

# Alaska Region Marine Mammal Stranding Network



## Spring 2017 Newsletter

### SAVE THE DATE:

We are working towards the development of a 3-day Oil Spill Drill/Regional Stranding Network meeting in Nome in February 2018. This will be dependent upon a lot of factors, including funding, but we want to get the idea on folks calendars asap.

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# Greetings from the Coordinator

by Mandy Migura, NMFS

*WELCOME* to another great edition of the AKR Marine Mammal Stranding Network Newsletter. Thanks to all those who contributed stories, data, and images. Our newsletter is really a team effort and a way to connect our network members with each other as well as our NMFS program. So thank you for all you do to keep our network running smoothly! Following, I've provided some tidbits, reminders, and guidelines. Don't forget to say hello to our new stranding program partners! We are excited to be growing our network in Alaska, and especially in trying to fill some big network member shoes lost in Kodiak last year. See page 14 for more details. And don't forget we have NEW and EXCITING Level A forms everyone should be using. See page 16 for more details.

## Good News May Lead to Confusion...

By now, we've all heard the good news – some distinct population segments of Steller sea lions and humpback whales in Alaska have recovered to the point they no longer require the protections of the ESA and have been removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Species. However, some populations of Steller sea lions and humpback whales in Alaska are still protected by the ESA, and MMPA Stranding Authorizations don't cover responses for ESA species. Given the animals don't always abide by our man-made lines, how do you know if you can respond to a stranding without case-by-case approval by NMFS (as is the case for ESA species responses)? We're going to try and make it easy on you.

For purposes of dead animal stranding responses (*NOTE – this pertains to SA holders only*):

- 1) We will assume all dead humpback whales in Alaska are from one of the recovered populations, so you may respond as you would to any non-ESA species. BUT – all humpback whale responses must be reported in the annual ESA permit report (filled out by CI letter holders and NMFS), so make sure you are fulfilling your Level A reporting requirements in a timely manner.
- 2) We will use a geographic boundary for Steller sea lions to delineate the ESA-listed western DPS from the non-ESA eastern DPS. Carcasses found east of 144° W longitude will be considered non-ESA and can be responded to as normal; carcasses west of this line will be considered ESA protected and need case-by-case authorization from NMFS. All Steller sea lions will be included in the annual ESA permit report, so make sure you are submitting Level As in a timely manner.

# Greetings from the Coordinator - continued.

## Inquiring Minds Want to Know...

Northern Edge 17 (NE17), the naval training exercise in the Gulf of Alaska, has come and gone this month. We asked our stranding network partners, especially from Kodiak to Yakutat, to be extra vigilant and report strandings asap. I am happy to share that we received no reports of strandings during the NE17 exercise in those areas.

## Speaking of Kodiak...and Cook Inlet

NMFS is working with contractor Jen Dushane Garner to start the process of developing Cook Inlet and Kodiak Marine Mammal Disaster Response Guidelines, akin to the Arctic Marine Mammal Disaster Response Guidelines that recently were available for public review and comment. Jen and Sadie Wright will soon be traveling to several locations along the Kenai Peninsula and to Kodiak to meet with local groups and gather information that will be used to develop these new regional guidelines.

## What Are...?



: This is a symbol to help easily recognize the end of a story or section.

Photo opp... : These are miscellaneous and interesting stranding photos received this year, but which do not necessarily accompany a specific story or topic in this newsletter.



## Photo opp...



On April 26, 2017, a passing US Forest Service field crew photographed this carcass, tentatively identified as a Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*), floating along the edge of Sumner Strait in Southeast AK. Beaked whale strandings are very rare in SEAK inside waters, with the last report of a Cuvier's from Elfin Cove in 1985. Unfortunately, attempts to relocate this carcass were not successful.

# Life-size Models Liven Up Stranding Response Training

by Heidi Pearson, UAS

Students in the University of Alaska Southeast Marine Mammalogy course participated in stranding response training using life-sized inflatable models. As part of an Alaska INBRE Curriculum Development Award, Professor Heidi Pearson purchased three custom-made marine mammals: an adult female harbor porpoise, a male harbor seal pup, and an adult female Steller sea lion. The models may be filled with air and/or water. The animals were created by Andy Peters of the Whale Workshop in the UK (<http://www.whaleworkshop.org/>).



For the Marine Mammalogy lab, the animals were “stranded” on the beach behind the UAS Anderson Building in Juneau. Students rotated through six stations where they responded to each species simulating a live and dead stranding situation. Students collected Level A and morphometric data. They also practiced providing supportive care for the harbor porpoise, establishing a perimeter around the Steller sea lion, and moving the harbor seal into a kennel for transport to a rehab facility. The lab was a hit and the favorite one of the semester!



The models are available for use by other stranding network members. Please contact Heidi for further information. [hcperson@alaska.edu](mailto:hcperson@alaska.edu), 907-796-6271.



