



## ICE SEAL CO-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

### MINUTES

29 May 2019

9:00 am

Dimond Center Hotel – Anchorage

#### 1. Call to Order

9:00AM: The Ice Seal Co-management Committee meeting was called to order by Brandon Ahmasuk.

#### 2. Invocation

Sam Gusuk provided the invocation.

#### 3. Roll Call

Present, Ice Seal Committee

Executive Manager:	Andy Von Duyke
North Slope Borough:	Billy Adams, Ice Seal Committee Chairman
Maniilaq Association	Emerson Moto
Kawerak, Inc.	Brandon Ahmasuk
Association of Village Council Presidents:	Jennifer Hooper
Bristol Bay Native Association:	Helen Aderman

Present, National Marine Fisheries Service

Alaska Region:	Jon Kurland
Alaska Region:	Barbara Mahoney
Marine Mammal Lab	Peter Boveng

The Ice Seal Co-management Committee has a quorum.

#### 4. Introductions

Other participants

North Slope Borough: Taqulik Hepa, Carla Kayotuk, Doreen Leavitt, Dr. Raphaela Stimmelmayer  
Association of Village Council Presidents: Albert Simon  
Bristol Bay Native Association: Sam Gusuk  
Marine Mammal Lab: Michael Cameron  
National Marine Fisheries Service: Shawn Carey

**5. Dispense with “Robert Rules of Order” and proceed by consensus**

Robert Rules of Order were dispensed with by the Ice Seal Co-management Committee.

**6. Select a Chairman from National Marine Fisheries Service**

Jon Kurland was selected as Chairman of the Ice Seal Co-management Committee.

**7. Adopt the Ice Seal Co-management Committee Agenda**

The Ice Seal Co-management Committee agenda was adopted by consensus.

**8. Approve the May 22, 2018 Ice Seal Co-Management Committee meeting minutes**

The 22 May 2019 Ice Seal Co-management Committee meeting minutes were tabled for review until later in the day. Albert motioned to approve the 2018 meeting minutes. Barbara Mahoney seconded this motion. The Ice Seal Co-management Committee meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

**9. Ice Seal Committee Topics**

**a. Executive Manager (Andrew Von Duyke) position and status**

Former Ice Sea Committee (ISC) Executive Manager, Michael Pederson, retired. The Ice Seal Co-management Committee thanks Michael Pederson for his hard work and service with the Ice Seal Co-management Committee. The ISC is in a transitional period. Andy Von Duyke, Carla Kayotuk, Larinda Danner, and North Slope Borough (NSB) interns worked together to prepare for this meeting. Andy is the new Executive Manager and Karla is the Assistant Executive Manager.

What style of minutes does the Ice Seal Co-management Committee prefer? Do they only want the action items listed or a transcription of meeting discussions?

Peter Boveng reminded the Ice Seal Co-management Committee that whoever chairs the meeting will provide the minutes. NMFS is responsible for the Ice Seal Co-management Committee. Barbara, Andy, and Peter are taking meeting notes and will combine their notes to submit for review at the next Ice Seal Co-management Committee meeting.

**b. Current ISC operations**

Andy is the Executive Manager, and will be supported by Carla, Taqulik, and Larinda.

The Executive Manager requested input from the Ice Seal Co-management Committee so that he can complete their requests, along with the requests of the ice seal subsistence hunting communities. Andy requested that all Ice Seal Co-management Committee business be funneled through him, and he will allocate work to the team.

## **10. NMFS Topics**

### **a. Petition to delist the threatened ring seals**

Jon provided an update on the petition to delist the ringed seals. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, and NSB are the petitioners. This petition provided information in support of a request that NMFS review the status of ringed seals. Under section 4 of the ESA, NMFS must review the petition and determine within 90 days (to the extent practicable) whether the petition presents substantial information indicating that delisting may be warranted.

1. If the answer is yes, then the agency completes a status review, which is an in-depth analysis of the status of the species and threats to the species.
2. If the answer is no, then the review stops, but NMFS's determination could be challenged in court.

NMFS is reviewing the petition. If NMFS proceeds with a status review, then there will be an opportunity for public comments.

