

SECTION B

GENERAL INFORMATION

ALEUTIAN ISLANDS WATERWAYS SAFETY PLAN

The web address to receive and/or view the LNM and the yearly Special Local Notice to Mariners (SLNM) is:

<http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=InmDistrict®ion=17>

Mariners can submit information to be published into the LNM by contacting the 17th Coast Guard District at: D17-PF-D17-LNM@uscg.mil

Mariners are urged to take advantage of automatic chart distribution as a quick and easy way to ensure the most up to date charts are on board.

Note: NOAA Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC) numbers are listed for vessels navigating using Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) that comply with International Maritime Organization (IMO) requirements for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) classed vessels.

B.10. OIL SPILL RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS

Certain vessel owners are required, under federal and state law, to hold approved vessel response plans for discharges of oil and hazardous substances. Federal and Alaska laws also require vessel owners to demonstrate financial responsibility to respond to a discharge from their vessels. Vessel owners can arrange to obtain vessel response plans and certificates of financial responsibility through their qualified individuals. The failure of a vessel to comply with state and/or federal requirements may result in the imposition of civil penalties or criminal fines.

The federal and state governments will designate on-scene coordinators to oversee the vessel owner's response to an oil spill. The designated federal and state on scene coordinators will ensure that an owner's response complies with national and area contingency plans covering the area of the discharge.

B.10.1. Vessel Response Plan Requirements and Applicability

Certain vessels, while operating in federal or state waters off the coastline of Alaska, are required to hold vessel response plans to respond to a discharge of oil or hazardous substances from the vessel.

Federal VRP

Tank vessels and non-tank vessels of over 400 gross tons, bound for or departing from a U.S. port, while navigating within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (out to 200 miles from the U.S. coastline), are required by federal law to hold a USCG-approved vessel response plan (VRP).

The USCG has determined that the available response resources in all areas within the Aleutian Islands are inadequate to allow a vessel owner to meet federal response planning standards for

discharges of oil in those areas. In order to satisfy federal VRP requirements, vessel owners must demonstrate that they have implemented approved alternative planning criteria (APC).

State Oil Discharge Prevention & Contingency Plan

Tank vessels and non-tank vessels of over 400 gross tons, while operating within Alaska state waters (out to 3 miles from the Alaska coastline), are required by Alaska law to have an Alaska State contingency plan, approved by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

Innocent Passage/Emergency Exceptions

The federal VRP requirements do not apply to vessels that are in innocent passage, on a voyage in which the vessel is not bound for a U.S. port or place. The State of Alaska planning requirements do not apply to a vessel that is transiting through state waters, or to vessels entering an Alaska port due to a force majeure event such as a medical emergency.

B.10.2. Certificate of Financial Responsibility (COFR) Requirements and Applicability

Federal COFR

All vessels greater than 300 gross tons using the navigable waters of the United States, or any vessel, regardless of tonnage, that is lightering or transshipping oil within 200 miles of the U.S. coastline, are required to carry a federal certificate of responsibility.

Alaska COFR

All tank vessels, and non-tank vessels greater than 400 gross tons, are required to have an Alaska state certificate of responsibility, when operating in Alaska state waters. Alaska state COFR requirements do not apply to vessels in innocent passage or those calling at an Alaska port due to a force majeure event.

B.10.3. Notification of Discharge or Substantial Threat of a Discharge

The master or person in charge of a vessel from which oil is discharged, or from which there is a substantial threat of a discharge of oil, must immediately notify the USCG National Response Center of the discharge or the substantial threat of a discharge. For vessels operating under a federal VRP, the master or person in charge should also follow all reporting requirements specified in the VRP.

The master or person in charge of a vessel operating in waters of the State of Alaska must immediately notify the State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) of a discharge of oil into state waters from the vessel.

OIL DISCHARGE NOTIFICATION NUMBERS

USCG National Response Center: 1-800-424-8802

ADEC: (907) 269-3063; Outside normal business hours call 1-800-478-9300 (International: 1-907-269-0667)

B.11. FISHING VESSEL-SHIPPING CONFLICTS

The combination of a projected increase in international shipping activity, high environmental sensitivity, and the economic reliance of local communities on what is one of the largest fisheries in the United States, makes the Aleutian Island archipelago and Pribilof Islands a high-risk region for hazards resulting from international shipping. Historically, commercial fishing vessel activity has dominated vessel traffic within the Eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands region. Statistics systematically collected by the Alaska Marine Exchange have determined that fishing vessel traffic account for nearly 60% of the vessel transits within the region.

