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
First ever Arctic Unusual Mortality Event (i.e., significant die-off) of seals and walruses 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.

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

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

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

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

Nome listening session, 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?
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
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!

New Species Page – Pacific Walrus
Social Media

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

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

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