Helen Aderman reminded NMFS to consider the Bristol Bay region. Helen requested that scientist simplify the scientific terms that are discussed (ex., species and subspecies).

Sam mentioned that in the past, there were lots of herring, and bearded seals in the area. Herring was food for people and seals. ADFG allowed a commercial harvest and spawning herring are declining in Bristol Bay. Locals would harvest herring and herring roe around Togiak Bay, now Togiak villagers have to travel 40 miles to find spawning herring. How does the decline of herring biomass, with respect to herring management, relate to ringed seal status?

Peter acknowledged there is a change in the herring and seal populations in Bristol Bay, like the changes in other regions. The Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Marine Mammal Lab (MML) does not yet understand this relationship to say how changes in herring will affect seals, particularly ringed seals, with respect to this delisting petition.

Helen said that federal and state agencies do not acknowledge the traditional ways of managing the resources. Helen requested that government agencies work with local tribes to conserve their resources. She mentioned that some tribes voluntarily restrict marine mammal harvest for conservation purposes, while other governmental agencies (ex., ADFG and the herring fishery) manage for overharvest. This contradicts tribal conservation efforts and fails to acknowledge the tribal entity's efforts. Federal and state agencies need to establish conservation measures to protect low number species. Helen wants to ensure that NMFS consider the testimonies that were given by local communities. When the federal and state agencies make decisions, they need to work with the tribes.

Albert asked how or what makes the decisions to list ringed seals under the ESA, or not list ringed seals. What information goes into the listing decisions? What information can the hunters provide about listing ringed seals and other ice seals?

Jon responded that the petitioners reported “new” information and asserted that NMFS misinterpreted the information available, which would indicate that listing ringed seals was an error, and therefore, ringed seals should be de-listed.

NMFS has to determine if the body of the provided information is new substantially different from what the agency considered before. The standard for the listing review is whether the petition presents “substantial scientific or commercial information” in support of delisting, “such that a reasonable person conducting an impartial scientific review would conclude that the action proposed in the petition may be warranted.” If hunters and/or tribes wish to send information about the listed ice seals, NMFS will consider it, but there is no public comment phase for the initial petition evaluation process. NMFS did receive one unsolicited letter from the oil and gas industry.

Helen was assured that NMFS will include all comments submitted by hunters in their decision to list or not list under the ESA.

Brandon asked about the status of the ringed seal information (i.e., age of previous surveys) and their use during this review. Brandon wondered if more surveys were required. Jon reported that only the latest available information (‘in our files’) will be used during this review. NMFS will not conduct new science or surveys to update information for the petition.

Brandon asked about other data on ringed seals, like ancillary information (e.g., ecosystem type data). Jon said that the initial review of a petition is limited to information NMFS already has, and other relevant information (e.g., climate change projections, ecosystem type data, and public comments) will be collected and used if NMFS conducts a full status review. Brandon suggested that NMFS consider the interrelatedness with other portions of the ecosystem.

Albert asked about the future outlook for ice seals, given the current weather changes and loss of sea ice that are occurring. Jon agreed that we are now in uncharted territory with respect to science and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Five-year status reviews will help to assess population trends, but there is a great deal of uncertainty with the current conditions.

Taqulik mentioned that listing animals under the ESA changes how Native people access these species for subsistence. Hunters’ feedback is not consistent with predictions for listed animals (i.e., ice seals are healthy). With listing under the ESA, critical habitat designations and recovery plans will come, along with research priorities, reporting, etc. Outside interest groups will inject themselves into what should be a close relationship between hunters and regulatory agencies. The Recovery Plan team should be agency staff (ex., NMFS, etc.), hunters, and ISC Board. Remember that misinformation creates confusion and fear among subsistence communities. Some hunters are still not sure they can subsistence harvest listed marine mammals. Taqulik has a ‘cheat sheet’ with four main points to delist ESA species. Taqulik will provide the ISC a summary page for the rationale behind the petition to delist ringed seals.

