



**The Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals  
On  
St. George Island in 2008**

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Report prepared by:

**Phillip A. Lekanof**, 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**

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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 2008 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 2008 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 contract with the National Marine Fisheries Service. During the 2008 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 2008 subsistence fur seal harvest season on St. George Island was conducted in 10 harvests; the harvest season began on 9 July, 2008. The final harvest took place on 8 August, 2008. A total of 170 sub-adult male fur seals (SAMs) were taken for subsistence from 4 harvests at Northeast haulout and 6 at Zapadni haulout.

**Table 1**

Table 1: Dates, locations, weather, numbers of harvests and sub-adult male fur seals harvested at the locations for the 2008 Subsistence Fur Seal Harvest on St. George Island, Alaska.

Date	Haul-out	Roundup	Temp °F	Wind Direction	Wind MPH	Weather	Harvested
07/09/08	Northeast HO	9:54	43-47	SSE	4-7 mph	overcast	10
07/16/08	Zapadni HO	9:45	45-50	VAR	8-12 mph	overcast/foggy	17
07/18/08	Northeast HO	9:56	40-45	SSW	8-12 mph	overcast	19
07/21/08	Zapadni HO	9:47	40-45	VAR	15-20	overcast/mist	10
07/28/08	Zapadni HO*	10:38	40-45	NE	10-15	overcast	17
07/31/08	Zapadni HO*	10:05	40-45	S	10-15	overcast	24
08/04/08	Zapadni HO	10:04	45-50	VAR	5-10	overcast/mist	19
08/06/08	Northeast HO	9:45	43-47	VAR	4-7mph	overcast	23
08/07/08	Zapadni HO	10:00	40-45	NNW	4-7mph	overcast	10
08/08/08	Northeast HO	9:47	40-45	NNE	8-12mph	overcast	21

- \* On July 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, the harvests were moved from Northeast haulout to Zapadni haulout due to a lack of sufficient harvestable-sized males in relation to a large number of adult males in the haulout area.

### *By-products and Waste*

An undocumented number of fur seal pelts, throats, teeth, and whiskers were taken for arts and crafts purposes during the 2008 subsistence fur seal harvest. An animal was harvested that was not taken for subsistence on July 28<sup>th</sup> at Zapadni Rookery. While the seal was being butchered a puss like substance was excreted near the flipper and the seal was therefore deemed not fit for consumption by the harvest foreman.

### ***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 2008 subsistence fur seal harvest. However, we did have 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 2008 Subsistence Fur Seal Harvest, a total of three entangled seals were counted as part of the round-ups. We also had observed one SAM that had previously been entangled at Zapadni. The first entanglement occurred at Northeast Haulout on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, it was an approximately 5 year old male with a 180° wound around the lower portion of the neck. There was a bit of a white packing band visible, but due to a lack of experienced crew and equipment, the SAM was allowed to return to the rookery. The second incident took place on July 31<sup>st</sup> at Zapadni Rookery. A 3-4 year old male had a white packing band around its neck which caused a full 360° wound. The animal was noosed and the packing band removed. The final sighting was at Zapadni Rookery on August 4<sup>th</sup>. There was a 2-3 year old male with a white packing band around its neck, but there was no wound at the time of its disentanglement. At this time we also observed a seal with mild scarring around its neck. The animal appeared fine and was released with an unharvested pod.

### ***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***

Fifty percent 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. Additionally, the St. George Traditional Council is permitted to collect upper canines and as a result 100% of the snouts with upper canines intact were subsequently collected. The canines not sent to NMML are archived at the St. George Traditional Council Eco Office for future research projects under NMFS Scientific Research Permit 1119-1882. Collections of canines were by Phillip A. Lekanof, with the assistance of Nathaniel Lekanof, Tracy Lekanof and Mathew Kashevarof, under Contract No. AB133F-06-CN-0184



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The St. George Traditional Council's Kayumixtax ECO-Office conveys special thanks to the St. George harvest foremen - Mark Mercurief & Hertha Kashevarof and crew; Tracy Lekanof, Mark Mercurief Jr., Nathaniel Lekanof, Sergei Lekanof, Derrick Philemonof, and Mathew Kashevarof, for all their hard work and diligence during the 2008 St. George Subsistence Harvest and also to the various community members who assisted with clubbing and fleshing hides.

This report was funded under (contract # AB133F-CN-0184) and reviewed by the National Marine Fisheries Service.