



Marine Mammal Commission

An independent agency of the U.S. Government

Summary of Community Listening Sessions

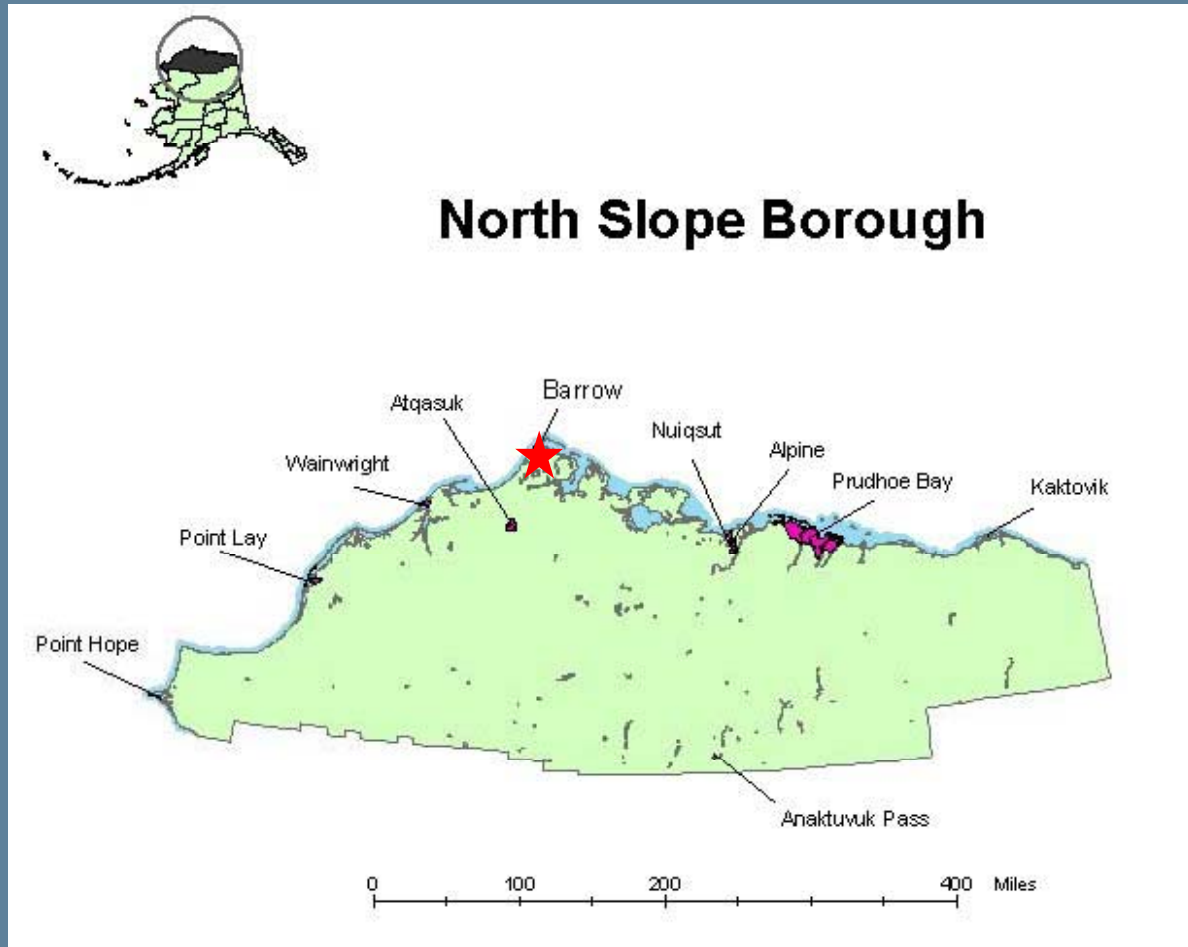
Barrow - Peter Thomas

Kotzebue – Vicki Cornish

Nome – Mike Gosliner

Possible Follow-up Actions – Rebecca Lent

Barrow



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis and US Census Bureau (2000)



Marine Mammal Commission

Who We Met With Barrow

- Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission
(Annual Mini-Convention)
- Charlotte Brower,
Mayor of the North Slope
Borough
- Native Village of Barrow



Who We Met With

Barrow

- North Slope Borough Wildlife Department
- Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS)
- Listening Session



