



Marine Mammal Commission

An independent agency of the U.S. Government



Arctic Update

MMC Arctic Team

Peter Thomas, Mike Gosliner, Vicki Cornish,
and Luis Leandro

MMC Annual Meeting, 5-7 April 2017

Topics

- Common themes from 2016 Arctic Listening Sessions
- 2016/2017 Arctic activities
 - Co-management
 - Polar bears
 - Arctic Council Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Network
 - Monodontid Workshop
- Alaska Communications Plan



Arctic Listening Sessions

Common Themes

- Uncertainty around climate change and its impacts on hunting of marine mammals
- Need to enhance communication/consultation between federal agencies and Alaska Native communities
- Potential impacts of ESA listings and critical habitat determinations on Alaska Native communities
- Health of marine mammals and concerns about impacts on subsistence use
- Increasing ship traffic and potential impacts
- Importance of traditional/indigenous knowledge and the need to incorporate it into federal decision-making



Co-management

Sec. 119 Marine Mammal Protection Act

Cooperative agreements to provide for...

- Collecting and analyzing data on marine mammal populations
- Monitoring the harvest of marine mammals for subsistence use
- Participating in marine mammal research conducted by the Federal government, States, academic institutions, and private organizations
- Developing marine mammal co-management structures with Federal and State agencies



Co-management

- Goals of co-management are falling short:
 - Inadequate funding
 - Inadequate capacity
 - Inadequate engagement
- IPCoMM recommended that MMC help with follow-up review of co-management



Enhancing Co-management

- Key issues:
 - Agreement on what co-management means
 - Co-management agreements vs. cooperative agreements
 - Expanding co-management agreements to other ANOs
 - Funding
 - Capacity
 - Communication
 - Participation by ANOs in all aspects of managing subsistence harvest
 - Incorporation of indigenous knowledge into federal decision-making



Enhancing Co-management

- Possible funding for MMC work on co-management:
 - NPRB proposal submitted in December 2016
 - Objective is to solicit input from communities regarding what they want to see in co-management relationships
 - Obtained letters of support from federal agencies
 - Waiting for award decision



Polar Bears

- Alaska Native concerns about implementing U.S.-Russia Agreement
- Nome Polar Bear Summit
- Demise of ANC
- U.S.-Russia Bilateral Meeting
- FWS Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
- Establishment of new polar bear ANO
- Final Conservation Management Plan

