

October 29, 2003


Aang (Greetings):

We are glad to present you with a copy of the 2003 annual report on the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals on St. Paul Island. We thank the St. Paul sealers for their participation and cooperation, our staff, and National Marine Fisheries Service for making this report possible. This report was funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service contract number AB133F-03-SE-0931.

If you have any questions please contact us by telephone, or via email pazavadil@tdxak.com or aquilina@tdxak.com.

Qaqaalakux... Thanks,


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Cc. ECO Files

**The Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals
on
St. Paul Island in 2003**

October 2003

by

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This Document should be cited as follows:

Zavadil P. A. and A. D. Lestenkof. 2002. The Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals on St. Paul Island in 2003. Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Tribal Government, Ecosystem Conservation Office. St. Paul Island, Pribilof Islands, Alaska.

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INTRODUCTION

Laqux, northern fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) is an important customary traditional food for Unangan of St. Paul Island, Alaska. Over the last decade, there have been various situations and activities that have led the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the Tribal Government of St. Paul to work together in efforts to safeguard the existence of the northern fur seal. Hopefully this report will serve as an instrument in these endeavors.

Traditionally, seals were hunted at sea and use of the whole animal was practiced out of necessity and therefore, respect. Harvesting seals was introduced in reaction to pressure from the consumer culture whose values support killing animals, fur seal in this case, exclusively to make money. This process was foreign to our people's traditional value system. Nonetheless, our people participating against their will, instilled their conservative-based subsistence concepts of respectful harvest methods, such as no taking of females. Becoming harvesters of seals leads to a need for respectful control factors because the "one with one" rules of hunting had been crossed. The evolving history of harvesting fur seals on the Pribilofs has come to a place of transition calling for a process of improving control factors and changing to accommodate the needs of today's members of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island.

METHODS

The 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest was conducted in accordance with the Northern Fur Seal Subsistence Harvest Management Plan and 50 CFR §216 Subpart F.

The Tanalix Amgignax (Island Sentinel) of the Tribal Government of St. Paul's Ecosystem Conservation Office (ECO) conducted the harvest monitoring for the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest for the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island and in accordance with the Agreement between the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island and National Marine Fisheries Service and under contract with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest was monitored for: number of seals harvested, by-products and waste, adult male and females seals killed or injured during the harvest operation, number of seal deaths due to overheating, number of seals entangled in marine debris, number of seals disentangled, oil contaminated seal pelts, other mortality, weather conditions at the time of the harvest, and any other unusual conditions.

RESULTS

Fur Seals Harvested

The 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest season was conducted in nine harvests beginning on 25 June 2003. With an approved extension beyond the usual August 8th closing date, the last harvest took place on 09 August 2003. A total of 522 fur seals were taken this season on St. Paul Island over those nine days at five different haulouts (Table 1). Refer to Appendix A for harvest monitoring log.

Table 1: Locations, number of harvests and seals harvested at the locations for the 2003 Subsistence Fur Seal Harvest on St. Paul Island, Alaska

LOCATION	NUMBER OF HARVESTS	NUMBER OF SEALS HARVESTED
Big Zapadni	3	106
Gorbach	1	42
Lukanin	1	96
Polovina	3	160
Zoltoi Sands	1	118
Total	9	522

By Products and Waste

An undocumented number of fur seal pelts, throats, teeth, and whiskers were taken for arts and crafts purposes during the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest.

No waste occurred on the harvest field under 50 CFR §216 Subpart F. No waste occurred after fur seals were harvested in accordance with 50 CFR §216 Subpart F.

Adult Male and Female Seals Killed or Struck

Although precautions were taken to avoid the killing of adult males and females, accidents did happen. During the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest no adult female fur seals were struck and killed. One adult male fur seal was struck but was not killed.

Heat Strokes

No deaths of any fur seal occurred due to heat stroke (over heating) during or as part of the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest.

