



# Ice Seal Committee - Board Meeting

March 24-25, 2022 (9am to 5 pm) – [Dimond Center Hotel](#), Anchorage, AK

## MINUTES

1. Call to Order (9 am).....Billy Adams, *ISC Chair*
2. Invocation           **Robbie Kirk**
3. Roll Call.....[Quorum](#) for ISC Board Meeting = majority (6 members)

Ice Seal Committee		Virtual	Present	Absent
Bristol Bay Native Association	Heidi Kritz	X		
	Sam Gosuk			X
Association of Village Council Presidents	Jennifer Hooper		X	
	Albert Simon		X	
Kawerak, Inc.	Brandon Ahmasuk	X		
	Ben Payenna			X
Maniilaq Association	Percy Ballot			X
	Cyrus Harris		<b>Robbie</b>	
North Slope Borough	Billy Adams		X	
	Joe Mello Leavitt		X	
<b>Total</b>			<b>7</b>	

#### 4. Introductions & Meeting Logistics

**Robbie Kirk**  
**Albert Simon**  
**Jared Nayakik**  
**Kimberly Pikok**  
**Andy Von Duyke**  
**Wybon Rivers - guest**  
**Joseph Leavitt**

**Jennifer Hooper**  
**Margaret Rudolph**  
**Brower Frantz**  
**Maddie Miranda**  
**Colleen Reichmuth**  
**Julia Kim**  
**Danielle Dickson**

**Barb Mahoney**  
**Carrie Goertz –**  
**ASLC**  
**Michelle Frantz**  
**Elisabeth Kruger –**  
**WWF**  
**Brandon Ahmasuk**

**Michael Cameron**  
**Erin Moreland**  
**Michelle Fournet**  
**Rowenna Gyba**  
**Lori Quakenbush**

**Bruce Robson**  
**Lauren Divine**  
**Heidi Kritz**  
**Moses Kritz, Sr.**

**Raphaela**  
**Stimmelmayer**  
**Craig Chythlook**  
**Donna Hauser**

**5. Welcome remarks**.....Billy Adams & Jon Kurland

**Billy Adams:** Provided welcome remarks.

**Jon Kurland:** Not present on Thursday (day 1). He will be present on Friday (day 2).

**6. Approve agenda**.....Ice Seal Committee

**Approved**

**7. Approve Minutes**.....Ice Seal Committee

A. FY2020-21 ISC Board Meeting

**Approved**

B. FY2020-21 Meeting #2 (virtual)

**Not finished.** Andy will submit to ISC soon.

**8. Reports**

A. Report from ISC Chairman.....Billy Adams

Moment of silence for Honorable Don Young.

Remember the Ukrainians and Russians.

**Billy Adams read his prepared comments:**

First of all, let us thank the Lord for allowing us to come together as a group in person or communicating by other means. Let us also remember our loved ones those that are not with us here that they are in a better place. I have confidence in this committee to move forward and catch up with each other.

We as a group must reignite our plans and goals for the next coming years as restrictions from covid are lessening. I hope each and every community for blessings of bountiful harvest of seals and other resources that we depend on as Alaskan Natives. Our relationship with our neighboring Regions continues to be excellent in giving updates on weather and ice conditions, health of harvested animals, and issues that we should be aware of.

Let us build up our relationships also with our State and Federal agencies along with our Circumpolar Indigenous members for we share resources such as ice seals,

bowhead whales, belugas, polar bears, walruses, fish and birds. Our efforts to preserving our Native rights depends on each other to be responsible stewards of our natural resources and we hope to keep them in perpetuity.

Billy Adams also provided NSB regional report: This update is recorded below in the regional reports section of the meeting minutes.

I look forward for a great meeting and a safe return for everyone.

Quyanaqpuq,  
Billy Adams

B. Indigenous Sentinels Network.....Lauren Divine & Bruce Robson<sup>1</sup>

Lauren Divine: Gave her presentation.

Albert Simon: How many fur seals/year allowed for harvest?

Lauren Divine: 2000/year all juvenile males max. Typically ~ 200/year.

Albert Simon: How do you know if the population is doing OK and that harvest levels are safe and sustainable?

Lauren Divine: Agencies have used empirical evidence to demonstrate that harvest is below PBR.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Has ISN been coordinating with Gay Sheffield?