Billy Adams reminded the ISC that many communities are served by the ISC and there is confusion within those communities about ESA listed marine mammals. Billy mentioned that all ISC board members should return to their communities with fact sheets about the ESA listing/delisting process. ISC is a small organization, but it represents a very large community of hunters. Everything is elevating quickly. There has been confusion with the ESA since the establishment of Alaska Native organizations. Explanations to community residents can be difficult to get people to understand. Billy would like a fact sheet so there is no confusion or mistakes about these ESA processes. Can NMFS and/or the ISC create these fact sheets?

Jon stated that the NMFS created an ice seal fact sheet of ‘frequently asked questions (FAQ)’ throughout the listing process, about 10 years ago. This FAQ sheet has been updated 2-3 times. Jon agreed to updating and circulating the NMFS FAQ sheets on ice seals.

Brandon mentioned the Nome radio (KNOM) call-in show are an effective method to get your message across. Brandon did a radio show in Nome, and Jon called in from Juneau. The board was all lit up with phone calls. The first caller asked, “Can we hunt?” Jon said, “Yes, there are no restrictions on ice seal hunting.” All the calls hung up, and the lights went out! All the callers received the answer to their most important question.

Peter requested that updated FAQ (information) sheets should be added to the annual Action Plans. Outreach efforts can be included in the Action Plan. For example, the Executive Manager (Andy) and NMFS representative (Barbara) should anticipate future questions, based on ISC and NMFS actions, which are relevant to subsistence needs. This review can be completed annually as part of the Action Plan, which will also include scientific research.

**b. Notice of Intent to sue NMFS for failure to designate critical habitat for bearded and ringed seals**

Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) gave a 60 day Notice of Intent to sue NMFS for not (yet) designating bearded and ringed seal critical habitats. When a species is listed, there is a requirement to designate critical habitat. NMFS placed the critical habitat designation on hold due to litigation over the ESA listings. Critical habitat designations are usually provided one year after listing under the ESA. Bearded and ringed seals critical habitats are not complete, and therefore, CBD is suing NMFS. NMFS will likely enter into a settlement process to define a timeline for critical habitat designation.

Brandon expressed hope to have tribe and regional input, which will be considered when NMFS designates critical habitat. The oceans are part of ice seal critical habitat, but seals can travel 70-80 miles upriver, and lagoons are also very important, especially for young pups. For example, riverine and estuarine lagoon systems are “critical” to ice seal survival.

Jon reminded the Ice Seal Co-management Committee that a proposed rule for ringed seal critical habitat was issued (December 2014). This process was stopped during the lawsuit that challenged the listings of bearded and ringed seals. When the critical habitat designation process starts again there will be opportunities for the ISC, hunting communities, and the public to provide information on what habitat is critical (and what is not critical) for ringed (and bearded)

seals. What is the best way to engage with hunting communities to collect this information? NMFS does not yet have a timeline for critical habitat designation and has not (yet) prepared a step by step approach.

Taqulik asked what critical habitat means at the community level, in terms of development (i.e., roads). What is the vision of critical habitat that will emerge from bearded and ringed seals? Some expansions opportunities (housing, roads) in Utqiagvik takes years because of eider critical habitat.

Jon replied that critical habitat is not a sanctuary and will not restrict subsistence hunting or other human activities. Critical habitat does trigger Section 7 consultation for projects require a federal action (such as a federal permit) that may affect critical habitat. Even without critical habitat, action agencies still have to consult with NMFS on effects to the listed the species. NMFS determines whether an action will destroy or adversely modify existing critical habitat, based on the value of that particular habitat to a listed species. For example, will construction affect key sea ice features that seals require? It is uncommon for an activity to have a major effect on an entire habitat as a whole. Taqulik asked for a pragmatic approach to critical habitat designation.

Albert stated that critical habitat, as a term, needs to be clearly defined for subsistence hunters. Scientific language about critical habitat is sometimes confusing to the hunters, and should be explained in plain language. What is critical habitat? Jon replied that a FAQ sheet would be helpful. Earlier suggestions to strengthen NMFS outreach products will be helpful.

Shawn Carey asked if Section 7 consultations result in projects being rejected. Jon stated that NMFS and the action agency or applicant go through a negotiation process and NMFS ensures that mitigation, if needed, is built into the design plans for that activity. The only time NMFS has found that critical habitat was likely to be adversely modified by a federal action in Alaska involved the effects of NMFS fishery management actions on Steller sea lion critical habitat.

