



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Region 7 - Alaska

1011 East Tudor Road

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

(907)786-3309 (TDD Available)

News

For Immediate Release

Contact: USFWS: Joel Garlich-Miller (907) 786-3820

Help Minimize the Disturbance of Walrus along the Chukchi Sea Coast

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requesting your support and cooperation in minimizing disturbances to walrus herds along the Chukchi Sea coast.

Walrus are known to congregate on isolated beaches and barrier islands along Alaska's Chukchi Sea coast in late summer when concentrations of sea-ice are low. Between late July and early October, large walrus herds, each including as many as several hundred animals, may be encountered at resting areas (haulouts) near Cape Lisburne (68° 52' 53" N, 160° 11' 39" W), Corwin Bluff (68° 52' 30" N, 165° 06' 02" W) and Icy Cape (70° 19' 45" N, 161° 52' 55" W).

WALRUSES ARE SENSITIVE TO HUMAN DISTURBANCES. Walrus will often flee haulouts in response to the sight, sound, or odor of humans or machines. Trampling deaths associated with disturbance events are among of the largest known causes of natural mortality among walrus. Frequent or prolonged disturbances may even result in long term haulout abandonment.

DISTURBING WALRUSES IS AGAINST THE LAW. Operating an aircraft in a manner which results in disturbing, harassing, herding, hazing, or driving of walrus is prohibited under provisions of the Marine Mammals Protection Act and Federal Airborne Hunting Act.

YOU CAN HELP MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO WALRUSES RESTING ALONG THE COAST.

To make sure that walrus are not disturbed, please follow these guidelines when walrus are present in the area

Fixed wing aircraft should remain at altitudes greater than 1,000 feet above ground level (AGL) while within 1/2 mile of walrus groups. Helicopters should remain at altitudes greater than 3,000 feet AGL when traveling within one (1) nautical mile of a haulout. If cloud conditions necessitate flying lower than these recommended altitudes, *please pass inland to avoid flushing walrus from the beach.*

Walrus are particularly sensitive to changes in engine noise and are more likely to stampede off beaches when planes turn or fly low overhead - *please avoid unnecessary circling or turning while in the area of a walrus haulout.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION.

To report incidences of harassment contact:

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

For questions contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Marine Mammals Management Field Office

1011 E. Tudor Road

Anchorage Alaska 99503-6199

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