Lauren Divine: Yes, she works with Gay. Is interested to hear if northern fur seals are showing up elsewhere. Decline of northern fur seals on St. Paul is an issue of pup and female survival. Communities suspect that it is due to prey availability, commercial fisheries, and perhaps marine debris. Many entanglements are observed. Stellar's sea lions occur in small numbers and decline may be due to emigration. Many factors at play and need to cover this with information gathering.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Photos of a bull sea lion from SE Alaska in the Gambell region. Would like to coordinate with Lauren and Gay.

Heidi Kritz: Is GIS available for all app users?

Bruce Robson: Will set her up with account (email and name). GIS mapping will allow defining a polygon for a spatial component for surveys. Not a true GIS, but will allow for display online. But can be exported to a real GIS. Currently will enable the collection of data that will be useful for GIS. Allows one to draw polygons around areas (e.g., subsistence use). New community requires a custom setup.

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<sup>1</sup> Unfinished Business – Requested to present on Thursday morning due to scheduling

Adding a new user in an existing community is simple and quick. Communities can be linked up.

Billy Adams: Project looks interesting. This would be useful for harvest reporting, especially if there is a quota (bowheads) – or a looming quota (polar bears). Great for working with federal partners. ISN should present at other groups (beluga whale committee and ANCC). ISN looks like they are “ahead of the game”. Some places may not gravitate to this because users are “old school”. Younger users though are more comfortable with apps.

Robbie Kirk: Hunters have high level of expertise, which should be acknowledged, respected, and compensated. This is a great example of what co-management can and should look like.

Lauren Divine: Now may be a good time to start a pilot program among ANOs. We can come together to submit a proposal.

Andy Von Duyke: Expressed his enthusiasm for these technologies.

## C. Reports – Regional

### 1) Association of Village Council Presidents

#### **Jennifer Hooper – Regional Representative**

Date: March 15, 2022

From: Jennifer Hooper, AVCP Natural Resources Department

To: Ice Seal Committee

Re: AVCP Regional Report

#### Current AVCP NR Staff:

- Jennifer Hooper, Program Manager
- Paige Jones, Forestry Resource Coordinator
- Three positions vacant:
  - Marine Resource Coordinator
  - Subsistence Resource Coordinator (new)
  - Natural Resources Coordinator (new)

#### Report on Activities:

COVID continued to hamper all operations at AVCP and within the region. With the latest surge of Omicron appearing to subside and positive cases continuing to drop, we are scheduled to return back to the office, resume travel and support in-person gatherings starting March 21. We are all hopeful this is the start of returning to a sense of normalcy.

School board is rescinding mask mandates soon. Communities are looking forward to a resumption of some “normalcy”.

Summer 2021 was on the cool side. Break-up seemed to be fairly normal in timing. Salmon returns were even more bleak than years past. The Yukon was

shut down the whole summer and the escapement into Canada was still not met. (Worst year ever. Bad if not worse than last year) AVCP worked with many partners to get donated and purchased salmon delivered to the Yukon and Delta communities. Both chinook and chum salmon numbers were way down. The situation was similar on the Kuskokwim but, the sockeye numbers were strong enough to support some subsistence fishing. Disaster declarations were requested for the Yukon and Kuskokwim in 2020 and the Yukon in 2021. Those requests were finally approved in January, and we are currently awaiting word on funding appropriations.

Our weather this winter has been “normal” for the most part – many weeks of severely cold temperatures and lots of wind in early winter. We had warming and icing around Christmas time and then again in early March. But we are back to single digits and strong north winds for at least the next week or so. We did have a lot of snow but, it melted quickly during the March “spring.”

I have not heard any reports of concerns or issues with seal hunting or other marine mammal subsistence activities. I occasionally see people sharing their harvests on Facebook and there is no indication there are any concerns.

Our Natural Resources program created a new Facebook page last fall and we’ve been busy sharing all sorts of information – events, research, activities, etc. Look for us and “like!”

As noted at the top, we are looking to expand and increase our capacity and are actively recruiting for three positions – two are new. We will also be engaging in strategic planning with our Administration in April to develop a subsistence advocacy plan and outline ways to be more proactive and focused in our work.

### **Albert Simon – Hunter Representative**

No regional report?

### **Wybon Rivers – “Next Gen” Participant – Scammon Bay**

Bearded seals were abundant last summer. Chased seals in front of town. Populations dependent on winter and ice conditions. Was a good winter. Lots of bearded seals in the rivers and along the coasts. Chase them with harpoons in fresh water because they sink. Good ice thickness. Lots of SE winds. Leads to lack of ice in the ocean. Seals and walrus come closer to shore when this happens. North winds will bring ice in, which is good for bearded and ringed seals. Lots of stinky male ringed seals, so need to be careful on which ones they harvest. Need to smell them so they don’t bring home a stinky seal. Lots of mating ringed seals. Not many female ringed seals taken.

