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Memorandum

1011 E. TUDOR RD.
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503
(907) 275-3800

Robert Jones, OBS/CE

Scott Schliebe, Migratory Birds

DATE: 29 JUN 1980

SUBJECT: Walrus Parts Collection Notes. ✓

The attached field diary notes are being provided to you as a documentation of the subject activities which occurred in the Nome and surrounding area during the periods of May 5-8 and May 21-June 9, 1980. It should be noted that the diary is not intended to be available for public release but is only intended to be used as an informative guide for future operations. Because of the nature of the notes, they have not been grammatically or editorially refined. I should be consulted if any issue arises which requires clarification.

The following is a brief summary including a description of the area, weather, ice conditions, problems encountered and recommendations for similar efforts in the future. The total result of the collection effort in Nome were; 3 stomachs; 3 reproductive tracts, and 8 pair of teeth.

Nome is a frontier type town with a population of approximately 3200 people. The populace is roughly a two-thirds admixture of Native races and one-third white. Within the Native populace exists the very separate community of King Islanders. These people have maintained their identity by living together in the east section of town. The King Island Native Corporation aids in further binding the group together socially and politically.

The beach abutting Nome extends approximately 10-15 miles toward Safety Lagoon on the east and continues to the west the entire length of Norton Sound and thence north along the Bering Sea. The relative diffuse nature of the town and probable boat hauling areas makes monitoring more difficult.

Hunting occurs as soon as open water leads are available in the Nome area. Once the ice has gone out hunting pressure generally shifts to the King Islander camp at Cape Wooley located 45 miles to the west, off the Teller road. The road into the area is 8 miles long. Cape Wooley has been a traditional hunting/camp area of the King Islanders and was selected as Native village deficiency lands under ANCSA. Flooding and high water conditions area common occurrence in the early spring. The road maybe underwater and culverts washed out. The camp is divided into two sections. The main area is located on the beach and contained 8 wall tents and two permanent plywood house structures. The area is separated from the mainland by a creek approximately 100 feet wide and

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
Wildlife Service
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

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FROM: Scott Schliebe, Migratory Birds

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requires a boat to cross. Two permanent wood structure camps and a double tent camp are located on the mainland side.

Boats observed at King Island during the later portion of the parts collection included 2 large skin boats and 6 aluminum skiffs, mainly 16-18 footers. The boats were powered by 25-75 horsepower motors with the newer motors being the higher horsepower. Most motors (50%) were Evinrudes. One boat was powered by twin motors (35 and 55 h.p.). The second motor served as a backup. The same types of boats were found on the beach east of Nome (up to 14 skiffs) and in town at the barge harbor (up to 12 skiffs). One Boston whaler, 70 h.p. and a larger fiberglass V-hull were located at the barge harbor. Many other boats, some functional and others delapidated, were observed around town.

The Nome area was ice bound until the 10th and 11th of May. Refer to Bob Leedy's report. Ice went out rapidly with the help of easterly winds. When I returned on the 21st of May the ice edge had retreated to King Island on the west (35 miles over open seas) and was west of Norton Sound. Some minor shifts in the ice pack occurred during the course of my stay but, in my opinion, not enough to significantly alter walrus distribution or influence the harvest. An aerial survey of King Island, taken on May 30th, revealed approximately 1,000 walrus south of the island. The estimate is without aid of aerial photography; Overway, who aided in other estimates was along. Prior estimates by Jones and Overway, proved to be 40% low. Some walrus observed appeared nervous and left the ice when the plane was heard.

This was the Service's and Kawerak's first attempt at carrying out a parts collection program and was not without its problems. Direction and role responsibility between the Service and Kawerak proved to be unclear. Kawerak did not or was unable to select an assistant from the area to aid in collection of samples at Nome. They were slow in announcing the parts collection effort and its purpose in Nome and the other villages. The marine mammal research position at Kawerak is held by an individual viewed as closely associated with the church. In an area of Catholic and Presbyterian congregations this may result in mixed feelings. Field stations were uncertain of who was in command when they received more than one set of orders. A clear chain of command and responsibility was lacking. Examples would be the shift in prices being paid for parts, quotas on the number of parts to be bought from each village, time lag required to communicate discrepancies and minor day to day hassles. Kawerak noticeably wanted to control the collection program and will attempt to expand their role through the contracting process in the future. Kawerak continues to have a strained working relationship with ADF&G.

