



**Bristol Bay Native Association**  
**Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council**  
*“Let It Be”*  
**Marine Mammal Fact Sheet**  
*“Imarpiim Ungungsiita Nallunailkutait”*



**BBMMC**

In 1995 the 31-member tribes of the Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) formed the Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council (BBMMC). The membership of BBMMC consists of a representative selected by each Tribal/Village Council. A 7-member Executive Council conducts the business for the BBMMC members. The Council consists of one member from each of the 5 sub-regions of Bristol Bay and two at-large members, all of which are selected by a vote of villages within each sub-region.

**BBMMC and Marine Mammals**

The purpose of the BBMMC is to promote the conservation of marine mammal populations in the Bristol Bay marine ecosystem for subsistence use by tribal members. The Bristol Bay marine ecosystem represents an area of rich and varied biodiversity. To properly address current and future marine mammal issues in the Bristol Bay area, the BBMMC provides council members with a forum to express their needs and draw attention to their specific concerns.

**Who May Hunt Marine Mammals?**

Only Alaska Natives may hunt walrus, seals, whales, sea otters, and other marine mammals along coastal waters as long as there is no wanton waste. This means, elders and experienced marine mammal hunters may take only what is needed and not be wasteful. Traditional ways of taking care of an animal harvested includes: butcher the animal properly, throw away or dispose of unedible animal parts in a proper and clean manner. Leave the area clean where the animal was caught; this shows respect to our Creator who provides for our needs, as well as respect for the land and the sea. Adhere to your local Alaskan traditional advice of hunting animals, proper butchering techniques, the proper way of disposing non-edible animal parts and related advice from elders and experienced hunters in your community.

**Marine Mammal Protection Act**

In 1972 Congress passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to create a moratorium on the taking of marine mammals by U.S. citizens within the United States and its jurisdiction. Included in the MMPA is a Native exemption in Section 101(b) that provides for Alaska Native take of marine mammals for subsistence purposes, including the creation of authentic handicrafts. Alaska Natives can harvest marine mammals so long as the take is in a non-wasteful manner. This provision has not changed since 1972.

**The Endangered Species Act**

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed by Congress in 1973. This provides for the conservation of endangered and threatened species of fish, wildlife, and plants, and for other purposes. Alaska Natives can continue their traditional subsistence harvesting activities of marine mammals, because the ESA contains an exemption to continue our traditional marine mammal hunting activities.

**Can We Hunt Marine Mammals Even If They Are Listed as Endangered, or Threatened?**

Alaska Natives can hunt marine mammals in coastal areas even if the U.S. Federal Government agencies have listed the subsistence harvested animals including walrus, seals, ice seals (ringed seal, bearded seal, spotted seal, and ribbon seal). The only regulated annual Alaska Native Fall walrus hunt is at Round Island, which is co-managed by the Qayassiq Walrus Commission, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

**Important Terms: Stranded Marine Mammal-**

This means, for example, a seal, walrus, beluga whale beached or stuck. For example, if the tide is out and muddy, the animal cannot get back to the water until high tide. If a stranded animal appears to be disoriented, sluggish, please call your local tribal council or the Bristol Bay Native Association Marine Mammal Program: 1-800-478-5257, extension 340 or locally at 842-5257, extension 340.

**BBMMC Process- Contact Local Traditional or Village Council Before Doing Anything!**

If you see any baby seals, walrus, whales, sea otters, and other marine mammals that may be sick, or stranded, please contact the local village community you observed the animal. Also can contact the Bristol Bay Native Association Marine Mammal Program at: 1-800-478-5257, ext. 340, or locally at 842-5257, ext. 340. We also work closely with local Dillingham state and federal agencies: Alaska Department of Fish & Game Subsistence Division at (907)-842-5925 or the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge at 842-1063. The appropriate protocol for the Bristol Bay Native Association Marine Mammal Program is to work directly with local Bristol Bay tribal communities, and only if they direct BBNA Marine Mammal Program staff to have appropriate organization's to take a sick or orphaned animal out of town, then we work with agencies. For further information, you can see the Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) website: [www.bbna.com](http://www.bbna.com) for the 31-federally recognized tribal council's serviced by BBNA.