Hooper Bay. Also had a good hunt. Bearded seals off the coast. Walrus harvest off the shore. Good fall hunt for bearded and ringed seals. Only shorefast ice right off town. Not enough shore ice to hunt from now, but north winds will bring more ice.

Billy Adams: Black face from a gland on male ringed seals. Wybon mentioned good IK on when and why seals are abundant.

Colleen Reichmuth: Clarify where ringed seals are being caught. Freshwater or in ocean?

Wybon Rivers: More rutting males ringed seals than usual.

Lori Quakenbush: Where is Albert? Can he mention Hooper Bay?

Jennifer Hooper: Albert stepped out due to back pain.

## 2) Bristol Bay Native Association

### **Heidi Kritz – Regional Representative**

Best winter in years. Lots of ice and snow. People are getting ready to out hunting. Sam Gosuk is out hunting with high school students. Working on co-management relationships with Federal partners. Planning to GIS mapping for subsistence hunting in the region.

### **Morris Kritz (for Sam Gosuk – Hunter Representative) - Togiak area**

Really good winter. Had a lot of ice, all the way to Anchor Point, but it is already breaking up and going out. People are going out for seals. Back in late 1960s-90s he was active hunter in bay. Has concerns about bearded seals. Since 1991 the bearded seals are declining slowly. Over the last 10 years almost nobody has really caught any bearded seals. Could it be due to the lack of ice or because the ice is going out too quickly. He misses eating the ugruk. Loved the intestine fat. Been getting this from friends in Unalakleet. This is a delicacy for older people in their 1970s. Current zooms ice out of the area quickly once it breaks up.

Lori Quakenbush: → Moses: Thinks that it has to do with the lack of ice. Would be a good idea to keep track of ice this year since it's been a "good" winter so far.

Heidi Kritz: Was out at Round Island and noticed that the waters had changed in that area.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Understanding that there were surveys performed to see what the prey resources are like. Is there less prey for the ugruks?

Moses Kritz: Thinks this is a good question. Need to look at what the seals are eating. When he was younger, they'd open the stomach and they found shrimp. Thinks research into seal diet in the area is a good idea.

Heidi Kritz: BBNA was going to be doing estuary research. Will discuss with Barbara Mahoney about this.

Andy Von Duyke: Asked about the status of herring in the region.

Moses Kritz: Related that there has been a lot of herring fishing. Locals note that the herring population is not as healthy as it used to be. Hard to get roe these days (spotty). Not much coverage for herring spawn. Thinly covered kelp for spawn over the last 10 years. Back in the 1960s-70s had lots of herring roe on the kelp. Unalakaleet sends him roe on kelp.

Billy Adams: NOAA fisheries? Who to talk with about this? This is important because seals eat fish.

Moses Kritz: For the last 5-8 years ADFG has not been present in Togiak to open up the fisheries. No observers present. Not enough funding to be present. They are in Dillingham. Problem is to fund sufficient managers and observers to ensure that it is sustainable.

Michael Cameron / Erin Moreland: NOAA people who can address questions about herring fisheries.

3) Kawerak, Inc.

**Brandon Ahmasuk – Regional Representative**

No reports of not being able to get seals. Overall a good harvest. Spring break up and ice thickness are the “new normal”. No notable extreme weather conditions. Harvest was plentiful across the region. When the ice departs, it leaves quickly. Probably due to thinner sea ice. Gay Sheffield did not report many (if any) UME seals. Fall had earlier ice. Southern sea ice extent was farther than it has been recently. Cold winter months. Hopeful that sea ice will remain longer. Feels that this will be better than the ecosystem as a whole. Looking forward to boating season.

Billy Adams: Commented on his trip to St. Lawrence Island. Observed a fair amount of ice on his flight. He could see the Russian side of that body of water was mostly ice free. Good cold winter in Barrow (reminiscent of the 1980s).

Brandon Ahmasuk: Last several years they have had a huge marine debris event (key new topic). Trash, Japanese and Russian trash. Up and down the coast, Nome, St. Lawrence Island. Austin Ahmasuk has been working on this, reporting, asking for funding. Materials included regular trash (plastic bottles), also oil drums, petroleum products. Concern on how this is affecting food security. Concern that contaminants may be related to UME.

