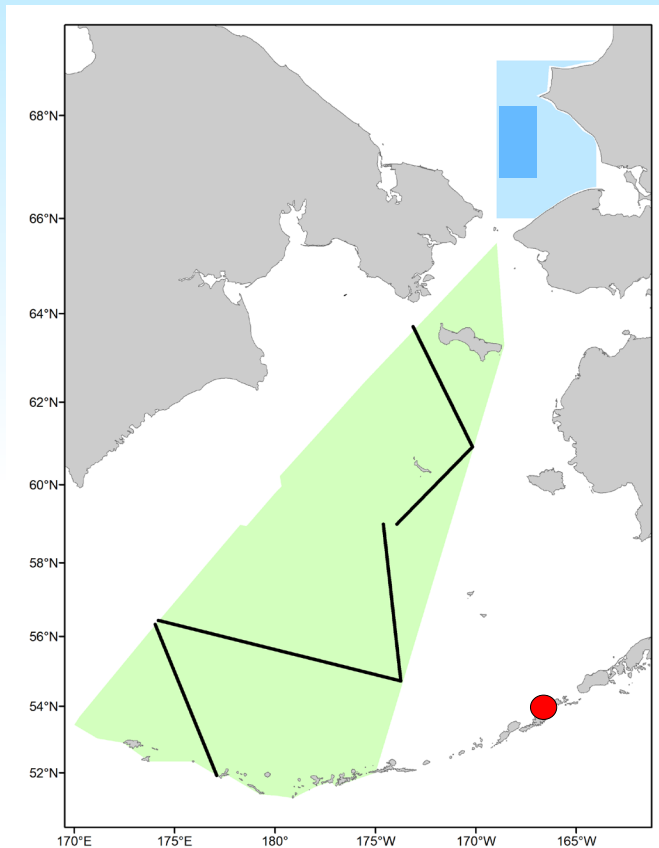




2025 Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research (POWER) survey

Aug 4-Sept 24, 2025



Map of study area; green and blue polygons indicate survey areas. Thick black lines represent planned track lines. Southern Chukchi Sea research efforts will be focused within dark blue box. The survey will begin and end in Dutch Harbor (red dot).

What are the target species?

The POWER survey will identify and count all cetacean species that we encounter during the survey. Photo-ID photographs and biopsy samples will be collected from gray, fin, humpback, and North Pacific right whales as time and weather allows.

Who is conducting the research?

The POWER cruise is sponsored by the International Whaling Commission. The survey will be conducted by scientists from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Marine Mammal Lab and colleagues from the Institute of Cetacean Research in Japan, aboard the R/V *Yūshin Maru 2*.

Where is the research being conducted?

The survey will begin and end in Dutch Harbor, AK. The primary operating area includes the southern Chukchi Sea (blue area) and the central Bering Sea (green area). The research vessel will not go north of 69° N.

Why are the data important? How will data be used?

The Alaskan Arctic is undergoing rapid environmental change with cascading effects on the entire ecosystem. To understand how this is impacting marine mammals, we need to collect data on marine mammal density, abundance, distribution, and stock structure of whales in this region. The data collected during these surveys and the resulting information help determine population trends and stock structure, and are used to inform stock assessment reports and management decisions. The data also help us better predict how climate change will continue to impact these species.

What are the research objectives?

The overall research objective is to conduct a visual line-transect survey for marine mammals to obtain information on the distribution and abundance of large whales. The specific objectives are:

- 1) Visually survey for marine mammals along pre-determined tracklines;
- 2) Collect photo-ID photographs from target species;
- 3) Collect biopsy samples from high priority species when possible;
- 4) Conduct real-time passive acoustic monitoring (i.e., listen for whales in real time) via sonobuoys, a free-floating hydrophone.



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Schedule for the 2025 POWER survey

Vessel departs Dutch Harbor	August 4
Transit north	August 4-7
Survey operations begin in northern stratum	August 8
Estimated date of completion of Chukchi Sea stratum	August 16
Estimated date vessel will be south of St. Lawrence	August 19
Vessel arrives in Dutch Harbor, end survey	September 24

What steps are you taking to prevent conflicts with subsistence hunting?

- The research vessel will be south of St. Lawrence well before any fall bowhead subsistence hunting occurs.
- The research tracklines are all a minimum 10 nautical miles from any whaling village.
- When transiting through Bering Strait, the vessel will remain offshore. Sightings and acoustics data will be collected in this area, and key species (North Pacific right, humpback, and gray whales) may be approached for photo-ID and biopsy if these activities can be completed successfully without approaching land within 3 nautical miles.
- Researchers will communicate daily via email with local coastal communities to identify where we plan to work and to avoid potential conflicts.
- Villagers can hail the vessel (*Yūshin Maru 2*) via VHF when in the area to voice concerns. Please ask for NOAA or Crance.

How do you plan to communicate research results?

Daily emails will be sent with a brief summary of the previous day's survey results. Given that the survey is an international collaboration, web stories will be published on both the NOAA Fisheries and the International Whaling Commission websites. A report of preliminary results will also be available after the survey end at the IWC website (iwc.int/power). With colleagues, results may be presented at conferences (e.g., Alaska Marine Science Symposium), local and regional seminars (e.g., Strait Science), and research meetings.

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