# The PEG Board (Pinniped Entanglement Group)

## Northeast Pinniped Entanglement Workshop

By Lauri Jemison, ADF&G, and Kim Raum-Suryan, NOAA

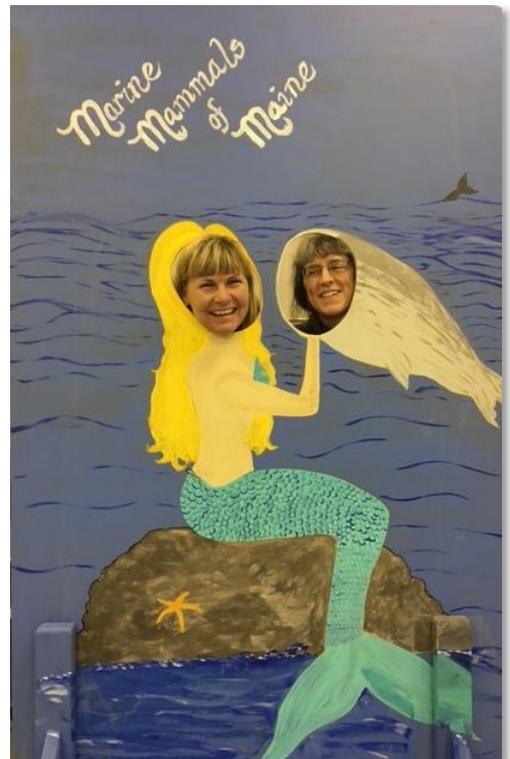
In New England waters, it appears that the number of harbor and gray seals becoming entangled is increasing, although actual estimates of the incidence or prevalence of entanglement are not easily obtainable. Pinniped rescue experts working in this region to document entanglements, understand the severity of the problem, and disentangle seals face a diverse array of challenges, some of which include: physical (shallow waters, strong ocean currents, unexploded ordinances), cultural (conflicts between sport and commercial fishing and the presence of seals), monetary (limited funding to address the problem), lack of baseline data (related to lack of funding for population surveys of both species), and multiple independent organizations conducting research (resulting in data collection that is not always easily comparable across groups).

On April 3-4, 2017, the Northeast Pinniped Entanglement Response Workshop was convened in Portland, Maine, bringing together pinniped rescue experts from the east and west coasts.

*Right:* Kim Raum-Suryan and Lauri Jemison represented the region at the workshop.

Workshop discussions included an overview of phocids entanglement issues in the Northeast, past and recent attempts to disentangle gray and harbor seals, overview of darting and disentangling sea lions in British Columbia and Alaska, and data collection and standardization. Ideas relating to capture and disentanglement approaches were discussed at length, including different methods used with phocids and otariids, and unique challenges posed by different species.

A lot of information was exchanged and useful discussions on various capture methods (what has worked, what hasn't, lessons learned) provided valuable information to workshop participants. Discussions on data collection and management were also helpful including what data might be most useful to collect, how to standardize data collection and organize data in a standardized database.

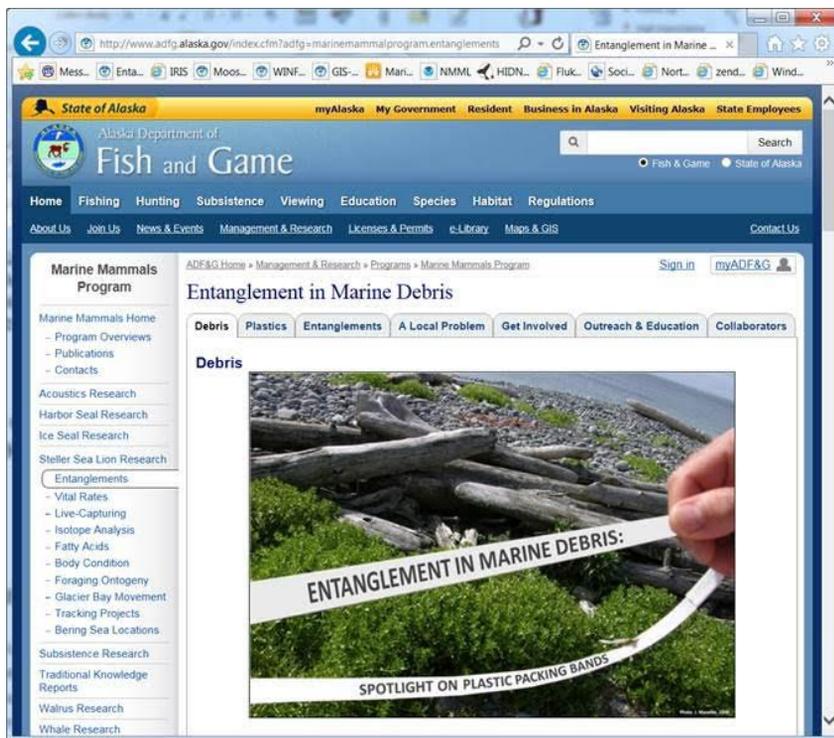


# The PEG Board– continued.

## Shameless Website Plug of the Month

By Justin Jenniges, ADF&G

Chances are that if you're reading the Alaska Region Marine Mammal Stranding Network Newsletter you are already well aware of the PEG. Hey- maybe you're even a member and in that case thanks for your continued support! But for those of you that aren't familiar, the Pinniped Entanglement Group (or PEG for short) was founded by Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) biologists to use animal rescue and public outreach/education to help reduce pinniped entanglements in marine debris and fishing gear. The PEG has since grown to include animal researchers, husbandry experts, and educators from 6 countries and is dedicated to bringing a permanent end to pinniped entanglements.