Figure B-6 shows the type of vessels operating in the Aleutians captured as a one-month summary of maritime activity in early 2018. The light green lines are cargo vessels (bulklers, container ships and reefer ships), the dark green is fishing vessels and blue are government vessels. AIS data has been and will continue to be a valuable source of information for assessing and managing risk in the region.

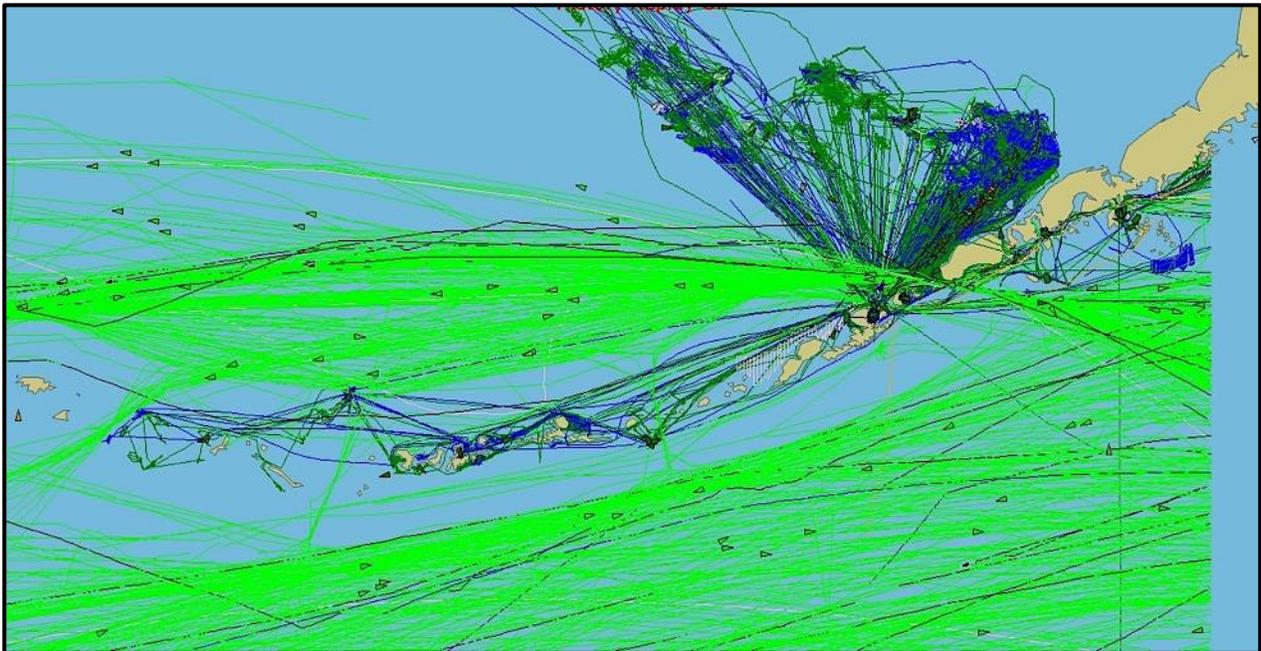


Figure B-6. One-month summary of marine activity in early 2018.

Fishing vessel traffic consists both of vessels transiting to and from port (largely Unalaska and Akutan) to the fishing grounds, as well as fishing vessels engaged in fishing while on the fishing grounds. Fishing vessels typically seen in the region run from small catcher vessels (58' pot fishers, seiners or longliners) that operate in near coastal waters to 300' trawl catcher processors (CP) that operate offshore, year-round, hundreds of miles from the nearest port. Different kinds of fishing vessels are on the grounds, transiting to / from port at different times

ALEUTIAN ISLANDS WATERWAYS SAFETY PLAN

of the year. The presence of the vessels on the grounds and navigating across the Great Circle Route both create hazards for deep draft vessels transiting the area.

Table B-1. Fishing Vessels in the Aleutian Islands Region.

