most recent movements of the tagged whales in our presentation.



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