Left: The ADF&G Steller Sea Lion (SSL) Entanglements website recently received a facelift in hopes that it will better highlight the detrimental effects marine debris, especially plastic packing bands, have on SSL. (SPOILER ALERT #1: Loops of plastic harm marine mammals by causing painful injuries and gruesome wounds.)

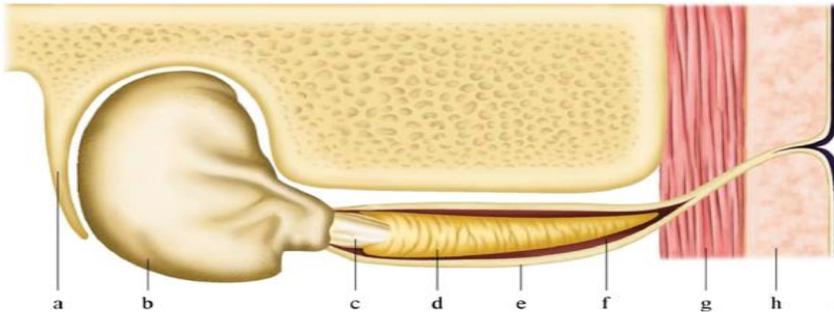
Stranding Network Newsletter readers are invited to visit our website for an update on Alaska's marine debris problem including where it's coming from and what PEG members are doing to help some of the entangled SSL we encounter. The website also includes some simple steps that YOU can do to help reduce entanglements. (SPOILER ALERT #2: Lose the Loop & Stash the Trash!!!)

# Cetacean Ear Plugs and Aging

By Kate Savage, NMFS

Cetacean ear plugs have been used to age animals since the early 1900's. The principal is similar to counting tree rings to determine the age of a tree, except the layers counted are different compositions of cerumen, the fats and keratin of earwax.

In cetaceans, the external ear canal, or auditory meatus, is not open to the environment. However, a remnant of this canal remains and it's within this remnant that oil is secreted and deposited in layers, or lamina. It's the regular basis of this deposition into growth layer groups, or GLGs, that allows for age estimation.



Above: Illustration of a blue whale earplug. (A) Schematic diagram showing the location of the earplug within the ear canal: (a) whale skull, (b) tympanic bulla, (c) pars flaccida/tympanic membrane ("glove finger"), (d) cerumen (earplug), (e) external auditory meatus, (f) auditory canal, (g) muscle tissue, (h) blubber tissue, and (i) epidermis (from Trumble et al. 2013).

The ear plug is the structure that collects in the external ear canal and is composed of a core and outer covering. The core contains dark layers, with lower fat content, and lighter layers, with higher fat content. As might be suspected, the dark layers are created during breeding at lower latitudes and the light layers created during feeding periods when at higher latitudes.

Counting GLGs in ear plugs does not work equally well for all species. Bowhead whales, for example, have unreadable laminae and other methods are used for aging. In minke whales, the ear plugs are soft with poorly formed growth layers.

*Right:* The ear plug looks like a piece of wood, but is delicate enough to require careful extraction and handling. In humpback whales it measures about 3.0 x 8.0 cm.



# Cetacean Ear Plugs and Aging - continued

While annual rates of GLG deposition were found in many baleen whale species, whale researchers, including Chris Gabriele from Glacier Bay National Park and Jan Straley from UAS Sitka, provided evidence that humpback whales accumulate one GLG annually when an ear plug was collected and analyzed from an animal with a long sighting history.

Below are short case histories and ear plug photos with descriptions (courtesy of C. Lockyer) of some recently stranded humpback whales in Southeast.

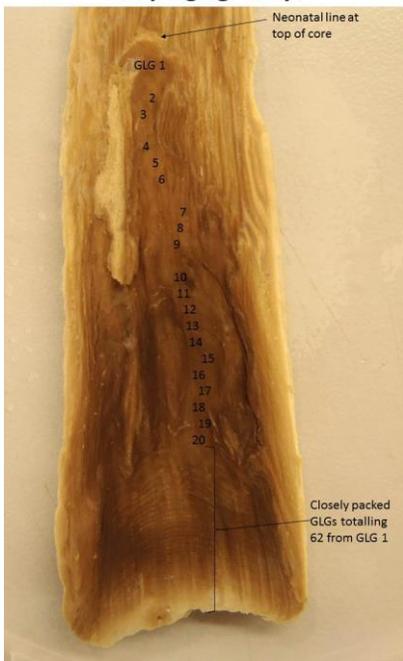


Above: "Festus", a 66 year old, male humpback whale with the longest recorded sighting history of any humpback in SEAK, found stranded near the mouth of Glacier Bay in 2016, emaciated, poor body condition, possible chronic illness.



