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Tagger Profile: Frank Hughes, Kake Kupreanof Island *By Brad Benter*



Frank Hughes

“Tagging is a service I really enjoy doing for my community; meeting up with the hunters has rejuvenated my desire to get outdoors more and become an active subsistence hunter.” Frank suffered from a logging accident several years ago injuring his right shoulder; with time he has been able to recover to the point that he can now use his classic Marlin model 336RC .30-30 to hunt deer.

Born in Juneau, Frank moved to the Oregon Coast in 1968 with his family. In 1975 he joined the National Guard and then the Army on active duty through 1983.

Yearning to know more about his Tlingit history Frank returned to Alaska. He is from the Eagle clan, Killer Whale Moiety of the Daklaweidi. He lived in Klukwan for a time, later moving to Kake. He is active with the Kake Keexkwaan dance group and proud to show off the local regalia.

Frank and his wife Marlene have three adult children, all of whom reside in Southeast Alaska. Frank came to Kake as the village public safety officer in 1986 and now keeps the lights going for the community as the manager of the power plant.

His good friend, Mike Jackson, passed his tagging kit on to Frank about 10 years ago and we are lucky to have him tagging and gathering harvest information for all parties invested in sea otters.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Goodbye: Gerard Koonooka

By Brad Benter



Koonooka Family

**Spotlight Rhonda Sparks
Alaska Nanuuq Commission**

By Forrest Hannan



USFWS

Gerard Angaaya Koonooka

On September 18, 2013, Gerard passed in his home in Gambell, Alaska. He was born in Gambell November 4, 1940. He married his wife Esther Aakawen in 1967 and raised three boys, Gerry, Jared and Jeremy.

Esther and Gerard ran a small general store, G&E, in Gambell together for over 30 years. Gerard was a tagger from the first days of the tagging program. Along with his son Gerry, they have tagged more walrus than anyone in the MTRP program.

Gerard was often seen traveling around Gambell on his Honda with one of his many grandchildren, enjoying the outdoors and giving a big smile to all he passed. Gerard also enjoyed photography, birdwatching and camping. He was a good friend and I truly enjoyed the many visits to his house over the years.

The Marking Tagging and Reporting Program recently had the opportunity to speak with Rhonda Sparks, Regional Coordinator for the Alaska Nanuuq Commission (ANC). Rhonda was born and raised in Nome and started with the ANC in 2010 after graduating from Ft. Lewis College with a degree in Anthropology. Rhonda's initial role within the ANC was the lead investigator for the Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Polar Bears in the Bering and Chukchi Seas. This investigative role allowed Rhonda to develop relationships throughout those villages where polar bears are traditionally harvested.

The ANC was formed in 1994 by Charlie Johnson to ensure that Alaska's Native people take an active and meaningful role in the conservation and management of Alaska's polar bear populations. ANC represents 15 coastal

villages who have designated the ANC to represent them in matters concerning polar bears. Rhonda works very closely with these coastal villages ranging from Kaktovik all the way to St. Lawrence Island.

Commissioners are appointed by each village to represent the villages' interests concerning polar bears. The ANC works with their partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) North Slope Borough, CHAZTO, World Wildlife Fund, National Park Service, and Defenders of Wildlife to help facilitate sound management of the Alaska polar bear population.

The ANC is a Federal co-management body for the conservation and management of Alaska's polar bears. The ANC partnered with the USFWS; collectively they work to conserve polar bears in Alaska and ensure Alaska Native subsistence use for the future.

Polar bears in the Bering and Chukchi Seas are a shared population between Chukotka, Russia and Alaska, USA. The ANC and USFWS are in the process of developing a shared harvest management plan under an International Agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation. The goals of the Agreement are conservation of polar bears in the Bering and Chukchi Sea, the continued traditional subsistence use of polar bear in Alaska, and allowing the Chukotka Natives the right of traditional subsistence use.

For more information on the ANC please visit <http://thealaskananuqcommission.org/index.html> or contact ANC Toll Free 855-877-5044.