Vessel Type	Operating Season	Fleet Vessel Total	Gear Type	Typical Vessel Size	Navigation Risk Factors
Longline CP	Jan – Dec	28	Longline	135 – 150'	Gear not always tended
Trawl CP (AFA)	Jan – Apr Jun – Oct	16	Trawl	270 – 365'	Maneuverability restricted when trawling
Trawl CP (A80)	Jan – Dec	19	Trawl	135 – 260'	Maneuverability restricted when trawling
Trawl CV	Jan – Apr Jun – Oct	100	Trawl	100 – 165'	Maneuverability restricted when trawling
Pot CV	Jan – Apr Oct – Dec	60	Pot	100 – 135'	Gear not always tended
Longline CV	Apr – Oct	35	Longline	50 – 60'	Gear not always tended
Pot CV	Oct – Dec	35	Pot	<60'	Gear not always tended

Vessels in the fleets described above are typically constructed of steel and equipped with VHF radios, AIS, satellite phones. Larger vessels are occasionally equipped with GMDSS equipment. It should be noted that in addition to the vessels themselves, fixed gear fishing vessels (pot and longline), can also create additional navigation hazards when fishing their pot gear and longline gear on the grounds. While this gear is marked with visual buoys, the buoys are not equipped with any kind of transmitter and could be susceptible to being struck by a passing deep draft vessel.

Increased fishing vessel traffic congestion can occur at certain times of the year and coincides with the start of certain fishing seasons. Most major fisheries (cod, pollock, flatfish, and crab) begin during the month of January. While the start of those fisheries is spread throughout the month, they all persist well into March, resulting in a high level of vessel traffic around Dutch Harbor for the first part of the year. On the grounds, trawl C/Vs are heavily concentrated in late January – mid February while they are fishing for cod near Unimak Island. Similarly, C/Vs using pot gear to fish for cod are concentrated at the same time of year in the same locations. In contrast, longline C/P are typically widely dispersed, with each vessel typically fishing a 20 x 20 NM box. Other fisheries tend to be more temporally dispersed across larger areas.

While there are existing vessel traffic management practices in place, specifically the Unimak Pass Safety Fairway (established in 1986) and the Two-Way Routes and Precautionary Areas in

the Bering Sea and the Bering Strait (established in 2018), they are designed to facilitate (west – east) and (north – south) traffic of deep draft vessels transiting the area. The two traffic management schemes are not integrated at this time and overlay the traffic patterns used by fishing vessels operating out of Unalaska and Akutan.

Note: There have been a limited number of collisions at-sea between fishing vessels and much larger deep draft vessels on transit via the Great Circle Route.

B.12. MARINE MAMMAL CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

Given the abundance and diversity of marine mammals in the Aleutian and Pribilof Island region and continued increases in vessel activity, there is significant potential for conflicts between marine mammals and vessels operating in the region. The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA) protects all marine mammals and established a national policy to prevent marine mammal species and populations from declining beyond the point where they ceased to be significant functioning elements of the ecosystems of which they are a part. Figure B-7a and B-7b show the variety of marine mammals in the region. This section provides general guidance for interacting with marine mammals as well as specific information regarding endangered and protected species found in the region.

