

Supporting Community-based
Science and Stewardship
In the Bering Sea

St. George Island



Dr. Etnier and Max calibrating the Total Station.

WWF is supplying St. George with a Total Station, a precision surveying tool used by engineers. Dr. Mike Etnier, a NOAA scientist, is teaching Max Malavansky and high school students to use this device to survey the beach, document the bones' precise location, and collect data.



Students practice using the Total Station.

As a result of this project, St. George has created a fossil collection of more than 400 bones. The collection will aid the community and scientists in future studies, ranging from a genetic analysis of the Steller sea lion bones to aging fur seal bones. Max is continuing to gather bones with the help of students and together they will save these remains for future research.



Dr. Etnier discussing the principles of surveying.

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Coastal Communities for Science
is supported by a grant from
The National Science Foundation
(ESI0337236)

Coastal Communities for Science St. George Island



Two ribs of marine mammals on the cobble beach.

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": St. George, St. Paul, Hooper Bay, and Unalakleet.

The goals of the program are to increase youth participation and community-wide involvement in science.



Each flag represents at least one bone on the beach.

St. George has identified the study of marine mammals as a major focus. In the program, St. George will work with a NOAA scientist to document a 2,500 year old marine mammal site. Community members will collect bones, document their locations, and organize the bones in a collection on the Island so that they can be used by visiting scientists.

The first step in this project is to collect the bones from the beach. St George participants and Dr. Etnier will then note the exact position of each bone at the site.

Plastic flagging is placed along the beach next to each bone. A surveying tool, called a Total Station, is then used to measure exactly where the bone is on the beach.

Max Malavansky, Jr., Community Coordinator, adjusts the Total Station.



Students are placing flags next to bones.

Finding each bone requires the help of many people. High school students from St. George are participating in this process, ensuring that bones from this important site will be preserved — before erosional forces of the Bering Sea wash them away.

