



# Questions and Answers to inform the public about the Cape Greig Pacific Walrus Haulout

June 2016

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Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Department of the Interior

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Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has management responsibility for the Pacific walrus. We have developed this question and answer document to provide information to the public about the Cape Greig Pacific walrus haulout which has recently formed.

1. **General public:** private and commercial pilots, land-based walrus viewers, and private mariners who may be interested in observing the haulout (*walrus take is prohibited*);
2. **Commercial fishing vessels and/or other vessels** operating near or transiting past the haulout (*walrus take is prohibited except for hazing related to fishing activities*); and
3. **Commercial fishers participating in the Ugashik fishery** (*walrus take incidental to fishing activities is authorized by NMFS permit*).

*Q: Where is the Cape Greig haulout?*

A: lon: -157.696771 lat: 57.729079

Haulout Description: Groups of walrus have been observed along the sandy and muddy beach on the north side of Cape Greig and up to 1/4 mile north of the cape. The cape is 7 nautical miles north of the mouth to Ugashik Bay.

*Q: What does the MMPA say about TAKE?*

A: The Marine Mammal Protection Act generally prohibits the TAKE of all marine mammal species in U.S. waters. TAKE is defined as “to harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal.” Disturbing walrus at a haulout could result in a stampede which could injure or kill an individual walrus. If such TAKE were to occur, individuals who provoked the stampede could be prosecuted for violating the MMPA.

*Q: What are the guidelines for flying near the Cape Greig haulout?*

A: Pilots of single engine aircraft should not knowingly fly over or fly within 1/2 mile of walrus hauled out on land or ice to avoid causing a disturbance. If weather or aircraft safety require flight operations within 1/2 mile of walrus, 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 walrus haulouts on land or ice to avoid causing a disturbance. If aircraft safety requires flight operations within 1 mile of walrus haulouts, helicopters and multi-engine aircraft should maintain a 3000' minimum altitude.

If aircraft safety requires flight operations below 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).

*Q: What are the general requirements for viewing walrus at a haulout?*

A: When viewing walrus on land, ensure that your actions do not cause a change in their behavior. Since individual animal's reactions will vary, carefully observe animals and leave the vicinity if you observe any of the following behaviors (generally listed in increasing intensity of disturbance):

- Several individuals raising their heads simultaneously
- Increased vocalizations
- Increased interactions with other animals
- Aggressive behavior by animals towards the disturbance
- Movement towards the water
- Hurried entry into the water

*Q: What should I do if I observe a stampede on the beach resulting in injured or dead walrus?*

A: Immediately contact the Stranded Marine Animal Hotline: 1-888-774-7325 to report the incident. For more details about reporting stranded or injured marine animals see the stranding guidelines posted on the Region 7 Marine Mammal Management webpage.

<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/strandings.htm>

*Q: Who may collect ivory or bones from dead walrus?*

A: Anyone – Alaska Native or non-Native -- may collect the bones, teeth, and ivory, of dead marine mammals found on the beach or land within 1/4 mile of the ocean. Collection at sea is prohibited. Walrus bones, teeth, and ivory must be registered with USFWS within 30 days. Report by calling 1-800-362-5148.

*Q: Where can beach found parts be collected?*

A: Regulations vary depending on land ownership. It is the collector's responsibility to know whose lands they are visiting. Collectors should check for additional regulations established by landowners (Federal, State, or private) before removing any resource. Regardless of land ownership, collectors should not attempt to pick up hard parts in close proximity to a haulout. If those actions trigger a stampede that injures or kills walrus, the collector may be prosecuted for violating the MMPA.

*Q: What is my responsibility as a commercial vessel transiting past a walrus haulout?*

A: Motor vessels should maintain a buffer from walrus haulouts on land or ice to avoid disturbance: Marine vessels 50 feet in length or less should remain at least a 0.5 nautical mile away from hauled out walrus. Marine vessels 50 - 100 feet in length should remain at least 1 nautical mile away from hauled out walrus. Marine vessels greater than 100 feet in length should remain at least 3 nautical miles away from hauled out walrus.

All vessels should refrain from anchoring, or conducting tendering operations within 3 miles of hauled out walrus. Sound carries a long way across the water and often reverberates off of cliffs and bluffs adjacent to coastal walrus haulouts amplifying the level of noise. Avoid sudden changes in engine noise, using loud speakers, loud deck equipment or other operations that produce noise when in the vicinity of walrus haulouts. Vessels traveling in a predictable manner appear to be less disturbing to animals. Avoid excessive speed or sudden changes in speed or direction when within 1 mile of walrus haulout areas. Harassment or pursuit of marine mammals is prohibited by law. Never attempt to herd, chase, or separate groups of walruses. Mariners who encounter walrus in the water should slow down and change course to avoid injury or death to the animal.

*Q: Can commercial fishers haze walrus?*

A: Yes, non-injurious hazing to avoid damage to fishing gear or catch is allowed under the MMPA. Section 101(a)(4)(A)(i) of the MMPA specifically allows the owner of fishing gear or catch, or an employee or agent of such owner, to deter a marine mammal from damaging the gear or catch. Suggested hazing methods include yelling, the use of a boat horn, or other noise-making devices to divert an individual walrus that may be swimming towards fishing gear.

*Q: If a walrus becomes entangled in fishing gear, what should the fisher do?*

A: Safety is paramount; the Service recommends that fishers separate themselves their crew and the vessel from the entangled walrus. Immediately contact the Stranded Marine Animal Hotline: 1-888-774-7325 to report the entangled or injured walrus.