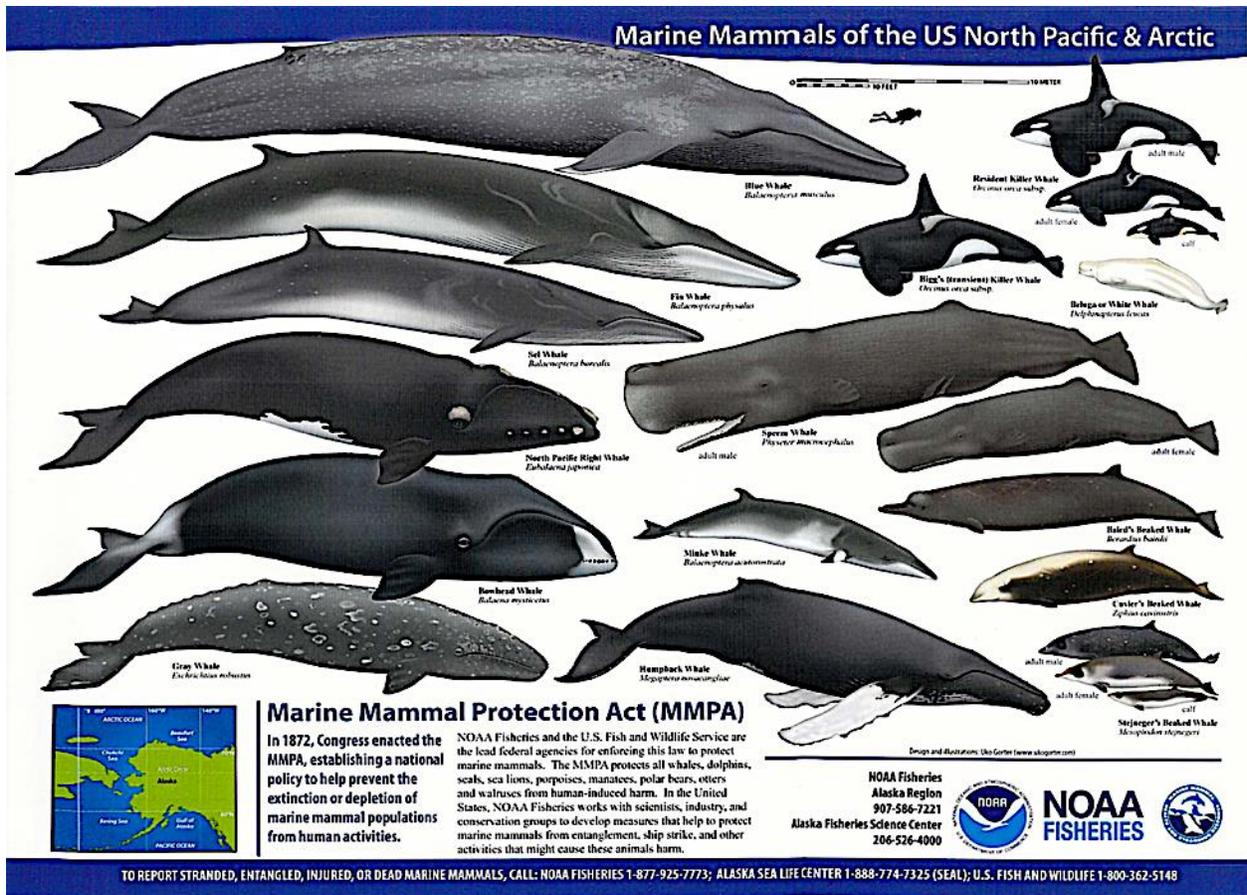


Figure B-7a. Marine Mammals of the U.S. North Pacific and Arctic.

Marine Mammals of the US North Pacific & Arctic

You can help protect marine animals!

Admire from a distance

- Adhere to local guidelines or regulations for boating, fishing, and whale watching.
- Keep your distance! Remain at least 100 yards from marine mammals in the water and on land.
- Support companies that commit to using best practices and protecting the oceans.
- Marine mammals are wild animals - don't feed or touch them.
- National Wildlife Viewing Guidelines
www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/viewing.htm
- Whale SENSE program: www.whalesense.org

Report a crime

- It is illegal to harm, harass, or capture a marine mammal, to collect marine mammal parts, or to attempt to do any of these things - with limited exceptions.
- Report suspected violations to the NOAA Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-853-1964

Report strandings, entanglements, and ship strikes

- Keep your distance and never attempt to touch or interact with animals on the beach.
- Report sick or injured animals by calling a stranding hotline so trained staff can respond to the situation:
 - NOAA Fisheries 1-877-925-7773
 - Alaska Sealife Center 1-888-774-7325 (SEAL)
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife 1-800-362-5148

Be an ocean steward

- Recycle, reuse, dispose of garbage properly, and don't release balloons into the air. This will help prevent marine debris and keep the oceans clean and healthy.
- Cut all packing bands and netting that could entangle marine life.
- Report derelict fishing gear.
- Tell your families and friends what they can do to help protect marine mammals!

