

ALEUT MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

147 Harborview Drive | Box 147 | Akutan, Alaska | 99553

Long-time Executive Director Retires

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Throughout the 20 plus years I witnessed many changes in our region, as well as the federal government. When the annual harvest surveys were conducted by AMMC through funding received by the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission (ANHSC) from NMFS, documenting these historic changes came to a stop. The annual harvest numbers were no longer collected for use by the federal managers. Incidental information about previous numbers of active hunters is no longer gathered about hunters who have passed away or new hunters in the region. This information goes hand-in-hand in

understanding the harvest numbers each year. For instance, if a village’s main hunter passes away, you will see less animals taken and when a new hunter becomes active you will see harvest numbers increase. During my tenure I witnessed the passing of many of our most experienced hunters, and less desire from the younger generation in participating in subsistence hunting. Many of the younger generation prefer “fast food” rather than subsistence harvested foods. Although these changes will eventually affect the number of marine mammal harvests no one is documenting how this change is occurring or what the projected outcome will be on subsistence.

One of the most successful things the Aleut Marine Mammal Commission (with my assistance) accomplished is establishing a “trusting working relationship” between our subsistence hunters and NMFS management and the national marine mammal lab’s marine mammal scientists. Many organizations have struggled in developing such a relationship which is key to successful co-management. Our Commissioners and NMFS have no fear in exchanging information that promotes the management and conservation of the marine mammal species we rely on to sustain our people. My one true purpose was to protect the subsistence way of life of the Aleut People. I am happy to say I never lost sight of this and focused on this for the 20 plus years I served our region.

Other accomplishments during my tenure include several technical papers AMMC was part of on the annual Harbor Seal and Stellar Sea lion harvests, the Sentinel Program (now de-funded) that trained local Aleut technicians in gathering marine mammal observations and environmental data in Atka, Unalaska/Dutch Harbor and King Cove, in air-survey techniques for gathering sea otter population data for the USFWS, and informing our hunters about the rules and regulations governing marine mammals harvested for subsistence purposes; developing an honest trusting relationship between myself and the hunters as well as the federal agency staff throughout our region; negotiated the AMMC-NMFS Agreement that stands today (along with the AMMC-ANHSC Native-to-Native agreement). I have learned that most people in the general public do not truly understand the meaning of subsistence, that there is a definite difference in what *subsistence* means to an Alaska Native vs. people who work for the federal management agencies. Although it may not be marine mammals that everyone around the world is involved in, subsistence activities of one sort or another, they just don’t recognize their activities as “subsistence.”

I have had the most wonderful time getting to know the Aleut people who live in our region, gaining a full appreciation for the character and local customs and traditions of each of our communities. I am so appreciative to have had the opportunity to serve the people in our region, and a delight to have worked with my commissioners who with their foresight, commitment, and in-depth knowledge to protect our marine mammal resources and way of life.

I truly hope that Josephine will enjoy her position as the Executive Director of AMMC. I sure did!

-Peggy Osterback



Welcome to our first Aleut Marine Mammal Commission (AMMC) e-newsletter!

My name is Josephine B-Shangin. Many of you know me as “Josy.” I live in my hometown of Akutan with my husband Tim and 3 kids: Anthony, Ian, and Emma. We moved back home in December 2009 for work and to make it our permanent home after having lived and worked in Anchorage off and on since 1998. Before working for AMMC, I worked at the Akutan Traditional Council and Maritime Helicopters. I also co-coordinate the Atka | Akutan Culture Camp – *Tanasxangin*. In addition to my employment, I also serve on the Aleutians East Borough Assembly, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Language Revitalization Committee and the Akutan Corporation as President.

I was hired as the co-director of AMMC in June 2019 working alongside Peggy Osterback prior to her retirement. She had a very in-depth succession plan that she put in place to ease the transition of directors. Some main points during that time was learning about the AMMC/NMFS co-management agreement, 2019 Action plan and timelines and the Atka Marine Mammal Harvest Monitoring Project (AHMP). I was also able to meet many co-management members, the AMMC Accountant, AMMC legal counsel, and many of the Commissioners from the region. It was a remarkably busy 6 months that Peggy and I worked together. We also moved the office from the longtime location in Sand Point to Akutan. So, if you ever find yourself in Akutan, I hope you will look us up, as we are just a *hop, skip and a jump* from the helicopter pad!



