



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Region 7 - Alaska

1011 East Tudor Road

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

News

For Immediate Release

Contact: USFWS: Craig Perham (907)

786-3810

HELP MINIMIZE THE DISTURBANCE OF POLAR BEARS ALONG THE BARRIER ISLANDS OF THE BEAUFORT SEA COAST AND NEAR BARTER ISLAND

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requests your support and cooperation in minimizing disturbances to polar bears along the Beaufort Sea coast and at Bernard Spit, near the community of Kaktovik on Barter Island.

From late August to early October concentrations of bears occur along the Beaufort Sea coast, as well as on Bernard Spit and Barter Island to feed on the carcasses of subsistence-harvested whales. Bears can be found all along the Beaufort Sea coastline. Large numbers of polar bears congregate to rest on Cross Island (70° 29' 26.9982" N, 147° 56' 44.9982"W) and Bernard Spit, north of the Barter Island runway, where portions of Bernard Spit are located within the landing pattern flight path of the runway to Barter Island. These bears can be disturbed if standard flight elevations are not maintained when flying over Bernard Spit to land on Barter Island. Currently, (as of September 10, 2014, approximately 150 polar bears have been counted along the Beaufort Sea coastline, from Barrow to the Alaska-Canada border. Approximately 20-30 polar bears are using Bernard Spit [70° 08' 36" N, 143° 35' 55" W to 70° 08' 48" N, 143° 33' 52" W]).

DISTURBING POLAR BEARS IS AGAINST THE LAW. Operating an aircraft in a manner which results in disturbing, harassing, herding, hazing, or driving of polar bears is prohibited under provisions of the Marine Mammals Protection Act.

YOU CAN HELP MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO POLAR BEARS RESTING ALONG THE BEAUFORT SEA COAST.

Polar bears can be sensitive to changes in aircraft traffic patterns, especially along Bernard Spit near the community of Kaktovik on Barter Island. Low-level flying to observe the bears can disturb or harass resting animals. To minimize unnecessary disturbances to polar bears, please follow these general guidelines when operating aircraft over the Beaufort Sea coastline and near communities:

- 1. When landing at Barter Island, if conditions warrant flying over Bernard Spit, all aircraft should maintain the standard flight path over Bernard Spit to minimize disturbance to polar bears.*
- 2. When traversing the Beaufort Sea coast, fixed-wing aircraft should remain at altitudes greater than 2,000 feet above ground level (AGL) and maintain a lateral distance of 1/2 mile from polar bears along the coastline. Avoid circling over or turning near polar bears.*
- 3. Likewise, when traversing the Beaufort Sea coastline, helicopters should remain at altitudes greater than 2,000 feet AGL when traveling within one (1) nautical mile of Bernard Spit.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION.

To report incidences of harassment contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement: 1-800-858-7621

For questions contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management

Toll free: 1-800-362-5148; fax 786-3816