Right: Aging clues in the ear plug of Festus.

M. Novaeangliae no 2016222  
ear plug age 62 yr



Left: Ear plug and aging clues from 2016222.



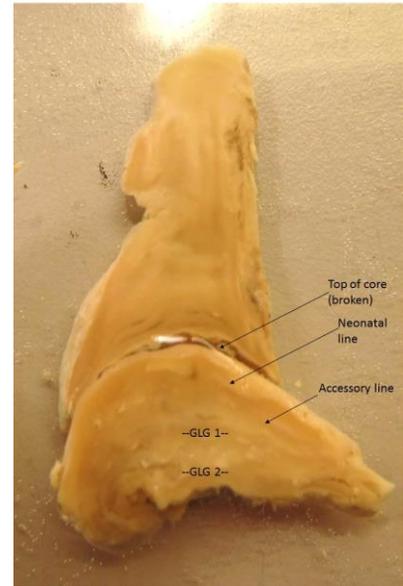
Above: NMFS# 2016222, Sitka, 62 years. COD likely vessel strike.

# Cetacean Ear Plugs and Aging - continued



Above: NMFS#2015303, Dutch Harbor, 2 years. COD likely drowning from chronic, debilitating entanglement.

M. *Novaeangliae* no 2015303  
– ear plug age 2 yr



Right: ear plug from 2015303.

Recently, blue whale ear plugs were used to describe lifetime patterns of mercury and exposure to organic pollutants as well as hormone levels. The ability to collect this chemical data from ear plugs is exciting, and may significantly improve and increase our level of understanding of both the biology and anthropogenic impacts of selected species.

Lastly, ear plug removal is part of a complete necropsy process and takes deliberate and educated effort. Contact either Kathy Burek or Kate Savage for instructions on the removal of ear plugs.

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Gabriele, C.M., C. Lockyer, J.M. Straley and C.M. Jurasz. 2009. Sighting history of a naturally marked humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) suggests ear plug growth layers groups are deposited annually. *Marine Mammal Science* 26(2):443-450.

Ichihara T. 1959. Formation mechanism of ear plug in baleen whales in relation to glove-finger. *Sci. Rep. Whales Res. Inst.* 14:107-135.

Maeda, H, T. Kawamoto and H. Kato. 2013. A study on the improvement of age estimation in common minke whales using the method of gelatinized extraction of earplug. NAMMCO Scientific Publications, Vol 10: 17 pp.

Trumble, S.J., E.M. Robinson, M. Berman-Kowalewski, C.W. Potter and S. Usenko. 2013. Blue whale earplug reveals lifetime contaminant exposure and hormone profiles. *PNAS* 110(42): 16922-16926.

# Addressing Large Whale Entanglements: Alaska and Hawaii Tie the Knot Again in 2017

By Aleria Jensen and Ed Lyman, NOAA

Summer 2017 again brings our Large Whale Entanglement Response Program the welcome opportunity for partnership between Alaska and Hawaii. As in years past, NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region is teaming up with NOAA's Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary to bring their Large Whale Entanglement Response Coordinator, Ed Lyman, to Alaska for two months to assist with capacity-building and response efforts throughout the state.

Ed will be working with the team here in Alaska from mid-June to the beginning of August to offer first-responder training, advanced refresher training, and assistance during real-time events, as well as outreach to the fishing community and the public at large. To take a strategic approach to inform the dates for Ed's time in Alaska, a decade of past entanglement reports were examined to find the historical spike/greatest incidence of confirmed large whale entanglement reports (see below).

