

- Identify the local communities near your area of operation
- Identify the co-management entities (see annotated dictionary for term definition) associated with any marine mammals potentially impacted by the research program.
- Contact community(ies) and co-management entities well ahead of time; six months prior to a research cruise is a good target. Keep in mind that many community leaders and co-management entities will be more difficult to reach during the spring and summer due to active hunting seasons.
- Communicate research plans ([e.g. one-page simple hand-out](#)) and assess if there will be conflicts.
- Use clear English and avoid specialized scientific jargon in written and spoken communications
- Adjust as practical; visit the communities impacted if practical and consult; communication tools such as Powerpoint should be used at most in a limited way; keep presentations short and to the point, allow for question and answer
- Communicate with appropriate village entities regularly during the cruise; this may include faxed ship positions and telephonic communication
- Invite community participation in the research cruise by a community observer if practical.
- Follow-up after the cruise by providing cruise reports and scientific results
- Request feedback from the communities on how successful the consultation (and if appropriate, mitigation) efforts were carried out

An Annotated Dictionary of Useful Terms

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Co-Management Entity

These are typically commissions such as the [Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission](#) and the [Eskimo Walrus Commission](#) that have representatives (commissioners) from each village that undertake hunting for the target animal that is mentioned in the name of the commission. These commissions are supported in part by federal agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that have primary management responsibility for the specified marine mammal population and have entered into formal agreements with subsistence hunters to jointly manage each marine mammal stock population. Thus the commissions advocate for their local hunters as well as promote conservation of the population stock of each co-managed species.

These commissions have regular meetings using Robert's Rules of Order, are typically led by a Chairperson and have an Executive Director, and essentially provide for the regulation of subsistence hunting by Native Alaskans.

If a scientific cruise will be operating in an area where a conflict with hunting, migration or marine mammal foraging might reasonably be expected, it would be to the advantage of the lead scientist to contact the executive director of the appropriate commission. As with IRA Councils, initial contact by telephone is preferable, followed by a written description ([example](#)) of planned research activities.

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District 17, US Coast Guard

[District 17](#) is the US Coast Guard operational organization with jurisdiction in Alaskan waters. Particularly for research cruises using US Coast Guard icebreakers, it is a good idea to coordinate village and co-management organization contacts with outreach programs that District 17 may have in place. Consult with the appropriate US Coast Guard science liaison, [Dave Forcucci](#) (Healy) or [Philip McGillivray](#) (Polar Sea or Polar Star) to help coordinate communication to local communities with the Coast Guard.

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Incidental harassment

While conducting other activities, such as scientific research, or more commonly oil and gas exploration, impacts on a marine mammal population, such as interfering with feeding or migration, are considered an incidental "take," by provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and are formally regulated and require authorization from the responsible federal agency that manages that animal species.

In practice, the impacts of most scientific research are not considered significant enough to have an impact on marine mammal populations. However if an activity, including scientific research rises to the level that it constitutes incidental harassment, those impacts that interfere with the availability of marine mammals for subsistence hunting are prohibited under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The U.S. National Science Foundation typically does not recommend that scientists obtain such permits.

However work using seismic equipment can require an Incidental Harassment Authorization (e.g. see [NOAA's guidelines](#)).

Moreover, there are differences of opinion on the need to obtain incidental harassment authorizations, and it is not uncommon for local community representatives to ask scientists to obtain such formal authorizations to enter areas where marine mammals may change their behavior due to ship traffic.

Scientists should consult with funding agencies, local communities, co-management agencies, past shipboard chief scientists, the AICC, Coast Guard science liaison and/or other informed parties to arrive at a defensible decision as to whether an application for an incidental harassment authorization is appropriate for their specific ship track, timing, and shipboard activities.

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Inuit

The term used primarily used in Canada for people that in the past have been called "Eskimo" who live in the circum-Arctic from Greenland to the Bering Strait region. In Canada the term Eskimo is considered somewhat offensive, but it is still widely used in Alaska.

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Inupiat

A more commonly used term for Inuit in Alaska. The native language is called Inupiaq.

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IRA Council

The IRA Council is the tribal government entity in each village. Often this is the best starting point for contact, particularly for the smaller villages, as the IRA Council members are locally elected by their communities, are locally respected, and have legal authority to act on behalf of their communities. Web-based information on the President, local Council membership, and other information on each village IRA is available at www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_BLOCK.htm but this information changes often and this database is only updated annually.