Marine Mammals We Heard About

Barrow / North Slope Region



Credit: I. Stirling

Polar Bears



Credit: NOAA/NMML

Bowhead Whales



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Major Themes/Concerns

Barrow / North Slope Region

Tribal Consultation

- Lack of consultation, late in process
- Large volume of new rules and regulations
- Agencies should consult with scientists that know the Arctic and have experience integrating traditional knowledge



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Major Themes/Concerns

Barrow / North Slope Region

ESA Listings and Critical Habitat Determinations

- Need stronger criteria that take into account large current abundance, potential for adaptation
- Need to consult earlier with communities on their knowledge and concerns
- Significant perceived impact of ESA listings and determinations on subsistence livelihoods and Native communities' ability to hunt



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Major Themes/Concerns

Barrow / North Slope Region

Implementation of the U.S. Russia Bilateral Agreement - Polar Bear Quota

- Confusion, lack of information, and lack of adequate consultation
- Concern that there is no scientific basis for the quota and “boundary change”
- Quota and boundary change will have a serious impact on Native communities
- Importance of polar bear hunting in community life and traditions, and fear for its loss



Major Themes/Concerns

Barrow / North Slope Region

Enforcement

- Talk of new regulation raises concerns about harassment by enforcement agents
- Stories of harsh enforcement and insensitivity to individuals and communities
- Perceived double standard between individual Alaska Natives and industry



