

Pribilof Islands Collaborative
Executive Summary
Fur Seal Meeting

JANUARY 28 - 30, 2005

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Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association
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St. Paul Tribal Government
The Nature Conservancy
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Pribilof Islands Collaborative: Background

On January 28-30, 2005, the third *formal stakeholder meeting* of the Pribilof Islands Collaborative was held. For over eighteen months previous to this, a series of discussions among the diverse stakeholders were held to determine if the sustainability of the ecosystem and related economic issues of the Pribilof Islands' marine resources and the various communities and industries that depend on them were significant enough to warrant stakeholders' time and deliberate efforts to build agreement. In April 2004 the first formal meeting of the Pribilof Islands Collaborative (PIC) was held. These stakeholders anticipate working on issues of mutual interest for 18-24 months. The need to have consistent and accepted representation of the key stakeholder groups resulted in formal stakeholder representatives being designated to participate in the PIC.

Organizing meetings for the PIC were held in November 2002, September 2003, and January 2004. Those participating in these meetings were from St. Paul and St. George Islands, the fishing industry, and conservation groups, federal government agencies, and universities. Executive summaries of the previous meetings are available. Please contact Denise Woods at (907) 279-5504, or at denise.woods@wwfus.org. The summaries are also posted on www.worldwildlife.org/beringsea/erbc

Those stakeholders participating at the January 2005 meeting determined that the next meeting also needed to continue a focus on northern fur seals as well as discussions regarding the roadmap to complete the PIC's work. This next meeting is tentatively scheduled for early March in Seattle.

Purpose of the Pribilof Islands Collaborative

The purpose of the Pribilof Islands Collaborative is to promote a healthy ecosystem and a strong economy in and around the Pribilof Islands while maintaining viable commercial fisheries and subsistence harvests in the central Bering Sea.

The process – to use a representative group of stakeholders to identify areas of agreement on policies, strategies, and actions - will provide participating stakeholders with the opportunity to be proactive, rather than reactive, to a variety of marine resource concerns including fluctuations and declines in populations of northern fur seal, crab, changes in some seabird populations, and reductions in halibut availability around the Pribilof Islands.

Meeting Overview

The first day and most of the second included a series of presentations to better understand the status and history of the northern fur seal and relevant information about the fisheries in the Bering Sea. Prior to the January meeting, an initial, limited local and traditional knowledge and wisdom (LTKW) effort was undertaken by a few of the PIC stakeholders, and information gathered from that effort was integrated throughout the meeting.

During the afternoon of the second day, expert presenters and participants reviewed and revised a conceptual model. The conceptual model was used as a mechanism to capture the information that was presented, including areas where information or data gaps exist. The purpose of the conceptual model is to provide a visual tool to frame the factors influencing the state the northern fur seal population.

On the third day of the meeting, the research needs on the northern fur seal were presented, the needs were included and presented in the conceptual model, and additional discussions about research needs ensued. In addition, PIC stakeholders began identifying possible actions and steps that might be taken as means to address the northern fur seal declines.

Purpose and Objectives of the Meeting

The purpose of the January 2005 meeting was for formal stakeholders to learn more about northern fur seals and fisheries in the Bering Sea, and to begin sharing ideas about possible actions that might impede the NFS decline. Additional goals included:

- To continue discussions in a formalized, shared learning experience to enable exploration of options that may constructively address the northern fur seal declines in and around the Pribilof Islands.
- To understand the status of the northern fur seal, and to jointly identify knowledge and information gaps about northern fur seal population dynamics and factors affecting the Bering Sea population.
- To also develop among stakeholders a common understanding of:
 - the status of fisheries around the Pribilof Islands,
 - the status and important elements of the ecosystem around the Pribilofs, including climate change issues;
 - potential interactions and overlap in space, time and resources between northern fur seals and fisheries (throughout year, by fur seal age, sex and rookery, by fishery type);
 - the Conservation Plan for the Northern Fur Seal (NMFS 1993, and 2005 Draft Revision), and lessons learned from the Steller sea lion story; and
 - the timeline of key events for the northern fur seal population, fisheries, and Bering Sea oceanographic information.
- To determine, to the best of the PIC's ability at this meeting, existing data needed to identify and answer questions about the northern fur seal population, and how/who should conduct this analysis.
- To reach agreement on elements of a comprehensive and integrated northern fur seal research plan.
- To begin talking about possible conservation actions.

Brief Summary of Presentations

The following lists the expert presenters and the topics they presented during the Northern Fur Seal meeting held in January 2005. For more detailed notes or to review presentation materials, please go to www.worldwildlife.org/beringsea_erbc/ or contact Denise Woods at wwfberingsea@alaska.net.