By the beginning of the fiscal year: October 1st, 2019 I was moved into my new office, full-time and on my own. I have Peggy on speed-dial, so not completely “alone.” (Sorry to interrupt your retirement!) Peggy was gracious enough to attend the Annual AMMC Board meetings in November 2019 to give her final report to the Commissioners and Co-management team, as well as introduce me to everyone. Since being hired, this was my first Annual meeting that I set up from the beginning, facilitated and completed! I was looking forward to this past year’s (2020), but the pandemic happened. We are on hold and hope to resume our regular meetings this year.

The first year working as your Executive Director has been interesting and challenging. COVID-19 has altered our lives. We have learned to work remotely, as needed, which have set-backs of it’s own. Also, working with many people to get a new office open and fully functioning is time consuming! All the while I was doing my best to fulfill the to-dos on our Action Plan, write and submit a proposal for the upcoming year; and continue my grant reporting and giving technical support, as needed to AHMP, the sub-recipient of AMMC.

I am excited and looking forward to the good work we have ahead of us. I hope to continue the AMMC program well into the future. My commitment to help protect our subsistence way of life, as well as maintaining a productive working relationship with NMFS management for the hunters of the AMMC region is something I strive for and hope to be successful at. If you ever have questions please don’t hesitate to contact me! I look forward to hearing from you.

“The Aleut Marine Mammal Commission (AMMC) is a tribally authorized non-profit organization established in 1997 by the eleven federally recognized Aleut Tribes of Akutan, Atka, Belkofski, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski, Pauloff Harbor (Sanak), Sand Point, Unalaska and Unga for the conservation, co-management and sustained use of marine mammals for subsistence purposes by Aleuts and Alaska Natives of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska Peninsula Region (AMMC Region)”

In Memory of Jennie Webster

AMMC Commissioner from Akutan

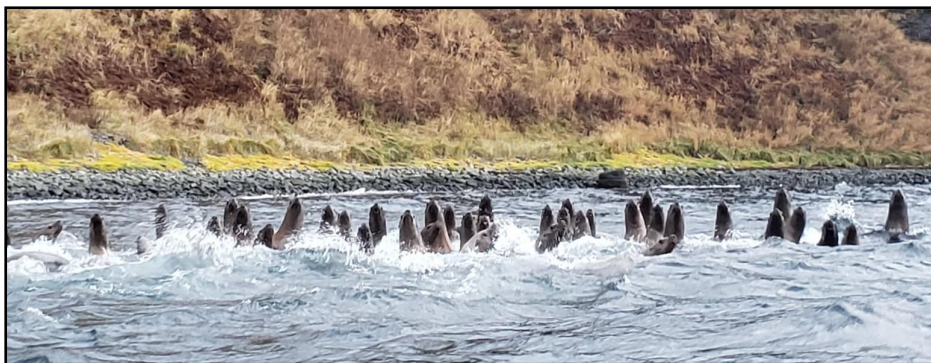


It is with fond memories and deep sadness that we say farewell to our dear friend and AMMC Commissioner, Jennie Webster.

Jennie passed away peacefully in her home on November 20th, 2020 after a lengthy illness. She was at home surrounded by her family.

Her service and funeral was held in Akutan at the St. Alexander Nevsky Russian Orthodox Church.

Jennie was a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, sister, and friend to many who knew her. She will be missed dearly, not only in her hometown of Akutan, but throughout the Aleutian region and Alaska.



Atka IRA hires new Hunter Liaison

Macarius Swetzof

Aang Makarius asaxtakuq. Atxam ilagaan angixtakuq. I am the newly hired hunter liaison for the Atka Marine Mammal Harvest Monitoring Project (AHMP) in Atka. The Atka IRA is an AMMC sub-recipient which runs this monitoring program. I have only been working for a few months but enjoy it! It is good to talk with the hunters. I have only been hunting a few years since I moved back home. I have gone out with many hunters including uncles, friends, and elders.

