

**Ice Seal Committee
Strategic Planning Meeting
November 2022 Summary Report
Submitted by Raven’s Group
and
Edited by Andy Von Duyke – ISC Executive Manager**

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Introduction

In September 2022, Raven’s Group was hired to facilitate the update and revision of the Ice Seal Committee’s (ISC) strategic plan. Raven’s Group met with the current Executive Manager to develop a set of activities to achieve the update of the ISC strategic plan and goals. Raven’s Group reviewed the current organizational documents, funding documents, and website in review and preparation of the strategic planning meeting and development of the strategic plan. During the course of the contract, Raven’s Group met regularly with the Executive Manager, interviewed available ISC members, and facilitated a two-day, in-person strategic planning meeting to address the ISC current mission, vision, purpose, and assisted in the conversational development of the ISC priority goals for the next 1-3 years. Additionally, Raven’s Group facilitated the discussion of bylaw legal amendments and addressed and provided space for comment and revisions on the ISC’s co-management document/agreement.

In addition to the development of a strategic plan with identified goals, outcomes, and proposed activities in the format of a strategic plan template, Raven’s Group also

identified other areas that the ISC might want to address in future conversations that will assist in further development of their organizational approach and mission.

At the meeting, the ISC members listed their hopes for the meeting and the near-future work for the ISC as:

- Explore and outline the definition of true co-management agreement/idea.
- Outline and describe how co-management is what we have done traditionally. Co-management is not commercial in nature and does not allow for overharvesting.
- The desire to collaboratively develop a statewide management plan for the future.
- Interest and motivation to acquire more equitable funding.
- Develop more pathways to communicate difficult issues to those in the community that might not have the technical background, but do have the Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge and lived experience and expertise.
- What and why there are differences in funding between different organizations and how can that be balanced.
- Find a way to fund people to come to the meetings.
- Identify areas for strengthening the organization and determine activities and strategies that ensure the organization is able to carry out the tasks outlined in the strategic plan.

Currently, the ISC is comprised of five regions and each region has two representatives, one regional representative and one hunter representative. The regions are (1) Bristol Bay Native Association, (2) the Association of Village Council Presidents, (3) Kawerak, Inc., (4) Maniilaq Association, and (5) the North Slope Borough.

In attendance at the meeting were (alphabetical):

Billy Adams	Regional Rep. – NSB – ISC Chair
Brandon Ahmasuk	Regional Rep. – Kawerak, Inc.
Jennifer Hooper	Regional Rep. – AVCP – Vice Chair
Tyson Kade	ISC Legal & Policy Consultant – Van Ness Feldman
Jared Nayakik	ISC Next-Gen Participant & Staff – NSB
January O'Connor	Raven's Group
Nate O'Connor	Raven's Group
Renee Roque	Regional Rep. – BBNA
Albert Simon	Hunter Rep. – AVCP
Ben Payenna	Hunter Rep. – Kawerak, Inc.
Andy Von Duyke	ISC Executive Manager – Biologist for NSB

Priorities that guided the development of the meeting were initially identified by the ISC Executive Manager and included the following:

- **Agility to use the information gathered in the strategic planning meeting to inform and write a funding proposal for 3 years instead of 1 year.**
In the past, the ISC funding has been behind due to the scheduling of the meetings and the lack of a current strategic plan.
- **Need to recruit a qualified person to fill a new position – Deputy Manager/Director (preferably Alaska Native).**
Currently, the ISC Executive Manager serves the ISC and keeps the organization current and helps with strategy. However, there is a need to build ISC capacity by filling this new position with a person who has the background and experience to inform the context and content of the ISC mission and vision. Alternatively, this person's knowledge and skills may be cultivated through exposure to and work within the ISC.
- **Eventually, there will be the need to develop a clear strategic plan.**
The goal of this planning is to direct the purpose and tasks of the ISC and also to clarify what the Executive Manager's priorities should be annually.
- **Discussions concerned the definition of co-management, if the ISC is implementing co-management at all or well.**
For example, there are issues with government consultation that need to be addressed.
- **Discussions concerned the identification of pathways and opportunities to grow as an organization in a meaningful manner and how to grow and cultivate future leaders.**
Both points are closely linked.