**c. Update on MML coordination with Kawerak, Inc. on research activities and co-production of knowledge.**

Peter works for the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), which does research on fish, fisheries, and marine mammals to support management. MML is engaged in a process with Kawerak, Inc. for the past few years to find ways to improve local community engagement on scientific research. They are taking steps towards a co-production of knowledge, a topic for co-management since it started. NMFS scientists have worked with co-managers for 20 years, without communication/outreach specialists. They are working to improve local community involvement, to work together with NMFS. There have been some successes and some missteps.

There are changes at AFSC, with a greater emphasis on communications and outreach. Some successes in the past few years are due to a greater emphasis on communication and outreach from AFSC. Changes in personnel opened up opportunities for communications specialist and staff, learning to work with communities and individuals. In particular, this happened with the Kawerak region on fisheries research, and now working with the marine mammal division. Initially NMFS consulted with Kawerak region about their fisheries surveys, which did not go very well. There was suspicion and uncertainty on why the fishery scientists were surveying the

Bering Sea and Bering Strait regions. These poor results motivated NMFS to work more closely with Alaska Native partners on science communication.

1. New techniques are being used:
  - a. Engage the communities early in research ideas
  - b. Calls to tribal councils
  - c. NMFS participates in Kawerak Regional Conferences
    - i. Present information to the public
  - d. Face-to-face meetings with regional representatives
    - i. Ongoing with fisheries management and NPFMC meetings
  - e. Communications protocol for research activities
    - i. One page brochures/flyers on upcoming research on marine mammals
      1. Including the brief description of the project and area map
    - ii. MML envisions more detailed brochures/flyers for other research

Peter provided a template for how AFSC would like to communicate more complex research to Alaska communities. Although AFSC is currently working with Kawerak, this process is applicable to other regions.

Albert asked about the status of Steller sea lions. Peter said that the western Steller sea lion stock is still listed as endangered and the eastern Steller sea lion stock was de-listed (October 2013).

Sam asked which fish are being studied. Peter answered that fisheries surveys in northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait initiated this new push for improved science communication. NPFMC directly AFSC to complete fish surveys in this area, before they can consider opening this area for commercial fishing (open water, no ice). Studies on the fisheries resources inventory began NMFS' discussion with the Bering Strait communities. Sam wondered if herring research was being conducted given their relationship to Steller sea lions. Sam suggested studying the local Steller sea lions during the herring run.

Helen said that the yellowfin sole fishery has caused bearded seals to move north of Bristol Bay and changed the walrus spring migration. Walrus go all the way to Ugashik and Port Heiden the last few years. Helen wanted to know how to establish moratoriums on commercial ground-fish fisheries? This fishery has depleted the area of fish and impacted marine mammal movements. This would protect hunter access to bearded seals. Jon answered that the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) makes fisheries recommendations, which, when approved, are carried out by NMFS. Helen said the Qayassiq Walrus Commission went before the NPFMC, but they did not listen. The NPFMC said there was not enough baseline data to support the reported effects. Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Commission (BBMMC) is trying to conduct local GPS surveys and mapping of the traditional areas used by marine mammals.

Jon said that the NPFMC is the management board for fisheries. The NPFMC make recommendations and NMFS carries out those recommendations. The process is to take your concerns to the NPFMC, keep talking with the NPFMC. Persistence and coalitions can help.

10:45 – 11:00 am      BREAK

## **11. ISC Funding:**

### **a. NMFS Section 119 Grants:**

**Shawn Carey**

The ISC needs more funds than are available. The FY20 funding decisions came out last week.

For FY19, NMFS received seven Section 119 proposals (harbor seals are not represented by an Alaska Native organization) from primary Alaska Native organizations. Award letters were sent to the recipients. Every organization received some cuts. Shawn handed the ISC award to Andy.

The ISC Board should review the review panel comments on the ISC proposal. Shawn asked that the ISC distribute those comments.