Entanglement Monitoring

A sample of male fur seals was counted during the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest to determine the rate of entanglement. The methods described in Robson et al. (1997) for surveys on entangled fur seals were followed. Observers sampled 956 juvenile male fur seals, ages two to four years of age, and a total of 1,987 male fur seals of all ages released from the killing field and 522 killed in the subsistence harvest. Six entangled male seals were observed during harvest surveys and included in the calculation for the rate of entanglement. Another six male fur seals were observed with entangling debris during the harvest roundup and three male fur seals with scars indicating evidence of previous entanglement were also observed, however these animals

were not used in calculations of the incidence of entanglement. A separate report will be prepared describing the rate of entanglement and all other fur seal entanglement activities that were conducted on St. Paul Island in 2003.

Oil Contamination

No pelts of harvested animals during the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest were reported with oil on them.

Other Mortality

No other fur seal mortality occurred during the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest.

Anomalies

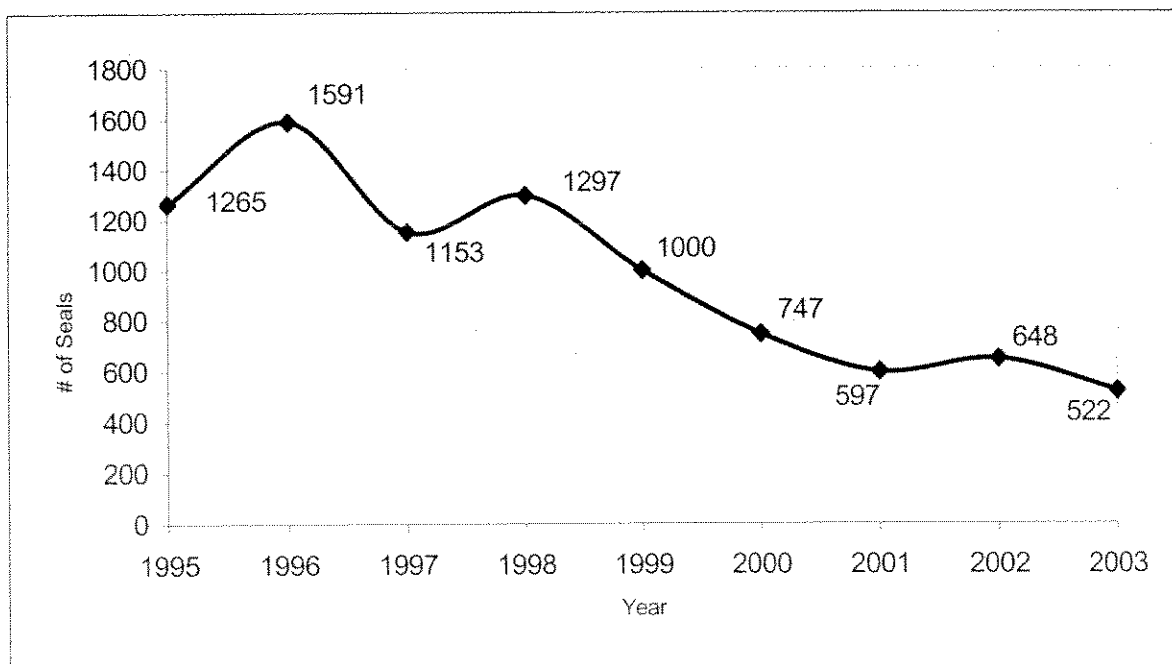
No anomalies occurred during the 2003 subsistence fur seal harvest.

DISCUSSION

Changes are occurring in our environment both locally and globally, in our community's needs, and in our customary traditional activities, such as subsistence practices. We need to work with, accommodate, and make decisions regarding these changes based on our people's generational values.

The fur seal take for decreased slightly from 2002 by 19% from 648 in 2002 to 522 in 2003 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Numbers of fur seals harvested, Subsistence Fur Seal Harvest 1995 – 2003, St. Paul Island, Alaska (Cormany 1999, 1997, 1996, 1995; Lestenkof and Zavadil, 2001; Zavadil and Lestenkof 2003; and Zavadil 2000, 1998).



Presently, the fur seals are harvested for the subsistence needs of the members of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island. The Tribal Government of St. Paul, who must consider and respect all aspects of the community it represents-present and future, governs the process. Community members must respect the fact that fellow community members are the sealer/harvest crew, performing harvest duties on behalf of all and that all animals harvested reflect the subsistence activity of the community as a whole. Community members must conduct themselves accordingly. In turn, the seal harvest crew must respect the process as representational of their fellow community members as a whole and conduct themselves accordingly.

