

United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE 1011 East Tudor Road Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

AFES/MMM

Dear Airman:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) needs your support to eliminate disturbance to Pacific walruses resting on shore along the Chukchi Sea coast. Currently there several thousand walruses hauled out on the barrier island just north of the community of Pt Lay. We expect this haulout to continue to be occupied thought mid-October. Walruses may also be present in large numbers at Icy Cape, on the barrier islands between Icy Cape and Pt Lay, Corwin Bluff, Cape Lisburne, and Cape Espenberg. Please use extreme caution when flying in these areas, as walruses are very sensitive to aircraft noise and may stampede off the beach in response to disturbance. These stampedes often result in the deaths of calves and yearlings. Please do not fly over or intentionally fly within the vicinity of hauled out walrus or know haulout areas. Pacific walruses are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and harassment or disturbance is illegal. Aerial photography is specifically discouraged. If you are an air charter operator and are contacted by someone wanting to photograph walruses, please contact the Service at the number below before proceeding. We want to work with you to assure that walrus are not disturbed and that MMPA violations do not occur.

The enclosed flyer provides guidelines for aircraft operations along the Chukchi Sea coast that if followed will help to minimize disturbance to resting walruses.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation in protecting and managing Pacific Walruses. If you have any question please contact Mr. Jonathan Snyder of the Marine Mammals Management office toll free at 1-800-362-5148. To report instances of harassment or disturbance, please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement toll free at 1-877-535-1795 or 1-800-858-7621.

Sincerely,

Chief, Marine Mammals Management

Le Melle, Acting



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ADVISORY

Region 7 - Alaska 1011 East Tudor Road Anchorage, Alaska 99503 (907)786-3309 (TDD Available)

Contact: USFWS: Jonathan Snyder (907) 786-3800

Updated 8/2015

NOTICE TO PILOTS - HELP MINIMIZE THE DISTURBANCE OF WALRUSES ALONG THE CHUKCHI SEA COAST

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking your support and cooperation in eliminating disturbances to walrus herds along the Chukchi Sea coast of Alaska. Walruses are known to congregate on isolated beaches and barrier islands along Alaska's Chukchi Sea coast in late summer and early fall when concentrations of sea-ice are low. Known haulout areas include: Cape Lisburne (68.883N, -166.214 W), Corwin Bluff (68.875 N, -165.102 W), Point Lay barrier islands (69.795 N, -163.032), Icy Cape (70.372 N, -161.881 W), and all barrier islands between Pt Lay and Icy Cape.

WALRUSES ARE SENSITIVE TO HUMAN DISTURBANCES. Walruses often flee haulouts in response to the sight, sound, or odor of humans or machines. Trampling deaths associated with disturbance events are one of the largest known causes of natural mortality among walruses.

DISTURBING WALRUSES IS AGAINST THE LAW. Harassing walruses is against the law. Operating an aircraft in a manner which results in harassing or disturbing walruses is prohibited by the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

YOU CAN HELP MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO WALRUSES RESTING ALONG THE COAST.

Walruses are particularly sensitive to changes in engine noise and are more likely to stampede off beaches when planes turn or fly overhead. Aerial photography of walruses poses a high potential for disturbance and is specifically discouraged. To help prevent disturbances, please follow these general guidelines when operating aircraft near walrus herds along the coast:

Pilots of single engine aircraft should not knowingly fly over or fly within 1/2 mile of walruses hauled out on land or ice to avoid causing a disturbance. If weather or aircraft safety require flight operations within 1/2 mile of walruses, small single engine aircraft should maintain a 2000' minimum altitude.

Pilots of helicopters and multi-engine aircraft should not knowingly fly over or fly within 1 mile of walruses hauled out on land or ice to avoid causing a disturbance. If weather or aircraft safety require flight operations within 1 mile of a haulout site, helicopters and multi-engine aircraft should maintain a 3000' minimum altitude.

If weather conditions or aircraft safety necessitate flying lower than these recommended altitudes, please pass inland or seaward (within safe gliding distance to shore) of the haulout site at the greatest lateral distance manageable for safe operation of the aircraft (1 mile if possible).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION.

To report incidences of harassment or disturbance contact: US Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law

Enforcement: Toll free: 1-877-535-1795 or 1-800-858-7621

For questions contact: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management

Toll free: 1-800-362-5148