Other goals and objectives for the meeting were identified as follows:

- **Develop a strategic plan and vision of where the ISC wants to be in five years.**
Speak openly about what participants think is important.
- **Discuss Tribal Authorization of the ISC.**
Currently the Ice Seal Committee does not have tribal authorization. How will and should the ISC go about obtaining Tribal authorization?
- **Discuss the ISC Mission, Vision values, etc.**
Go through the foundational documents to make sure they are still valid and re-confirm them
- **Clarify what the representatives' jobs and tasks are as representatives and members of the ISC.**

- **Communication between the communities and federal agencies.**
 - If information is needed more often
 - How best to do that?
 - What methods work best?
 - How often should we be communicating?
 - What technology works best?
- **New proposal process from NMFS.**
 - Should ISC shift to a 3-year cycle of funding? Yes/No
 - Regardless of 1-3 years, what specifically should be included in this round of funding?
 - What are some funding strategies we can use to build capacity?
- **Development of a Deputy Manager Position.**
 - Discuss needs and what that person might do.
 - Discuss the difference between an Executive Director and Executive Manager.
- **Draft legal language to clarify role of ISC Executive Manager in the ISC By-Laws.**
- **Identify legal revisions that need to be added into the by laws and/or other ISC internal governance documents.**

Interview and Meeting Findings for Consideration

The ISC discussed most of the above listed topics. It was a free-flowing conversation that covered many points. The following priorities were identified and developed from those discussions:

Theme 1: Tribal Authorization

Currently, the ISC does not have formal Tribal Authorization. Without Tribal Authorization, the ISC can be countermanded by tribes or decisions might not be supported by tribes. Further, there are no obvious resolutions documented in Appendix A of the ISC Co-Management Agreementⁱ.

Each representative agreed to reach out to their host organizations to find what was originally signed and share that document with the ISC Executive Manager. The ISC Executive Manager will work with the previous versions and draft a potential document to serve as Tribal Authorization document for the tribes to review and sign and support.

An approved and signed Tribal Authorization document will provide guidance to the ISC from the tribes and provide more formal support from the tribes on what the ISC produces. Without that document, the ISC cannot legally take part in government consultation with the US government on behalf of the tribes.

Theme 2: Defining Co-Management

Throughout the interviews and the in-person meeting, the group mentioned the need to “*get on the same page*” about the definition of co-management. Specifically, the group identified the need to interweave or build cross-understandings about the definition of co-management from the perspectives of hunters and Alaska Native communities and other federal management agencies. One Ice Seal Committee member stated:

“Hunters in our communities will ask ‘what is co-management?’ We have our co-management plan which has been passed down for generations. If you ask a hunter what co-management is. What does it mean? It is a challenge to address it and describe to them what co-management is and means. I joined this committee through my interactions with Fish & Game, and their tech will contact me and they trained me to do satellite tags – I asked why would I want to do that, the biologist said to track them [seals]. Co-management is a scientific word to us hunters, community members don’t understand [western] co-management because it is shrouded in scientific jargon and perspective.”

In another activity at the strategic planning meeting, members were asked to partner and discuss and collaborate to develop an initial concept of co-management that would take into consideration hunters, community members, and Alaska Native management concepts. The activity was brief and delivered as a discussion starter, however, each group came up with very thoughtful ideas that captured several ideas that could potentially be explored in future work to define co-management. The five groups came up with the following initial thoughts and ideas regarding co-management:

Group 1:

Equal vote – equal say in the management of ice seals – at all levels and activities of management that currently occurⁱⁱ. Also, it means reaching out to Traditional Knowledge holders. Means to us – don’t understand the word of co-management [education or renaming of the word] education by the NMFS. NMFS needs to do more outreach OR equitable distribution of work and expectations. Without clear expectations and roles, the ability to enforce does not carry any weight when dealing with real life situations.

Group 2:

If this [co-management] happens, then this is successful: equal authority, acknowledges TEK/TK/IK/IQ and utilizes that knowledge, trust with shared goals [between NMFS and ISC], active participation during development of policies and documents, shared development of a potential disaster plan (if population

declines); respect, shared authority, cultural understanding [note: DEPENDING on what the purpose of co-management will be, the carrying out will look different]

Group 3:

Working together as equals across all aspects of co-management of ice seals. Using TK/TEK/IK/IQ in that management and APPLYING it. Equitable decision making in the process.

