

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

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-C-1-2018

PROJECT NUMBER: P1.0

PROJECT TITLE: Round Island Sanctuary Operations

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: 01 May 2018 – 31 December 2019

PERFORMANCE YEAR: 1 May 2018 – 30 June 2019

REPORT DUE DATE: 1 September 2019

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joe Meehan, Lands and Refuges Program Coordinator
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COOPERATORS:

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR

OBJECTIVE 1: Operate all aspects of the visitor use program at Round Island.

Job/Activity 1a: Manage public access as required by statute and regulation at Round Island to include review and issuance of access permits, explanation of permit conditions, assistance with logistics and explaining wildlife viewing and other opportunities on the island.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: All aspects of Activity 1 a were accomplished. Forty camping and 5 day-use permits were issued for the 2018 season (April – August 2018). For the 2019 season, 19 camping and 1 day-use permits were issued. Actual visitation for 2018 and 2019 was 28 and 10, respectively; with 150 visitor use days in 2018 and 52 visitor use days for 2019 as of 30 June.

Job/Activity 1b: Conduct visitor monitoring and educational programs at Round Island to include oversight of public activities to prevent impacts to wildlife, interpreting through informal presentations the natural history of the island's wildlife and habitats, and providing other educational opportunities as appropriate.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: ADF&G Fish & Wildlife Technicians were present on Round Island 26 April through 17 August 2018 and 15 May through 9 August 2019. During these times they managed visitor use at the sanctuary and provided onsite oversight and guidance of wildlife viewing and habitat protection. They also provided informal interpretation of wildlife, habitats, and sanctuary resources to sanctuary visitors.

OBJECTIVE 2: Monitor or research changes in abundance, use patterns, population health, productivity, and/or other parameters of wildlife populations and their habitats.

Job/Activity 2a: Conduct wildlife surveys and monitoring programs to assess Pacific walrus, Steller sea lion, seabirds and other wildlife species and resources at Round Island. Surveys shall follow protocols and authorizations jointly developed with the department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Office of Migratory Bird Management, and Marine Mammals Management Office) and NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service and will include management of data from prior surveys.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During the reporting period normal census monitoring and protection surveys were conducted 26 April through 17 August 2018, and 16 May through 9 August 2019 for the following: Pacific walrus and Steller sea lion haulouts; Steller sea lion brand re-sights and entanglement surveys; phenology, productivity and population surveys for black-legged kittiwake, common murre and pelagic cormorant; daily wildlife observations; pacific walrus disturbance surveys; and floristic inventories.

OBJECTIVE 3: Provide appropriate and safe facilities for public uses, research, management, maintenance and other administrative duties at Round Island.

Job/Activity 3a: Maintain, enhance, repair and expand as appropriate facilities including trails, boardwalks, viewing platforms, cabins, campgrounds, restrooms, signs, interpretive displays and other educational materials, and other facilities necessary for public use, research and administrative functions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During the reporting period staff conducted or assisted with a number of maintenance and repair items including building maintenance, trail maintenance and improvements, and installation of a power shed.

Job/Activity 3b: Maintain, repair, enhance and/or protect habitats and other resources as required to provide for public use and administrative facilities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Staff conducted minor habitat protection actions through trail improvements, maintenance projects and minor removal of a couple invasive plant species as they were noted.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

1. A number of problems, delays and adverse conditions occurred during the 2018 and 2019 seasons which did altered normal operations and required reallocating expenditures and work; but did not materially impair our ability to meet the objectives.
2. The original project proposal included purchase of a 14-foot inflatable boat and 25 hp motor. Upon further investigation it was determined that a smaller rigid hull type boat and smaller 4 stroke motor would better suit operations. Consequently, a 12-foot Zodiac Cadet 360 DL

aluminum ribbed inflatable boat and Yamaha 20 hp 4 stroke outboard were ultimately purchased at about half the original estimate.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

The full 2018 Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary Annual Management Report is still being drafted and hopefully will be out by the end of 2019. Several summary reports for the 2018 season were issued under memos dated 1 September 2018, 9 October 2018, and 30 July 2019 to the Qayassiq Walrus Commission, various funding organizations and the Annenberg Foundation. Other information, photos and video can be found through Explore.org's walrus cam web page <https://explore.org/livecams/oceans/walrus-cam-round-island> who we are partnering with us to stream live footage on the internet.

Reports and information for the 2019 field season will be released following the 2019 field season. When completed both the 2018 and 2019 Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary Annual Management Reports will be available via our web page at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=walrusislands.resources>.

Information and data is also forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for inclusion in their reports and publications. Reports and publications from these sources can be found at:

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwi39tb24YjkAhXjPn0KHaeqAscQFjABegQICBAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fws.gov%2FuploadedFiles%2FAlaska%2520Seabird%2520Summary%2520Report%25202018.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2YJZTIWjO11OR_7zMySFTC

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT The project will continue through December 2019 under this grant. Crews will be pulled from the field approximately 15 August 2019, followed by data entry, compilation, quality checks and drafting of reports. After December 31, 2019 the project will continue under grant AKW-B-VERS-2020.

Prepared by: Ed Weiss, ADF&G

Date: 15 August 2019