*Q: If a walrus is struck by your boat; what should you do?*

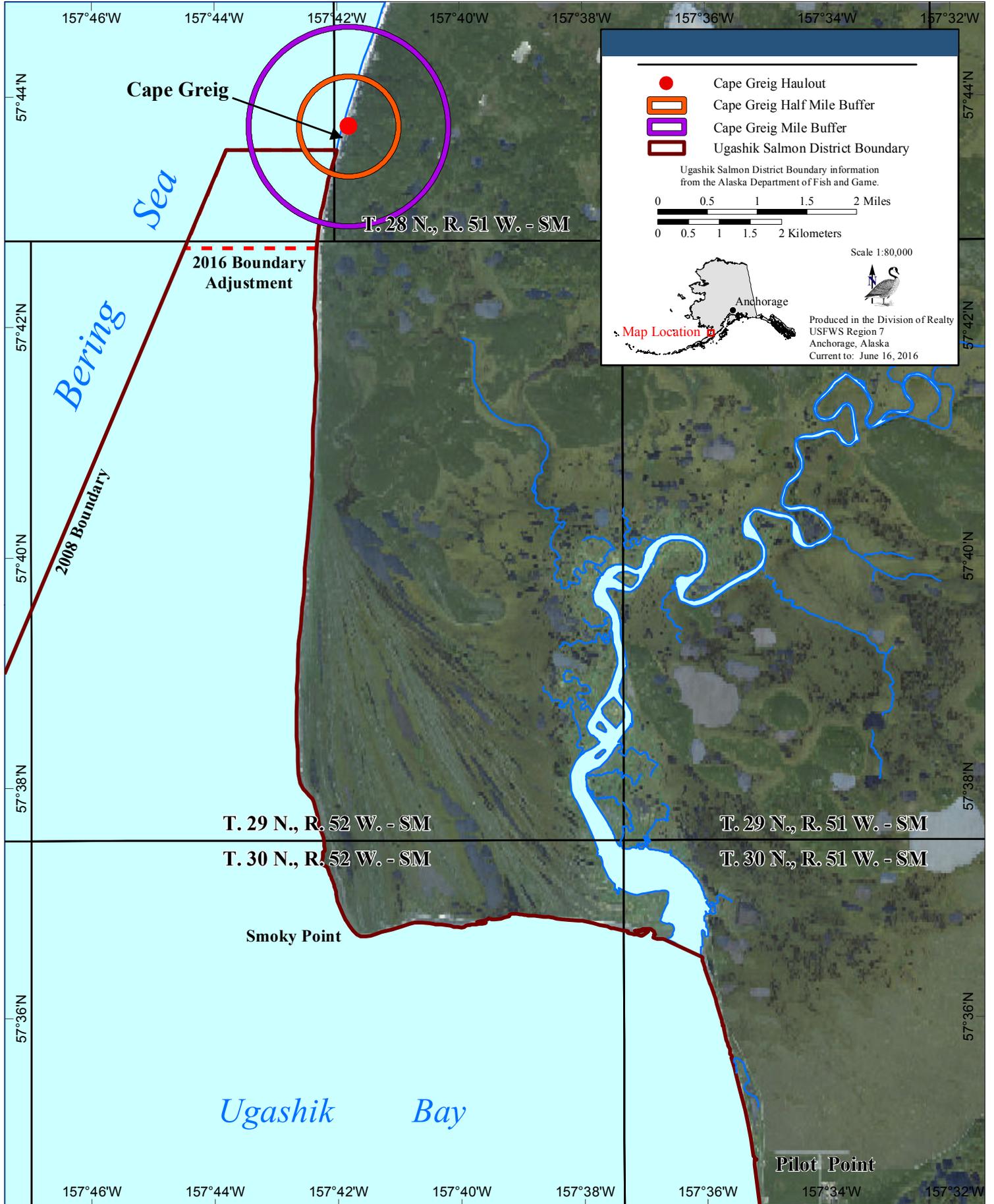
A. Observe the animal to determine if it has been seriously injured or killed. If it appears to have been injured by the strike, immediately contact the Stranded Marine Animal Hotline: 1-888-774-7325 to report the injured animal. If you are participating in a commercial fishery, you may also have a reporting requirement associated with your MMPA authorization from National Marine Fisheries Service.

*Q: Who may take walrus under the MMPA?*

A: Any Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo who resides in Alaska and who dwells on the coast of the North Pacific Ocean or the Arctic Ocean may take any marine mammal without a permit if such taking is: (1) For subsistence purposes, or (2) For purposes of creating and selling authentic native articles of handicraft and clothing, and (3) In each case, not accomplished in a wasteful manner.” Ivory taken for subsistence or handicraft purposes must be registered with the USFWS within 30 days.

*Q: What should I do if I observe someone harassing walrus?*

A: If you observe someone harassing walrus you should note details of the incident, such as aircraft or vessel description, name or tail number, date time of the incident, number of people involved and the approximate number of walrus disturbed and any injuries or mortalities. Please immediately contact USFWS Law Enforcement at 1-800- 858-7621 to report the incident.



**Legend**

- Cape Greig Haulout
- Cape Greig Half Mile Buffer
- Cape Greig Mile Buffer
- Ugashik Salmon District Boundary

Ugashik Salmon District Boundary information from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometers

Scale 1:80,000

Anchorage

Map Location

Produced in the Division of Realty  
USFWS Region 7  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Current to: June 16, 2016