

Subsistence
Harvest of
Northern Fur
Seal Pups
St. George
Island, AK

2023

Saint George, Alaska



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Traditional Council of St. George Island

Harvest report for the 2023 Season
September 16 to
November 30, 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

Laqudaadax, or the northern fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) pup, is not just an important customary traditional food for the Unangan of St. George Island, Alaska, it is a necessity for an island where grocery shipments are few and prices high. In 2023, the Traditional Council of St. George (TCSTG) coordinated, monitored, and managed the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals to safeguard their existence under a Co-Management Agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under section 119 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The 2023 laqudaadax harvest was conducted in accordance to 50 CFR §216.72 (d) on St. George Island.

II. CRITERIA FOR HARVEST MONITORING AND OBSERVER REPORTING

During the 2023 subsistence fur seal harvest, the below data for items a-i were specified for *observed* harvests. Items a-e are presented in Table 1 below. Items f-i, along with additional data added to those specified in the NMFS template, are included in the Exhibits at the end of this report.

- a. Date
- b. Location
- c. Weather conditions
- d. Disturbance Start and end times
- e. Number of young seals taken
- f. Number of seals released after determination of sex-
- g. Number of non-young of the year seals in round up
- h. Recommendations for improvements to the conduct of the harvest

The below additional criteria, for items j-p, were specified and a NMFS reporting template was provided. These items are additional addressed narratively directly below.

- i. Incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process
- j. Female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation
- k. Number of seal deaths due to overheating
- l. Number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled
- m. Evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts
- n. Other types of fur seal mortality
- o. Attempted harvest and/or other unusual conditions related to the harvest
- p. Research conducted during the harvest

III. NARRATIVE OF RESULTS

A. Training/Planning/Regulatory: Harvest monitoring was conducted by Island Sentinels employed by TCSGI, with regular in-season reporting to NMFS.

50 CFR 216.72 (d)(7) requires; “No more than 50 male young of the year may be harvested from each of the following regions where fur seals congregate: East region includes the breeding areas known as East Reef and East Cliffs rookeries and the associated non-breeding hauling grounds; South region includes the

breeding areas known as Zapadni and South rookeries and the associated non-breeding hauling grounds; and North region includes the breeding areas known as North and Staraya Artil rookeries and associated non-breeding hauling grounds. Table 1 shows no more than 50 male young of the year were harvested from any region in 2023. No area was harvested more than twice in a seven-day period. NMFS has determined that Staraya Artil Rookery meets the criteria from paragraph (d)(10) of this section.” Table 1 shows no harvests conducted at Staraya Artil Rookery.

50 CFR 216.72 (d)(8) requires; “the scheduling of the young of the year harvest is at the discretion of the Pribilovians, but must be such as to minimize stress to the harvested and un-harvested fur seals and minimize the take of female fur seals. The Pribilovians must give adequate advance notice of their harvest schedules to the NMFS representatives to allow for necessary monitoring activities. No fur seal may be taken except by sealers using the harvesting methods implemented to reduce disturbance, injury, and accidental mortality of female fur seals. Pribilovians may use, but are not limited to, organized drives of young of the year fur seals from congregating areas to inland killing fields. Methods of harvest must include identification of male young of the year, followed by stunning and immediate exsanguination, unless the NMFS representatives, in consultation with the Pribilovians conducting the harvest, determine that alternative methods will not result in increased stress to harvested and un-harvested fur seals, increased disturbance or injury to resting fur seals, or the accidental mortality of female seals.” All requirements of this section were followed. Fur seal pups were sexed prior to harvesting and no females were taken.

This joint harvest report represents compliance with 50 CFR 216.72 (d)(11), in that it provides subsistence information, reviewed and revised by NMFS, and discusses efforts to meet the subsistence need of the community and measures to reduce negative effects from subsistence use on fur seals.

B. Harvest Monitoring: Harvests season was open from September 16 to November 30, 2023 with the first harvest taking place on September 26th, 2023 and the final harvest on October 28, 2023. A total of 6 male young of the year northern fur seals were harvested during the 2023 season. A total of 3 harvests were conducted in the two-and-a-half-month period; Table 1 below provides a summary of the harvests including items a-e above.

C. Sampling: None.

D. Reporting: Table 1: Specified Data for Harvests-.

Seal Harvest Data

a. Date	b. Location	c. Weather Conditions	d. Start & End Times	e. No. of Male Seals Taken	f. No. of Female Seals released after sexed	g. estimate of young in round up
09/26/23	North Dock	Temp: 48° Sunny. Calm	Start: 1 PM End: 1:15 PM	3	8	15
10/04/23	North Dock	Temp: 43° Rain, SE@15	Start: 6 PM End: 6:08 PM	1	3	7
10/28/23	North Dock	Temp: 47° Rain, SW@10	Start: 12 PM End: 12:07 PM	2	3	10

Table 1. Shows the young of the year seal harvest dates along with data collected on Saint George Island.

h. Recommendations for improvements to the conduct of the harvest:

Observation: None

(1)

(2) Recommendation: None

i. Incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process: None

j. Female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation: None

k. Number of seal deaths due to overheating: None

l. Number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled: None

m. Evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts: None

n. Other types of fur seal mortality: None

o. Attempted harvest and/or other unusual conditions related to the harvest: The pup harvests went well overall. The weather played a role as usual. There were only a couple or few days where we weren't able to harvest due to weather. The weather would blow for days and then calm; some sights were mixed populations as a result. As a result of the weather direction, it created sheltered areas where seals congregated with a mix of adults and pups.

p. Research and training conducted during the harvest: No research occurred during 2023 harvests, but the harvests that did occur were a great success. Young people attended nearly every harvest which exposes them to the fieldwork. This is perfect for future possible job training and cultural education for the younger group. In the past and today, the youth have always been involved with fur seal work. This has cultural and economic significance.