Hunting trips vary from itxaygix (reindeer) to isux (harbor seal) to birds. I have not gone out and got a qawax (sea lion) yet, but it's on my to-do list! My favorite was

probably the hunt when we were on Korovin side. I hadn't been around the island in a skiff before, so it was cool to see. We also got an itxaygix and an isux on that hunt. My favorite thing to eat is fried qawax with home-made gravy. My Nana and Uncle Danny Boy make the best. Qagaasakuq for reading, stay safe!

-Makarius Swetzof



HS intern: Mia Vincler

Hi, I'm Mia Vincler. I'm 14 years old. My Mom and Dad are Karen and David Ravenscroft, and my biological father is Matthew Bereskin. My grandparents are Lydia and Raymond Vincler. I grew up in Akutan and I still live here today. I'm happy to be working with my Auntie Josy.

For my birthday my Dad got me my own ukulele, I play my ukulele pretty much every day. I am having a ton of fun learning and playing some songs. My favorite song to play is "Somewhere over the Rainbow" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. I'm starting to get better at playing it, if I do say so myself. The other day I started to learn a Billie Eilish song called "The End of the World," which is ironic considering the current events.

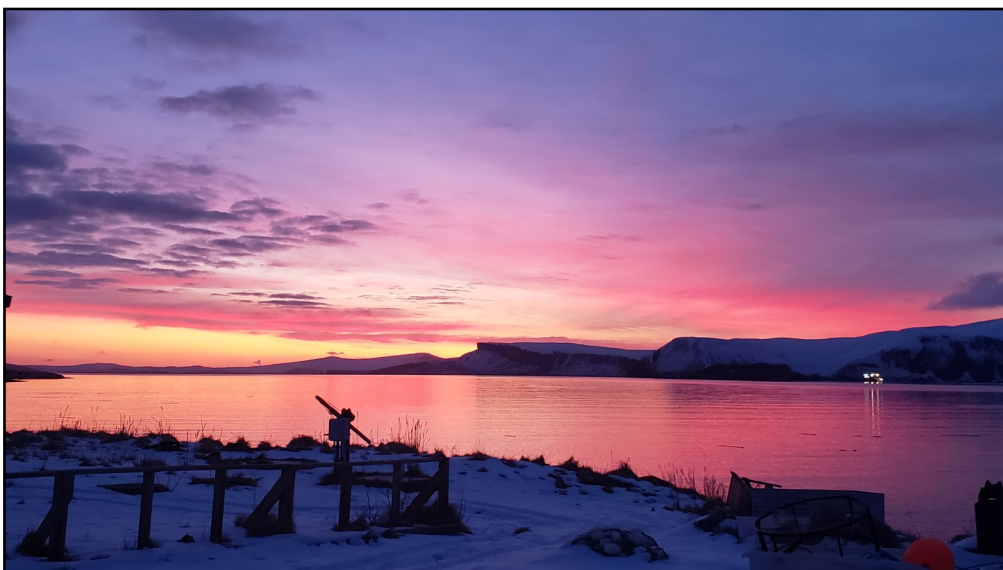
Another of my favorite things to do is read. I have probably read about a hundred books during my fourteen years on this earth. Whether I'm reading by myself or someone was reading to me. I think my love for reading came from my Grandpa, who was a librarian. Every night I would see him with a book in his hands. I

wanted to be like him, so I started borrowing books from the library. Then my teacher told me about the battle of the books. I have competed ever since.

I love to swim. I would swim in the bay, if I could. Too bad this isn't a tropical island then I would swim every day. The school kids have gone on a swim trip for the past few years. We would go over to Unalaska and learn different techniques of swimming. We would be over there for a school week and that would be the best week of the school year because all we had to do was learn how to swim!

Anyways, while I am interning here, I hope to learn more about the marine mammals and which ones we hunt. This is my first office job, so I am learning how to work in an office setting and how to do certain things such as emails, printing stuff, scanning, etc. It's a good thing I am being better informed on the issues that were having now so I can help to have a better future.

-Mia Vincler



Jenn Hall-Brown bids farewell

AMMC Staff and Commissioners: I am sad but excited to announce that I'm leaving the NMFS AK Region Program Office and transferring to the NMFS Management and Budget under the Acquisition and Core Policy Programs.