Questions and Answers About the Chukchi Sea Polar Bear Management Plan Under the U.S. - Russia Agreement

Q: Which Alaskan villages are part of the Agreement?

A: The Agreement applies to all coastal villages from Point Lay south.

Q: Is polar bear harvest allowed under the Agreement?

A: Yes, the Agreement recognizes that polar bears are a valuable subsistence species and affirms the ability of Native people of Alaska and Chukotka to hunt polar bears in a sustainable manner for cultural and traditional uses. Along with the right to hunt, hunters also have the responsibility to ensure that hunting doesn't hurt the polar bear population, or the ability of future generations to hunt polar bears.

Q: Is there a limit on polar bear harvest?

A: Yes, a limit has been identified but has not yet been implemented. In Alaska, the quota of 29 bears for the Chukchi population (the U.S. share of the total quota) will not go into effect until a system is in place to manage a regulated harvest. This quota will be reviewed annually.

On a side note, the Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population (shared with Canada) is managed through the Native to Native Inuvialuit - Inupiat Agreement in villages from Wainwright to Kaktovik.

Q: When will the Chukchi Sea harvest limit take effect?

A: The harvest limit will take effect when a new management system is in place. A phased implementation consisting of a village consultation process, continued cooperation with Federal agencies, and increased deterrence activities began in 2013. Implementation of a quota system will likely follow sometime in 2014.

Before and during the roll-out, the ANC will work with the USFWS and local communities to identify the best procedures for implementing the quota. A Phased implementation will occur after more consultation with the affected communities.

Local residents and communities are encouraged to provide input into this process by contacting their local ANC commissioner or the ANC office in Nome at 907-443-5044 <http://thealaskananuqcommission.org> or the USFWS Marine Mammals Management program at 1-800-362-5148.

Until the quota implementation, harvest will continue as currently operated by the USFWS Marking, Tagging and Reporting Program. **Hunters must continue to report and tag harvested polar bears within 30 days with their local tagger.**

Q: How was the harvest limit determined?

A: The Bi-Lateral Commission set the harvest limit based on recommendations from its Scientific Working Group and consideration of historical harvest records in western Alaska. The

overall harvest limit for the population is 58 bears per year, of which no more than one third can be female. This overall limit is divided equally between the Native peoples of Alaska and Chukotka. The average harvest limit of 29 bears per year for the Alaskan communities that are part of the Agreement, is slightly lower than the average of 34 bears per year that were harvested by these communities from 2004-2008. This number will be reviewed annually.

The Scientific Working Group acknowledged that the current harvest limit set by the Bi-Lateral Commission is likely to be sustainable in the near future. It is critical to continue scientific and traditional ecological knowledge studies to understand the status of the population and the effects of harvest.

Q: Are there restrictions on harvest other than the limit?

A: Yes, harvest is limited to coastal Natives of Alaska and Chukotka and for the purposes of subsistence or to manufacture and sell handicrafts and clothing.

Under the terms of the U.S. - Russia Agreement on polar bears, which is implemented domestically through the Marine Mammal Protection Act, **it is prohibited to take females with cubs**, cubs less than one year of age, and polar bears in dens. Aircraft, poisons, traps, snares, and large motorized vehicles cannot be used to harvest polar bears.

To access the full Q & A sheet or more information regarding the Agreement contact ANC or visit; <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/polarbear/bilateral.htm>

Tagger Payments



What taggers can do for quicker payments:

1. Send us a complete pay voucher with your name, current address, telephone number and social security number and the number of items that you tagged. Also include the completed white tag certificates.
2. Make sure that the mail envelope you send has enough postage. If you pay for postage we will pay you back. If you are running low on vouchers, tags or other items for your tagging kit, call us at 1-800-362-5148. Leave a message if we do not answer. We will send them to you by return mail.
3. Don't Forget, **Cash that Check!** It's important for you to cash any check you get from us at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service soon after you receive it. The reason is that it becomes void, which is no good, 60 days after it is written. Then we have to cancel the old one and issue a new one, a hassle for both you and us.