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Other Themes/Concerns

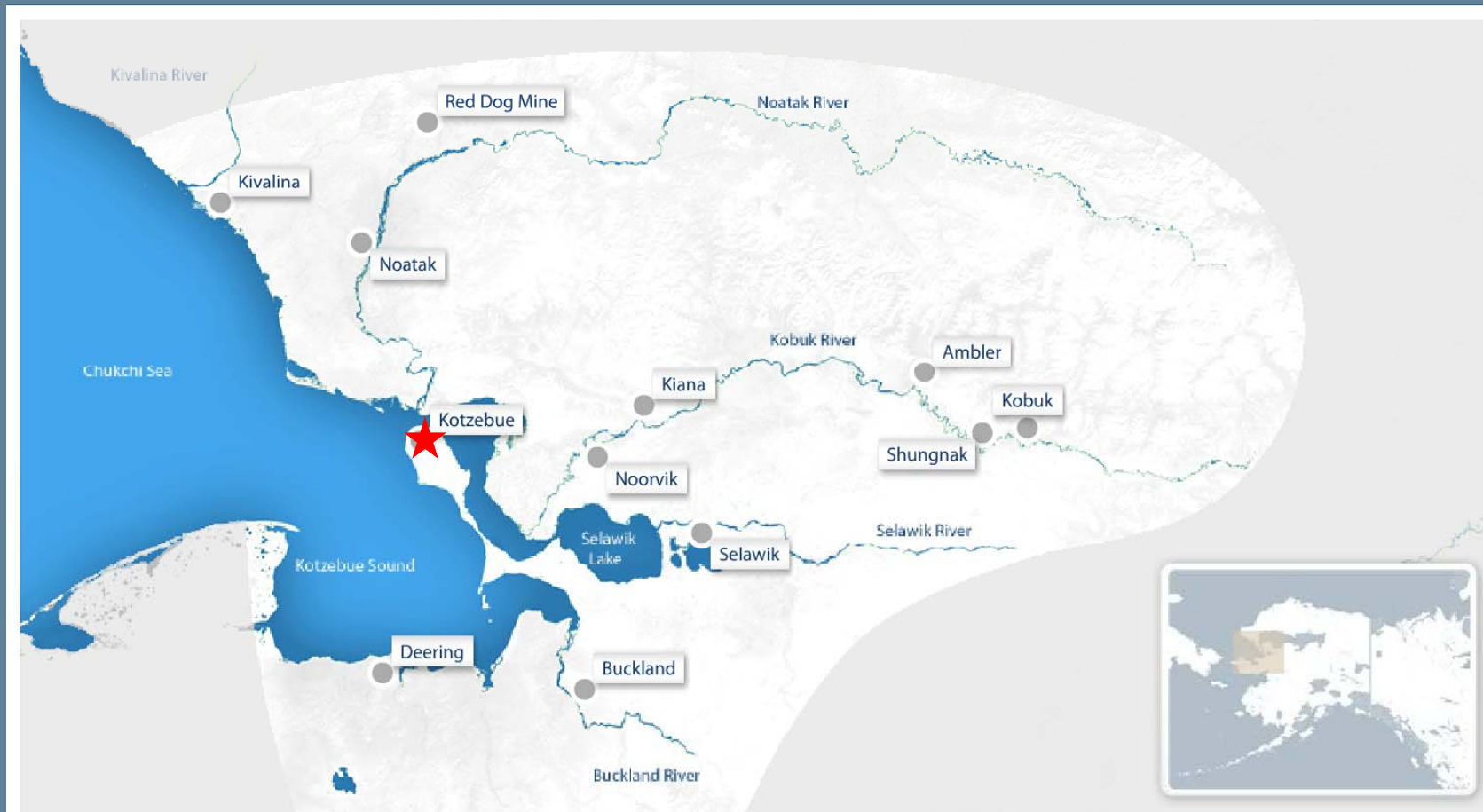
Barrow / North Slope Region

- Commercial Sale of Marine Mammal products
- Shipping
- Culture and Livelihoods
- Climate Change
- “We’ve never heard of the Marine Mammal Commission”



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Kotzebue



Source: NANA Regional Corporation



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Who We Met With

Kotzebue

- Northwest Arctic Borough
- Native Village of Kotzebue



Who We Met With

Kotzebue

Listening Session

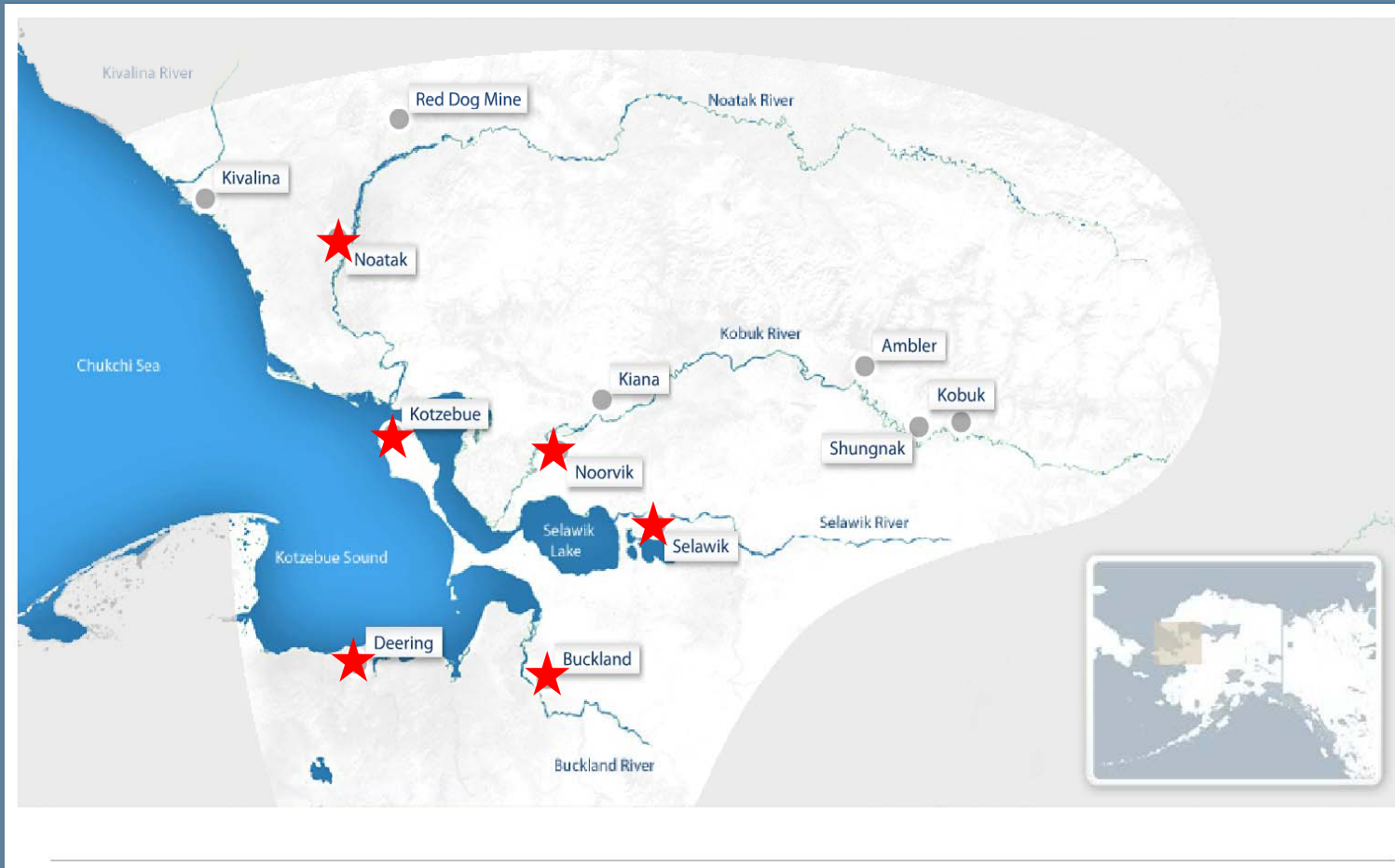
Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Room



