

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## EMERGENCY RULES TO BE ISSUED TO PREVENT UNREGULATED HUNTING OF WALRUS IN ALASKA

In an emergency rulemaking to prevent essentially unregulated hunting of the Pacific walrus, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is suspending its 1976 regulations that allowed taking of the marine mammal under controls established by the State of Alaska.

While the suspension is in effect, recreational hunting, importation and other activities formerly allowed under State control must cease. Federal permits will be required to take or import walruses for scientific research and public display. Non-wasteful taking necessary for Native subsistence and for the creation and selling of authentic Native articles of handicrafts and clothing may continue, however. The suspension takes effect immediately on publication **this** week in the Federal Register.

The emergency action was taken after the State repealed most of its hunting regulations and other restrictions on the walrus on July 1 and simultaneously terminated its management and law enforcement activities. After consultation with the Marine Mammal Commission, the Service determined that the State's actions are not consistent with the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the 1976 "waiver" regulations, under which management of the walrus had been returned to Alaska. The 1976 regulations, now to be suspended, waived a moratorium imposed by the Act on the taking of walrus; they became effective after the State instituted federally approved controls on hunting, killing, and taking of the marine mammal.

Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the Interior agency, said the Fish and Wildlife Service hopes that Alaska soon will be able to reinstate an approved management plan, including appropriate hunting regulations, so that the suspension of the waiver may be lifted.

"Toward that end," Greenwalt said, "the Service is continuing to meet and work with State and Native representatives to solve the problems that the State believed necessitated its recent actions."

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