

Northern  
Fur Seal  
Harvests  
St. George  
Island, AK

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Harvest report  
for the 2016  
Season  
07/18/2016-0  
8/08/2016

## 2016 Northern Fur Seal Subsistence Harvest

### **INTRODUCTION**

Laqox, northern fur seal (*callorhinus ursinus*) is an important customary traditional food for the Unangan of St. George Island, Alaska. Together, the Traditional Council of St. George along with the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service coordinated, monitored, and managed the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals to safeguard their existence. The 2016 subsistence fur seal harvest was conducted in accordance to 50 CFR §216 Subpart F on St. George Island.

### **METHODS**

The Island Sentinel of the St. George Traditional Council Kayumixtax Eco-Office monitored the 2016 subsistence fur seal harvest for the Aleut Community of St. George Island and in accordance with the Co-Management Agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Aleut Community of St. George. Within this context, management and activities were conducted under a cooperative agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service. During the 2016 subsistence fur seal harvest information was collected on:

- a) the number of sub-adult male fur seals harvested
- b) incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process
- c) the occurrence of older male seals judged to be 124.5 cm or more in length

- d) female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation
- e) the number of seal deaths due to overheating
- f) number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled
- g) evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts
- h) other types of fur seal mortality
- i) weather conditions at the time of the harvest
- j) any other unusual conditions related to the harvest
- k) Research conducted during the harvest, and visitors requesting to view or film the harvest

## RESULTS

The 2016 season opened with the first harvest taking place on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and ending the harvest season on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016. A total of 36 northern fur seals was harvested during the 2016 season. Six harvests were conducted in the month period, with five being at the East Rookery and one being at Zapadni Rookery.

### a.) The number of sub-adult male fur seals harvested

Table 1: Dates, locations, weather, harvest time and number of Sub-adult males harvested.

Date of Harvest	Rookery	Weather	Time of Harvest	# Of Seals Harvested
07/18/2016	East Rk	Wind: SW @ 9 Temp: 51	Start: 1:15 PM End: 1:30 PM	4
07/21/2016	East Rk	Wind: W @ 10 Temp: 53	Start: 9:20 AM End: 9:50 AM	6
07/29/2016	East Rk	Wind: SW @ 15 Temp: 52 (Rain)	Start: 9:15 AM End: 9:50 AM	5
08/03/2016	East Rk	Wind: NE @ 20 Temp: 51 (Rain)	Start: 09:50 AM End: 10:30 AM	5
08/04/2016	Zap Rk	Wind: NE @ 14 Temp: 50 (Light Rain)	Start: 10:00 AM End: 10:45 AM	7
08/08/2016	East Rk	Wind: SW @ 15 Temp: 50	Start: 9:50 AM End: 10:50 AM	9

**b.) Incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process**

No waste of edible portions of seals was observed during the harvest season. Harvesters did not collect pelts from the harvest for the creation of handicrafts. No other by-products were collected from the harvested seals.

**c.) The occurrence of older male seals judged to be 124.5 or more in length**

Older males are often rounded up during the harvest process and released during the drive to the killing field or released during the harvest. No seals judged to be longer than 124.5 cm in length were harvested in 2016.

**d.) Female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation**

No female fur seals were observed in the harvest round-ups or killed accidentally during the harvest.

**e.) The number of seal deaths due to overheating**

No seals died during the harvest due to overheating.

**f.) Number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled**

No entangled seals were observed in the harvest round-ups.

**g.) Evidence of contaminated seal pelts**

No evidence of oiled seal pelts or oiling of seals was observed during the harvest.

**h.) Other types of seal mortality**

No accidental or intentional mortality occurred during the harvest.

**i.) Weather conditions at the time of the harvest**

No unusual conditions were observed during the harvest.

**j.) Any other unusual conditions related to the harvest**

No unusual conditions were observed during the harvest.

**k.) Research conducted during the harvest, and visitors requesting to view or film the harvest**

Tagged animals were observed by harvesters, but due to limited staffing they were not captured to allow the tags to be recorded or individual tagged seals to be weighed. However, they were let out of the groups to ensure no harm was done to them. No tagged seals were harvested during the 2016 season.

The Island Sentinel sampled seals harvested for the Marine Mammal Laboratory (MML).

100 % of the upper canine of each harvested Sub-adult male was collected, bagged and tagged. The teeth are being processed by the Island Sentinel for aging by the MML. The subsistence harvest of

sub-adult males was lower than usual in 2016 due to unforeseen community events that delayed the start of the harvest and limited available volunteers to help with the round-ups.