



**The Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals
On
St. George Island in 2010**

September 2010

**The Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals
On
St. George Island in 2010**

September 2010

Report prepared by:
Afanasia Merculief Island Sentinel, Kayumixtax Eco-Office

Aleut Community of St. George Island
St. George Traditional Council
Kayumixtax Eco-Office
PO Box 940
St. George Island, Alaska 99591
907-859-2447/2448 (voice)
907-859-2251 (fax)

CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	3
DISTRIBUTION LIST	4
INTRODUCTION	5
METHODS	5
RESULTS	6
<i>Fur Seals Harvested</i>	6
<i>By-products and Waste</i>	6
<i>Males 124.5 cm or More in Length and Female Seals Killed or Struck</i>	7
<i>Heat Strokes</i>	7
<i>Entanglement</i>	7
<i>Oil Contamination</i>	7
<i>Other Mortality</i>	7
<i>Anomalies</i>	7
<i>Research</i>	8
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	9

DISTRIBUTION LIST

ECO Public Files

Michael T. Williams, NMFS

Traditional Council of St. George Island

INTRODUCTION

Laqux, northern fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) is an important customary traditional food for Unangan of St. George Island, Alaska. Together, the Traditional Council of St. George and U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service coordinate, monitor and manage the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals to safeguard their existence. The 2010 subsistence fur seal harvest was conducted in accordance to 50 CFR §216 Subpart F on St. George Island.

METHODS

The Island Sentinel of the St. George Traditional Council Kayumixtax Eco-Office monitored the 2010 subsistence fur seal harvest for the Aleut Community of St. George Island and in accordance with the Co-management Agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Aleut Communities of St. George. Within this context, management and activities were conducted under Cooperative Agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service. During the 2010 subsistence fur seal harvest information was collected on:

- a) the number of sub-adult male fur seals harvested,
- b) incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process,
- c) the occurrence of older male seals judged to be 124.5 cm or more in length,
- d) females seals killed or injured during the harvest operation,
- e) the number of seal deaths due to overheating,
- f) number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled,
- g) evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts,
- h) other types of fur seal mortality,
- i) weather conditions at the time of the harvest,
- j) any other unusual conditions related to the harvest,
- k) Research conducted during the harvest, and visitors requesting to view or film the harvest.

RESULTS

Fur Seals Harvested

The 2010 subsistence fur seal harvest season on St. George Island was conducted in 7 harvests; the harvest season began on 9 July, 2010. The final harvest took place on 6 August, 2010. A total of 78 sub-adult male fur seals were taken for subsistence from 3 harvests at the Northeast haul out and 4 harvests at the Zapadni haul out.

Table 1

Table 1: Dates, locations, weather, numbers of harvests and sub-adult male fur seals harvested at the locations for the 2010 Subsistence Fur Seal Harvest on St. George Island, Alaska.

Date	Haul-out	Roundup	Temp F	Wind Direction	Wind MPH	Weather	Harvested
7/09/10	Zapadni HO	9:54	43-47	SSE	4-7 mph	overcast	12
07/16/10	Northeast HO	9:45	45-50	VAR	8-12 mph	overcast/foggy	4
07/16/10	Zapadni HO	9:56	40-45	SSW	8-12 mph	overcast	09
07/23/10	Northeast HO	9:47	40-45	VAR	15-20	overcast/mist	13
07/27/10	Zapadni HO	10:38	40-45	NE	10-15	overcast	10
07/30/10	Northeast HO	10:05	40-45	S	10-15	overcast	18
08/06/10	Zapadni HO	10:04	45-50	VAR	5-10	overcast/mist	12
Total							78

By-products and Waste

Males 124.5 cm or More in Length and Female Seals Killed or Struck

Based on our observations at every harvest, we estimate no male fur seals 124.5 cm or more in length were struck and killed. There were no females killed or stunned during the harvests.

Heat Strokes

No deaths of any fur seal occurred due to heat stroke (over heating) during or as part of the 2010 subsistence fur seal harvest. There was one occasion where an animal appeared to be showing early signs of heat stress. The animal was removed from the pod and allowed to recover on its own. Within 15-20 minutes, the seal made its way to the haulout and appeared fine.

Entanglement

Throughout the course of the 2010 Subsistence Fur Seal Harvest, a total of 1 entangled seal was disentangled as part of the round-ups. The harvest crew and Afanasia Mercurief observed 2 entangled seals one at Northeast 30 July 2010 and the other at Zapadni on 6 August 2010. The first sub-adult male (SAM) was small enough (about 3-4 years old) to physically restrain and remove the green net from around its neck and safely release it at Northeast. The net caused a 360 degree cut around its neck. The second entangled SAM was at Zapadni which had a line around its neck but personnel were not prepared to restrain the seal and remove the line due to its size (estimated 5 years old). The harvest crew observed another SAM at Zapadni with a visible scar on its neck, but it was not captured.

During other non-harvest research on 7 July 2010, Mike Williams and Afanasia Mercurief encountered 2 entangled SAMs at Staraya Artil haulout. One SAM had a line around its neck creating a 360 degree cut and the other a plastic packing strap creating a 180 degree cut on the neck that were both removed. The entangling debris was saved for future studies.

Oil Contamination

No evidence of oil contamination on fur seals pelts of harvested animals during the subsistence fur seal harvest was observed, however not all pelts were thoroughly checked for evidence of oiling.

Other Mortality

No other fur seal mortality occurred.

Anomalies

There were no anomalies observed.

Research

100% of the snouts with upper canines were collected, however one set of canines were found to be damaged. Ninety-nine percent (77 of 78 harvested) of the upper canine teeth from each harvest were taken for the National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) in Seattle, Washington to gather age related data from the harvested animals. The 2010 canines were all sent to NMML other teeth from prior years are archived at the St. George Traditional Council

Eco Office for future research or arts and crafts. Afanasia Mercurief collected canines in 2010 under NMFS Scientific Research Permit #1119-1882.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The St. George Traditional Council's Kayumixtax ECO-Office conveys special thanks to the St. George harvest foremen - Mark Mercurief & and crew; Tracy Lekanof, Sergei Lekanof, Tess Lekanof and Mathew Kashevarof, for all their hard work and diligence during the 2010 St. George Subsistence Harvest and also to the various community members who assisted with clubbing and fleshing hides.

This report was funded under Cooperative Agreement NA08NMF4390549 and reviewed by the National Marine Fisheries Service.