

**FEDERAL AID  
FINAL 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 and Segment Number:** T-1-2  
**Project Number:** 1.0  
**Project Title:** Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary  
**Project Duration:** 1 July 2002 – June 30, 2007  
**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**

OBJECTIVE 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 US Geological Survey (USGS) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (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.

OBJECTIVE 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 for the entire project**

OBJECTIVE 1:

JOB/ACTIVITY A: Walrus numbers, behavior, distribution and other environmental conditions were documented on a near-daily basis during summer (early May – mid-August) during the entire project period. Survey techniques were consistent with

established protocols and included comparisons of count techniques (e.g., multiple counts by single observers, multiple counts by multiple observers, and photographic counts). Annual high counts ranged from 2,195 animals in 2005 to 5,245 animals in 2007.

JOB/ACTIVITY B: Satellite photos of Round Island were taken in 2002 (4 photos) and 2003 (5 photos). Sanctuary staff provided “ground truthing” counts and photographs of walrus on the island that were used to develop a technique for estimating numbers of walrus present in the satellite imagery.

In addition, satellite telemetry tags were deployed on seven animals at Round Island in 2003 and these animals were tracked throughout the season. Satellite transmitters were also deployed on 30 walrus in the sea ice west of Round Island in April 2004. During summer of 2004, Round Island staff observed and recorded tagged animals hauled out on the island.

JOB/ACTIVITY C: ADF&G provided shelter and support for two USGS and one USFWS research biologists in 2002 when approximately 50 skin samples of walrus were collected to help delineate American/Russian populations and to investigate the validity of genetic population estimates. Shelter and support were also provided to one USGS and one USFWS research biologists in May 2003 when 19 skin samples of walrus were collected. During the summers 2002 – 2005, ADF&G provided shelter and support for one USFWS technician who assisted with walrus haulout monitoring.

JOB/ACTIVITY D: Staff recorded all observations of anthropogenic disturbances by visitors, boat and traffic, and sanctuary operations including 9 events in 2002 (all aircraft); 38 incidents in 2004 (plus two natural disturbance events involving a rock slide and seabird activity); 17 incidents in 2005 (plus one natural disturbance event); ten incidents in 2006 (plus one natural disturbance event); and 21 incidents in 2007. Evaluating these observations allowed staff to better direct sanctuary operations in an effort to minimize disturbance to walrus.

#### OBJECTIVE 2:

JOB/ACTIVITY A: All data collected during the project period were provided to the Office of Marine Mammal Management at the USFWS for use in their Bristol Bay Walrus Conservation Plan. These data were used in evaluating survey techniques and relationships between haulout use and environmental factors. A draft conservation plan has been prepared; however, other conservation priorities for Pacific walrus have delayed final plan preparation.

JOB/ACTIVITY 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. Efforts continued throughout the project period to implement conservation and land protection strategies for the Cape Siniavin haulout in southern Bristol Bay.

JOB/ACTIVITY C: A Memorandum of Agreement for managing and staffing the summer program at Round Island was updated in 2003.

**Project Accomplishments during last segment period only (July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007)**

Walrus surveys as described in OBJECTIVE 1, JOB/ACTIVITY A continued during this reporting period as did documentation of anthropogenic disturbances as described in OBJECTIVE 1, JOB/ACTIVITY D. These data were provided to the USFWS for their continuing efforts to manage and conserve Pacific walruses in Bristol Bay and for use in their conservation plan (OBJECTIVE 2, JOB/ACTIVITY A).

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