Those of us working in the Marine Mammals Management Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service really appreciate what you are doing for us as subsistence harvest taggers. You are providing an important service to your communities, helping to directly manage

important marine mammal resources and ensuring the continuation of subsistence hunting rights. We thank you and will do everything we can do to get you paid as quickly as possible. Happy New Year!

Year End Payments and 1099 Forms.

It is that time of year again; should you be expecting a year end payment? If you were available to tag in your community during 2013 and respond to our year end letter that was mailed out in late January you are eligible for a payment of \$50. If you tagged at least one item in 2013 and made less than \$100, we will make up the difference, making sure you make at least \$100 for the year. If you tagged more than \$100 in 2013, thank you for your service to your community and keep up the good work.

We often get calls this time of year asking about 1099 forms from the U.S. Government. Please don't expect a 1099 form unless you made more than \$600 in 2013 from the U.S. Government. If you did make more than \$600 during the year a 1099 will be mailed to you in February. Please do not expect delivery until at least February 10. If you do not see the form by mid February feel free to call our office at 1-800-362-5148 or 1-907-786-3800.

Lucy, Forrest and Brad want to thank you for tagging and look forward to working with you in 2014. Thank you for tagging.

Pulling Teeth



Location of small premolar and use of tooth elevator to separate gum and tooth.

For anyone that plans on hunting sea otters or polar bears; it is very important to keep the skulls from your animals. It is also important to keep the skull with the animal it came from, especially when presenting multiple animals for tagging.

A small premolar is all that is removed from your skull. This tooth is used to age the animal, providing valuable information to the biologists.

Taggers, when pulling the premolar, use direct pressure with the tooth elevator, between the tooth and gum from all sides without prying. Next use extracting pliers to pull the tooth. There are four premolars to choose from. If one breaks then please try again until you are able to get an unbroken premolar removed. Place the tooth in the completely filled out the tooth envelope before working on another skull to avoid mixing up teeth.



Examples of two broken sea otter teeth and an unbroken sea otter tooth (right).

Results of a Joint Walrus Research Cruise for Pacific Walrus Population Assessment

By Dr. Patrick Lemons



USFWS



USFWS



USFWS

Clockwise: Clarence Irrigoo (left) heads out for the day to biopsy walrus. Clarence Irrigoo and Perry Pungowiyi scan the horizon for walrus to sample. Perry glassing the horizon. Clarence sneaking up on a group of walrus. A group of walrus. Clarence with a harpoon after a radio transmitter was successfully placed on a walrus.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service launched a genetics based capture-mark-recapture project in an effort to estimate the size of the Pacific walrus population as well as estimate annual survival and reproductive rates. A genetics based approach relies on the DNA identification of individuals and subsequent re-sampling of some of those individuals over time. This technique is ideal for elusive species, such as the Pacific walrus, as it does not require the physical capture and handling of animals. We utilized a minimally invasive technique to remotely collect small skin samples (i.e. biopsies) using a crossbow and biopsy darts.

In June of 2013 we conducted a joint research cruise in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The USFWS's primary goal was to collect skin biopsy samples from approximately 1,300 live walrus hauled out on sea ice during the spring migration. We timed this research cruise to occur when walrus were moving north through the Bering Strait which allowed us to access many animals

in a relatively small area. Over the course of 28 days we collected skin biopsy samples from just over 1,600 animals. Given the success of the first year of this project we are planning for a continued effort in 2014 and 2015. It will take a minimum of 3 years to obtain estimates of population size as well as annual survival and reproductive rates. We are in the preliminary stages of planning the second year of this effort and currently have funding in place for a second joint research cruise in 2014. This project is planned to continue for at least the next 5 years.

Importantly, we were fortunate to have two members of the walrus hunting communities on St. Lawrence Island join us on this trip. Clarence Irrigoo from Gambell and Perry Pungowiyi from Savoonga joined us on the 28 day research cruise. Their expertise with walrus behavior and techniques for approaching walrus hauled out on sea ice were vital to the success of the first year of this project. We hope members of the walrus hunting communities will continue to join us on these cruises.