Past frustrations by ADF&G in negotiating a transfer in management authority for marine mammals and the Togiak case served as a basis for less than ideal working relationships. Bob Nelson and Bob Pegau should be commended for their cooperation and aid under these circumstances. Both took a very professional and biological approach and provided valuable advise based on past working knowledge of the parts collection program.

Working with the King Islanders proved to be very challenging. They moved as a group from their Native island to Nome in 1962. Even though the move occurred almost 20 years ago a close community social and cultural relationship has been maintained. Its members are proud to be walrus hunters and are adverse to any insinuation of head hunting. A verily loosely regimented social/hunting structure revolves around various family units. Those individuals not related by birth or marriage may either be taken into a unit on apprentice basis or remain unattached. Those unattached hunters generally will have sub-groups which hunt together. The person owning the boat controls who will hunt with him, in both cases. Hunters unattached by family ties are more independent and refrain from conversation. They are also suspected of having less need for the edible parts of walrus since no elders are reliant upon their hunting success.

The King Islanders in the past, resented ADF&G management of walrus and in particular disliked the ivory sealing and village quota system which had been imposed. Legal requirements and enforcement techniques implemented by ADF&G had generally resulted in ill feelings. A certain amount of distrust or apprehension certainly carried over from past experiences. This may be the true for any enforcement program, ~~is~~ regardless of who is in charge of administration. The King Islanders were aware of a change in management to the FWS, but were uncertain what this would mean. As with other working relationships trust must be developed with time. The King Islanders were generally quite and did not divulge much information voluntarily. Also a language barrier made full comprehension a problem with older individuals at ~~some~~ times. The King Islanders generally believe they should be allowed as many walrus as they can take (self-regulation). Also, they believe it should be their decision not Kawerak's on whether or not to participate in the parts collection program. Some individuals thought the prices being paid for the parts (mainly stomachs) were not high enough but they did realize that it was being paid for parts which for the most part, were previously unsalvaged for any monetary or food value. All of the parts collected were from boats launched from Nome, while no samples were acquired from boats launched at Cape Wooley.

It was my decision at the time not to set up a tent camp on the beach at Cape Wooley. The following reasons were, responsible for this choice:

- All indications were that hunting was not occurring to a significant extent and that most of the hunting activity would occur in late June if the ice edge held
- I would be viewed as a spy and possibly cause irreversible resentment
- The King Island field assistant had not been nominated or was rejected by Kawerak
- Lands ^{was} ~~wer~~ Native Village deficiency selected under ANCSA
- The parts collection program was voluntary and a hard line approach would reinforce the King Islanders opinion that walrus management under any regime would be unsatisfactory.

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In retrospect, I would have been welcomed to set up camp during the last week of my stay, and if I return next year would plan to establish a beach tent. Under ideal circumstances a camp at Wooley and one in Nome would provide the greatest amount of information on harvest. A 24 hour watch of the Nome area would be required.

It is impossible for me to say to what degree the program was successful or unsuccessful in obtaining the desired information in Nome. Hopefully, future working relationships will improve and our efforts this year will have contributed to increased cooperation and success in the future.

Recommendations for future parts collection and walrus management program in the Nome/King Island area include:

- Initiate public involvement/awareness of the upcoming program earlier (minimum of 1 week-10 days prior to ice out)

- Hire an assistant from the King Island Community (King Islanders should agree on the selection)

- FWS personnel available to assist in area of high harvest

- Same FWS personnel returning to the same village

- Do not split village assignments. Once the person is in place they should stay uninterrupted for the entire length of the parts collection.

