



National Marine Fisheries Service
Alaska Region
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Bowhead Whale Subsistence Harvest 2008 - 2012

Achievements

A conservation success

The abundance of the Western Arctic bowhead whale stock has been steadily increasing since the mid-1970s – the only stock of bowhead whales to do so since commercial whaling stopped over 70 years ago. The stock is now estimated to exceed 10,000 whales.

Subsistence success

During the past ten years, AEWC villages have landed an average of 41 whales annually. Hunting efficiency has improved from 50% historically to a recent average of 75% of whales struck being landed, due to programs for whaling captains and crews, as well as improvements in accuracy and reliability of the tools used to hunt bowhead whales. The subsistence harvest has been sustainable, meeting community needs without increasing harvest levels, as the bowhead population has grown.

Co-management success

Cooperative agreements have been in place since 1981. These agreements establish the relationship and responsibilities of NMFS and AEWC, delegating on-the-ground management to AEWC. AEWC administers and enforces regulations with oversight by NMFS.

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www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/whales/bowhead/eis0108/default.htm



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Subsistence Bowhead Whaling 2008 - 2012

During the May 2007 meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) adopted an on-going framework for Inupiat subsistence bowhead whaling for the years 2008 through 2012.

The IWC concluded that the bowhead whale population is continuing to grow, and that the harvest requested by the Alaska whaling captains is within sustainable limits and meets the subsistence needs of the whaling communities.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implements the decisions of the IWC in the United States. The aboriginal subsistence harvest is conducted in accordance with a cooperative agreement between NMFS and the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC).



International Whaling Commission Plan Highlights

The IWC *Plan* for 2008 through 2012 works through a system of block quotas, with internal allocations. Provisions include:

- a block quota of 280 bowhead whales landed (by agreement, the Alaska Inupiat may take up to 255 whales, while 15 are allocated to Russian aboriginal bowhead whalers);
- in each of these years, the number of bowhead struck may not exceed 67 whales; and
- up to 15 unused strikes may be carried forward to the next year.

How NMFS implements the IWC quota

Each year within this five-year framework, NMFS issues an annual strike quota allocation to the AEWC by regulation through publication in the Federal Register. This quota and other limitation govern the harvest of bowhead whales.

For 2008, the strike quota included the annual 67, plus a carry-over of 15 unused strikes from 2007, for a total of 82. Through an arrangement between the United States and the Russian Federation, Russian aboriginal whalers may use no more than seven of these strikes, and Alaska Inupiat, no more than 75.

AEWC then allocates these 75 strikes among the 11 member villages whose subsistence and cultural needs have been documented in past requests.

AEWC reports all subsistence harvest strikes and landings to NMFS, insuring that the five-year total of landed whales complies with the IWC five-year quota.