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2013 Polar Bear Research in the Chukchi Sea

By Dr. Eric Regehr



USFWS

There is a need for information on polar bears in the Bering, Chukchi, and eastern portion of the East Siberian Seas. This polar bear population is shared between the U.S. and Russia, and is called the Alaska-Chukotka or Chukchi Sea population. The Alaska Nanuuq Commission (ANC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been working to collect information on the Chukchi Sea population for the past few years. The ANC recently completed a study of Traditional Ecological Knowledge about polar bears, based on talking with residents and hunters in Alaskan coastal communities. <http://thealaskananuqcommission.org/ANCpublications.html> The USFWS recently completed its fifth year of polar bear research. What we observed during research in 2013 is summarized below, and results from this research are summarized in the article *New Results: Polar Bears in the Chukchi Sea in Good Body Condition from 2008-2011*.

Polar bear research provides scientific information on the Chukchi Sea population. We are trying to understand the body condition (i.e., fatness), health, and diet of polar bears. We also

want to know the distribution of bears and how they use the sea ice. For example, do the same bears spend one year on the Russian side, and then come over to the U.S. side? And finally we want to know about population size and survival rates. All of this information is important for understanding how many bears can be harvested in a sustainable manner, understanding how changes in the sea ice due to climate change are affecting polar bears in the Chukchi Sea, and trying to reduce the possible impacts of oil and gas exploration on polar bears.

During March-April 2013:

- The USFWS captured, collected information from, and released 68 polar bears on the sea ice of the Chukchi Sea between the communities of Point Hope to the north and Shishmaref to the south. Twelve of the captured bears had been previously tagged during this study from 2008-2011.
- The helicopter used to study polar bears stayed more than 30 miles away from Point Hope and avoided other communities, to not disturb subsistence activities such as whaling.
- The USFWS put 17 Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite radiocollars on adult females. These radiocollars provide data on where the bears travel. All radiocollars are set to drop off after one year, to prevent bears from wearing old radiocollars for multiple years. We also deployed experimental tags that are smaller and lighter than radiocollars: 5 glue-on satellite transmitters (applied just behind the shoulder) and 32 light-sensitive tags (nickel-sized

ear tags).

- The USFWS captured an adult male that weighed 1390 lb, which to our knowledge is the largest polar bear weighed and released alive in the U.S. This breaks the previous record of 1353 lb from this study in 2010.
- An adult female and two very small cubs-of-the-year were observed—but not captured—at a den site on the sea ice approximately 90 miles west of Kivalina. This is the first time we have observed successful maternal denning on the sea ice this far south in the Chukchi region, although there are accounts of people observing this while hunting.
- Seven of 68 captured bears had some unusual hair loss or skin lesions (mostly minor or healed), similar to a condition observed by the U.S. Geological Survey during polar bear research in the southern Beaufort Sea in 2012. We are working with our partners to understand the cause and nature of this condition.

Longer-term studies are necessary to understand population trends, and we hope to continue this research in the future. Our goal is to reduce the effort, cost, and stress to polar bears while continuing to gather critical information for management and conservation of the Chukchi Sea population.

If you have questions or comments about this study, or have seen something interesting about polar bears that you want to talk about, please contact Eric Regehr with the USFWS using the email eric_regehr@fws.gov or the phone number 907-786-3800

Polar Bear Patrols and Attractant Management

By Susanne (Susi) Miller



Setting up a household food storage container in Kaktovik in 2012. An improved version will be designed based on feedback from residents.

Since 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been providing funding to the North Slope Borough (NSB) to implement polar bear patrols in coastal villages. These patrols are critical to human safety because they minimize human-bear interactions by deflecting bears from entering the community. Some communities are experiencing a steady increase in polar bear activity; for example, in Kaktovik, large numbers of bears are attracted to the village during fall whaling.