- Any contract should name FWS as the lead agency, should be more specific as to other responsibilities, should allow greater time frame for data collection

- Completed comprehensive walrus management plan

- Expanded activity on the walrus technical committee

- A formal LE policy

- Some method of sealing (tagging) ivory

- Greater definition of administrative direction and chain of command in walrus program

- Boat and motor size provisions (future)

- Coordinated news releases

- Video tape of this years data analysis

- Remote sensing of ice conditions correlated to harvest activity

Future FWS walrus management efforts should be discussed with ADF&G, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, the Walrus Technical Committee, affected

Native organization and the State Subsistence Section. ADF&G is intimately more familiar with management aspects of walrus populations and user groups. Their cooperation should be pursued.

Scott L. Shih

Nome Harvest Report - Spring 1979

Escaping rainy climes in the south I arrived in Nome on May 6th, a Sunday. I was informed that the intensive walrus hunting began May 3rd and had gone strong through the 5th. No one had been available to adequately monitor the harvest so I was plopped into a city of over 3,000, not knowing anyone, and began to learn names, addresses, and catch statistics (with damn little help from those involved with the latter).

Much of my time during the next 10 days was spent greeting boats as they returned from hunting, chatting with hunters on the beach, and visiting hunters' houses to tag ivory. Pam Field arrived on the 10th of May and assisted for 3 days. Ed Muktoyuk was also available to help for several days beginning on the 8th.

Due to the various landings and numbers of people involved, it was difficult to accurately determine the number of crews involved in hunting. A minimum of 15 boats were counted 1 day at various launchings and to this could be added occasional hunting crews not present that day and crews launching from areas not surveyed.

Beginning on the 8th and continuing for the rest of my stay, I handed out collections of plastic bags, tags, and envelopes along with explanation sheets to allow the hunters to assist us in collecting samples (as the EWC promised they would). At least 25 such sets were distributed to at least 15 separate boat crews. As it turned out, Wagner Wongittilin, Richard Immingan, Lincoln Milligrock, and Gilbert Muktoyuk contributed the bulk of our 76 sets of samples. Gilbert, with the help of his brother Ed, collected most of the reproductive tracts we received (9 of 14) and Lincoln brought a number of stomachs in, although most were empty. Caleb Pungowiyi brought back two fetuses for us to measure and Richard Immingan brought one.

With Nome being the headquarters of the Eskimo Walrus Commission, it is extremely surprising that so few samples were retrieved by the hunters, especially considering the public broadcast alleging the active cooperation of the Commission with ADF&G.

Belukhas were seen near the ice May 5th, although numbers were not mentioned. A belukha was taken near Nome on May 14th.

It was reported that most of the walrus seen during this period were females with few, if any, young. This is quite probably related to the ice leaving earlier than normal and therefore a different segment of the migration being viewed. By the 11th the ice was reported to be 35-40 miles out and hunting was rapidly slowing down.

Most of the walrus hunting that I was informed of was conducted by King Islanders and St. Lawrence Islanders living in Nome. A number of other hunters participated to a lesser extent, including a small number of

non-Natives during the weekend of the 12th. Over 200 walrus had been taken by the time I left.

One walrus was towed back whole and butchered on the beach ice. Most other boats I saw returning contained 5-25 percent of the coke, a flipper or so from each animal, and perhaps a liver, heart, etc. One man retrieved stomachs to make drums. Another brought back a large amount of coke to sell to the Mercantile Mart.

There was some problem in sealing ivory. Once or twice people initially told me to forget it or that the ivory would crack. Eventually many of the people either came by or called for ivory sealing. There was, however, a number of unsealed ivory tusks reportedly being sold to individuals both Native and non-Native.

Some ringed seals and oogruks were taken in conjunction with the walrus hunting. The numbers taken were not qualified, but normally it appeared to be only three or four to a boat for only a few days each--certainly less than 100 seals of combined species.

I left Nome on May 16th. Nome had become too warm whereas Wales offered a colder climate and ongoing walrus hunting.

Richard Tremaine

