

Potential Project:

*Expansion of ringed seal Indigenous Knowledge habitat models project to bearded seals*

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

Potential Funder: Lenfest Ocean Program ([www.lenfestocean.org](http://www.lenfestocean.org))

Project Timeline (if awarded): **January 2024 – March 2025**

Goal:

In partnership with Alaska Native hunters, develop bearded seal habitat models based on Indigenous Knowledge (IK) to better include IK in the management and conservation of bearded seals in Alaska – a listed species under the US Endangered Species Act.

Background:

This project is an expansion of the Ringed Seal IK Project that was presented at the 2023 spring Ice Seal Committee by Rowenna Gryba. This project, which was supported by the Ice Seal Committee, documented IK of ringed seals (also bearded and spotted seals), and was used to create maps of ringed seal habitat use. This new project would apply the same methods, but for bearded seals near Utqiagvik, Alaska.

Personnel:

Rowenna Gryba (Inuit Circumpolar Council - Canada)

Andrew Von Duyke (North Slope Borough)

All work to be performed in partnership with IK holders from Utqiagvik.

Activities and Deliverables:

1. Conversion of IK that was previously documented for bearded seals near Utqiagvik, Alaska. Specifically, the IK will be converted using a method that will enable maps to be produced for different bearded seal habitat types (e.g., ice concentration, distance from shore).
2. Conduct follow-up interviews with Indigenous Knowledge holders in Utqiagvik to review the mapped IK. Any edits and corrections will be applied.
3. Produce seasonal IK-based habitat models for bearded seals. Results will include maps of areas used by bearded seals throughout the year.
4. Follow-up interviews to review model results. Any edits and corrections will be applied.
5. Mapping of final results.
6. Reporting, progress reports, and communications with Lenfest Ocean Program Staff.
7. Regular updates to the Ice Seal Committee.
8. Submit manuscript for publication in peer-reviewed journal with IK holders as co-authors.