

Supporting Community-based
Science and Stewardship
In the Bering Sea

Hooper Bay



Edible berries growing in the dunes along the Bering Sea.

Hooper Bay's community-based monitoring program will also include the study of plants in the dunes, grasslands, and on the tundra



Hooper Bay students studying fish.

Participation of youth, as well as adults, in monitoring and documenting environmental change is critical. These are the future stewards of the coastal regions of the Bering Sea, and it is they who will ensure sustainable management of resources for future generations.



Agatha Napoleon collecting beach grasses.

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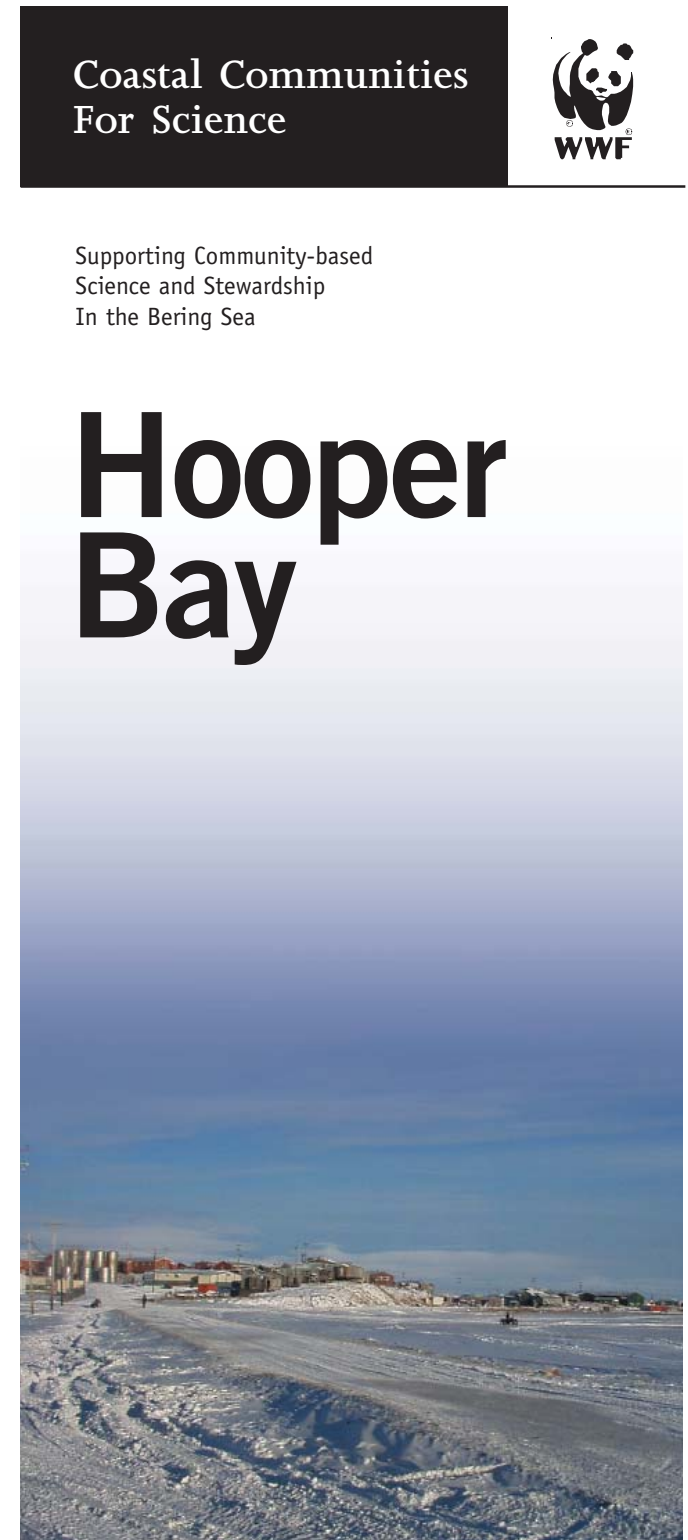
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Coastal Communities for Science Hooper Bay



Community Coordinator Albert Simon collecting from Hooper Bay for this study.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recognizes the Bering Sea as a globally significant ecoregion for protecting the world's biodiversity. Together with many partners, WWF is working to conserve the long-term viability and health of Bering Sea ecosystems. Coastal communities on both coasts of the Sea play critical roles in observing, managing, and conserving marine resources.

Through WWF's "Coastal Communities for Science" program, communities are partnering with scientists to develop research programs. Communities identify questions of interest to them, and are integrally involved in planning and implementing the research.

To date, four communities in the Bering Sea are key players in "Coastal Communities for Science": Hooper Bay, St. George, St. Paul, and Unalakleet.

The goals of the program are to increase youth participation and community-wide involvement in science. To accomplish the goals, WWF connects a large network of scientists with communities and provides training and equipment to support ongoing community-based science.



Albert Simon sampling fish from the Black River.

In Hooper Bay, research is now underway to study the quality and quantity of subsistence foods. Observations by local residents are important in guiding and directing the science. In 2003, Hooper Bay fishermen found masses of chum and king salmon dead in their nets. WWF, scientists, and Hooper Bay hope to identify the causes of this decline through "Coastal Communities for Science."

With support from WWF and involvement of a University of Alaska ichthyologist, Hooper Bay residents are developing a Subsistence Foods Monitoring & Reporting Network. To support the effort, WWF is holding workshops that bring together scientists and community members, allowing for information exchange on identification, genetics, and natural history of fish. Hands-on instruction and sharing of traditional knowledge of the species allows for a comprehensive understanding of changes in the marine environment.



King salmon drying on a fish rack.

The monitoring program began in 2005 with an intensive study by youth and adults in the community, led by Albert Simon. They document when fish appear in Hooper Bay, take measurements, collect scales to estimate age, and take samples for genetic analysis. Later they will begin to collect and document parasites and tumors from fish and mammals, and share the results with scientists and resource managers.



Larry DuBois, Alaska Department of Fish & Game demonstrating the collection of scales for aging fish.