The following are recommendations from the Tribal Government of St. Paul's Ecosystem Conservation Office Co-Directors:

1. Community members should pick up their seal meat from the harvest field or make their own arrangements for someone (family or friend) to provide transport to and from the seal harvest.
2. Community members wanting seal should provide their own salt, buckets, bags, etc.
3. Barter and trade by community members within the community and with other communities should be encouraged and promoted.
4. Put forth ideas to avoid wastage, such as trading parts with one another, an individual compensating another individual for labor such as cutting meat if they're unable to.
5. Tribal Government employees may participate in the harvest as community members on their personal time, except for specific paid positions such as researchers, research assistants, and the Island Sentinel or Harvest Monitor.
6. Harvest must take place in the early morning, beginning no later than 9:00 a.m., out of respect for the seals and to prevent the overheating of seals that usually occurs as temperatures warm up throughout the day.
7. Some harvests should be conducted in the evening to allow for community members who work during the day to participate in the harvest.
8. The Harvest Plan should be reviewed each year prior to the next harvest season.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Tribal Government of St. Paul's Ecosystem Conservation Office wishes to thank the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, and the Tribal Government for its support. Thank you to the following people for their support, assistance, and work for making this report possible: David R. Cormany and Michael Payne. A very special thank you to the St. Paul Sealers, Greg Fratis, Sr., Aaron Lestenkof, Serafima Lestenkof, Robert Melovidov, Terry Spraker, Peter Gabe Tetoff, Damon Zacharof, and M. Richard Zacharof for your cooperation, patience, and support. This report was funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service contract number AB133F-03-SE-0931.

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Appendix A: 2003 St. Paul Island northern fur seal harvest log

Harvest Identification Number	Harvest Date	Harvest Location	Drive Time	Harvest Time	Temperature (C)	Wind Direction	Wind Speed (MPH)	Weather Condition	Grass Condition
SNPNFSHV0301	June 25, 2003	Polovina Haulout	11:00 - 11:07	11:17 - 12:10	40	Southwest	20	Cloudy and Rainy	Moist
SNPNFSHV0302	June 28, 2003	Big Zapadni Sands Haulout	14:30 - 14:45	15:00 - 16:52	46	South	18	Overcast	Wet
SNPNFSHV0303	July 9, 2003	Big Zapadni Sands Haulout	14:15 - 14:25	14:35 - 15:45	43	Southwest	10	Overcast	Moist
SNPNFSHV0304	July 16, 2003	Polovina Haulout	14:44 - 14:53	15:04 - 15:58	50	Northeast	28	Partly Sunny	Dry
SNPNFSHV0305	July 18, 2003	Big Zapadni Sands Haulout	13:45 - 14:00	14:15 - 15:07	45	Northeast	20	Cloudy	Wet
SNPNFSHV0306	July 25, 2003	Gorbach Haulout	13:45 - 13:54	14:05 - 15:00	50	North	15	Overcast	Dry
SNPNFSHV0307	August 5, 2003	Polovina Haulout	12:55 - 13:10	13:20 - 14:24	45	Northeast	20	Cloudy	Wet
SNPNFSHV0308	August 6, 2003	Lukanin Haulout	14:55 - 15:10	15:17 - 17:00	45	Southeast	15	Cloudy with Light Rain	Wet
SNPNFSHV0309	August 9, 2003	Zoltoi Sands Haulout	14:26 - 14:57	15:05 - 17:30	40	East	15	Partly Cloudy	Wet

# Seals Harvested	SAM Release Count	Total Release Count	# Entangled Seals	# Seals Disentangled	# Scarred Seals	# Bulls Stunned	# Bulls Killed	# Females Killed	# Heat Strokes	Comments
29	0	144	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	
26	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
34	215	384	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	The harvest happened too late in the day, seals were getting hot toward the end.
51	0	201	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
46	0	280	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
42	173	207	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	
80	153	268	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	
96	101	118	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
118	314	385	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	