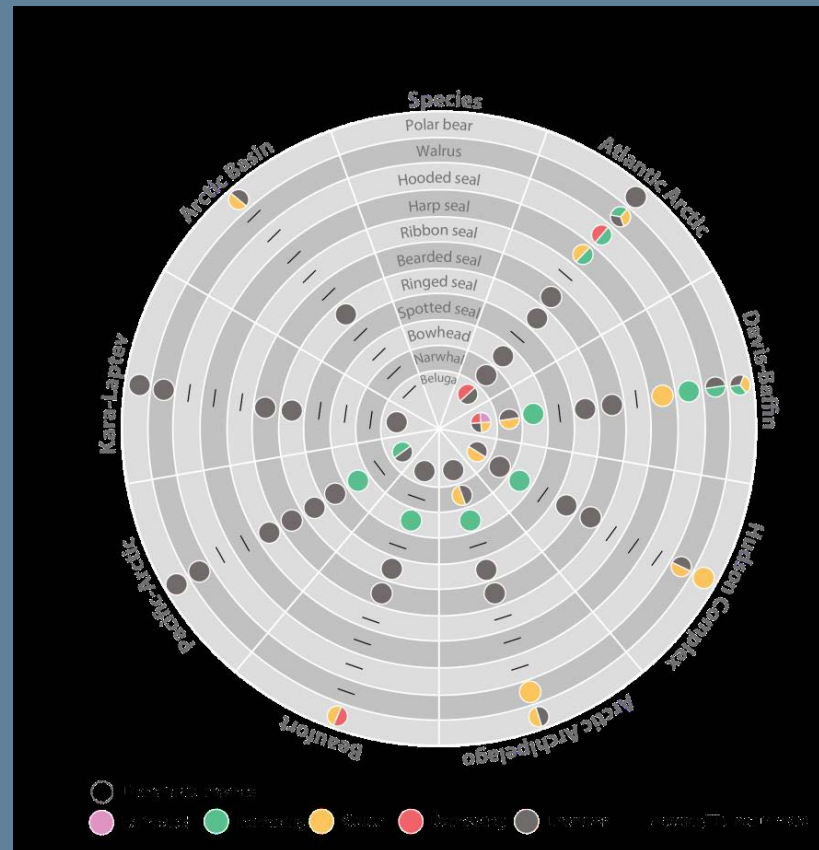


Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Network

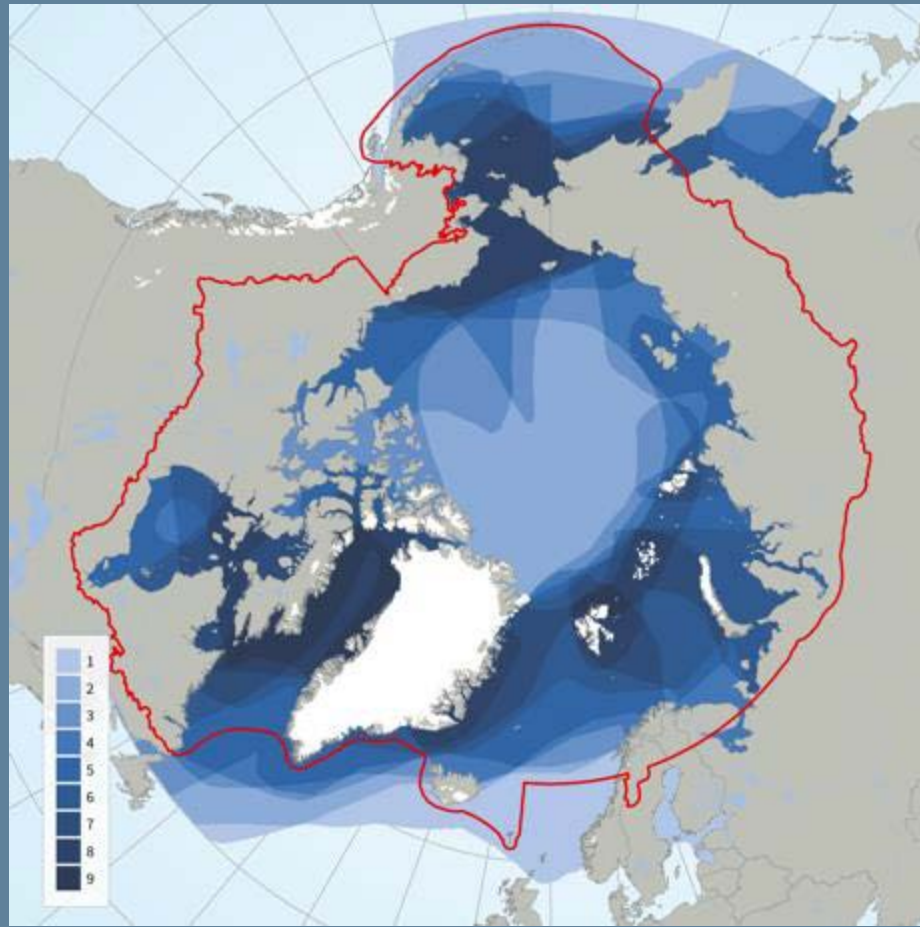
- Bullets



Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Network



Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Network



- Beaufort
- Atlantic Arctic
- Arctic Basin
- Pacific Arctic
- CAFF Border
- Arctic Archipelago
- Hudson Complex
- Davis-Baffin
- Kara Laptev

