

## Funding Update - Indigenous Knowledge habitat models of bearded seals (ugruk; *Erignathus barbatus*) in coastal Alaskan waters

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**Purpose:** This project will develop Indigenous Knowledge (IK) habitat models for bearded seals in partnership with Iñupiat hunters, to better include IK in the management and conservation of bearded seals, a listed species under the US Endangered Species Act, in Alaska.

This project is an expansion of the ringed seal project presented previous Ice Seal Committee meetings by Rowenna Gryba and was approved by the Ice Seal Committee Nov. 2023. The ringed seal project, supported by the Ice Seal Committee meeting, documented IK of ringed, bearded and spotted seals, and used the IK to create maps of ringed seal habitat use. This project would apply the same method but for bearded seals in the waters near Utqiagvik, Alaska.

All work would be done in partnership with IK holders from Utqiagvik that participated in the previous ringed seal project. The Ice Seal Committee will be provided with updates as the project progresses and results will be presented at meetings.

**Funder:** Lenfest Ocean Program

### **Project Timeline & Activities: March 2024 – March 2025**

April 2024 - Conversion of previously documented IK of bearded seals in the waters near Utqiagvik, Alaska. The conversion will result in maps for different habitat types (e.g., ice concentration, distance from shore)

June 2024 - Follow-up interviews with Indigenous Knowledge holders to review the mapped IK. Any edits and corrections will be applied.

September 2024 - Seasonal IK habitat models for bearded seals. Results will include maps of areas used by bearded seals.

November 2024 - Follow-up interviews to review the model results. Any edits and corrections will be applied.

January 2025 - Mapping of final results.

March 2025 - Writing of peer-review manuscript, with IK holders as co-authors.

March 2025 - Reporting and communications with Lenfest Ocean Program Staff.