Learn more
www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov
www.afsc.noaa.gov
www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/
www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/laws/mmpa
www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/strandings.htm

Dall's Porpoise *Phocoenoides dalli*

Harbor Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

Pacific White-sided Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*

Northern Elephant Seal *Momotia occidentalis*

Ribbon Seal *Heterophoca fasciata*

Spotted or Largha Seal *Phoca largha*

Bearded Seal *Erigonotus barbatus*

Ringed Seal *Pusa hispida*

California Sea Lion *Zalophus californianus*

Northern Fur Seal *Callorhinus ursinus*

Walrus *Odobenus rosmarus*

Sea Otter *Enhydra lutra*

Polar Bear *Ursus maritimus*

Scale: 0 to 10 FEET / 5 METERS

Image and Illustrations: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

TO REPORT STRANDED, ENTANGLED, INJURED, OR DEAD MARINE MAMMALS, CALL: NOAA FISHERIES 1-877-925-7773; ALASKA SEALIFE CENTER 1-888-774-7325 (SEAL); U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE 1-800-362-5148

Figure B-7b. Marine Mammals of the U.S. North Pacific and Arctic.

B.12.1. General Guidance for Interacting with Marine Mammals

- Where possible, do not approach observed marine mammals and avoid interacting with them by giving them a wide berth.
- In the event marine mammals cannot be given a wide berth, maintain a minimum distance of 500 yards from the animal and stay downwind if possible.
- Vessels should be slowed to 10 knots or less when whales are sighted, allowing both the vessel captain and the whale an opportunity to change direction and avoid impact.
- Actions that disrupt or alter the animal's behavior are considered harassment under the MMPA (see table below for full definition).
- Document, and photograph if possible, any abnormal marine mammal behavior or entanglements and share the information with NOAA Fisheries.
- If a marine mammal is observed to be entangled, injured, or is otherwise in distress contact the **NOAA 24-hr Stranding Hotline: (877) 925-7773**

Table B-2. Definition of Harassment under the Marine Mammal Protection Act

Definition of Harassment under the Marine Mammal Protection Act	
Level A harassment	Any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance that has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild.
Level B harassment	Acts that have the potential to disturb (but not injure) a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by disrupting behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.
Report marine mammal harassment! NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline: (800) 853-1964	

B.12.2. Restricted Areas for Vessel Traffic

There are areas within the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands that have legal protections restricting vessels from entry. It is prohibited to adversely modify designated critical habitat. Designated no-entry zones for Steller sea lion critical habitat can be found in 50 CFR 224.103(d) at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/50/224.103>.

Note: Vessels may enter these areas in cases of emergency or with written authorization from the appropriate government entity.

B.12.3. Awareness Areas for Vessel Traffic

Marine mammals can be found throughout the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands. Humpback whales and killer whales are present year-round. Other species, such as fin whales, gray whales and North Pacific right whales – the rarest of all large whale species - are present seasonally (early spring to late fall) and are concentrated in Aleutian marine passes during their migration. Other areas to be aware of are the North Pacific Right Whale critical habitat areas. Vessels should minimize operations in these areas as practical and maintain a vigilant watch while operating within them. For more information on North Pacific right whales, see Figure B-8 or click on the following link: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/north-pacific-right-whale>

