

AGREEMENT
between the
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
and the
COOK INLET MARINE MAMMAL COUNCIL
for the
CO-MANAGEMENT OF THE COOK INLET STOCK OF BELUGA WHALE
for the YEAR 2006

I. PARTIES

This document constitutes an agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Cook Inlet Marine Mammal Council (CIMMC), otherwise referred to as the Parties.

CIMMC is an association, chartered by the Cook Inlet Treaty Tribes, which represents these Tribes and Alaska Native marine mammal subsistence hunters within the Cook Inlet area who are registered with CIMMC.

The Cook Inlet (CI) beluga whale stock applies to all beluga whales occurring in waters of the Gulf of Alaska north of 58 degrees North latitude including but not limited to, Cook Inlet, Kamishak Bay, Chinitna Bay, Tuxedni Bay, Prince William Sound, Yakutat Bay, Shelikof Strait, and off Kodiak Island and freshwater tributaries to those waters.

II. AUTHORITIES

- A. NMFS has the authority to enter into this agreement pursuant to section 119 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA), 16 U.S.C. 1388. Guidance is provided by the Presidential Memorandum of April 29, 1994 (Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Government); Executive Order 13175, November 6, 2000 (Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments); the American Indian and Alaska Native Policy of the U. S. Department of Commerce, March 30, 1995; and the Memorandum of Agreement for Negotiations of Marine Mammal Protection Act Section 119 Agreements, August, 1997.
- B. CIMMC has the authority to enter into this agreement under its charter and authorizing resolutions from Alaska tribal governments. Further, CIMMC is recognized as an Alaska Native organization under the MMPA and, as such, may enter into this agreement to co-manage the subsistence use of marine mammals by Alaska Natives.

III. PURPOSES

The purposes of this agreement between NMFS and CIMMC are to promote the recovery of the CI stock of beluga whales while at the same time providing an opportunity for a limited harvest of the CI beluga whale by the Native Village of Tyonek (NVT) during 2006; and to promote scientific research on the CI beluga whale stock and its habitat.

IV. BACKGROUND

In 1972, the MMPA was passed by Congress and provided an exemption which allows the taking of marine mammals by Alaska Natives provided such taking is for subsistence purposes or done for purposes of creating and selling authentic Native articles of handicraft and clothing. Such taking may not be accomplished in a wasteful manner.

In 1994, CIMMC was established to facilitate cooperation and communication among beluga whale subsistence hunters, scientists, and the government regarding the conservation and management of CI beluga whales. CIMMC is composed of CI village representatives and hunters who hunt CI beluga whales.

In April 1994, the MMPA was amended to include section 119 "Marine Mammal Cooperative Agreements in Alaska." Section 119 formalizes the rights of Alaska Native organizations to participate in conservation-related co-management of subsistence resources and their use. Section 119 also authorized the appropriation of funds to be transferred by NMFS to Alaska Native organizations to accomplish these activities.

Section 3022 of Pub. L. 106-31, 113 Stat. 100 (May 21, 1999), as extended by section 627 of Pub. L. 106-553 (December 21, 2000), prohibits the taking of CI beluga whale except pursuant to a cooperative agreement between NMFS and affected Alaska Native organizations.

V. MANAGEMENT OF COOK INLET BELUGA WHALES

The Parties agree that the CI beluga whale harvest, during the calendar year 2006, shall consist of one (1) strike, which is allocated to NVT. A strike is defined as hitting a whale with a harpoon, lance, bullet or other object. Upon striking a whale, subsequent strikes on that same whale are not counted against the strike limit.

Harvest Practices

1. Only whaling boats and captains authorized under a permit issued by CIMMC may participate in the harvest allocated under this agreement. An Elder or experienced hunter shall be present and shall direct the harvest for each beluga whaling boat. This will reduce the chance of striking a calf, a

female accompanied by a calf, or of striking a whale in an area or in a manner that may result in the loss of the whale.

2. Each whaling vessel must have aboard the following equipment: harpoon and attached rope/float and at least 30 feet of nylon rope or equivalent, to help insure against the loss of the whale.
3. All CI beluga whale hunting shall occur on or after July 1, 2006 to minimize the possibility of harvesting a pregnant female.
4. CIMMC, NVT, or the person or persons holding a permit for the strike shall notify NMFS Enforcement, Anchorage office, 24 hours prior to the initiation of that day's hunt.
5. The intentional or negligent taking of a maternally dependent calf, or a female beluga whale accompanied by a maternally dependent calf, is prohibited.
6. The beluga whale shall be struck with a harpoon and float prior to shooting. This is intended to reduce struck and loss.
7. Consistent with the desire of CIMMC in regards to this agreement, the current practice of NVT, and the Cook Inlet hunting community, the sale of the beluga whale, or parts thereof, harvested under this agreement, shall not be permitted; provided that nothing herein is intended to prohibit the use or sale of non-edible by-products of a beluga whale taken under a permit authorized herein for the creation of traditional handicrafts or clothing.
8. Upon harvesting a CI beluga whale, the whaling captain shall contact NMFS. This will allow NMFS to attend the whale and collect the necessary biological information (teeth, stomach, tissue samples, skin, etc.) for analysis. The whaling captain shall also provide the time and location of harvest.
9. All hunters shall comply with the provisions of this agreement and any permit issued by CIMMC. Non-compliance with any provisions by a hunter may result in the loss of his/her hunting privileges for CI beluga whales and prosecution.
10. Any unauthorized striking of a CI beluga whale by a member of CIMMC shall be counted against the strikes allocated to CIMMC. If such a strike occurs prior to the hunt conducted legally under a CIMMC Harvest Permit that Harvest Permit will be voided and no further hunting shall occur under this agreement.