Each year, NSB hires local people and trains them to scare bears out of villages. These patrollers benefit from having local employment as well as the opportunity to serve as first responders and contribute to their community safety in a positive way. The USFWS extends a hearty THANK YOU to all polar bear patrollers, and to the NSB for implementing this program that significantly contributes to conservation and co-management of polar bears.

One of the challenges that patrollers face is when meat is left unattended at residences in a manner that allows easy access

by bears. Bears learn quickly, and once they realize that they can receive a “food reward” in the village, they are more likely to keep returning to the community, which increases dangerous situations and the potential for people to get hurt. This is especially true when bears arrive on the coast hungry. While patrollers work hard to deter bears and keep them out of each community.

Every resident can help by identifying ways to minimize any bear attractants that you may have around your home. For example, moving your meat to a secure location such as a freezer, ice cellar or bear-resistant food storage container is one option to consider. In Kaktovik, several food storage containers were recently donated and tested for storing whale meat. Residents provided feedback on how to improve the containers and USFWS is currently working with two non-profit organizations to develop a newer, improved version that better suits community needs. If you are interested in testing a food storage container once a new version is developed, please contact Susi Miller at susanne_miller@fws.gov or 1-800-362-5148. Thank you for helping out polar bears and your community!



USFWS

New MTRP Staff



Hannan

Forrest Hannan joined the Marking, Tagging and Reporting Program in May of 2013. He has spent the last 9 months tagging walrus and sea otters, travelling to local communities and learning the job. Working with subsistence hunters and training new taggers has been a great start to an exciting new position. Forrest enjoys hunting, fishing and exploring Alaska. He has been with the USFWS since 2007 trying differing roles from Safety to his newest foray into biology. He is excited to get out of the office and meet with those who utilize Alaska bountiful resources. Please welcome Forrest to the program.



Hannan

Alaska Sea Otter Hunting and Handicrafts Before Hunting

Who may harvest sea otters in Alaska

Alaska Native peoples (50 CFR Part 18.3 Definitions), who reside in Alaska and dwell on the coast may harvest sea otters without a permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The harvest must be accomplished in a non-wasteful manner. Non-Alaska Native peoples may accompany Alaska Native hunters as observers, but may not participate in the hunt.

During the Hunt

Where you can hunt

The Marine Mammal Protection Act does not limit the areas of Alaska where sea otters may be harvested. However, there may be some areas with hunting or access restrictions, such as National Parks, State game sanctuaries, or private land. Some Tribal governments have written and are implementing sea otter management plans which encourage or discourage hunting in specific areas. Some areas have State or local ordinances limiting where firearms can be discharged.

How many sea otters can you harvest and what methods are allowed

There is no Federal harvest limit for sea otters and no restrictions on the methods in which they may be taken. Some local areas or Tribal governments may have local guidance, and we encourage you to check with the nearest Tribal government.

After the Hunt

Tag your Harvest

Hunters must have their raw sea otter hides and skulls tagged by a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service tagger within 30 days of harvest. If more than one sea otter is taken for tagging at the same time, hunters must match the skull with the correct hide. The tags must stay on the hide and skull for as long as practical during the handcrafting process. Tagging is a management tool which gives biologists information about the animals and where they are being taken. A pre-molar tooth may be removed from the skull and kept by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as part of the tagging process. To find the closest tagger or to get answers about tagging contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Marking, Tagging and Reporting program by e-mail FW7_ak_marine_mammals@fws.gov or phone (907) 786-3800 or 1-800-362-5148 or go to the web site at <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/mtrp/mtrpmain.htm>

Tanning Sea Otter Hides

The tags must remain attached to the hide throughout the tanning process and until the skin has been cut into parts for creating an authentic Native article of handicraft or clothing. Home, or self-tanning, by Alaska Native peoples is allowed without a permit. Commercial tanneries must be registered with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to be able to tan sea otter hides. For a list of registered tanneries, call the USFWS at 907-786-3311.

Selling Sea Otter Parts

Selling to Alaska Native Peoples

Unaltered (tanned or untanned) sea otter parts or whole hides may be sold or traded to other Alaska Native peoples or to a registered agent for resale to other Alaska Native peoples.

