

Harvest Monitoring Services, Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals on St. George Island, AK

2019



Last Harvest Day November 21, 2019



The U.S. Department of the Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Region Pribilof Program Office managed the 2019 Northern Fur Seal Pup Harvest on St. George Island with the assistance of Harvest Observers from InupiaQ Alaska Group, LLC, who worked closely with the St. George Tribal Government representatives.

Harvest report for
the 2019 Season
September 15 to
November 30, 2019

I. INTRODUCTION

Laquudax, northern fur seal pup (*callorhinus ursinus*), is not just an important customary traditional food for the Unangan of St. George Island, Alaska it is a necessity for an island where grocery shipments are few and prices high. The Traditional Council of St. George (STG) together with the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), coordinated, monitored, and managed the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals to safeguard their existence. The 2019 subsistence pup fur seal harvest was conducted in accordance to 50 CFR §216 Subpart F on St. George Island.

II. CRITERIA FOR HARVEST MONITORING AND OBSERVER REPORTING

During the 2019 subsistence fur seal harvest, the below data for items a-i were specified for observed harvests. Items a-e are presented in Table 1 below. Items f-h, along with additional data added to those specified in the NMFS template, are included in Exhibits A and B at the end of this report.

- a. Date
- b. Location
- c. Weather conditions
- d. Disturbance Start and end times
- e. Number of young seals taken
- f. Number and disposition of samples collected – No samples were taken for the 2019 NFSH.
- g. Number of seals released after determination of sex- Estimates were not taken at all harvests.
- h. Number of non-young of the year seals in round up – Estimates were not taken at all harvests.
- i. Recommendations for improvements to the conduct of the harvest

The below additional criteria, for items j-q, were specified and an NMFS reporting template was provided. These items are additional addressed narratively directly below.

- j. Incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process
- k. Female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation
- l. Number of seal deaths due to overheating
- m. Number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled
- n. Evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts
- o. Other types of fur seal mortality
- p. Attempted harvest and/or other unusual conditions related to the harvest
- q. Research conducted during the harvest

III. NARRATIVE OF RESULTS

A. Training/Planning: A. Training/Planning/Regulatory: IAG was contracted by NMFS Alaska Region to monitor 30 days of the harvest season. IAG, NMFS, and the Traditional Council of St. George Island determined IAG would be present on St. George during parts of October and November. These dates were chosen to monitor the most likely period of interest by subsistence users based on prior year's harvests and interest to capture the most harvest events.

50 CFR 216.72 (d)(7) requires; No more than 50 male young of the year may be harvested from each of the following regions where fur seals congregate: East region includes the breeding areas known as East Reef and East Cliffs rookeries and the associated non-breeding hauling grounds; South region includes

the breeding areas known as Zapadni and South rookeries and the associated non-breeding hauling grounds; and North region includes the breeding areas known as North and Starayax Artil rookeries and associated non-breeding hauling grounds. Table 1 shows no more than 50 male young of the year were harvested from any region in 2019. No area was harvested more than twice in a seven-day period. NMFS has determined that Starayax Artil Rookery meets the criteria from paragraph (d)(10) of this section.

Table 1 shows no harvests conducted at Starayax Artil Rookery.

50 CFR 216.72 (d)(8) requires the scheduling of the young of the year harvest is at the discretion of the Pribilovians, but must be such as to minimize stress to the harvested and un-harvested fur seals and minimize the take of female fur seals. The Pribilovians must give adequate advance notice of their harvest schedules to the NMFS representatives to allow for necessary monitoring activities. No fur seal may be taken except by sealers using the harvesting methods implemented to reduce disturbance, injury, and accidental mortality of female fur seals. Pribilovians may use, but are not limited to, organized drives of young of the year fur seals from congregating areas to inland killing fields. Methods of harvest must include identification of male young of the year, followed by stunning and immediate exsanguination, unless the NMFS representatives, in consultation with the Pribilovians conducting the harvest, determine that alternative methods will not result in increased stress to harvested and un-harvested fur seals, increased disturbance or injury to resting fur seals, or the accidental mortality of female seals. All fur seal pups were sexed prior to harvesting, and as shown in Table 1 a new harvest location was used (Old Dock in Town). This new location (similar to the Old Dock in Zapadni or in the south arm of the boat harvest) includes few or no adult fur seals and no lactating females and represents a significant reduction of negative effects over harvest locations on the rookeries or hauling grounds.

This joint harvest report represents compliance with 50 CFR 216.72 (d)(11), in that it provides subsistence information, reviewed and revised by NMFS, and discusses efforts to meet the subsistence need of the community and measures to reduce negative effects from subsistence use on fur seals.

B. Harvest Monitoring: Harvests season was open from September 15 to November 30, 2019 with the first harvest taking place on September 30th and the final harvest on November 21st, 2019. A total of 32 northern fur young of the year seals were harvested during the 2019 season. At total of 8 harvests were conducted in the two-and-a-half-month period; Table 1 below provides a summary of the harvests including items a-e above.

C. Sampling: There was no tissue sampling of the harvest required in 2019.

D. Reporting: Table 1: Specified Data for Harvests- Shaded box signifies harvests that IAG monitored.

Seal Harvest Data

Table 1. Shows the young of the year seal harvest dates along with data collected on Saint George Island.

a. Date	b. Location	c. Weather Conditions	d. Start & End Times	e. No. of Male Seals Taken	f. No. of Female Seals released after sexed	g. Estimate of young in round up
09/30/19	Zapadni Beach	Temp: 50° Overcast	Start: 1:54 PM End: 1:59 PM	2		

a. Date	b. Location	c. Weather Conditions	d. Start & End Times	e. No. of Male Seals Taken	f. No. of Female Seals released after sexed	g. Estimate of young in round up
10/03/19	Zapadni Beach	Temp: 50° Overcast	Start: 2:15 PM End: 2:38 PM	4		
10/09/19	Old Dock in Town	Temp: 40° Overcast	Start: 1:50 PM End: 2:10 PM	6	8	25
10/11/19	Old Dock in Town	Temp: 50° Overcast	Start: 1:19 PM End: 1:28 PM	5	5	5
11/01/19	East Rookery	Temp: 48° Overcast	Start: 1:50 PM End: 1:59 PM	5	3	20
11/07/19	East Rookery	Temp: 45° Overcast	Start: 1:54 PM End: 1:59 PM	2	2	22
11/15/19	East Rookery	Temp: 35° Overcast	Start: 1:53 PM End: 2:03 PM	4	1	20
11/21/19	Zapadni Beach	Temp: 37° Overcast	Start: 2:24 PM End: 2:29 PM	4	2	20
				32		

i. Recommendations for improvements to the conduct of the harvest:

(1) Observation: Harvests went well. The demand for harvests has diminished as there are less people and less able-bodied harvesters.

(2) Recommendation: None

j. Incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process: None

k. Female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation: None

l. Number of seal deaths due to overheating: None

m. Number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled: None

n. Evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts: None

o. Other types of fur seal mortality: None

p. Attempted harvest and/or other unusual conditions related to the harvest: None

q. Research conducted during the harvest: No other research was conducted during harvests.

IV. LOGISTICS SUPPORTING OBSERVER TASKING

IAG LLC supported the harvest monitoring on Saint George Island for 30 days in October and November for the young of the year harvest season. Five out of the eight harvests were monitored by IAG. The harvest on September 30th, October 3rd and October 11th was not observed by IAG, but was monitored and reported by the Traditional Council staff and subsistence users.