A telephone call is probably more effective for identifying the current appropriate people for each village. Although a relatively small number of IRAs are internet-savvy, it is far more preferable to directly call the IRA office initially rather than to use email.

Follow-up information following the initial contact should be by fax, or if enough time allows by mail. Remember mail service to outlying communities in Alaska is often slow to be delivered.

IRA Council offices are normally open only during business hours Monday-Friday and they may be closed or have limited staffing during the lunch hour.

Incidentally, the term IRA Council is derived from the Indian Reorganization Act (a congressional act of 1934), but the full term is never used in Alaska because most Native Alaskans do not consider the term American Indian to apply to them.

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Marine Mammal Protection Act

This [legislation](#), first approved by the U.S. Congress in 1972, with amendments in 1994 and 2007 provides protection for marine

mammals throughout U.S. waters. This legislation provides a process for issuance of incidental harassment authorizations when marine mammals will be significantly impacted by activities that can include scientific research. The legislation also provides an exception for the taking of marine mammals by Alaska Natives through traditional subsistence hunting

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Marine mammal, bird and community observers

Marine mammal observers are individuals who participate on research cruises as paid professionals and provide information during ship navigation to avoid conflicts with marine mammal migrations and foraging. These positions are particularly common on industrial operations associated with oil and gas drilling and these professionals help the oil industry comply with incidental harassment permitting and regulations associated with the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Some bird and marine mammal observers fulfill a somewhat different function onboard research cruises and contribute census information to better understand marine mammal and bird distribution patterns in the Arctic. The North Pacific Research Board has for example funded [these observation programs](#) on a ship of opportunity basis.

Finally community observers are invited members of local communities who can in some cases fulfill the work of marine mammal observers. In other cases, these individuals become members of science sampling teams and can provide a window of knowledge through written reports back to their communities ([example](#)) about what happens during scientific research cruises. Community observers are usually paid an honorarium or salary for their service. Funds can be budgeted during proposal preparation or individual arrangements can be made through the funding agency.

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Native Corporations

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 was an act of Congress that enabled a "final" settlement of land claims in Alaska that had been unresolved since before statehood was established in 1959, separating federal, state, and Native Alaskan ownership. Thirteen regional corporations were established as well as a large number of village corporations through the transfer of \$962.5 million dollars that was used to endow these corporations with initial capital for investment. In some cases, the regional corporations have become important corporate entities, paying significant dividends to their shareholders and contributing to a higher standard of living for Alaskans, as well as investing in other commercial concerns throughout the United States and globally.

Village corporations were also endowed with funds and surface rights to lands totaling 178,000 square kilometers, in many cases near and within individual villages. As a result, many areas near and within villages are privately owned by village corporations and technically, coming ashore in many communities requires permission of the village corporation.

Permission can be conditioned upon paying fees for entry, but typically fees are not collected for embarkation and disembarkation from ships conducting scientific research.

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Saint Lawrence Island Yupik

A distinct language and ethnic group native to Saint Lawrence Island and a small part of the Russian mainland. Some linguists refer to this group as Siberian Yupik, but in the two villages on Saint Lawrence Island, Savoonga and Gambell, the distinct preference is to be called Saint Lawrence Island Yupik. Linguistically the Yupik language spoken in southwestern Alaska differs significantly from Inupiaq and Saint Lawrence Island Yupik.

Village

The preferred term for small communities in Alaska with predominantly Alaska Native populations.

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Whaling Captains Association

Most of the eleven Alaskan villages that traditionally undertake bowhead whale hunting (Savoonga, Gambell, Diomede, Wales, Kivalina,

Point Hope, Point Lay, Wainwright, Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik) have whaling captains associations that consist of the individual captains of teams that engage in bowhead whale hunting. These associations are additional advocacy organization for bowhead whale hunters in individual villages. These associations can also provide information on perceived or real conflicts between subsistence hunting and planned research cruises.

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Yupik

A Native Alaskan ethnic and language group that predominates in southwest Alaska, from roughly the Yukon River south to Bristol Bay.

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Related Links

[National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs](#)

[Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic \(National Science Foundation document\)](#)

[Guidelines for Improved Cooperation between Arctic Researchers and Northern Communities \(draft document written in 2004\)](#)

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