First ever Arctic Unusual Mortality Event (i.e., significant die-off) of seals and walrus in 2011, affecting food sources for Indigenous communities in U.S., Canada, and Russia

Large differences in species composition of microbial plankton detected before and after the 2007 sea ice minimum

Ivory gull decline by 80-90% in past 20 years

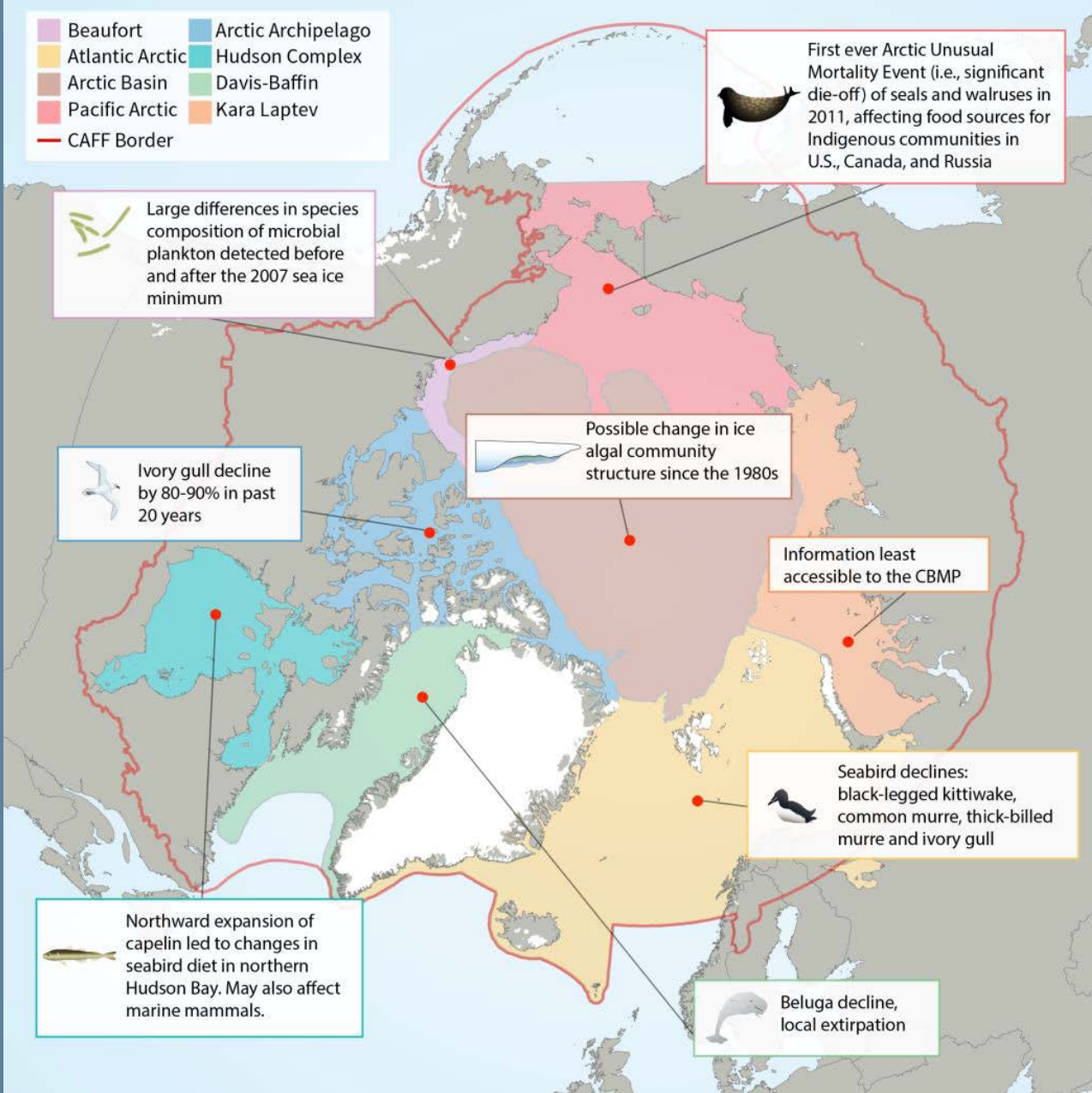
Possible change in ice algal community structure since the 1980s

Information least accessible to the CBMP

Seabird declines: black-legged kittiwake, common murre, thick-billed murre and ivory gull

Northward expansion of capelin led to changes in seabird diet in northern Hudson Bay. May also affect marine mammals.