Billy Adams: Noted that in Savoonga they find flotsam that they can actually use. But also know that there is a lot of marine debris. Leslie Pierce (former NSB outreach coordinator) was seeking funding for marine debris cleanup. There is much work to do with respect to this topic. Perhaps funding available to help pay local entities for equipment and supplies for debris collection and cleanup. Pre-pandemic, NSB had started hiring H.S. students to do this.



Pandemic has stopped just about everything. Hopeful that we all can start to work toward important goals – like marine debris cleanup.

**Ben Payenna – Hunter Representative**

No regional report given.

4) Maniilaq Association

**Robbie Kirk (for Percy Ballot and Cyrus Harris)**

Noatak hunters:

Enjoyed large solid chunks of flat ice, at the end of May and the beginning of June, with every family at Sisaulik harvesting 3-4 uugruk early. Towards the middle of June, the ice started breaking up into smaller pieces from the wind and currents. Harvesting uugruk was still happening, but at a slower rate. Most uugruk were uugrukchaiq (preferred by many Noatak hunters) and the rest were large red headed males.

Sisaulik has been experiencing erosion near Nuvguraq (the tail end of the spit) a few of the camp sites have been moved up to higher ground because of the erosion. We have witnessed a few more seal pups on the beaches of Sisaulik than normal.

Vessel traffic has been higher than normal with the construction in the area. Teck Alaska (Red Dog Mine) has been working very closely this year with the Noatak and Kivalina hunters to keep the port traffic to a minimum during harvest time. This has helped with more hunters harvesting Beluga this year as well.

Seals in the Noatak River have been steady and they are hunting in the same areas with their pups as usual, in the same areas, and leaving at the same time.

Higher number of stranded younger seals on the beach. Hunted prematurely due to high east winds sweeping the broken ice out to sea.

Kivalina Hunters:

Good ice and a good hunting year.

Kotzebue Hunters:

Reporting good hunting conditions early with normal harvests. The ice conditions are changing from past years, as the size of the ivuniqs are smaller than normal, making stalking the seals more challenging. There are roughly 40 crews hunting seals out of Kotzebue mid-May to mid-June as conditions permit. Kotzebue hunters enjoy an earlier hunt than most as they can follow the river ice out as it breaks up. (Jackson Snyder)

Uty ugruk. Liver in ugruk and ringed seals was spotty and they were uncomfortable eating these.

Deering Hunters:

We're usually blocked in with a little shore fast ice to hunt when it goes out. Lot of animals on not very much ice, but it was gone faster than usual, maybe 3-days of hunting then little to no ice at all. The new ice was really thin in early May, when we travel on the ice for geese hunting and spotted seals on the ice. Didn't notice any



vessels. 2 years ago, we caught a couple of utti ugruks, some had grey blubber, meat and blubber did not turn out on those. Seem like we had more than usual rain, in April and May, not certain though. (Kevin Moto)

Really bad ice conditions. Trapped by the ice. When they hunted that ugruk were uly, i.e., the fat and meat could not be separated to render fat into seal oil.

Buckland hunters:

Other area hunters (Noorvik, Selawik, Kiana, Ambler, Shungnak, Kobuk)  
There are typically a few hunters that come down the river after the Kobuk river ice breaks up, but most times they are limited to fewer hunting days because of the slow ice movement in Kobuk lake. The number of other hunters varies, based on their ability to make it to the sound in time to hunt. Good hunting.

Mike Cameron: Interested in the inability to render the seal blubber.

Robbie Kirk: Amount of fat on seals was less than normal. Could not separate the fat from the meat.

Billy Adams: Thin seals are hard to use for ukruk.

Raphaela Stimmelmayer: Collaborates with hunters in and out of NSB region. If hunters need supplies to ship out questionable seals, then we can provide them and pay for shipping. Local points of contact include NSB, Alex Whiting, Gay Sheffield, ADFG, Stranding Network (Barb Mahoney). UME is still being investigated.

Robbie Kirk: Large number of dead juvenile seals on the beach and also a large number of pups on the beach. Mix of recent and older carcasses. Need to send Raphaela contact info for Robbie Kirk. East winds push up dead animals. Number of seals with spotty liver are declining.