Shawn supported much of what the ISC submitted in their FY19 proposal. Many things from the FY18 review panel were incorporated into the ISC new proposal, like ISC Board training and more autonomy for a website. The budget was very easy to follow. For example, Shawn supported the ISC Board receive professional training and contract for a separate (from the NSB) website. The total amount for the ISC FY19 funds was just under \$62K.

The only cuts to the ISC proposal was for participant support costs, which is not funded (supported) for any Alaska Native organization. This was a matter of consistency. However, ISC Board members who have an active role with the ISC and/or co-management can be funded (supported).

Taqulik asked about consistency between NMFS and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in supporting ISC Board members. Some ISC Board members attend meetings as volunteers, while other attend meetings as part of their paid jobs. USFWS compensates meeting participants with honorariums, through their grant to co-management partners. The Marine Mammal Council provides stipends. If participating in co-management is not part of your job, then hunters need to take annual leave.

Shawn said that Section 119 does not fund (stipend) the ISC Board members. This allows more money to be distributed among the Alaska Native organizations.

Taqulik said that participant costs are allowed, however, it's a NOAA policy to not fund participants. If NOAA wants good representatives on their co-management boards, then participants should be compensated. Knowledge is valuable, yet the hunters and ISC Board are not compensated for sharing their knowledge. This is similar to Robert Suydam providing information to the MMC. Honorariums for hunters is not a salary.

Shawn said that if everyone on these co-management boards received an honorarium, which would be a huge cost to the Section 119 program.

Taqulik wants to continue discussing ISC Board payments (stipends). Could this payment (stipend) be added to the ISC Board per diem payments?

Shawn mentioned that honoraria have not been paid to attend Alaska Native organization meetings with Section 119 funds. However, if ISC Board members or other people conduct ice



seal harvest surveys, ice seal captures, etc., then Section 119 funds, through the ISC, can pay for their time. NMFS co-management agreement with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission has delegates that do get compensated.

Brandon suggested ISC meetings should rotate in regional hubs to allow more hunter involvement. There are two Kawerak representatives on the ISC, which is good; however, if an ISC meeting was held in Nome, then a wider audience and set of participants, who can contribute knowledge, would attend. The ISC would receive more information, more input, from the host region.

Shawn said the ISC proposal had strong support from the Panel review. Shawn encourages the ISC maintain an open dialogue with its Board members. Shawn reminds the ISC to:

- i. Section 119 funds are limited. Remember to be clear in the proposal. Identify which priorities are highest, so that if/when NMFS has to reduce proposed budgets, the ISC higher priority projects will be funded.
- ii. Don't double dip, don't received multiple funding (i.e., NMFS and NPRB) for the same work.
- iii. NMFS funds are for Section 119 (co-management related) projects. The activities in your proposal must be relevant to co-management. Other activities, not co-management, would need funds from other sources.

**b. Current Application funding for 2019:**

**Andrew Von Duyke**

Details about the ISC Section 119 proposal, award process, and other aspects of NMFS funding that are related to the action plan.

The ISC received 88% of their requested budget for the following tasks:

- 1) One day ISC Co-management Committee meeting with NMFS
- 2) Two day ISC Board meeting
- 3) Once day workshops: 0.5 day for Board training and 0.5 day Board visionary training
- 4) Professional transcription services: to receive meeting minutes accurately and timely
- 5) Two teleconference meetings, in addition to the face-to-face annual meeting
- 6) Stand-alone ISC website (initial design, rollout plan, and one year maintenance) that will provide information to ice seal communities and hunters. Would like the ISC website to have information on ice seals, including: critical habitat, frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheets, listing petitions, etc. It is challenging to be locked into the NSB template.
- 7) Operational expenses: Executive Manager will work on ISC issues; Outreach Coordinator will be the webmaster for the ISC webpage; will arrange teleconference calls, travel, and workshops; Executive Assistant will help the Executive Manager.

Barbara said to have your funding requests connected to co-management for the Section 119 funds.

Shawn said the FY19 ISC budget was great, easy for reviewers to follow. The narrative and table were easy to read.

Taqulik wants to do more for ice seals as a committee. ISC should have their annual Action Plan, help prepare the budget for next year, and prioritize ice seal concerns year to year.