NORTHERN FUR SEALS

Status and Life History

Presenter: Dr. Rolf Ream, National Marine Mammal Lab

LTKW Perspective: Karin Holser, St. George Island and Aquilina Lestenkof, St. Paul Island

Comparisons of Pribilof Northern Fur Seal population with other populations

Co-Presenters: Dr. Rolf Ream, NMML and

Dr. Vladimir Burkanov, NRC, Inc. providing Russian perspective

LTKW Perspective: Karin Holser, St. George Island and Aquilina Lestenkof, St. Paul Island

Northern Fur Seals: Nutritional Stress Discussion

Co-Presenters: Dr. Andrew Trites, University of British Columbia

Dr. Bob DeLong, National Marine Mammal Lab

Dr. Lowell Fritz, National Marine Mammal Lab

LTKW Perspective: Karin Holser, St. George Island and Aquilina Lestenkof, St. Paul Island

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTING FACTORS to FUR SEAL POPULATION CHANGES

Factors we have little/no control over

Environmental Effects

Co-Presenters: Nancy Kachel, Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory, NOAA
Dr, Gordon Kruse, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Dr. Alan Springer, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Predation: The potential role of killer whale and other predation in northern fur seal population declines.

Co-Presenters: Dr. Alan Springer, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Dr, Doug Demaster, Alaska Fisheries Science Center
LTKW Perspective: Karin Holser, St. George Island and Aquilina Lestenkof, St. Paul Island

Diseases

Presenter and LTKW Perspective: Dr. Terry Spraker, Colorado State University

Factors We Have Some/More Control Over

Fisheries in the North Pacific: Overview

-Areas of Prey Concentration, Dr. Bruce Robson, private consultant

-Temporal trends in species diversity in the region. Status and trends of key prey species in the Eastern Bering Sea, sub-arctic, and California Current (WA and OR Coasts/fur seal migration corridor), and Socio-economic considerations including value of fisheries, communities using fish resources, Dr. Libby Logerwell, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

-Herring fishery, Dr. Gordon Kruse, University of Alaska Fairbanks

-Spatial and temporal trends in commercial fisheries removals including shifts in target species, area closures, and gear. (1991 – 2004); Bycatch over time of prey species important to NFS; and Overview of current management regulations, Dr. David Ackley, National Marine Fisheries Service, Juneau

-Recent (1999 - 2004) spatial and temporal trends in the pollock fishery, and Overview of current management considerations (including bycatch, sea lions and AFA-related) affecting the Pollock fishery, Dr. Karl Haflinger, SeaState, Inc.

-Spatial and temporal trends of Pollock catch and biomass in NFS foraging area,, Dr. Lowell Fritz, National Marine Mammal Laboratory

-LTKW Perspective: Karin Holser, St. George Island and Aquilina Lestenkof, St. Paul Island

Subsistence Takes

Presenter: Aquilina (Debbie) Lestenkof, Co-Director, Ecosystem Conservation Office, Tribal Government of St. Paul

Contaminants

Presenter: Dr. Shannon Atkinson, Alaska Sea Life Center

Development, Research and Activities on and around the Islands (other than subsistence)

On-Islands 1982 – Forward

Presenter: Char Kirkwood, City of St. Paul Planner

Off-Islands - Acoustic Tracking of Northern Fur Seals in the Bering Sea

Presenter: Dr. Steve Insley, University of California-Santa Cruz

Entanglement and Marine Debris: History & current status of northern fur seal take resulting from entanglement in marine debris, including debris and gear type

Co-Presenters: Dr. Chuck Fowler, National Marine Mammal Laboratory and
Mike Williams, LGL Alaska

Incidental Take of Marine Mammals

Presenter: Dr. Doug Demaster, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Fur Seal Conservation Plan Overview

Presenter: Kaja Brix, National Marine Fisheries Service - Protected Resources

Endangered Species Act, including Steller sea lion history (biological and political lessons learned)

Presenter: Dr. Doug Demaster, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

POTENTIAL RESPONSES TO ADDRESS DECLINE

Research Needs

Co-Presenters: Dr. Tom Gelatt, National Marine Mammal Lab

Mr. Don Calkins, Alaska Sea Life Center

Dr. Andrew Trites, University of British Columbia

Phil Zavadil, for Ecosystem Conservation Office, Tribal Government of St. Paul and
Pribilof Islands Stewardship Program, St. George Tribal Council

PRIBILOF ISLANDS COLLABORATIVE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Review, refine and determine how the PIC will use the Conceptual Model and Possible Management Actions, which were both created during the January 2005 PIC meeting. (Send documents to PIC Stakeholders).
- ✓ Steering Committee will coordinate with stakeholders and determine next meeting date – in April or sooner
 - Primary agenda items:
 - Fur Seal issues – agreement building (may take more than one meeting)
 - Identify those items that are easy to get agreement on and begin taking action soon, e.g. education
 - Develop Roadmap
- ✓ Development of research needs
- ✓ Continue fundraising efforts
- ✓ Explore/create GIS layering
- ✓ Data Work Group – Need input from PIC Stakeholders to reconstitute this group into what is now needed
- ✓ LTKW Effort – Develop next steps

List of Participants

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