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Listening Session

Native Village Representation



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Marine Mammals We Heard About Kotzebue/Northwest Arctic Region



Source: NOAA/NMML

Beluga whales



Source: marinebio.org

Bearded Seals (Ugruk)



Source: NOAA/NMML

Spotted seal



Ringed seal



Walruses



Killer whales



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Major Themes

Kotzebue / Northwest Arctic Region

Changes in weather patterns

- Less ice, thin, unstable, “dirty”
- Late or no shorefast ice
- Earlier break-up, later freeze-up
- Stronger, more variable winds
- Stronger currents



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Major Themes

Kotzebue / Northwest Arctic Region

Impacts of climate change on hunting

- Beluga whales increasingly rare in nearshore waters, less available to hunters
- Killer whale presence may be affecting beluga whale and walrus movements
- Compressed hunting season
 - E.g., bearded seal hunt limited to one or two weeks
- Hunting is more dangerous on thin ice



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Major Themes

Kotzebue / Northwest Arctic Region

Shipping

- Increased open water means more vessels
- How will ship traffic affect subsistence?
- ANO's are developing best practices for ships entering Arctic waters through Arctic Waterways Safety Committee
- USCG should extend Bering Sea Port Access Route Study (PARS) to Canadian border



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Major Themes

Kotzebue / Northwest Arctic Region

Science/Research Needs

- Better information on killer whales, i.e., presence in Arctic, behavior, prey species
- Aerial surveys for beluga whales in Kotzebue Sound
- Better communication with Russia on science and policy issues
- Genetic samples from belugas in Russia to determine extent of mixing with eastern stocks



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Major Themes

Kotzebue / Northwest Arctic Region

Consultation/co-management

- Need to ensure Alaska Natives are consulted with early on
- Agencies should consult with Tribal governments
- Proposals for Marine Protected Areas must involve consultation early on
- Lack of village-based agency contacts to provide accurate information



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Major Concerns

Kotzebue / Northwest Arctic Region

“Sick” seals

- Started appearing in 2011, prompted UME declaration
- Seals lethargic, have sores, patches of hair loss, breathing difficulties
- Affected all seal species
- Hunters do not use affected seals for subsistence
- Causal factors yet TBD
- Still seeing hairless seals
- Concern over role of Fukushima fall out
- Hunters expressed that follow-up communication with villages is lacking



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Nome



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Who We Met With

- Native hunters in Shishmaref and from Unalakleet
- Kawerak Inc.



Nome / Bering Strait Region

Native Village Representation



★ Conference Call

★ Listening Session



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Marine Mammals We Heard About

Nome / Bering Strait Region



Source: FWS

Walruses



Polar bears



Bowhead whales



Beluga whales



Bearded seals (Ugruk)



Spotted seal



Source: NOAA/NMML

Ringed seals



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Major Themes

Nome / Bering Strait Region

- Climate Change
 - Ice conditions and winds unpredictable
 - Safety concerns and limited access to marine mammals
 - Worried about food security and safety of consuming marine mammals; declared disasters
 - Seal UME first one declared for subsistence species
 - Lack of subsistence resources will have a profound impacts on traditional culture
 - Need greater flexibility on when and where hunting can occur