Beluga decline, local extirpation



Global Review of Monodontids

13-16 March 2017

Hillerød, Denmark

- Previous global review of belugas and narwhals in 1999 by IWC Scientific Committee
- Sponsored and hosted this time by North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)



Global Review of Monodontids

- 5 countries have monodontid populations: Russia, Norway, Greenland (Denmark), Canada, USA (Alaska)
- Participants from Arctic Council, 4 of the 5 range countries (not Norway)
- Suydam and Reeves nominally represented IWC SC (Bjørge unable to attend)



Global Review of Monodontids

- Summary table:
- Evidence used to differentiate stocks
- Basic aspects of distribution and phenology
- Abundance
- Trends
- Threats including removal levels from hunting



Alaska Communications Plan

- Enhance communication with Alaska Native communities
- Requires internal and external communications strategy



Nome listening session, Feb 2016



MMC AK team endures blizzard in Kotzebue, Alaska, Feb 2016



Alaska Communications Plan

- How can we work more effectively together as a team?
- How can we help fill existing communication gaps?
- What projects can we lead that involve others who work on AK issues?



Marine Mammal Commission
U.S. Government

2016 Alaska Communications Plan
Last Updated: October 2016

Purpose

Facilitate two-way communication with Alaska stakeholders on issues pertaining to marine mammal science, management and policy, particularly focused on Arctic and subsistence issues.

Strategy

Identify several deliverables for the year to help improve overall communication with Alaska stakeholders. Assemble an interagency team to help implement this plan and assign team members to specific tasks under each deliverable.

Primary Audiences

Alaska Native communities/ Tribal villages, Alaska Native Organizations (ANOs) and subsistence hunters, participants from the 2016 Alaska listening sessions, Alaska Congressional delegation, and other Federal Agencies, academia and NGOs with presence in Alaska.



Communications Team

- Communications Plan Coordinator: Luis Leandro, Marine Mammal Commission (MMC)
- Alaska Native Liaison: Vicki Cornish, MMC
- Jenna Malek, MMC
- Peter Thomas, MMC

Subject Matter Experts and Advisors

- Arctic Policy: Peter Thomas, MMC
- Arctic Science: Sue Moore, NMFS and Marine Mammal Commission; Robert Suydam, North Slope Borough and Marine Mammal Commission; and Robyn Angliss, NMFS/ AFSC Marine Mammal Laboratory
- Tribal Consultation/Co-Management: Vicki Cornish and Mike Gosliner, MMC; Mike Miller, IPCoMM; Kathryn Mengerink, Environmental Law Institute
- Arctic Shipping: Peter Thomas, David Laist, MMC
- Energy Development: Vicki Cornish, MMC
- MMPA and International Treaties: Mike Gosliner, MMC
- Marine Mammal Health: Frances Gulland, The Marine Mammal Center and MMC
- Subsistence Issues: Robert Suydam, North Slope Borough and MMC; Vera Metcalf, Eskimo Walrus Commission and MMC

Spokespeople

- Daryl Boness, Chairman
- Frances Gulland, Commissioner
- Mike Tillman, Commissioner
- Rebecca Lent, Executive Director



CHOW 2016 Arctic Panel

- Co-organized and co-sponsored Capitol Hill Oceans Week (CHOW) Arctic Session
- Panel included Vera Metcalf and Harry Brower Jr.
- Focus on subsistence resources, identity and traditional way of life