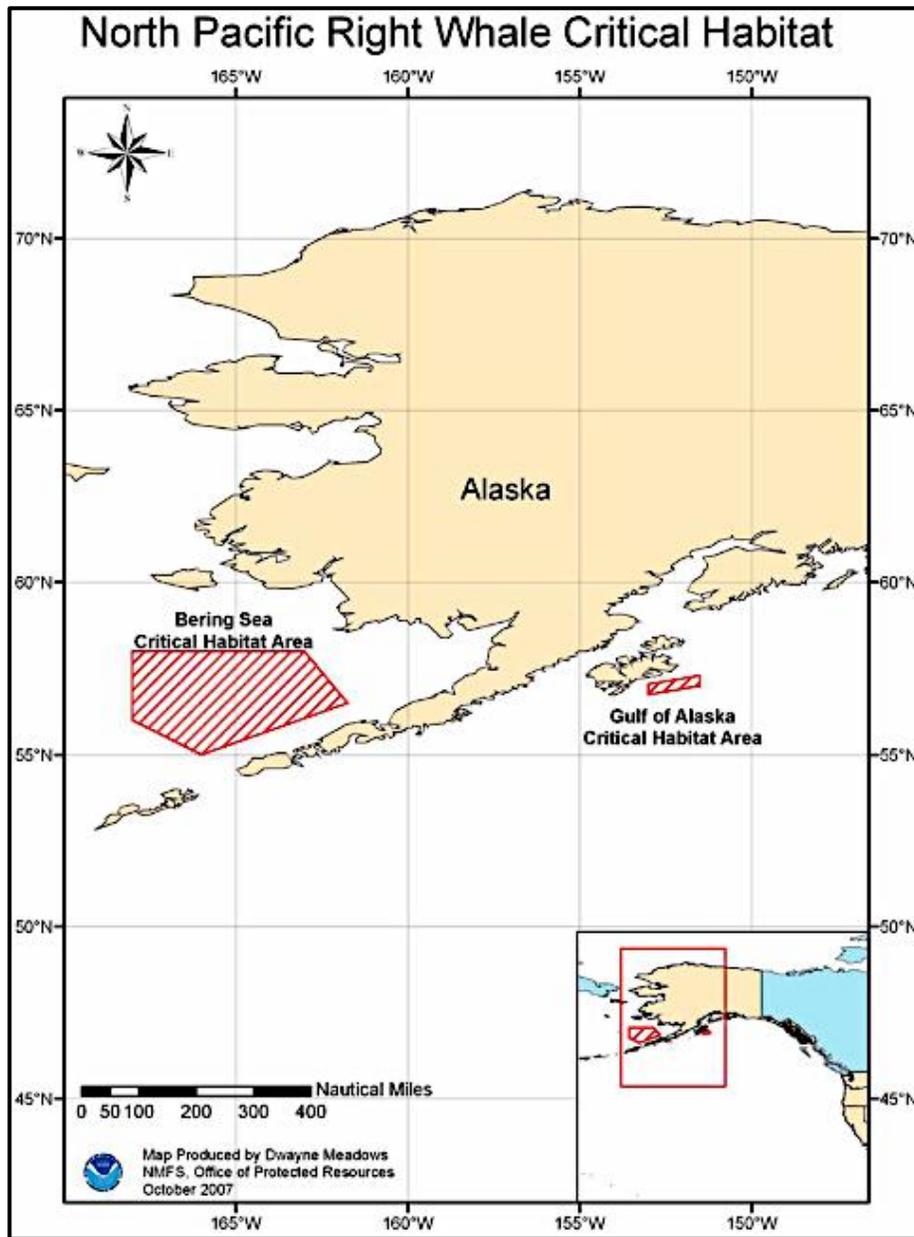


Figure B-8. North Pacific Right Whale critical habitat

Steller sea lions are designated as endangered under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and congregate near rookeries and haulouts during the spring/summer breeding season. They disperse widely outside of the breeding season, without clearly defined migratory routes. Their distribution and movements are most likely affected by seasonal prey availability and can vary significantly between years. Designated critical habitat for Steller sea lions includes a 20 nautical mile buffer around all major haulouts and rookeries (50 CFR 226.202).