Group 4:

Includes equal decision-making powers between government and ANOs and working with each other to make the decisions AS the development of these decisions and policies HAPPENSⁱⁱⁱ. Equal access to information. (Other federal agencies have access to the information where we don't)

Group 5:

[A situation in which the] Federal agencies and ANO's are equal and no one entity has more power. Make decisions together and talk it out (consensus) – instead of developing the document and then passing it alongⁱⁱⁱ, it is important to develop the understanding and the document together!

The primary purpose of defining co-management is to build bridges between federal agencies undertaking management and the Tribal organizations also working to enact co-management of ice seals. With a more defined concept of co-management, it would ideally enhance the relationship between federal and tribal management agencies and organizations for the benefit and positive management and harvest of ice seals.

Theme 3: Create a Checklist of Consultation

The group also identified the creation of a “consultation” checklist – using academic articles and informed by stakeholders would be of great help to inform organizations and federal agencies about what true consultation looks like when done well. Currently, consultation does not occur with the community. True consultation needs to occur before or during the development of documents and policiesⁱⁱⁱ. This would mean that there is a greater need for more staff and capacity and/or at least a consistent person with an understanding of tribal consultation. To also carry out true consultation, local experts and hunters need to be compensated for their time and expertise and the funding categories need to be shifted to allow for that expense.

Theme 4: Research

During the two-day, in person meeting, the ISC identified research as a priority for future strategies and actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the mission. The following are the research areas listed by priority:

1. Identify critical areas for pupping, migration, and feeding.
2. Determine population abundances.
3. Examine the interactions between fisheries and ice seals.
4. Determine ice seal stocks in Alaska.
5. Determine stock movements (migration patterns).
6. Determine effects of man-made disturbance and noise.
7. Compile and incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge about ice seals into proposed and current research activities.
8. Create demographic models using the following information: population size, birth rate, gender composition, age composition, age at sexual maturity, and mortality.
9. Determine harmful contaminants.
10. Develop population models for each ice seal stock.
11. Monitor the prevalence of disease in the ice seal population.
12. In the absence of biological information on sustainable harvest levels, and to minimize the burden on subsistence users, the ISC recommends further research on biological indicators of future population declines.

The ISC members present at the meeting identified these areas and this priority ranking of the research with the explanation that the more informed that the ISC and those managing the ice seal populations are, the more able communities and organizations would be to respond to potential issues in the future. Currently, ice seal populations are stable. However, the group noted that it is important to not wait until there is an issue with the population before gathering information and data regarding ice seal populations. The above listed research areas were identified by the group to develop an informed picture of the ice seal population and environment.

Ice Seal Committee Strategic Plan

The ISC document review, member interviews, and strategic planning meeting discussions informed and led to the following draft mission, vision, values (TBD), principles (TBD) and strategic plan:

Mission, Vision, Values, and Principles

Vision: Alaska Native Peoples and their descendants continue their way of life through the harvesting, subsistence gathering, and traditional and cultural use of ice seals.

Mission of Ice Seal Committee: Protect our Alaska Native way of life through the preservation of marine resources of ice seals.

Purpose Statement: Promote the sustained health and management of Alaskan ice seals to protect traditional subsistence harvest of ice seals for perpetuity

Organizational Values:

Values and Values Statements: Confirm and wordsmith values listed below and/or add or subtract values. Write a sentence for each describing how this value guides your work and helps the organization achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

Value	Value Statement (<i>what does this value mean and/or look like?</i>)

Principles and Principle Statements: Confirm and wordsmith the principles listed below and/or add or subtract principles. Write a sentence for each describing how this principle guides your work and helps the organization achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

Principle	Principles Description (<i>What do we mean by this?</i>)

