



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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Report # B-7: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, April, 2021.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has partnered with Marine Exchange Alaska and the Alaska Conservation Foundation on a project which capitalizes on Automatic Identification System (AIS) technology to assess and monitor maritime activity near coastal walrus haulouts in Alaska. Preliminary analysis of 2020 AIS data indicate high levels of commercial fishing traffic in close proximity to walrus haulouts in Bristol Bay and along the Alaska Peninsula. This 'geofencing' information will be used to help target education and outreach efforts to various user groups to help reduce interactions and disturbances to resting walrus. We are also working with the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and the United States Coast Guard to update navigation charts with information on recommended buffer zones around coastal walrus haulouts.

Mariners are advised that walrus occupying coastal haulouts are highly sensitive to disturbances which can result in trampling injuries and mortalities. Disturbing walrus is also a violation of the Federal Marine Mammal Protection act of 1972. To avoid disturbances:

- Vessels 50 feet (15.24 meters) in length or less should remain at least a 0.5 nautical mile (approximately 1,000 meters) away from a walrus haulout.
- Vessels 50 to 100 feet (approximately 15 to 30 meters) in length should remain at least 1 nautical mile (approximately 1.9 kilometers) away from a walrus haulout.
- Vessels greater than 100 feet (30 meters) in length should remain at least 3 nautical miles (approximately 5.6 kilometers) away from a walrus haulout.
- All vessels should refrain from anchoring or conducting tendering or fishing operations within 3 miles (approximately 4.8 kilometers) of hauled out walrus.

If the Council has questions, please contact the Yukon River Subsistence Fishery Manager, Ms. Holly Carroll via email holly_carroll@fws.gov or at 907-351-3029.