5) North Slope Borough

**Billy Adams – Regional Representative**

*Billy gave his report earlier in the meeting. It is recorded here for the sake of organization.*

The bearded seal hunting in the spring and summer was good overall as the pack ice was closer and stayed longer this year. The winter hunt for ringed seals for Pt. Hope was excellent, in Wainwright it was okay for the most part, but in Barrow we had no hunting on the ice from October to January due to conditions. Late February and March was a complete blessing as hunters rebounded and provided almost 5 seals for the Barrow and other villages that were shared with.

**Joe Leavitt – Hunter Representative**

Ice went out early last year. Last year a boat was crushed off of Barrow. When young ice is still on the beach, and ice pack is still visible, it can be pushed onto the beach, and can be very dangerous. No injuries or deaths. Once ice leaves Barrow, it doesn't seem to come back these days. But farther north, there is still ice at the point. Currents have to do with this. Summer seal season is getting shorter and shorter. Need to finish hunting before rains so you can dry your meat. Good seal hunting last year. Changing sea ice make it difficult to skin-boat hunt for whales. Motorboat hunting will likely take over. Skin boats may stop being used before too long due to the decline in sea ice. Prefers using a skin boat. Ugruk hunting, couple years ago got a seal that almost had no fat. But the meat was good. No seal oil though. Mainly focuses on bearded seals. Billy is a great ringed seal hunter.

Last summer they say humpback whales feeding on herring off of barrow. Many hunters prefer to hunt after midnight. Glassy water, saw evidence of herring. Gillnets catching more salmon than whitefish. Warmer water species are moving north. Ice stayed closed. Cold weather. Currently the ice is still young. Many caribou around Barrow now. Lots of polar bears around right now. Saw a wolverine at the Barrow gravel pit about 6 weeks ago.

Billy Adams: Did not hunt ringed seals until last month. In a few days they got 50 seals...all healthy. Lots of seals = lots of polar bears. Every day. And a lot of bears from Pt. Hope to Barrow to Kaktovik. Worked with USGS to biopsy 45 bears. Healthy big bears, and bears with cubs. Regionally, reports of good seals. Improvements since 2011 UME.

## D. Reports – Research

- 1) ADF&G
  - a) Ice seal research update

Lori Quakenbush<sup>2</sup>

Lori Quakenbush: Provided ADFG research report.

Billy Adams: Asked about how long tagging will occur.

Lori Quakenbush: Not recorded

Brandon Ahmasuk: Need to know what the seals are eating in the middle of the winter. Is of the opinion that bearded and spotted seals eat Pollack. Tracking data show locations where this could be happening. Missing information is important in order to better manage.

Peter Boveng: Gap that Brandon identified is important. Many data gaps. Part of a bigger data gap about what is the overall importance of the ecosystem throughout Alaska.

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<sup>2</sup> Requested to present on Friday morning due to travel

Brandon Ahmasuk: Wants to make a motion to emphasize winter seal diet research. Nome communities are seeing a complete ecosystem crash throughout their region, not just ice seals, but many species (e.g., salmon). Wants research to focus on this and feels like we can't lose any more time. It is an urgent priority.

Billy Adams: Can't vote today because of members absent.

Andy Von Duyke: Proposed drafting a resolution to distribute among ISC members to vote on electronically (per the amended By-Laws) so we don't have to wait until the next meeting. Requested advice from Brandon to help craft the wording of the resolution.

Lori Quakenbush: Winter is when the seals gain weight and are in their best condition. Also the hardest time to study them. It is important.

Wybon Rivers: Regarding winter diet...spends lots of time hunting in the winter. Ringed seals – shrimp. Spotted seals – smelts. Does not know about bearded seals. Locals want to set shrimp pots.

Percy Ballot: Spotted seals herding fish. Pro research in the winter. He has seen skinny / dying seals. If no quorum but have an understanding that winter research is a priority. Action isn't always necessary. Can make a clear statement.

Lori Quakenbush: As system changes, telemetry remains important to track this.

Billy Adams: Need to put research recommendations on the agenda. Perhaps to propose working with a hunter(s) in each region to help move this research forward.

Heidi Kritz: Are there resources for other information? E.g., ISN and Leo network will become more important. Need to be clear about data ownership etc.

Lori Quakenbush: Interested in working with those data collection tools. ADFG works pretty directly with hunters. Asks for information via calls, photos, etc. Returns the data to community. Rely upon co-management group to help guide.

b) Recent publication (on behalf of Karyn Rode of USGS)

Justin Olnes: Presented a paper on behalf of Karyn Rode.