11. In the event of any unusual loss of beluga whales through strandings or other causes, NMFS, CIMMC and NVT shall enter into consultation to determine whether to proceed with the hunt permitted by this agreement. Such determination shall be made based upon the best available information and consistent with the primary goals of the parties as set forth in Section III of this agreement. Consistent with the above consultation, NMFS may suspend further hunting at any time if it finds unanticipated deaths within this stock are too high to permit additional removals consistent with recovery of the CI beluga whales.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CIMMC

- A. CIMMC, in cooperation with NMFS, will manage the CI beluga whale subsistence harvest consistent with the authority and responsibilities of CIMMC specified by this agreement. CIMMC may provide for monitors to be aboard the whaling vessel to verify and report on the strike.
- B. CIMMC and NMFS shall communicate on an as-needed basis concerning matters related to the enforcement of this agreement or the Harvest Permit. Any party to this agreement which initiates an enforcement action for a violation of a prohibition involving Native take of the CI beluga whale shall notify, as soon as practical, the other party to this agreement of the enforcement action.
- C. CIMMC may obtain a permit to conduct research on the biology, natural history, and traditional knowledge of the CI population of beluga whales. NMFS personnel may participate in such data collection. All information collected under this section shall be shared between CIMMC and NMFS.
- D. No financial commitment on the part of CIMMC is authorized or required by this agreement.

VII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF NMFS

- A. NMFS has primary responsibility within the United States Government for the management of beluga whales. NMFS may assert its Federal authority to enforce any provisions of the MMPA that are applicable to the Native harvest of beluga whales. Such assertion of Federal authority will be preceded by consultation with CIMMC.

- B. NMFS and CIMMC shall communicate on an as-needed basis concerning matters related to the enforcement of this agreement or the Harvest Permit. Any party to this agreement which initiates an enforcement action for a violation of a prohibition involving Native take of the CI beluga whale shall notify, as soon as practical, the other party to this agreement of the enforcement action.
- C. NMFS, in consultation with CIMMC, may conduct research on the biology, natural history, and traditional knowledge of the CI population of beluga whales. CIMMC personnel may participate in such data collection. All information collected under this section shall be shared between CIMMC and NMFS.
- D. No financial commitment on the part of NMFS is authorized or required by this agreement.

VIII. REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

NMFS recognizes the existing tribal authority to regulate tribal members during the conduct of the subsistence harvest of beluga whales. CIMMC recognizes the Secretary of Commerce's authority to enforce the provisions of the MMPA and other Federal laws applicable to the Native harvest of CI beluga whales.

IX. OTHER PROVISIONS

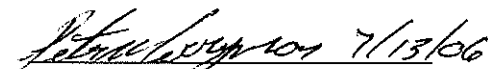
- A. Nothing herein is intended to conflict with current NOAA or NMFS directives or the directives of CIMMC. If the terms of this agreement are inconsistent with existing laws, regulations, or directives of either of the Parties, then those portions which are determined to be inconsistent shall be invalid, but the remaining terms and conditions not affected by the inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect. At the first opportunity for review of the agreement, all necessary changes will be accomplished by either an amendment to this agreement or by a new agreement, whichever is deemed expedient to the interest of both Parties.
- B. Should disagreements arise over the provisions of this agreement, or amendments or revisions thereto, that cannot be resolved at the operating level, the area(s) of disagreement shall be stated in writing by each Party and presented to the other Party for consideration. If agreement on interpretation cannot be reached within a reasonable time, a special meeting or teleconference shall be held to resolve the issues. This meeting shall include representatives of NMFS and CIMMC.

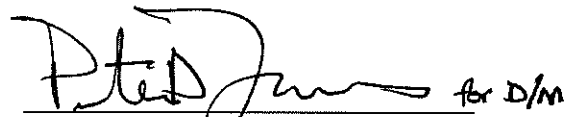
X. ADOPTION, DURATION, AND MODIFICATION

This agreement will become effective when signed by both Parties, may be amended at any time by written agreement of both Parties, and shall expire on December 31, 2006. Either Party may terminate this agreement by giving 45 days prior written Notice of Termination to the other Party.

XI. SIGNATORIES

The Parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last written date below:


Peter Merryman Date
Chairman,
Cook Inlet Marine Mammal Council
PO Box 82009
Tyonek, AK 99682

 for D/M
Robert D. Mecum Date
Acting Administrator, AK Region 7-7-06
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21688
Juneau, AK 99802-1668