

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

I. MISSION

The Department of Wildlife Management facilitates sustainable harvest and monitors populations of fish and wildlife species through scientific research, indigenous ecological knowledge, leadership, and advocacy from local to international levels. The Department diversifies funding opportunities through the submission of grant proposals focusing on subsistence species and issues of the highest interest to North Slope residents.

II. DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department of Wildlife Management is responsible for helping to assure participation by Borough residents in the management of wildlife and fish, by working to maintain these resources at healthy population levels so that residents can continue to practice traditional methods of subsistence harvest of wildlife resources in perpetuity. Our studies help to provide the scientific documentation of the subsistence needs of North Slope Borough (NSB) residents. With industrial activity expanding into new areas, arctic warming trends already affecting the marine and land environments, and further regulation of subsistence hunting by State, Federal and special interest groups, it is very important that we continue to work toward the following goals.

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: DOCUMENT THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBSISTENCE BY MAINTAINING ACCURATE, AREA-SPECIFIC HARVEST RECORDS

Obj. 1.1: Continue to collect and report on subsistence harvest data for North Slope communities.

GOAL 2: DETERMINE THOSE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS IMPORTANT TO SUBSISTENCE-USE ANIMALS

Obj. 2.1: Document movements of the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd, bowhead whales, ice seals, geese, and belugas in order to determine important habitat use areas and migratory routes.

Obj. 2.2: Collect information on key subsistence species in areas that may be impacted by oil and gas activities and increased shipping.

Obj. 2.3: Critically review any proposal for critical habitat designation for any North Slope species or population listed under the Endangered Species Act.

GOAL 3: IMPROVE THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIOLOGY OF SUBSISTENCE-USE ANIMALS AND THEIR HABITAT FOR ENHANCED LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE SUBSISTENCE HARVEST

- Obj. 3.1: Estimate the size of the bowhead whale population at ~10 year intervals to help ensure safe harvest levels. The next survey is scheduled for 2019. (Note: Results from the 2011 survey were recently completed and the abundance estimate is ~17,000 whales with a 3.7% rate of increase.)
- Obj. 3.2: Evaluate the impacts of industrial development and other stressors on subsistence species by monitoring such things as: hearing, general health, reproduction, stress, strandings, unusual mortality events, etc.
- Obj. 3.3: Monitor the contaminant levels and ecological changes related to the health of subsistence species populations and provide that information to human health experts to determine the safety of subsistence foods.
- Obj. 3.4: Conduct baseline studies on biological/physical processes with respect to forage species important to marine mammals and fish to improve our understanding about the causes and impacts on important resources, such as fish in the Colville River Delta.
- Obj. 3.5: Utilize Indigenous and local ecological knowledge to support and strengthen all aspects of wildlife research.

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATE, COOPERATE, AND COLLABORATE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES REGARDING STUDIES AND THE EVALUATION OF DATA FOR STRONG LOCAL INPUT INTO MANAGEMENT OF SUBSISTENCE-USE RESOURCES

- Obj. 4.1: Continue to support the goals and objectives of the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee and Ice Seal Committee, in part through the management of grants and collection and analysis of biological data from subsistence harvested animals.
- Obj. 4.2: Continue monitoring Lesser Snow Geese and Black Brant colonies and habitat use along the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea coasts.
- Obj. 4.3: Work closely with North Slope communities and the Fish and Game Management Committee to determine ways to increase the populations of the Central, Teshekpuk and Western Arctic Caribou Herds.
- Obj. 4.4: Work with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to develop Indigenous knowledge panels to provide guidance and input into studies being funded by BOEM.
- Obj. 4.5: Continue DWM participation in and co-ownership of the bowhead whale aerial photo-identification program with the NMFS.
- Obj. 4.6: Continue to support efforts to appropriately develop a new polar bear co-management

organization.