Shawn reminded the ISC that Section 119 funding is limited. The ISC proposal should prioritize their funding requests, so if there has to be cuts, it will not be to a high priority funding request.

Taqulik suggests the ISC look for other funding sources, as well as NMFS Section 119 funds, and submit proposals for funding.

Helen said that we all work for organizations we have to answer to. We try to collaborate on research and work with the ISC Board. BBMMC takes a multi-species approach for co-management.

Barbara said that the ISC Action Plan lists funded projects and describes how the award will fund the proposed tasks. The Action Plan is different from an aspirational/visionary plan, or research plan, which has not yet been funded. Future ISC Section 119 proposals should connect to the co-management issues for co-management funding.

**c. GAP Analysis:**

**phone call: Mike Miller, IPCoMM**

Jon said that Mike Miller with Indigenous People's Council for Marine Mammals (IPCoMM) is working to help Alaska Native organizations grow and be more effective. IPCoMM is working with the GAP analysis (the comparison of actual performance with potential or desired performance).

Mike said that IPCoMM has 17 members, from southeast Alaska to Utqiagvik. IPCoMM is trying to provide a service to all their members. IPCoMM received NMFS funds (and other funds?) to conduct a GAP analysis, which is to compare current funding to what is really needed for operations (the budget you receive vs the budget you need to perform your job). This analysis is to look at real numbers of what it costs for the ISC to be true partner with the agencies. This service is for an outside organization to facilitate the process and review budgets in detail for IPCoMM members. The co-management organizations will perform an analysis that looks at the organization's budgets: "wish list funding" for what you think you need, vs the funding you receive from the agencies. Gap Analysis is the gap between the fund you receive right now and the funds needed to complete your job. In other words, what are the real costs for working with agencies on an equal basis?

The Hope of Nations, Native Nations Institute, and Udall Foundation work with Alaska Native and American Indian groups to perform these budget analyses. Budget details are emphasized, with a goal for a fully funded organization that able to complete the work it should be doing. These budgets could include competitive salaries, health benefits, etc.

Reviews for some Alaska Native organizations with IPCoMM are currently under analysis and will be completed in June 2019. These Alaska Native organizations will hopefully put together a package (test cases) to show to congressional staff. The ISC will be in the second round of analysis.

Barbara asked about other sources of funding. Co-management funds through NMFS are stagnant, and therefore, additional funding sources can assist the ISC expand their efforts for ice seal conservation.

Mike Miller's plan with this training to for IPCoMM organizations to take their products and look at other funding sources, and not just agency (NMFS and USFWS) funding.

Corrections to the report:

- 1) Jennifer Hooper. There are two 'n' in her name and requests the pages be numbered.

1146PM: Lunch Break

1:00PM: Afternoon session starts

## **12. Draft Action Plan:**

**Andrew Von Duyke and Barbara Mahoney**

### **a. Review and work on the 2019-2020 Action Plan, which includes information and activities needed to promote the conservation of Alaska ice seal populations and co-management of subsistence uses of ice seals in Alaska.**

Barbara provided a synopsis of last year's Action Plan 2018 – 2019. The purpose of the Action Plan is identify the co-management actions that can be completed by the ISC and NMFS, using the received Section 119 funding.

Andy suggested the ISC copy the NSB Wildlife Observational Database as a tool on the "new" ISC website, with data fields, drop-down menus, etc. This Wildlife Observational Database can be completed online by hunters and ISC representations while talking on the phone, in person, or the provided data can be entered by ISC staff from emails, telephone calls, etc. Finally, this wildlife observational data request can be replicated in a questionnaire (hard copy/paper) format, and then entered into the database. At the beginning, the Wildlife Observational Database format requires guidance from researchers to allow the data to be collected in a manner that is most helpful and informative. Maybe his Wildlife Observational Database records could be a phone app someday.

Albert mentioned the ADFG harvest surveys that have been done for the past 6 – 7 years. Albert conducts the harvest surveys and asks older hunters about the local changes. These hunters observed a great deal of change during their lifetime. For example, in Hooper Bay, there was always shore-fast ice till June, now there is much less ice and it's usually gone by June. Albert advocates for more historical TEK documentation and recordings, to compare over time.