Major Themes

Nome / Bering Strait Region

- Communication Issues
 - Agencies do not consult/communicate with Native communities or do so late in the process
 - Agencies need to consult with the hunters, not leaders in the “hub” communities
 - Need better guidance on what constitutes “wasteful” take
 - Lack of agency follow-up
 - Little information provided on polar bear harvest limit
 - Reliance on the Federal Register and websites is not good enough



Major Themes

Nome / Bering Strait Region

- Walrus
 - Potential ESA listing will lead to limits on hunting and other activities
 - FWS is not consulting with Native Villages about the listing
 - Walrus are plentiful, but ice conditions are preventing access
 - Need clearer guidance on what is allowed/prohibited (e.g., wasteful take and handicraft uses)



Major Themes

Nome / Bering Strait Region

- Enforcement
 - Agency presence focused on enforcement
 - Unclear guidance has led to unintentional violations
 - Weather-related safety concerns need to be considered
 - Penalties under federal law more severe than under State law; prior offenses unrelated to marine mammals considered
 - Interpretations of the rules vary by agency
 - Enforcement officials are over-zealous
 - Should Native Villages or organizations be playing a role in enforcement?



Major Themes

Nome / Bering Strait Region

- Strandings/Health Concerns
 - Alaska needs a stranding network
 - Beach stranded animals are seen as food sources, not something to investigate
 - Animals may look normal but be diseased or contaminated; no testing
 - Better guidance needed on how to handle stranded animals
 - UME has people worried about safety of consuming stranded marine mammals
 - Lack of subsistence resources will have profound impacts on traditional culture
 - Need greater flexibility on when and where hunting can occur



Common Themes

- Climate change
- Communication/Consultation
- ESA and Critical Habitat
- Health of marine mammals
- Shipping impacts
- What is the Marine Mammal Commission?



Possible Follow-up / Actions

Enhancing Communication

- Designate Marine Mammal Commission Alaska Native Liaison
- Expand traditional outreach and use of social media
 - e.g., Facebook
- Host Alaska Native Intern
- Regular visits to Arctic



Possible Follow-up / Actions

Marine Mammal Health

- Facilitate/coordinate meeting of key players and hunting communities
- Communicate results of research and analysis
- Identify and communicate web-based sources of information



Possible Follow-up / Actions

Review of Co-management

- Conduct a formal review of co-management agreements
- Work with the relevant federal Agency and ANO to agree on review criteria, process and timing
- Start with two reviews (individually) and continue as needed



Possible Follow-up / Actions

ESA and Critical Habitat

- Work with federal agencies to “front load” consultation early in the process
- Formal letter of recommendation to federal agencies at earliest stage
- With other federal agencies, clarify impact of ESA listing and Critical Habitat on subsistence hunting



Possible Follow-up / Actions

Chukchi Polar Bear Regulations

- Support request for data from North Slope Borough
- Clarify harvest data and relative size of cap
- Ensure ample time for updated analyses and communication/consultation prior to proposed rule



Possible Follow-up / Actions

Other Ideas

- Fund research on barter of subsistence product
- Beluga whale science: genetics, aerial surveys
- Clarify process for designating marine protected areas and impact on subsistence hunt
- Disaster declarations
- Russian oil development and shipping



Discussion Period



Marine Mammal Commission

Proposed Actions / Ideas

- In addition to Staff Liaison for AK Native communities, consider engaging persons in the Arctic who have appropriate skills and experience, possibly through contracts.
- Strong statement from the Marine Mammal Commission about the importance of co-management.
- Co-management review will be critical - everything else will fall under that.
- Immediate Feedback: Share the information that you got on this trip - find a way to get that back out to the community. Might do that in collaboration with IPCoMM.



Proposed Actions / Ideas

- Also immediate action: Need to inform AK Native communities on how ESA listing and C-HAB determination impacts their activities, directly or indirectly. Look at pros and cons of ESA listing and C-HAB, including indirect actions. Consider how the Marine Mammal Commission can play a role in this, through our own communication strategy. Working with Capitol Hill as well as the federal agencies.
- Consider establishing sub-committees, potentially with non-CSA or non-Staff members, who can consider particular issues. They cannot provide a decision but they can bring their input to the C/CSA as a whole. Outsiders can provide advice, it is just the deliberation and the decision process that the laws would restrict. As long as we are just collecting info.



Public Comment Period



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Thank You!



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