

Ice Seal Committee – Regional Report

Jennifer Hooper – AVCP

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Current AVCP Natural Resource Dept. 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.

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. 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.