Peter mentioned that NMFS will work on the Wildlife Observational Database format. Peter suggested that prior to designing anything, NMFS should consult with ADFG to keep consistent and draw upon their expertise.

Helen suggested that the information format should recognize differences in regions. Regions have unique sets of conditions and they may not all fit with a single questionnaire.

Taqulik asked what are we trying to learn and what should be reported? How often will the data be summarized? How will the ISC make use of this information? Perhaps it would be prudent to hire a professional social scientist. The ISC should avoid collecting data that will not be useful.

Helen reminded scientists to ensure that format fits with the Native community members' ability to understand. Careful wording is important to ensure that community members are able to best communicate.

Peter thinks the Action Plan should describe realistic incremental steps that will move the ISC toward the large scale aspirational goals that live in the founding documents (e.g., co-management plan, harvest plan, etc.).

Sam commented about the immense work to monitor all the ice seal harvests. Regional hunters have their own methods and timing to hunt seals, which varies by region.

Barbara mentioned that in May 2019, NMFS declared an unusual mortality event for the threatened gray whales along the western Pacific Coast, from Mexico to Alaska. There were five stranded gray whales, 9 to 28 May in Alaska, and more stranded gray whales are expected.

Any joint radio shows should be scheduled in synch with the hunters' activities.

Next steps for the Action Plan is to have a small group (Andy, Barbara, Brandon, and Peter) edit the Action Plan. This should happen by mid-June. Once the Action Plan is ready to share, it can be sent by email to the ISC. The small group should integrate the ISC's suggested edits and revisions.

### **13. Closing Comments**

Barbara mentioned that Dr. Colleen Reichmuth (UC Santa Cruz) will attend the ISC Board meeting on Thursday. If the ISC Board agrees, Dr. Reichmuth can present information and results from her research on comparative cognition, bioacoustics, and behavioral ecology on ice seals.

Peter provided the AFSC's Draft Research Communication Protocols that has instructions to MML (themselves). AFSC is looking for feedback and ideas to help make information, via communication protocols, useful to the ISC and their communities.

Billy expressed gratitude for this process of both parties, ISC and NMFS, working together. Separate agendas lead to loss of trust and mixed feelings within the group, which takes a very long time to repair these relationships and come back together. This happens in other Alaska Native organizations. There can be times when members are involved in a wrong way. The ISC has an opportunity to ensure that we are working together in the right way ("hand in hand"). Successful organizations are those that work together. The ISC and NMFS can continue working towards better communications and meeting more often. Billy is personally thankful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of hunters and commends Brandon for his hard work in handling many animals. Quyanuk.

Brandon received the Department of Interior Regional Director Award with Gay Sheffield. Usually there is one person for each region, but Brandon and Gay work so closely together.

Brandon's comments: Brandon loves the land, the people, and the resources. Personally it is all very important to him.

Jon asked Andy and Barbara to schedule the teleconference calls. The ISC has two teleconference calls funded in the FY19 grant.

Jon said it is helpful to have successful co-management meetings to advance our co-management of ice seals. Jon is grateful and feeling positive about the current position with co-management.

Taqulik said it is nice to be able to participate in this co-management forum. The ISC is a good forum to work together and discuss our concerns.

#### **14. Date for Next Meeting**

Teleconference 1 of 2	September 1, 2019	?
Teleconference 2 of 2	January 6, 2020	?

Andy and Barbara talk regularly. Andy and Barbara arrange times for phone calls between face to face meetings.

6 May 2020 is the approximate time of the next face-to-face meeting.

The ISC and NMFS supports the Dimond Center for the ISC meetings.

#### **15. Adjournment**

Adjourned at 15:45

#### **16. Executive Session**

**ISC: Billy Adams, Helen Aderman, Brandon Ahmasuk, Jennifer Hopper, Emerson Moto**

**NMFS: Jon Kurland, Peter Boveng, Barbara Mahoney**

An executive session was not needed.

The ISC Annual Meeting will likely have an executive session to address compensation to hunters for returning satellite transmitters.