Billy Adams: Brought up a concern regarding the dip in body condition during the period of the UME. Discussed the variability in blubber thickness.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Comment on the graph with year vs mean blubber thickness. Cold pool in N. Bering Sea went away. Bottom trawlers showed increase in Pacific cod and Pollack. Climate change → more predatory fish in the area. Perhaps this too had an effect due to ecological regime shift.

Raphaella Stimmelmayer: Large ecological statements – bring papers prior to publication. Tap into traditional and local knowledge.

Taqulik Hepa: More data is good. But it should be looked holistically. Variability is part of the system. Need to be careful on how the messaging is portrayed.

Billy Adams: Not recorded.

Justin Olnes: This project used data collected with help from Alaska Native hunters for decades. No long-term decline in health. Seals are now as healthy as they've ever been (if not healthier).

Billy Adams: Acknowledged that ADFG AMMP has been working with hunters for years and is hopeful that this information will be used appropriately.

Andy Von Duyke: Conveyed need to both understand IK and for communities to better understand science.

Billy Adams: ISC and leaders need to go back to the communities to translate terms.

2) NMFS.....Jon Kurland, Barbara Mahoney

Barbara Mahoney: Gave a NMFS presentation

Jon Kurland has been promoted to Regional Administrator. He can't make it today, but will be present "virtually" on Friday.

Final submission to bearded and ringed seal critical habitat by 29-April. May 2022 will be closing date for current UME.

Call 877-925-7773 (24/7) to reach the stranding network if you find a dead stranded animal. Alaska Sealife Center also available for strandings 888-774-2325. Barbara Mahoney's cell phone number is 907-331-8528.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Is a flyer going to be made for other regions to communicate about strandings? AVCP, Togiak, and Hooper Bay only heard through word of mouth. Would be good to streamline the process for the regions so they can ship samples out more efficiently. Also wants outreach to educate about what an actually stranded marine mammal is. For example, some pups are merely resting on the beach. Healthy seals should not be "rescued" unnecessarily. Too many instances of uninformed but well-meaning people are interfering with healthy animals that are exhibiting natural behavior.

Barbara Mahoney: This is being done. PSAs, and newspaper and poster publications. But needs to reach out further to AVCP etc. Not reaching everybody yet, but it’s improving. Smart phones are helping now because people can take a picture to seek guidance rather than simply “rescuing” the animal first. No more UME announcements because it will soon be closing. New announcements will have NOAA’s number, rather than calling to through Brandon, Gay, Raphaela.

Brandon Ahmasuk: What is the process? Local experts will assess first. But in other regions, the NOAA number will be included. Brandon was concerned that previous non-local control was unnecessarily pulling animals out of the wild.

3) Marine Mammal Laboratory.....Michael Cameron, Erin Moreland

a. Update on MML Research 2020-21  
Link to report on ISC website – no link yet

b. Update on upcoming MML Research in 2022  
Link to report on ISC website – no link yet

Brandon Ahmasuk: Concerned about placement of satellite tags on the head.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Asked about low survey years and whether these were low sea ice years.

Erin Moreland: 2013 was a smooth survey experience with good weather. She does not recall whether the ice was distinctly different. She’ll look it up.

Mike Cameron: Mentioned that satellite tag data can help to clarify this.

Billy Adams: Encouraged good communication between researchers and communities.

4) Long Marine Lab (UCSC).....Colleen Reichmuth

Colleen Reichmuth: Gave an update and presented recent publications.

Billy Adams: Discussed the extent of indigenous knowledge. Also talked of struggles of Native peoples to be listened to. Asking for equity in collaborative research. Co-production of knowledge is important and communities want this. This information goes to only a few people in the communities. Many don’t want to go to these meetings. Suggested that studies should be highlighted in the schools. This info can capture the students’ interest and help them to learn.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Disagrees that this information was great. Concern about misuse of information, particularly the commercial fishing industry. He is frustrated that subsistence users have to bear the costs of conservation. He’s concerned that industry will state that seals only require only what has been documented

in this research. Suggesting that captive conclusions differ from what is occurring in the wild. Other natural forces (e.g., predation, environmental variability) suggest that conclusions drawn from captive studies may not be easily comparable to wild seals.

Colleen Reichmuth: Acknowledged Brandon’s concerns. Went on to explain that the hard numbers are not the main point, and more the trends are important. Wants to work with ISC and subsistence communities to ensure that the right questions are addresses.

Madeline: Introduced herself and her work to the ISC.

