

Ice Seal Committee – Regional Report

Robert Kirk – Maniilaq

March 2022

Report on activities:

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 has 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.

Kivalina:

Kotzebue:

“Hunters are 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)

“The seals in the fall used to have spots in the liver and the meat and fat were not as good as before, but last fall the seals were a lot better(fatter). Was able to harvest between 30 and 40 seals in the fall for dog mushers and some uugrukchaiq for elders.” (Dickie Moto Sr.)

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Deering:

“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 may, not certain though.” (Kevin Moto)

Buckland:

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.