Selling to Non- Alaska Native Peoples

Sea otter parts must be significantly altered into an authentic Native handicraft, by an Alaska Native person, in order for them to be sold to non- Alaska Native peoples.

Authentic Native Handicrafts

Alaska Native peoples may make both traditional items (such as mittens) and non-traditional items (such as teddy bears) using sea otter parts. The items may have non-traditional features such as zippers, buttons and snaps. However, the items must be significantly altered in order to be considered authentic Native handicrafts and be saleable to non-Alaska Native peoples.

Significantly Altered

A sea otter will be considered “significantly altered” when it is no longer recognizable as a whole sea otter hide, and has been made into a handicraft or article of clothing as is identified below:

1. A tanned, dried, cured, or preserved sea otter hide, devoid of the head, feet, and tail (i.e., blocked) that is substantially changed by any of the following, but is not limited to: weaving, carving, stitching, sewing, lacing, beading, drawing, painting, other decorative fashions, or made into

another material or medium; and cannot be easily converted back to an unaltered hide or piece of hide.

2. Tanned, dried, cured, or preserved sea otter head, tail, or feet, or other parts devoid of the remainder of the hide which includes any of the following, but is not limited to: weaving, carving, stitching, sewing, lacing, beading, drawing, or painting, other decorative fashions, or made into another material or medium.

Please see following pages: 10-11

Sea Otter Hides...What is "Significantly Altered Fact" Sheet

Transporting Sea Otter Parts or Products across International Boundaries

No one may trade or take a sea otter part or product into Canada (even if they have relatives there) because Canadian law prohibits the take of sea otters and does not allow commerce involving sea otter parts or products.

All sea otter populations are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and require a CITES permit to be transported across international boundaries. The CITES permit is required even if the product has been made into an authentic Native handicraft.

Some countries, however, may allow sea otter products to move across the border if they are personal effects. For more information about permits, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife import/export office in Anchorage at (907) 271-6198.

New Diseases Showing up in Alaskan Sea Otters.



USGS

Biologists and veterinarians working with both live and dead sea otters have recently detected several diseases that have rarely been seen in Alaska before now. Many of these diseases are caused by bacteria, which may affect humans also. The recent warmer ocean temperatures could be part of the reason the different types of disease causing bacteria have become more common in Alaskan waters.

Many of the otters found to be carrying the bacteria appear unharmed, if their immune systems are able to keep it under control, though animals have died as a direct or indirect result of infections from disease causing bacteria.

Sea otter hunters should take precautions;

when handling animals, especially when skinning out animals, and you should always wash your hands after handling otters. Precautions may include; wearing protective clothing such as rubber gloves and eye protection. Hunters with open sores or cuts should use even more caution when handling dead otters. All meat should be cooked thoroughly before being consumed by people or pets.

Proposed Elephant Ivory Ban Not to Affect Legal Walrus Ivory Products and Art

In a letter to the Department of the Interior (DOI) Senator Mark Begich asked Secretary Sally Jewell to "consider a reasonable approach when it comes to any immediate ban or restriction of the use of ivory, such actions could have negative economic consequences for Alaska Native artists and carvers that have acquired ivory in a legitimate, legal manner." Senator Begich added "Additionally, Alaska is home to small villages where Alaska Native people depend on a subsistence lifestyle and who use animal parts to make tools, art, or other products that then become the main source of income for the year."

In a response from the DOI, Senator Begich was assured by the USFWS that the actions to control illegal elephant ivory would not impact the use of lawfully acquired walrus ivory by Alaska Native artists and carvers.



Bentley

A carving made from walrus ivory from Gambell, Saint Lawrence Island. Walrus ivory carvings are not included in the ban on elephant ivory.