Colleen Reichmuth: Reiterated that they would very much like to be in and work with the communities. Education in the communities is indeed very important.

### RECESS UNTIL FRIDAY MORNING 9AM

5) North Slope Borough.....Raphaela Stimmelmayer, Andy Von Duyke

Raphaela Stimmelmayer: Gave a presentation (virtually)

Percy Ballot: Confirmed the yellow blubber work presented by Raphaela. How old are the seals with liver issues associated with yellow blubber?

Raphaela Stimmelmayer: Do not know yet. Still collecting data. Jaws/teeth will help to age the animals. IK suggests that older female ugruk are more likely to have it. More samples and a more random sample will help (e.g., Utqiaġvik tends to take larger seals for umiaq skins).

Brandon Ahmasuk: In Kawerak region they tend to take the first ugruk that they see. They have seen yellow blubber in all age classes, body sizes, and both sexes. Seemed pretty random.

Raphaela Stimmelmayer: Good to hear this. Wants to get hunters’ opinions when they write up the data. Please sample these seals (e.g., younger seals, etc.).

Brandon Ahmasuk: All his life and his father’s life (who is 90 years old) can verify that in the Nome region yellow blubber is a common thing.

Raphaela Stimmelmayer: On the north slope, this seemed to be more of a recent phenomenon. Came up at workshops.

Billy Adams: Yellow blubber has been around for a long time. Perhaps this gets duplicated from time to time.

Percy Ballot: Good to hear and compare with what the hunters are seeing and hearing. Especially true for what’s going on in the Nome area. In Percy’s

area the yellow blubber seals are not often seen. Generally, seals are healthy. Wondering about the influence of the landscape/rivers etc.

Andy Von Duyke: Provided a brief update of ongoing work and collaborations.

6) Bearded Seals (NPR-A).....Michelle Fournet & Andy Von Duyke

Michelle Fournet: Gave a presentation

Billy Adam: Recalled that Togiak would like to have noise studies. ISC would like to focus on that region.

Michelle Fournet: Indicated that she and Heidi have been in contact already. She will work on finding funding to make this possible.

Heidi Kritz: BBNA has a high priority on acoustic work with bearded seals.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Bearded seals in the spring are very vocal. Understanding that mothers call (sing) to pups under the water. Very loud. Suggestion to potentially work in the Nome area.

Michelle Fournet: Is not aware of female calling. Requesting permission and/or feedback on how to work in the Nome area.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Singing call tends to be when mom and pup are together.

7) AAOKH Research Updates.....Donna Hauser and students

Donna Hauser and students: Gave the following presentations

- UPDATE - Assessing Coastal Haulouts
- UPDATE - Baseline Studies of Ringed Seal Habitat
- UPDATE - AAOKH Newsletter

Billy Adams: Provided a statement as an AAOKH participant and endorsed it.

Wybon Rivers: Asked about spotted seals.

Donna Hauser: Presented slides about the CMI project.

Wybon Rivers: Spotted seals in his areas. Offered to help deploy tags.

Taqulik Hepa: Food for thought...knowledge of science and local experts is the “same”. She has trust and faith in safety based on locally acquired knowledge. Knowledge holders should be well compensated. Science needs the help of Native people, but also Native people will benefit from what science has to tell us.



Percy Ballot: Very impressed and thankful for the report from the young people at AAOKH. Regarding future funding for AAOKH, willing to connect with AAOKH and get his regional young people involved. Thank you. Can Percy's region do something to help with funding? Keep Percy in the loop and he is willing to help.

Donna Hauser: Is grant writing and is looking for partners. AAOKH observers are compensated and this needs to be collaborative effort to be effective across regions.

## 9. Unfinished Business

- Winter feeding study – Brandon
- Elections of 2 officers
- Media policies
- Struggles with attendance and commitments of members (rules governing this in By-Laws)

Jennifer Hooper: Concurs with the need for reviewing attendance and, more so, reaffirmation of commitment from regional reps and hunter reps. How to do this may be through a review of the By-Laws. This should be an agenda item at the next meeting.

Billy Adams: Hunters and reps should be paid for service to the ISC. Need to get to what other ANOs have with respect to resources. Other ANOs have more to offer and our members, when given a choice, sometimes choose to focus on other ANOs. This is having a negative impact on the efficacy of the ISC as a co-management organization.