Over the last 15 years administering and monitoring AMMC's grants and cooperative agreements with the Alaska Region (AKR), I have forged many wonderful relationships with my grantees, AMMC being one of those! I had the privilege of being a part of a major transition period for AMMC during the succession planning and transition of Peggy Osterback's well deserved retirement. This was a major milestone and huge lift for Peggy, who did an outstanding job organizing and finalizing the onboarding of Josephine Shangin as the new Executive Director. It has been a pleasure working with both these amazing women and I am truly lucky to have been a part of such a legacy. I've had the opportunity to travel to some amazing places and meet some incredible and talented people from your organization and communities (including Dutch Harbor, Sand Point and Atka)! Thank you so much for making my time at AKR an adventure and allowing me the opportunity to get to know you, your organization, and the folks within your communities! Although I'm sad to be leaving the amazing folks I've worked with over the past 15 years I am looking forward to this new challenging adventure! Again, thank you all for such a wonderful ride. Please continue to stay safe and healthy!

Respectfully, Jenn Hall-Brown

Aleut Marine Mammal Commissioners:

Paul "Butch" Gundersen	Nelson Lagoon
Jennie Webster	Akutan
Lynn Mack	Belkofski
Arnold Dushkin	Nikolski
Mark Snigaroff	Atka
William "Buzz" Lekanoff	Ounalashka
Robin Gould-Medina	Agdaagux
Peter Devine	Qagan Tayagungin Tribe
William "Billy" Shellikoff, Jr.	False Pass
George Gundersen	Pauloff Harbor
Dwain Foster	Unga



Section 101b of MMPA

(b) Exemptions for Alaskan Natives, except as provided in section 1379 of this title, the provisions of this chapter shall not apply with respect to the taking of any marine mammal by any Indian, Aleut or Eskimo who resides in Alaska and who dwells on the coast of the North Pacific Ocean of the Arctic Ocean if such taking (1) is for subsistence purposes; or (2) is done for the purposes of creating and selling authentic native articles of handicrafts and clothing: provided that only authentic native articles of handicrafts and clothing may be sold in interstate commerce: and provided further, that any edible portion of marine mammals may be sold in native villages and town in Alaska for native consumption. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "authentic native articles of handicrafts and clothing" means items composed wholly or insome significant respect of natural materials, and which are produced, decorated, or fashioned in the exercise of traditional native handicrafts without the use of pantographs, multiple carvers, or other mass copying devices. Traditional native handicrafts include, but are not limited to: weaving, carving, stitching, sewing, acing, beading, drawing and painting; (3) in each case, is not accomplished in a wasteful manner.



NMFS UPDATES

~ The Steller sea lion program at NMFS does not have any new information since last year. We had to cancel all of our summer 2020 field work due to the Pandemic. Our "current" plan is to try everything again in summer 2021 that we had planned for summer 2020. Thus we will try to do an aerial survey of sea lions in June-July between the Shumagin Islands and the western Aleutians. We should know more in about March if this will happen.—*Tom Gelatt, Program Leader for the Marine Mammal laboratory's Alaska Ecosystems Program*
tom.gelatt@noaa.gov

~ ADF&G was awarded a Bycatch Reduction and Engineering Program grant to test a new acoustic startle device to try to deter Steller sea lions from interacting with troll fisheries. I am a collaborator on that project so hopefully, if COVID is under control, the plan is to start testing that device first at a fish hatchery (to ensure the salmon do not react) in Southeast Alaska in late spring 2021, then to test on a commercial troller in the sum-

mer of 2021. We will keep everyone updated on how that is going once the testing is complete. - *Kim Raum-Suryan, Western Distinct Population Segment (DPS) Steller sea lion recovery Coordinator and Pinniped Entanglement Group (PEG) Coordinator*

kim.raum-suryan@noaa.gov

~ Harbor seal research: We don't have any new or recent updates to share. No projects were conducted in the AMMC region this past year and it's looking unlikely that any will be conducted this year. Our latest info on abundance and trends (through 2018) is in the 2019 Stock Assessment Report for Alaska harbor seals. We recently submitted a paper for publication that evaluates thermal imaging for detecting harbor seals in the Aleutian Islands during aerial surveys, and are in the early stages of an analysis on habitat use by tagged harbor seals in the Aleutians. We'll be sure to pass those along once they're published.—*Shawn P. Dahle, Research Biologist at the Marine Mammal Laboratory, NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center*
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Executive Director

Josephine Shangin

AMMC Office Intern

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