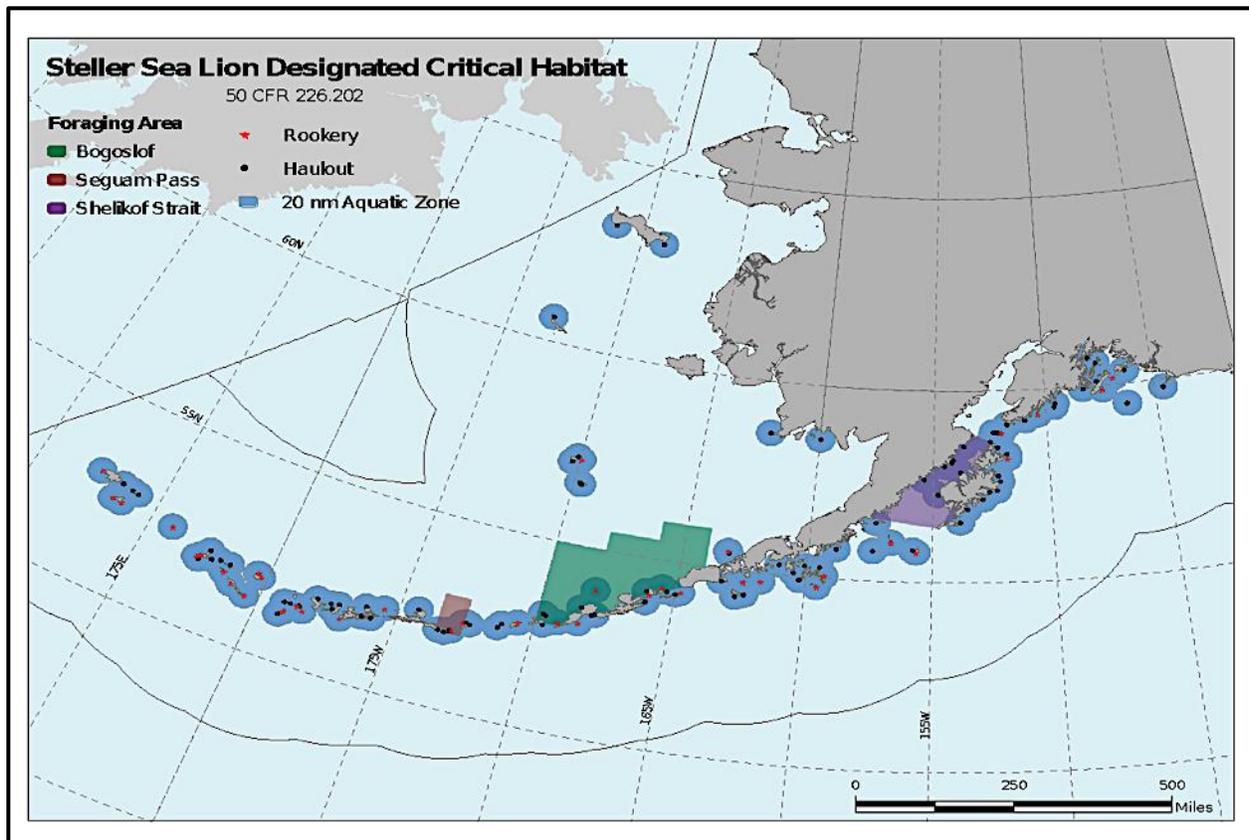


Figure B-9. Critical habitat designated for the Steller sea lion in western Alaska.

Northern sea otters are distributed within 3 miles around many of the islands in the Aleutian chain and the islands of the lower Alaska Peninsula at very low densities and are designated as threatened under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Northern fur seals are designated as a depleted species under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. They range from Japan to Southern California and north through the Bering Sea, and seasonally inhabit the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. Fur seals will spend months at a time at sea. Major northern fur seal rookeries and haulouts in Alaska occur on the Pribilof Islands and on Bogoslof Island. During the breeding season, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total world population will be found in the Pribilof Islands.

B.12.4. General Species Information

Marine Mammal identification tools for mariners

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/outreach-and-education/marine-mammals-us-north-pacific-arctic>

Information regarding Endangered Species in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands

As defined in the Endangered Species Act (ESA), endangered species are any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Within the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands region this includes the following species:

Listed Species	Scientific Name	Status
Short-tailed albatross	<i>Diomedea albatrus</i>	Endangered
Blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Endangered
Humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Endangered
Fin whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Endangered
Sei whale	<i>Balaena borealis</i>	Endangered
Sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Endangered
North Pacific right whale	<i>Eubalaena japonica</i>	Endangered
Steller sea lion (Western population)	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>	Endangered

Information regarding Threatened Species in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands

Threatened species are any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Within the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands region this includes the following species:

Listed Species	Scientific Name	Status
Steller's eider	<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>	Threatened
Spectacled eider	<i>Somateria fischeri</i>	Threatened
Northern sea otter	<i>Enhydra lutris kenyoni</i>	Threatened

Additional Information & Other Resources

The following organizations provide additional information regarding the protected marine mammal resources within the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands:

1. **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)** provides additional information regarding marine mammals in Alaska on their website: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska>
2. **US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**
3. **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**
4. **Whale Alert** is an online and phone-based app, which can be at: <http://www.whalealert.org/> and used to identify and report all marine mammal sightings.