Strategic Plan Outline

Goal 1: Build Organizational Capacity	
Desired Outcome: Administrative capacity achieves Day to Day operations and carries out the strategic plan	
Strategies - an approach or focus that the organization to achieve its goal	Tactics - Specific, tangible actions and/or activities to help achieve the strategies
Build Administrative Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire other positions listed in the Grant Proposal <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create an Annual "Work Plan/Timeline" that outlines ICS' "Annual To Do's" 2. Hire coordinator to plan the ISC meetings and meeting structure 3. Find funds to increase the number of in-person meetings for ISC 4. Review Accounting options for non-profit ISC 5. Communications Plan/Strategy 6. Find a cloud storage system to store documents (Google is inexpensive and accessible, dropbox, sync, etc.) 7. Develop a map/visual of ISC partner organizations, and details about who hunts what and when and the numbers within communities
Build Board Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an "onboarding manual" <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a visual that outlines the annual activities b. Create an agenda template for the quarterly meetings that identify the topics addressed at each quarterly meeting 2. Create the opportunity for Quarterly Meetings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Send out a poll to all of the orgs b. Draft an agenda of topics/flow (Initial Proposed Idea: follow the outline of the management plan) 3. Identify and obtain training for Board Members (Robert's Rules of Order Etc., roles of the board, revise the bylaws etc.) 4. Update the Bylaws to further outline tasks and roles of each of the partners 5. Find the Initial Resolutions from the member organizations and potentially review, revise, and re-sign the agreements with the ISC organizations 6. Finalize a 5-year non-profit Strategic Action Plan

Goal 2: Strengthen relationships and communication with federal management agencies and Alaskan communities

Desired Outcome:

Increased equitable relationships and decision-making processes with federal management agencies and increase communication pathways between federal management agencies, ISC, and communities

Strategies - an approach or focus that the organization to achieve its goal	Tactics - Specific, tangible actions and/or activities to help achieve the strategies
Advancement of Co-management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the Management Plan, to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Community Stakeholder Feedback on the update - work with ISC to identify the appropriate pathways in which to complete this and ensure communities are able to provide meaningful feedback b. Write the history of the management plan 2. Update/Revise Action Plan 3. Update the grant submission to shift from 1 year to 3 year 4. Discuss/Consider Tribal Authorization and create a plan, approach, and/or statement regarding tribal authorization 5. Develop an approach to develop regional plans to proactively address the potential decline in ice seal populations
Communicate Issues and Priorities to NOAA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a "What Does True Consultation with Tribal Organizations and Entities Entail". This could potentially be a checklist, a pamphlet and could be carried out through research by a hired consultant and disseminated to partners - Governmental or other
Tribal Authorization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each regional rep will reach back out to the orgs and see what resolution was originally signed and share with Andy/Chair <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Take that resolution back to each of the orgs chair 2. Find any original documentation relating to Tribal Authorization of the ISC

Goal 3: Increase reach and impact of ISC with hunters and community-based research (programming & projects)	
Desired Outcome: Support initiatives within local communities and build the next generation of ice seal hunters who can take a leadership role in co-management	
Strategies - an approach or focus that the organization to achieve its goal	Tactics - Specific, tangible actions and/or activities to help achieve the strategies
Communication and Education of hunters and community at large	1. Trainings - For Community and Interested persons
Building Future Leaders	1. Creating Research Opportunities for New Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PhD Student b. Intern(s) 2. High School Programming
Research Project	1. Priority Research Projects 2. Communications Approach or Focused Projects 3. Definition of co-management 4. Draft/create a desired consultation process and/or a list of
Ice Seal related activities	★ Hunter Summit ★ Young Hunter Summit

ⁱ It is uncertain whether this is a clerical error...i.e., did the regions pass resolutions in support of the ISC and it is not well documented? Need to verify prior to seeking a resolution.

ⁱⁱ Comment from Andy Von Duyke: It would be a very useful and helpful effort to reach out to our Canadian counterparts regarding the role of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in wildlife management. The use of IK is constitutionally mandated in Canada as part of their land claims agreements. Canada is very far ahead of the US in this, and while a constitutional amendment in the US is highly unlikely, perhaps there are other actions (inspired by the Canadians) that can be emulated in the US.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is in contrast to a model where NMFS develops policy and requests that the ISC review it once it is 95% complete, rather than have the ISC be a part of the development process at the beginning. Granted that in its current state, the ISC may not have the capacity to do this, but if this is a priority, then the ISC can work toward this goal.