Sea Otter Hides

What is “Significantly Altered”

Background

Alaska Native peoples have traditionally hunted sea otters for generations and this activity continues today under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and its implementing regulations. The Act’s intent is to conserve marine mammals, and generally prohibits the take of marine mammals. Due to the special relationship that Alaska Native peoples have with the marine environment, including the use of marine mammals for subsistence and handicrafts, the Act allows for the non-wasteful harvest of sea otters by coastal-dwelling Alaska Native peoples. When an Alaska Native person harvests a sea otter, the hide and skull must be tagged by a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service representative within 30 days of harvest. This allows harvest numbers to be monitored and provides important biological information about the health of the sea otter population.

The implementing regulations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act allows Alaska Native peoples to give, trade, or sell sea otter hides or parts to other Alaska Native peoples. The regulations also allow Alaska Native people to create authentic “significantly altered” Native handicrafts and clothing and sell them to non-Native people. The term “significantly altered” has been confusing to Alaska Native hunters and artists for many years.

In November 2013, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service issued guidance to help clarify this term.

Guidance

A sea otter will be considered “significantly altered” when it is no longer recognizable as a whole sea otter hide, and has been made into a handicraft or article of clothing as is identified below:

1. A tanned, dried, cured, or preserved sea otter hide, devoid of the head, feet, and tail (i.e., blocked) that is substantially changed by any of the following, but is not limited to: weaving, carving, stitching, sewing, lacing, beading, drawing, painting, other decorative fashions, or made into another material or medium; and cannot be easily converted back to an unaltered hide or piece of hide.
2. Tanned, dried, cured, or preserved sea otter head, tail, or feet, or other parts devoid of the remainder of the hide which includes any of the following, but is not limited to: weaving, carving, stitching, sewing, lacing, beading, drawing, or painting, other decorative fashions, or made into another material or medium.

Examples of Significantly Altered and Not Significantly Altered Items:

Photos: USFWS



Significantly Altered

Slippers with sea otter trim—made from a sea otter hide that has been cut into small pieces and sewn.



Significantly Altered

Hat—made from a hide that has been cut into small pieces and sewn. The hat brim is natural fur; the top part of hat is shaved fur.



Significantly Altered

Mittens—made from a sea otter hide that has been cut into pieces and sewn.

Sea Otter Outreach Continued



Significantly Altered

Purse—made from a sea otter hide that has been cut into small pieces and sewn.



Significantly Altered

Pillow—made from a sea otter hide that has been cut and stitched on all edges.



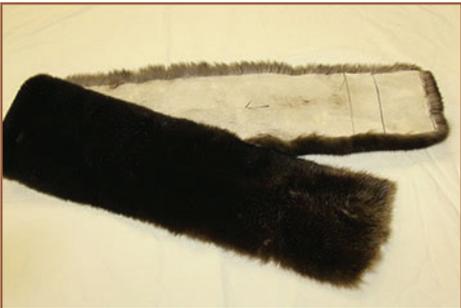
Significantly Altered

Scarf—made from a sea otter hide that has been cut, lined, and sewn on all edges.



Significantly Altered

Blanket —made from a sea otter hide that has been blocked, lined, and stitched on all edges.



Not Significantly Altered

Scarf / neck roll—made from sea otter hide that has been cut, but has not been stitched or lined.



Not Significantly Altered

Drawing—made from a sea otter hide that has not been blocked, and has not been stitched or lined.

The full guidance document, a photo gallery, and frequently asked questions and answers are available on the Web:
http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/hunting_seaotter.htm

To find a tagger in your area or to request a copy of the guidance:

E-mail (fw7_ak_marine_mammals@fws.gov) or call (907) 786-3800 or 1-800-362-5148.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Marine Mammals Management Office
1011 E. Tudor Road - MS341
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Phone: 907-786-3800
Toll Free: 800-362-5148
Fax: 907-786-3816
Web: <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm>

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How Many Did You Harvest?

*Total Reported Alaska Subsistence Harvests for the Last Five Years***

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	5-yr Avg.
Northern Sea Otter	882	1084	1282	1331	1924	1301
Pacific Walrus	1638	1330	1041	1357	460	1165
Polar Bear	32	26	63	85	40	49

**These are harvest statistics from your tagging certificates.

For further information, contact:
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