“Local Voices and Traditional Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic Economy”



Stakeholder Engagement

- Held multiple Congressional briefings with AK delegation
 - March 2017 follow-up visits in Anchorage, AK
- Attended Fall and Spring IPCoMM meetings
- Chaired Arctic Waterways Safety Committee workshop on research vessel standards



Vera Metcalf places “hometown pin” on AK map in Sen Sullivan’s Office, March 2016



Web and Newsletter

Marine Mammal Commission 2016 Alaska Listening Sessions

A Heartfelt Thank You

On behalf of the Marine Mammal Commission, I would like to thank you for attending our Alaska public listening session and for the input you provided. We were honored to be able to hear from the communities and people of Barrow, Kotzebue, Nome, and Anchorage during our visit to Alaska.



I want to stress how valuable it was for us to receive input from you. We heard your concerns about marine mammal subsistence hunting activities and how hunting is being impacted by changes in the marine ecosystem, human activity in your region, and other factors. We also heard about the need for improved two-way communication on issues affecting Alaska Native communities and for further efforts to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into federal agency decision-making.

We have [posted on our website](#) the presentation from our wrap-up meeting/webinar in Anchorage, as well as a summary of the listening sessions with potential follow-up/action items. We welcome your comments on the summary and proposed actions. We would also like to share our new [Co-Management and Alaska Native Tribal Consultation](#) website page, which we hope will be a useful source of information to you.

First MMC Newsletter!



The screenshot shows the Marine Mammal Commission website's page for the Pacific Walrus. The header includes the commission's logo and name, along with navigation links for 'ABOUT THE COMMISSION', 'PRIORITY TOPICS', 'GRANTS AND RESEARCH', 'LETTERS AND REPORTS', and 'MEETINGS AND EVENTS'. The main content area features the title 'Pacific Walrus' and a brief description: 'The Pacific walrus is a subspecies of walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*) found in the Bering, Chukchi, Laptev and East Siberian Seas. The reliance of walruses on sea ice for resting during the summer foraging period makes them particularly vulnerable to changes in climate and the associated loss of sea ice. As a result, the Pacific walrus is a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)'. Below the text is a photograph of walruses on ice, captioned 'Walrus on ice. (USGS)'. To the right of the main text is a sidebar with a close-up photo of a walrus and four informational sections: 'Protection Status' (Candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act), 'Threats' (Climate change induced loss of sea ice, human disturbance/development, and pollutants), 'Did You Know?' (Walrus do not use their tusks for feeding; they rely on whiskers to find prey), and 'Range/Distribution' (Bering, Chukchi, Laptev, and East Siberian Seas).

New Species Page – Pacific Walrus



Marine Mammal
Commission

Social Media

 **MMCommission** @MarineMammalCom · 12 Feb 2016


Marine Mammals in a changing #Arctic-
what did AK communities share?
1.usa.gov/1SYpzyk #ourocean #whales




 **MMCommission** @MarineMammalCom · 12 Feb 2016

CI Beluga #whales recognized as at-risk species by
@NOAAFisheries. Learn more here: 1.usa.gov/1PrrKH2



 **MMCommission** @MarineMammalCom · 8 Feb 2016

Join us Thursday for a webinar about
Marine Mammals and the Arctic
conta.cc/1T0zFNY



Other Arctic Activities

- Chaired Arctic Waterways Safety Committee workshop on research vessel standards
- Co-organized and co-sponsored Capitol Hill Oceans Week (CHOW) Arctic Session
- Held multiple Congressional briefings
- Funded research on Arctic ringed seal genetics
- Provided input to the IWC Scientific Committee on implementation of the IMO Polar Code
- Commented on Arctic Marine Mammal Disaster Response Guidelines
- Attended Fall and Spring IPCoMM meetings



Discussion

What more could MMC be doing to engage on Arctic issues?

How can communications be improved to increase our effectiveness in the Arctic?