Percy Ballot: First meeting. Willing to work to make things right as best as possible.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Concurred that it's important to get members to the meeting. Yes, many people where many hats and it's getting tough to go to all events. Perhaps something like a youth hunter conference for seals, kinda like the Eskimo Walrus commission [YOUNG HUNTERS SUMMIT].

Andy Von Duyke: Was grateful for feedback and stated that this is helpful when putting together grants.

Percy Ballot: Provided positive feedback relating to Brandon's comments.

## 10. New Business

- A. ICC – CAO / Alaskan Inuit Food Sovereignty Initiative..... Vernae Angnaboogok  
Carolina Behe

Vernae Angnaboogok: Could not make it due to a medical emergency.

TABLED

Percy Ballott: Is on the ICC board. Strongly encouraged the ISC to read the ICC publication that came out after a 3-year effort. Provided a description of the organization, the process, and the intent. Plan has been finalized. Letting people know about it. Looking to put it into action.

- B. NSF Proposal – *Stress and resiliency of northern pinnipeds in a rapidly changing environment*..... Sylvia Brunner, Lara Horstmann  
Amy Hirons, and Greg O'Corry-Crowe

Billy Adams: Asked about the funding source.

Sylvia Brunner: It's under review with NSF. If funded, and if there's an interest in collaboration with the ISC, then their team would request supplemental funding from other sources.

Billy Adams: What will the information be used for and who will be using it?

Sylvia Brunner: Will provide info on stress levels. Can be used to look for correlations with what is happening now. If a group is resilient, how could this be incorporate to help other populations that are less resilient.

Amy Hirons: This could be used to make more immediate management recommendations/responses. Provides the information that can be used to better manage a population and/or ensure food safety. Longer term conclusions will help with mediating potential environmental / industry / development issues.

Billy Adams: IK has taught hunters for generations on what is safe to eat. Concern about how a study was used in that it created a negative message for Inuit almost circumpolar.

Amy Hirons: Reaching out to request direction from ISC and communities for guidance.

Billy Adams: Studies can be duplicated. Concern for the search for evidence that animals are in peril, then it becomes more stressful on the Inuit. Can you look at UME animals? UME animal analysis would be greatly helpful and of interest to Inuit. Polar bears and walrus from the UME time period would be super interesting.

Brandon Ahmasuk: Would like to see that the more detailed presentation.

Sylvia Brunner: Wants to make sure that this proposal is hitting topics that are useful to the ISC. Regarding the UME, their team does have some samples that will allow

for this type of analysis. Regarding the more recent UME, they have specimens too. Willing to meet again to help figure this out.

Andy Von Duyke: Mentioned that the next ISC virtual meeting this summer would be a good time to discuss further.

C. Marine Mammal Commission..... Vicki Cornish & Mellisa Maktuayaq Johnson

**TABLED**

D. Elections

Offices up for election in 2022

Current Officers		End of Term
Chair	Billy Adams	2022
Vice-Chair	Jennifer Hooper	2022
Sec./Treas.	Heidi Kritz	2023

Tabled Elections

Elected offices (2022-2024)

This were done at the Nov. meeting (we had a quorum)

Elected Officers		End of Term
Chair	Billy Adams	2024
Vice-Chair	Jennifer Hooper	2024
Sec./Treas.	Joe Mello Leavitt	2024

E. Next meeting dates

- 1) 2022 Meeting #2 (virtual) – before 30-Aug 2022
- 2) 2023 Annual Meeting – late-January strongly preferred \_\_\_\_\_

Andy Von Duyke: Will poll ISC members about next meeting dates.

Billy Adams: Advocated for in person meetings.

**11. Adjourn Meeting**

**Adjourned**

DAY 2 ATTENDEES

Taqulik Hepa  
Tyson Kade  
Margaret Rudolph  
Billy Adams  
Jared Nayakik  
Donna Hauser  
Mik (Donna’s student)  
Wybon Rivers  
Jon Kurland  
Colleen Reichmuth

Maddie Meranda  
Elisabeth Kruger  
Michael Cameron  
Erin Moreland  
Heidi Kritz  
Brandon Ahmasuk  
Michelle Fournet  
Danielle Dickson  
Barbara Mahoney  
Peter Boveng

Rick Raymond BOEM  
Craig Chythlook  
Justin Crawford  
Brower Frantz  
Nicole Kanayurak  
Jennifer Hooper  
Raphaella Stimmelmayer  
Cathy Coon – BOEM  
Josh London

ROLL CALL

Billy  
Jennifer Hooper  
Heidi  
Brandon Ahmasuk  
Percy Ballot