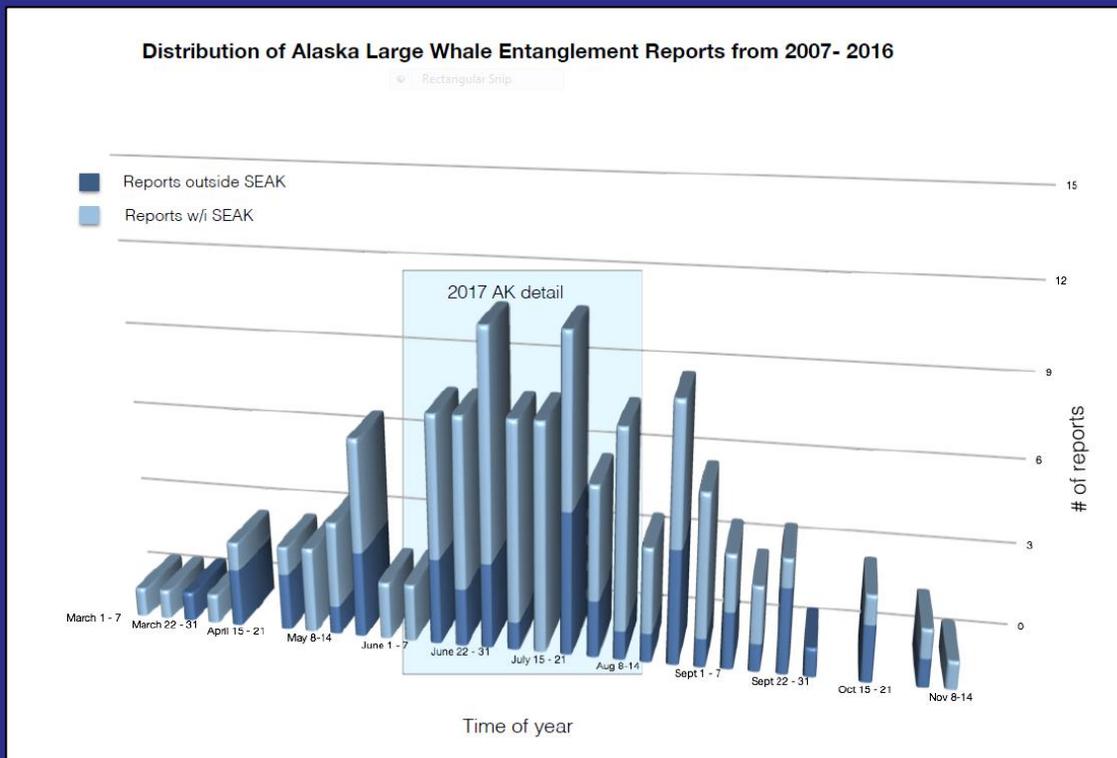


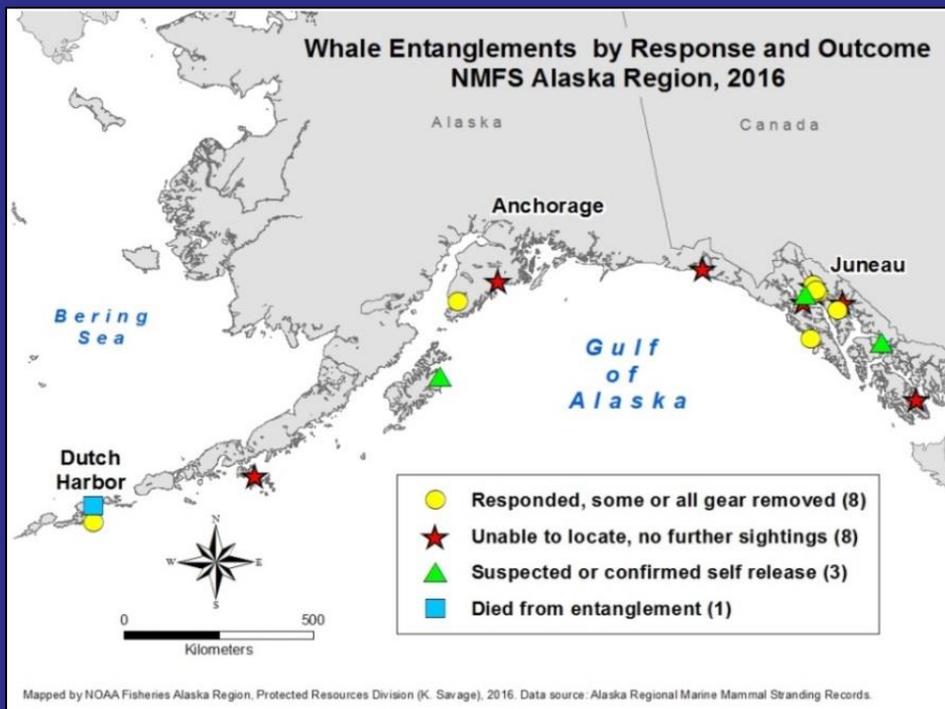
Chart: Ed Lyman, HIHWNMS

# Addressing Large Whale Entanglements – continued.

Trainings are planned in 2017 for Dutch Harbor/Unalaska, Homer, Kodiak, Juneau and Ketchikan, and will include U.S. Coast Guard District 17 personnel as well as NMFS Enforcement. Ed will also be on hand to lead on-water responses and further train network members during actual incidents.

To date in 2017, NMFS Alaska Region has received reports of three entangled whales, beginning in January with a log transfer facility anchor-cable humpback mouth entanglement case in Nutkwa Inlet, Prince of Wales Island. This whale is believed to have been released gear-free by responders on scene. Two subsequent entangled whales were reported in Hoonah (Jan.) and Homer (March), in each case trailing an unidentified buoy. No further sightings were received.

The map below indicates the locations of entangled whales reported in 2016, response efforts, and ultimate fate when known. In addition, the following chart gives a summary of confirmed entanglement reports by year received by NMFS Alaska Region over the last seventeen years.



