

**FEDERAL AID
INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

STATE WILDLIFE GRANT (SWG)

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: T-1-2

PROJECT NR.: 1

WORK LOCATION: Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary

PROJECT DURATION: 1 July 2002 – 31 December 2006

PROJECT REPORTING PERIOD: 1 May 2005 – 30 August 2006

PROJECT TITLE: Walrus Islands Conservation Planning

Project Objectives:

1. Track trends in the number of walrus using Bristol Bay (annually and seasonally) from 2002-2006.

Job/Activity a: Staff will count walrus hauled out on each beach or estimate their numbers daily from mid-May to mid-August each year.

Job/Activity b: Staff will collect “ground truth” information to evaluate accuracy of satellite imagery to count walrus during summer 2002.

Job/Activity c: ADF&G will provide shelter and support for USGS and USFWS research biologists in the collection of skin samples of walrus during summer 2002.

Job/Activity d: Staff will record all observations of anthropogenic disturbances by visitors, boat traffic, and air traffic.

2. With Federal, State, Native and other groups, develop cooperative conservation efforts from 2002-2006.

Job/Activity a: Staff will provide data for updating the Bristol Bay Walrus Conservation Plan

Job/Activity b: Staff will assist in developing and maintaining cooperative management of walrus in Bristol Bay with Federal, State, Native and other groups by June 30, 2006.

Job/Activity c: Staff will update cooperative management agreement between USFWS and ADF&G by March 2003.

Summary of Project Accomplishments:

Objective 1 (Note: Because the data collection period overlaps the reporting period, the accomplishments for Objective 1 refer to two field seasons of data collection from May 17 to August 13, 2005 and May 2 through August 14, 2006.)

- a. Walrus haulout surveys were conducted 80 times in the 2005 season and 95 times during the 2006 season. The high counts were 2,195 walruses on May 19 and 2,716 walruses on May 26 for the 2005 and 2006 seasons, respectively.
- b. There were no tagging or marking of animals in the 2005 or 2006 seasons and satellite imagery was not conducted in either season.
- c. There were no research efforts by USFWS or USGS staff at Round Island in 2005 or 2006.

- d. Staff observed 17 incidents of anthropogenic disturbances to walrus and one natural disturbance event during 2005. During the 2006 season, staff observed 10 anthropogenic disturbances and no natural disturbance events. All observed disturbance incidents were from authorized activities (by visitors, boat traffic and air traffic) and the natural event was likely a result of a thunderstorm. During 2006, two aircraft flew low over the island in separate incidents and it is unknown if any walrus were disturbed.

Objective 2

- a. Staff provided walrus survey and disturbance data to USFWS management biologists for updating the Bristol Bay Walrus Conservation Plan. The USFWS continues to work on the draft conservation plan and have recently hired a graduate intern to review current and past survey data to assess the affects environmental conditions have on walrus use of haulouts. These results may influence how the conservation plan is ultimately implemented.
- b. Staff and partner agencies finalized a revised Cooperative Agreement to manage the Round Island traditional walrus hunt in 2003. Staff continue meeting and discussing hunt-related issues and other Bristol Bay walrus management issues with partner entities during several annual meetings and as necessary.
- c. A Memorandum of Agreement for managing and staffing the summer program at Round Island was updated in 2003. While the USFWS Office of Marine Mammals Management provided assistance with survey methodology, and provided financial assistance to support an ADF&G volunteer program in 2005, they were unable to provide staffing support during the 2005 and 2006 seasons.

Project Costs (includes indirect costs):

Total costs: Federal share \$80,795.62 + state share \$26,931.88 = total cost \$107,727.50

Prepared By: Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator

Date: August 30, 2006