**BBMMC –Local Traditional Knowledge on Orphaned, Sick or Stranded Marine Mammals**

The BBMMC Council, the Bristol Bay and the Alaska Peninsula Alaska Native tribal communities traditionally harvest marine mammals along coastal Alaskan communities mainly in early Spring, and Fall. Ice seals are harvested in the winter. When a hunter observes a baby seal, walrus, whale or other marine mammal swimming or hauling along the beach shoreline, the traditional Alaska Native advice is to leave the baby animal alone. The baby animal is not orphaned, instead the mother is feeding nearby. The mother animal feeds for several hours, for two days or more at sea. After the mother marine mammal feeds out at sea, she usually returns to feed or nurse the baby seal, walrus, whale or other marine mammals. If a marine mammal hunter observes a sick seal, walrus, whale, sea otter or other marine mammal, they usually leave it alone and let Mother Nature take care of it. The Alaska Native elders and experienced marine mammal hunters let Mother Nature take care of a sick marine mammal, and do not hunt the animal. If a sick animal is caught and eaten, humans who ate edible animal parts may become ill. The recommendation of the BBMMC Council is to leave any baby seal, walrus, sea otter, whale or other marine mammals alone. This applies to sick animals observed, leave them alone! Call the local Village or Traditional or Tribal Council in the village where the animal was observed (sick, stranded, or orphaned).

**Rehabilitation of Marine Mammals-**

This means, if a federal or state agency like the Alaska SeaLife Center is contacted, they will make arrangements to rehabilitate (take care of a sick animal) until it is well and ready to be released. Sometimes, the animal is released to a different location than from which it was originally picked up by these organizations. The Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council (BBMMC) does not support any rehabilitation of marine mammals by organizations unless it has been authorized by local tribal council in working with BBNA Marine Mammal Program staff. BBMMC is concerned if a person calls one of these organizations who rehabilitate marine mammals, and transplant them to other parts of Alaska, animal diseases will spread, including contaminants to our pure Bristol Bay and Alaska Peninsula waters. So, please do not call any of these organizations, such as the Alaska SeaLife Center without local tribal permission or tribal consultation!

The coastal and other tribal communities that hunt seals, walrus, whales, sea otters, and other marine mammals include:

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|---|--|--|
| Aleknagik Traditional Council (907-842-2080)    | Ivanof Bay Village Council (907-522-2263)    | Nondalton Tribal Council (907-294-2220)      |
| Chignik Bay Tribal Council (907-749-2445)       | Kanatak Tribal Council (907-357-5991)        | Pedro Bay Village Council (907-850-2225)     |
| Chignik Lagoon Village Council (907-840-2281)   | King Salmon Tribe (907-246-3553)             | Native Village of Perryville (907-853-2203)  |
| Chignik Lake Traditional Council (907-845-2212) | Kokhanok Village Council (907-282-2202)      | Pilot Point Tribal Council (907-797-2208)    |
| Clarks Point Village Council (907-236-1427)     | Levelock Village Council (907-287-3031)      | Port Heiden Village Council (907-837-2296)   |
| Curyung Tribal Council (907-842-2384)           | Manokotak Village Council (907-289-2067)     | Portage Creek Village Council (907-277-1105) |
| Egegik Village Council (907-563-0556)           | Naknek Village Council (907-246-4210)        | South Naknek Village Council (907-246-8614)  |
| Igiugig Village Council (907-533-3211)          | Newhalen Tribal Council (907-571-1410)       | Togiak Traditional Council (907-493-5003)    |
| Iliamna Village Council (907-571-1246)          | New Koliganek Village Council (907-596-3434) | Twin Hills Village Council (907-525-4821)    |
|   |  | Ugashik Traditional Council (907-338-7611)   |

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Seal pictures were taken by ADF&G, Kathy Frost, ABWC and Gusty Chythlook

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