Map: Kate Savage, NMFS

# Addressing Large Whale Entanglements – continued.

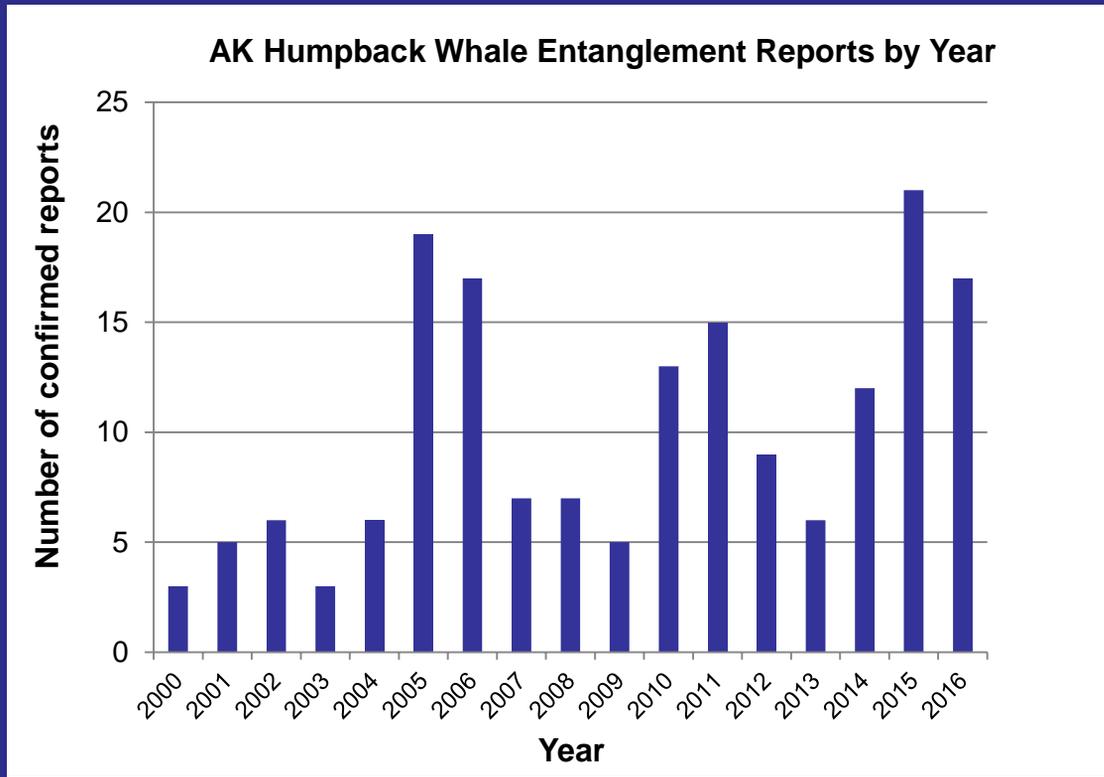


Chart: Kate Savage, NMFS

The response network in Hawaii also had a cable-entangled humpback whale this past season that ended up being a particularly challenging effort. The case occurred in March off the coast of Maui and involved moderate gauge (5/8") coaxial communications-type cable deeply embedded in the animal's mouth, trailing hundreds of feet behind. Since none of our existing knives would cut the cable, cable or bolt cutters were acquired to make two cuts on either side of the mouth. The authorized response team ultimately removed approximately 500 feet of cable from the whale, with about 60 feet remaining in the mouth that responders hope the animal will shed on its own given time.

# Addressing Large Whale Entanglements – continued.



Blough - NOAA HIHWNMS/ MMHSRP (Permit# 18786)

*Response team of Lyman et al. make the final cuts. Photo courtesy Ed Lyman, HIHWNMS.*



Blough - NOAA HIHWNMS/ MMHSRP (Permit# 18786)

*Cables successfully cut. Photo courtesy Ed Lyman, HIHWNMS.*

# Addressing Large Whale Entanglements – continued.



*Cable removed and recovered from animal. Photo courtesy Ed Lyman, HIHWNMS.*

Please welcome Ed back to Alaska and continue to communicate with our program if you have specific gear or training needs. As in the past, our objective with entanglement response is to reduce risk by freeing animals from life-threatening entanglements, while gaining information to reduce impacts/threats in the future. We continue to address this goal this by facilitating and relying on teams of well-trained, experienced, and well-equipped personnel.

Thank you for all you do to report, document and respond to these events as a network. It is an honor to work with you all!



## Photo opp...a sign of spring

Congratulations to Melissa Good! On March 5, she received the first report from a troubled observer about a sea lion holding a flipper in the air.

One of the most common reports we receive, most observers interpret the behavior as a sign of injury or entanglement. In truth, it's called "jugging" and considered a mechanism for temperature regulation.



