

North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management 2008 Stranding Report



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- The Department of Wildlife Management facilitates sustainable harvests and monitors populations of fish and wildlife species through research, leadership, and advocacy from local to international levels.
- Important Goals: Subsistence species health and monitoring for potential impacts of global climate change and industrial development

Stranding Agreement in place as of October, 2008

- One incident, two reports (potentially the same animal)
- Ability to respond occurred (near) post-open water season
- Example of a typical industry mortality report
- Issues with reporting and examination of dead stranded marine mammals noted in the vicinity of industrial work (i.e., seismic, side scan sonar, shipping)
- Concern about increase in strandings and dead marine mammals (specifically, whales) reported



October 13, 2008: Report from the Shell MMO's



- Photos/info provided by industry were not very helpful in determining age or cause of death
- Reported as:
 1. 15' Bowhead Calf
 2. Sighted 1.5 miles from vessel
 3. vessel located 35 mile NW of Wainwright headed East
 4. possible male
 5. cause of death hard to determine - was photographed by MMO
 6. had gash on side but "could have been congenital - hard to tell"







October 20, 2008: NSB08-208

Bowhead whale reported stranded in the surf near “Shop 3” along the beach road in Barrow



This head no longer had its lower jaw attached and was of interest, as industry had reported a young, dead bowhead whale with an apparent “gash” in its side floating in the vicinity of Franklin Point approximately 1 week before this head was recovered.



The head, as recovered, had both baleen racks intact and the baleen measured approximately 90 cm. in length, indicating that this whale was a yearling. The head was transported back to the NSB Department of Wildlife Management.



Several days later, it was thawed with a portable heater under a makeshift tarp tent and a necropsy was performed. The head was slightly decomposed.



Externally, there were several things noted:
First, there were tear marks noted in the skin around the base of the skull. These were consistent with killer whale tooth rakes.



Second, there were marks near the tip of the jaw that were consistent with a small propeller. These marks were not deep and did not penetrate the skin (the blubber was not affected). These marks occurred at the time of death or after the whale was dead, as there was no evidence of a hemorrhage or a healing process taking place.



Blubber was removed by B. Adams and A. Leavitt. No evidence of broken bones or trauma in the blubber layers was noted. The blubber was remarkably fresh and was light pink in color, though the area surrounding the base of the skull was quite decomposed. The right side of the upper jaw was more decomposed than the left and had been partially torn away from the bone.



Benefits of stranding response/necropsy

- Biopsy (genetics) can allow tracking of the individual carcass
- Necropsy can allow for determination of cause of death
- Impacts from a variety of sources, including, industrial development can be more fully assessed
- Scientific data collection

The NSB-DWM has applied for Prescott funding for dead/stranded marine mammal response

- Aerial monitoring and shoreline surveys, helicopter and boat-based response
- Priority will be given to animals sited in areas of industrial activity