



**North Slope Borough
Department of Wildlife Management**

P.O. Box 69, Barrow, Alaska 99723
(907) 852-0350

September 17, 2010

Help Minimize the Disturbance of Walrus along the Chukchi Sea Coast of the North Slope

The North Slope Borough, along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, and the Native Villages of Barrow and Point Lay, is requesting your support and cooperation in minimizing disturbances to walrus herds along the Chukchi Sea coast. Walrus are sensitive to the sight, sound, and odor of humans and machines, and may stampede back into the water when disturbed. Large-scale mortality events have occasionally resulted from herd stampedes, with calves being particularly vulnerable to trampling injuries. Frequent disturbances may also impact animal health and condition if walrus are unable to obtain sufficient rest between feeding excursions.



Walrus hauled out on the beach near Barrow in 2007 (photo credit: Craig George)

Please remember that harassment of walrus or other marine mammals violates the **Marine Mammal Protection Act** and, if the disturbance involves an aircraft, the **Federal Airborne Hunting Act**.



Walrus haulout near Point Lay this fall (photo credit: Bill Tracey)



Photo by Cynthia Christman
NOAA Fisheries Service
AFSC, Natl Marine Mammal Lab
FFW Permit No MA212570-0

Walrus haulout near Icy Cape in the fall of 2009.

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES:

PILOTS: Avoid flying near coastal haulouts. Fixed-winged aircraft traveling along the coast should maintain a minimum altitude of 1,500 feet and maintain a lateral distance of ½ mile. Activities such as buzzing, circling, landing, taking off, and taxiing near walrus groups are likely to cause disturbances. When weather conditions allow, fly well inland from walrus groups to avoid flushing animals into the water.

MARINE VESSELS: Maintain a ½ mile buffer from shore when traveling past a walrus haulout. Avoid excessive speed or sudden changes in direction near walrus groups encountered in the water.

LAND BASED-VIEWING: Approach walrus cautiously when hauled out on land. Viewing walrus should be done in a manner that allows them to remain unaware of human presence. NSB recommends that approaches are made quietly from downwind, and may require maintaining a distance of 300-500 yards. The use of binoculars can help to ensure a good view without causing disturbances.

WALRUS HUNTERS: The discharge of firearms near coastal haulouts can result in a stampede and incidental mortalities. Exercise caution when hunting near coastal haulouts to avoid unintentional disturbances and mortalities.

For more information on walrus: Eskimo Walrus Commission at <http://www.kawerak.org/servicedivisions/nrd/ewc/index.html> or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management at <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/walrus/wmain.htm>

To report sightings: Call the Native Village of Barrow at (907) 852-4411 or (907) 350-9273, or NSB Dept of Wildlife Management at (907) 852-0350, or Native Village of Point Lay at (907) 833-2575, or USFWS/MMM office at (800) 362-5148