

CHUGACH IMAQ



What is the Chugach Imaq Project?

Chugach Imaq Project is a culturally competent co-management plan of marine mammal species within the Chugach Region. Co-management relationships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will improve the conservation and sustainable management of marine mammals in a rural and remote region where Indigenous people are keenly aware of the importance and interconnectedness of intra-species dynamics (e.g. reproductive performance, survivorship, abundance, and vital rates). CRRC anticipates the creation of cooperative agreements that embody the spirit of subsistence users and traditions, while supplementing important environmental, biological, and harvest monitoring research.

What is Imaq?

Imaq (E•muh•CK) is Sugt'stun. It means ocean; sea; saltwater, and it's contents.

When, and Where?

Starting November 14th, CRRC will be hosting a week long workshop at the Cordova Center. CRRC will be inviting both community and Tribal members to attend. Throughout the week there will be an open house for community members to learn about CRRC, CRRC's programs, and talk to staff, plus a day with presentations to introduce and educate the community on the project. We will also interview knowledge holders on their observations and concerns about marine mammals and marine mammal harvesting. More information to come.

What are the anticipated outcomes?

This project is possible thanks to funding from the Marine Mammal Commission and Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy. The overarching goal is to design and implement a pilot project to document climate threats to marine mammal populations that will be replicated across the Chugach Region. For this pilot project, CRRC has 4 anticipated outcomes.

1. Develop a research protocol that combines ethnographic interviews and citizen science to better understand the current status of marine mammals and the impacts climate change may be having on them, utilizing TEK-based monitoring to contribute to co-management of marine mammal resources.
2. Educate communities on scientific concepts around climate change-induced ecosystem responses and marine mammal distribution, migration timing, health, diets, and behavior.
3. Develop new data on the diets of harbor seals, sea lions, and sea otters, which will be used in future climate change and marine mammal health research.
4. A final report and poster publication detailing the results, which will contribute to the co-management process, and inform future research.

PROJECT

Informing future research and management to protect marine mammals and safeguard cultural, economic, and subsistence needs.

Climate change is affecting subsistence harvesting through changes in species abundance, distribution, and health. Subsistence practices must continue to be shared with younger generations to ensure continuation of traditional Alaska Native marine mammal use. Co-management is an important part of ensuring that marine mammals are used by future generations, and involvement of the people who live around and depend on marine mammals contributes critical and integral data to the management process. Evaluating the effects of a changing climate from a firsthand, Indigenous, and locally based viewpoint will ensure a better understanding of general health, body condition, population sizes, hunting seasons, behavior, and activity of marine mammals. The project research will inform future research prioritization and strategies to prevent and reverse harm to the marine ecosystem and species.

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