*Above: Steller sea lion "jugging"*

# Alaska SeaLife Center – 2017 Stranding and Rehabilitation

## Homer Stranding Meeting

by Kathie Woodie, ASLC

The Alaska SeaLife Center hosted a meeting for our volunteers based in Homer on April 5th. Our spring meetings are a great opportunity to catch up after winter and get ready for summer. Additionally, we provide annual reminders on a number of topics to stay in compliance with NOAA guidelines as well as ASLC's insurance and human resource policies. Topics included zoonotic disease and personal protective equipment refreshers provided by the Alaska SeaLife Center's veterinary staff and information about how to log volunteer hours and use ASLC volunteer resources on the website.



*Above: Participants in the Homer Stranding meeting*

The organizers of the meeting were delighted to have NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Region Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator, Mandy Migura, virtually attend the meeting and have made future plans which would allow for more virtual attendants or even presenters! NMFS OLE officers from the Kenai Peninsula also attended for a meet-and-greet. Officer Kasey Mayhew spoke about public interactions and registration of animal parts by the public.

# Alaska SeaLife Center – continued.

USFW biologist Kristin Worman provided insight into the sea otter mortalities in the region and talked about the impact of these volunteers to collect such a great data set. The group was joined by Bryce Golden from the South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services for a presentation and discussion about Compassion Fatigue and coping mechanisms to improve mental health. At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Kathy Woodie of the ASLC was able to announce a planned Weekend Necropsy Workshop scheduled for Sunday May 21st at the Islands and Oceans facility in Homer which would focus on data and sample collection for stranded marine mammals by volunteers when approved. The workshop will feature speakers Dr. Kathy Burek Huntington, Alaska Veterinary Pathology Service; members of the Alaska SeaLife Center Vet Team; and USFWS biologist Kristin Worman.



## HAZWOPER TRAININGS/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

by Jamie Auletta, ASLC

As previously announced, in September 2016, ASLC was awarded a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to work with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) to create and sustain national network of animal care professionals to respond to oil spills and other disaster events across the country. Under the three-year grant, ASLC will work with the Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center (WHC) of the University Of California Davis School Of Veterinary Medicine, to develop and deliver training courses, a mutual aid framework, and searchable database to facilitate rapid identification and deployment of appropriately trained specialist from the AZA community.

The grant will focus on delivering both HAZWOPER 24-hr and HAZWOPER 8-hr Refresher trainings to members within the AZA community, extending to volunteers and members of the Alaska Stranding Network. The grant covers the cost of the course and materials for those who are able to participate, it does not cover any associated travel costs.

ASLC will be sending out HAZWOPER 8-hr refresher reminders as certifications come close to expiration. If you are in need of HAZWOPER 8-hr refresher training and would like to get ahead start please contact Jamie Auletta at [jamiea@alaskasealife.org](mailto:jamiea@alaskasealife.org). This will be at no cost to you.

We do not have an in-house HAZWOPER 24-hr training scheduled at this time but it is currently being discussed. If you are interested in or need HAZWOPER 24-hr training please contact Jamie and ASLC will alert you when more information becomes available.



# Petersburg Marine Mammal Center Report

By Kelly Bakos, PMMC

**Petersburg, Alaska** – The Petersburg Marine Mammal Center welcomed the approaching summer by conducting its first stranding and disentanglement meeting of the season on Saturday, April 15. The day served as an opportunity to de-winterize, inventory and test the equipment; introduce new volunteers to the program; and practice boat handling techniques.



*Left:* Sunny Rice practices throwing the grappling hook.

*Right:* Scott Roberge coaches new volunteer Kelly Bakos on hooking the line.



*Above:* Don Holmes at the helm of the *Tongass*

Don Holmes led the morning session, which included an overview of disentanglement equipment and uses, as well as a review of past stranding events and lessons learned. The afternoon session moved to the water where Scott Roberge volunteered the use of his charter boat, *Tongass Jem*, to tow an array of buoys simulating an entangled whale. Attendees practiced disentanglement techniques including safely approaching a marine mammal with the inflatable outboard and attaching buoys to entangled gear. It was an informative day and a great start to our season!

# Announcements, Updates and FYIs

## Welcome to New Stranding Network 109(h) Partners!



*Left:* Preston Kroes, Kodiak State Parks. Preston has been with Alaska State Parks for 14 years, stationed in Fairbanks, Chugach State Parks, Haines, and is currently the Park Ranger II/ District Manager in Kodiak. After high school, he worked in construction for 14 years, then acquired a Bachelor's degree prior to working five years as a seasonal National Park Ranger ending at Glacier Bay Nat. Park and Preserve to start his state career.

*Right:* Ben Shryock, Kodiak State Parks. Ben earned a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Sciences from Virginia Tech, and worked most of his summers in Alaska for USFWS, USFS, and other agencies. After graduating, he worked as an Alaska Wildlife Trooper Technician, assisting with marine patrols around the Kodiak Archipelago. Ben worked for two years as a Kodiak Police Officer before becoming a State Park Ranger earlier this year.



Also, a warm welcome to Kevin Murphy, Chief Ranger of Southeast Area State Parks, who will be helping out with strandings and large whale entanglements around Juneau.



