



2022-23 Regional Report worksheet

INTRODUCTION: To help the ISC do its job co-managing ice seals in Alaska, we need to collect the best possible information for use when/if needed. It will be extremely helpful if the ISC members would write down regional reports to be presented at the next meeting. Additional information will be added as needed.

DIRECTIONS: Please fill in what you can under each section below regarding your understanding about how ice seals, harvest, habitat, climate, etc. have been going over the last year. If there is a section missing, then please feel free to add whatever else you think is important. PLEASE BE SPECIFIC.

The ISC has a budget available to pay for the time you spend in preparing your report (up to 4 hrs at \$50/hr = \$200).

You can fill in the worksheet, type your answers, email them to me, or bring to the meeting. Also, you can submit your report on the ISC Website (www.iceseals.org) under OBSERVATIONS. Contact Andy (andrew.vonduyke@north-slope.org or 907-855-1149) if you have questions.

Thanks for your help! Andy

#####

Name Sam Gosuk **ISC Region** Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)
Year 2022-23

1. Please describe how seal harvest went over the past year.

This year during seal hunting time, I did not get an opportunity to go out myself to do some seal hunting. I did get some seal from those who did.

This year during the spring, the ice broke rather early and with it the ice went away, so I did not hear of any people getting bearded seal out there.

This past fall during moose season around August and September people saw young seals at the mouth of Togiak River and upriver. A few people got some young bearded seals.

In between October and November there was a quick cold freeze-up and it was very cold, which allowed me to think that we would have a cold weather which would freeze the creeks and rivers that would allow the trail to get good for moose harvest. But in late December, the weather didn't get as good as it would and the trail did not get as good. The snow was still powdery up to the end of this February. In October and November, there were good days and people took advantage of it and went out to get some seals in the warm spell.

As the winter continues, now that moose season is over, we hope now to have opportunities to go out to sea and try to get the *maklak* (bearded seals) while they are still around. When the spring comes early this year, we know that we will not see bearded seals, which used to be available around April spring break-up with lots of ice. The pattern has become as an early spring which causes early break-up then the western or northern wind which blows out the ice out to sea. While this pattern continues, we know that we will not have much opportunity for getting bearded seal as we would like to. We will have to wait for spring herring with which the seal will be more available in late April and early May before the fishing season.



2022-23 Regional Report worksheet

2. Please describe whether hunters had difficulty going out seal hunting. Explain.

I did not hear of any people having difficulty going out to the sea. The ice broke early and we had no trouble accessing the bay.

3. Please describe seasonal events over the year. For example, were freeze-up and break-up normal? Any other seasonal or environmental factors that were important? (e.g., storms)

The spring break up last year was fast.

This year it wasn't very cold only a few times it was cold then mostly 20s. This allowed the rivers not to freeze as much and when I asked a fellow hunter about moose and the climate, he stated that the river didn't freeze as much. When he went fishing, making a hole for ice fishing, he noted that the ice as about 2 feet deep and usually is takes almost all of the ice machine drill which is about 4 feet deep. I believe that we will have an early spring this year.

This year also, in Togiak River area, we noted the decline of the abundance of three salmon (species). The kings were not being caught as much. We saw very little chum salmon and, in the fall, there were not as much silver salmon. In Bristol Bay there were lots of red salmon this past fishing year. One thing that we are noticing is that the size of red salmon is getting smaller. People have started using smaller mesh size.

For herring roe on kelp, we continue to suffer from lack of herring spawn on kelp. The herring are being harvested before they spawn on the kelp we harvest for food. I do believe the herring biomass is getting smaller in our area. We continue to not see as much herring as we did in the past. I personally believe that if there is nothing done to protect the herring, they will continue to diminish as they have since I remember them.

As far as events, one of the patterns we see is that King Eider seem to pass through our area farther out at sea, passing by eastern Hagemeister but not close enough to be harvested as much. The abundance of migrating King Eider seems to be less than in the past.

4. What was the health of the seals like over the past year? Fat thickness? Unusual hair loss? Body-condition? Anything else?

It seems that some seals are skinnier. I received a seal skin and fat this year that was a medium spotted seal. I was expecting to get a bucket of processed seal fat to render but ended up with a half a bucket of fat.

Usually after October and November, the seal usually get fat on the smelt coming in between October and November.



2022-23 Regional Report worksheet

5. *Did you see pups? Are the seals pupping OK? Explain answer if necessary.*

In the past sometime people saw pups on ice. In this time, sometimes we see small seal upriver in the spring. Seal used to herd together in the spring on ice and we still see them when there is ice. We usually go toward Cape Pierce area when hunting in the spring for ice floes in which there are seal, bearded seal, and walrus. When the ice breaks up early, then we do see the seal on ice in Matuqaq and Asviyaq Area, as shown on the map as an oval. But when there is north or west wind the ice is blown out of our area along with the bearded seal. I think when there is lack of ice, the seal pups or young seal go to the coastal areas or rivers including our Tuyuryaq River.



6. *What was the status of seal prey? Were salmon runs OK? Herring? What was the general health of the ecosystem?*
7. *What is commercial shipping like in the region? Has this changed, increased, decreased? Are you observing or hearing about effects on ice seals or their ecosystem?*
8. *Is there industrial development being planned or currently being worked on? In your opinion, is this important to ice seals? Please explain.*
9. *Please add anything else that you think is important.*