GOAL 5: WORK CLOSELY WITH THE BOROUGH'S FISH AND GAME MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS FOR SUBSISTENCE-USE ANIMALS

- Obj. 5.1: Hold three to four meetings per year, either in person or by teleconference with the NSB Fish and Game Management Committee.
- Obj. 5.2: Request that members bring their communities' concerns to the committee, the Department, researchers, and State and Federal agencies and take information back to their City and/or Tribal Councils.
- Obj. 5.3: Use the committee to assist in local coordination and involvement of community members in management decisions and research conducted by the NSB, industry, independent researchers, and agencies.
- Obj. 5.4: Assist the NSB Fish and Game Management Committee in providing comments and testimony on proposals submitted to the Alaska Board of Game.

GOAL 6: IN CONSULTATION WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS, REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF PROPOSED STUDIES, REVIEW EXISTING INFORMATION, AND CONSULT WITH NORTH SLOPE RESIDENTS TO IDENTIFY, MINIMIZE, AND MITIGATE INDUSTRIAL IMPACTS LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT PEOPLE,

WILDLIFE, OR THE ENVIRONMENT

- Obj. 6.1: Continue to communicate with all industry lease holders and operators, and the responsible federal and state agencies, to review the design and effectiveness of required monitoring and mitigation programs both in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas for impacts to bowhead whales and other marine mammals, and onshore for impacts to terrestrial species.
- Obj. 6.2: Assist the Mayor's Office, Law, Health, and Planning Departments in preparing Borough comments regarding proposed industrial activities, including drilling, vessel transits, aircraft use, and seismic operations.
- Obj. 6.3: Enhance and assist the Mayor's Office and the Planning Department in the design of monitoring programs and other permit conditions to be imposed on industrial operations.
- Obj. 6.4: Research the potential effects of human activities and climate change on locally utilized subsistence species.
- Obj. 6.5: Collaborate with industry operators and responsible oversight agencies in the design, conduct, and review of North Slope research efforts.
- Obj. 6.6: Collaborate with responsible oversight agencies, co-management organizations, and industrial operators in the continued

development and enhancement of North Slope wildlife response plans, procedures, readiness, and capacity to respond to oiled animals.

GOAL 7: REVIEW MAJOR TECHNICAL, PROGRAM, POLICY, AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS AND DOCUMENTS FOR PROJECTS THAT MAY AFFECT THE BOROUGH'S ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE AND FISH RESOURCES, OR SUBSISTENCE USERS, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

- Obj. 7.1: Continue to assist the Mayor's Office and Planning Department in dealings with the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding its management plan, regional mitigation strategy, and oil and gas leasing and activities within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), including the Greater Moose's Tooth I & II Development Projects.
- Obj. 7.2: Assist the Mayor's Office and Law Office in developing positions and comments related to the Endangered Species Act, including any proposed listing of species or critical habitat designation, the implementation of a recovery plan for polar bears, and issues related to the listing of ringed and bearded seals.
- Obj. 7.3: Help represent the Borough in dealings with the federal Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal and state agencies, involved companies, and the affected North Slope communities regarding exploration and

development in and around the Colville River Delta, Smith Bay, the NPR-A, and other projects, including the proposed Nanushuk Development Project.

- Obj. 7.4: Help represent the Borough in communication with the State of Alaska as it annually considers new information relevant to the Best Interest Findings (BIFs) for the North Slope, Beaufort Sea, and North Slope Foothills Area-wide Oil and Gas Lease Sales.
- Obj. 7.5: Help represent the Borough in dealings with the multiple federal and state agencies and other parties regarding efforts associated with the North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI).
- Obj. 7.6: Assist the Mayor's Office in dealings with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Bureau of Oceans and Energy Management, and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement as the agencies work to mitigate impacts of arctic marine seismic and exploration activities on marine mammals, other marine resources, and subsistence hunters.
- Obj. 7.7: Help represent the Borough in dealings with state and federal agencies and the oil and gas industry in the review of offshore exploration and development proposals, including the development of a 2019-2024 National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program to replace the existing 2017-2022 Program, and the proposed Liberty Development Project.