### Photo opp...

Thanks to Susan Oehlers from Yakutat who sent photos of some "furry stuff" on worn whale vertebrae. The consensus was that stress testing would confirm whether the strands were cartilage or marine algae, and the material ended up tough enough to likely be the latter.



# Announcements, Updates and FYIs - continued

Photo opp...and a note of appreciation.



Two OLE officers from Kodiak and Kodiak veterinarian David Colwell flew with the USCG to respond, finding a decomposing gray whale instead being chomped on by three brown bears (above).

*Right:* USCG close-up of one of the bears with an ADF&G collar.



Also, a substantive aerial carcass survey along coastal Bering Strait was completed in 2016 through a collaborative effort between the USCG, Kawerak Sea Grant and the Eskimo Walrus Commission. Gay Sheffield has checked in with the USCG and it looks like the same may happen during the USCG's 2017 northern deployment operations. Contact Gay for a copy of the 2016 report.

**Thanks to Dr. Colwell, the USCG and NMFS OLE!**

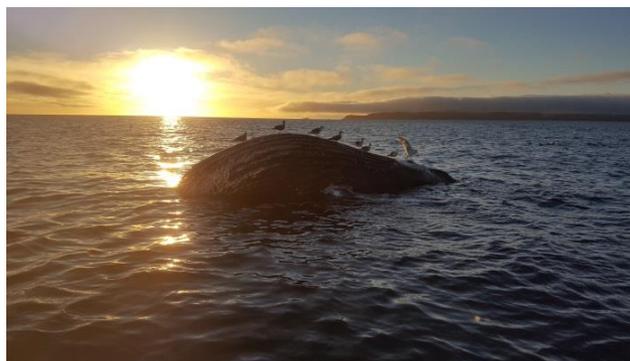


Photo opp...

First stranding report in 2017 was a floating young humpback whale photographed by a passing fishing boat.

2017 Stranding Snapshot thus far:  
29 strandings                    1 vessel strike  
3 large whale entanglements  
4 pinniped entanglements

# Announcements, Updates and FYIs - continued

## Welcome to the New Level A!

All of the AKR Stranding Network members should have received the new and improved 2017 Level A, along with associated documents (Human Interaction Form 2017, Examiners Guide 2017 and Rehabilitation Form 2017). A few notes – by no means comprehensive – below:

- It is recommended, but not required, that we start using the Human Interaction Form. The form is likely to become a requirement in 2018. Please read the “Findings of Human Interaction” on page 20 of the Examiners Guide.
- Please do read the 2017 Examiners Guide just to ensure full understanding of how each field needs to be properly filled.
- The “Examiner” is the Stranding Network member filling out the form.
- A description of “Confidence Codes” is on page 9 of the Guide.
- “Initial Observation” includes information on the initial sighting and “Level A Examination” is the more in-depth exam, which may be one and the same.
- Coordinates should be in decimal degrees.

• Please fill out as many fields as you are able, including the new “SAMPLES COLLECTED”, (see below) which now requests more specific information about samples. NB: the “Life History” box should be checked for the skin samples we collect in DMSO.

• If **non diagnostic** specimens were collected, which includes skin for genetics, bones for collection, blubber for contaminants, make sure you also check the appropriate boxes in the “PARTS TRACKING” section

### SAMPLES COLLECTED (Check one or more)

1. Histology  2. Other Diagnostics  3. Life History  
 4. Skeletal  5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### PARTS TRACKING (Check one or more)

1. Scientific Collection  2. Educational Collection  
 3. Other: \_\_\_\_\_



# Announcements, Updates and FYIs - continued

## Kudos to Kathy Burek

In case you haven't seen it, Outside Magazine recently published a story about one of our own Alaska Stranding Network members, Dr. Kathy Burek (aka, The Detective of Northern Oddities). This is a nice article about Kathy's work as a veterinary pathologist in Alaska, that also highlights some of the challenges the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program in Alaska has been facing in recent years. Kudos Kathy!

Find the article here:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2143191/detective-northern-oddities>

Also thanks to Kathy for upcoming necropsy training, scheduled for June 29 in St. Paul and, in conjunction with the ASLC, completed on May 20 in Homer.



## Photo opp and a reminder...

Not a stranding per se but a photo of a Steller sea lion that briefly visited Savoonga during late January.

Adult male Steller sea lions are known to use Bering Sea ice edge during winter months. However, in recent years, the ice edge has been as far north as Saint Lawrence Island in December and January due to unprecedented environmental conditions, resulting in this most unexpected visitor in late January.

The photo (credit: T. Akeya) was submitted by Gay Sheffield with a timely reminder:

*...to expect the unexpected!*

THANK YOU in advance for your hard work during the upcoming stranding season. Many calls come in to NMFS from all over the state, demonstrating a true team effort to respond to stranded animals in Alaska. Thank you for your help! A reminder to please submit any level As, photos, and necropsy reports within 30 days to: [Kate.Savage@noaa.gov](mailto:Kate.Savage@noaa.gov)  
Your reports allow us to track marine mammal health in Alaska and beyond. 21