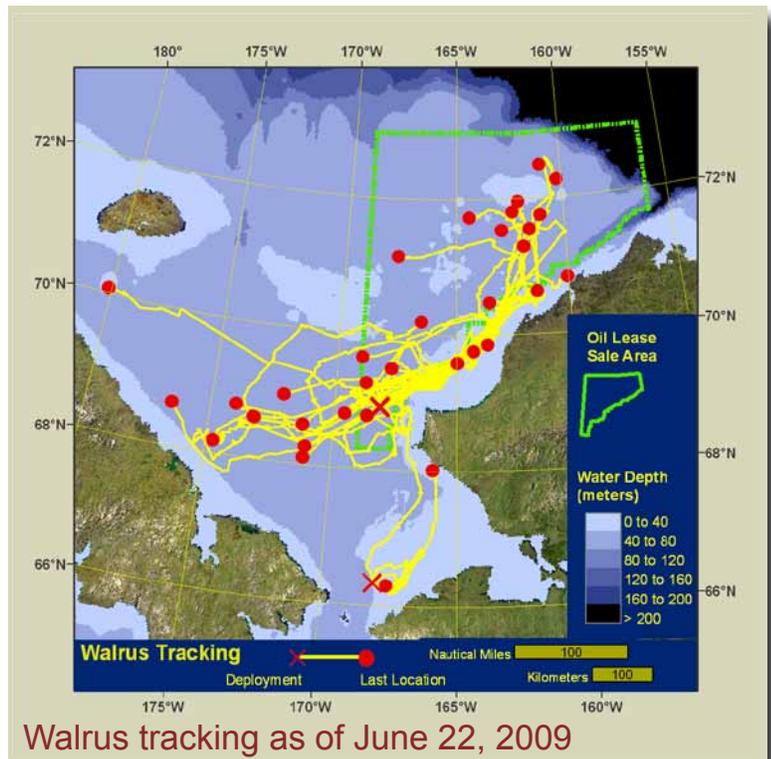


SUMMARY: USGS is leading a walrus tracking study in the Chukchi Sea in collaboration with USFWS. The purpose of the study is to better understand the distribution of walrus and their use of important foraging areas and sea ice habitats in the Chukchi Sea. The Department of the Interior (DOI) needs basic information about walrus in this region due to oil and gas leasing in the eastern Chukchi Sea. In addition, the DOI also hopes to understand how changes in sea ice will affect walrus. Results of the study will provide the public, subsistence users, and resource managers with a greater understanding of walrus migration and habitat use in the Chukchi Sea.



Radio-tagged walrus

RADIO-TAGGING: On June 6 and 8, researchers deployed 34 satellite radio-tags on walrus and are now tracking them. The radio-tags were deployed by crossbow by tagging teams in skiffs launched off the 115-foot research boat, Norseman II. All work was conducted at least 40 nautical miles offshore.



Research boat

FLIGHTS: Between June 5 and 8 a high wing reconnaissance plane was flown out of Kotzebue to help us locate walrus for tagging. Per USFWS guidelines for overflights in this region, the plane avoided areas with subsistence hunters and flew above 2000 feet to avoid disturbing walrus.



Aerial reconnaissance plane

HARVEST: Radio-tagged walrus are safe to eat: no drugs are used to deploy the tags. If you do harvest a radio-tagged walrus, please help us by returning the tag and providing information on the location and condition of the animal. If you have any questions, please contact

Tony Fischbach
USGS Alaska Science Center
(907-786-7145)

or

U.S Fish & Wildlife Service
Marine Mammals Management
(1-800-362-5148).

For tracking results see our web site
<http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/walrus>