Obj. 7.8: Continue to assist the Planning and Health Departments in work with the Bureau of Oceans and Energy Management, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers, and the State of Alaska, in advocating for the inclusion of analysis of potential human health impacts in all North Slope oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development planning processes.

Obj. 7.9: Help represent the Borough in dealings with the State of Alaska, responsible federal agencies, and industry applicants concerning onshore exploration and development proposals.

Obj. 7.10: Assist in developing a sustainable harvest management program for Chukchi Sea Polar bears within the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Agreement.

GOAL 8: STRENGTHEN AND ENHANCE OUR HEALTH ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR IMPORTANT SUBSISTENCE SPECIES WITHIN THE NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH

Obj. 8.1: Investigate and provide expertise and regional leadership in the on-going scientific investigation of the Unusual Mortality Event (UME) of ringed seals, which began in 2011.

Obj. 8.2: Collect and scientifically analyze biological data and tissue samples from harvested and stranded subsistence animals to better understand health status in a time of a rapidly changing climate and increasing human activity.

GOAL 9: PROVIDE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AT THE ARCTIC RESEARCH FACILITIES (ARF/BARC) AT UIC-NARL TO APPROPRIATE VISITING SCIENTISTS AND FOR THE BOROUGH'S RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Obj. 9.1: Provide modest logistical support for visiting scientists on projects of importance to the Borough, such as those involving bowhead whales, polar bears, waterfowl, seals, walrus, fish, sea ice, and climate change.

GOAL 10: CONDUCT OUTREACH AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S STUDIES ON SUBSISTENCE-USE WILDLIFE AND OTHER ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE NSB

Obj. 10.1: Distribute information about animals and activities important for subsistence which has been collected by the Department of Wildlife Management and/or collaborators to the Assembly, Mayor's Office, and to village residents through newsletters, the NSB website, memos, radio shows, lectures, etc.

Obj. 10.2: Provide educational materials and lecture presentations to Ilisagvik College, NSBSD schools, and the public to help students, teachers, and others become aware of departmental studies and their value in managing wildlife and maintaining subsistence access to wildlife.

Obj. 10.3: Support and mentor North Slope Borough residents through college internships with our Department, including NSB students involved in the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP).

Obj. 10.4: Involve NSB students in hands-on educational opportunities on the North Slope and at the facilities of our collaborator's, such as Mystic Aquarium.

GOAL 11: REPRESENT THE BOROUGH IN A WIDE RANGE OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL FORUMS TO PROVIDE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE BOROUGH'S WILDLIFE RESOURCES AND SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

Obj. 11.1 Conduct scientific and Indigenous knowledge research using the highest standards to ensure that information used in wildlife resource decision-making is of the highest quality.

Obj. 11.2: Represent the Borough and the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) at meetings of the International Whaling Commission (scientific committee, humane killing workshop, Commission Meeting, etc.).

Obj. 11.3: Represent the NSB at major scientific meetings such as the Biennial meeting of the Society for Marine Mammalogy, the Alaska Marine Science Symposium, and The Wildlife Society, etc.

Obj. 11.4 Author technical reports and peer-reviewed scientific publications that document the results

of research conducted by the Department of Wildlife Management on species, habitat, and/or other factors that are relevant to facilitating the continuation of subsistence practices by North Slope residents.

Obj. 11.5: Represent the interests of the Borough and its residents at a variety of technical forums and meetings, including: Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council, Indigenous Peoples' Council for Marine Mammals, Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission, Alaska Nannut Co-Management Council, Ice Seal Committee, Eskimo Walrus Commission, Alaska Beluga Whale Committee, International Whaling Commission, Inupiat-Inuvialuit Polar Bear & Beluga Whale Agreements, Spectacled/Steller's Eider and Polar Bear Recovery and Implementation Teams, North Slope Science Initiative, Alaska Coastal District Association, Alaska Coastal Management Program Stakeholder Working Group, and various meetings convened by the U.S. Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Bureau of Oceans and Energy Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Departments of Natural Resources, Environmental Conservation, and Fish and Game, Arctic Institute of North America, and the Arctic Council.