B.13. PRIORITY AREAS FOR BOTTOM SURVEY

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has a statutory mandate to collect hydrographic data in support of nautical chart compilation for safe navigation and to provide background data for engineers, scientific, and other commercial and industrial activities. Hydrographic survey data primarily consist of water depths, but may also include features such as rocks, wrecks, navigation aids, shoreline identification, and bottom type information. NOAA is responsible for archiving and distributing the source data as described in this metadata record. The National Ocean Service (NOS) has 2.1 million bathymetric soundings

extending 1,900 km along the Aleutian Islands from Unimak Island in the east to the Russian border in the west and ranging approximately 500 km north of the central Aleutians to Petrel and Bowers Banks, and also the surrounding deep waters of the southeastern Bering Sea.

These bathymetry data are available from the National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI): <http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov>, which archives and distributes data that were originally collected by the NOS and others.

The development of a list of priority areas for new hydrographic surveys is an on-going process as areas are identified by local pilots, mariners, NOAA, the USCG and other users of the Aleutian Islands waters. A Navigation Workgroup will be the point of contact for the gathering and prioritization of areas identified for new bottom surveys before presenting AIWSC recommendations to NOAA.

B.14. SHIP-TO-SHIP TRANSFERS (Lightering)

During the Aleutian Islands Risk Assessment (AIRA), offshore and nearshore ship-to-ship transfer of non-persistent petroleum products from tank vessels to barges or smaller vessels was rare and not identified as an activity of concern. However, since the conclusion of the AIRA, ship-to-ship transfers in the Aleutian Islands have increased and reflect a shift in the fuel delivery model to remote villages in Western Alaska. Although this operational activity in the Aleutian Islands has not resulted in a known oil spill, the potential for a spill into nearshore waters adjacent to highly sensitive environmental and economic resources is of concern.

Vessel operators conducting ship-to-ship transfers, commonly referred to as “lightering,” must adhere to U.S. Coast Guard and ADEC regulatory requirements. These requirements include approved vessel response plans (VRP), oil spill prevention and response plans, and ship-to-ship (STS) operations plans.

Vessel operators conducting ship-to-ship transfers must submit a lightering plan to the USCG Captain of the Port (COTP) – Western Alaska, complete a Declaration of Inspection prior to conducting the transfer, and provide information associated with on-scene oil spill response capabilities. The lightering operation must ensure a vessel/barge meeting the Western Alaska Alternative Planning Criteria for tank vessel and secondary cargo carriers has a valid Vessel Response Plan and certain equipment for on board response resources.²

Coast Guard Marine Safety Information Bulletin 07-13 and a sample lightering notification form can be found on the U.S. Coast Guard Homeport webpage:

[https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/western-alaska-\(anchorage\)](https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/western-alaska-(anchorage))

² The vessel/barge may also be a signatory to the Alaska Petroleum Distributors and Transporters (APD&T) APC Agreement for compliance.

Lightering notification forms should be submitted to the USCG Sector Anchorage Waterways Management Division: Anchorage.Waterways@uscg.mil

B.15. ABANDONED & DERELICT VESSELS

Derelict vessels in navigable waters may pose hazards to the marine environment or to the safe navigation of vessels. A federal response (Coast Guard or Corps of Engineers) may be undertaken to address a derelict vessel blocking a navigational channel or with oil or chemicals on board and in threat of sinking and causing environmental harm. Response to derelict vessels not meeting these criteria may be addressed by local, state, and federal partners as resources permit or by private parties. In cases where oil and/or chemicals are present on the vessel and the vessel presents a threat of sinking or otherwise causing a release of oil or chemicals into the marine environment the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (Fund) may be accessed to fund a response that prevents or mitigates the environmental threat. A private party that takes action to prevent the threat of environmental harm may seek reimbursement from the Fund for costs incurred.

The State of Alaska has established a Joint Agency Vessel of Concern Reporting Form that can be used to initiate an assessment and determination on the actions that may be taken for a derelict vessel not presenting an immediate threat. A copy of this form is available from Coast Guard Sector Western Alaska and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation via the following link: [ADEC-ak-voc-reporting-form](#)

If the situation presented by a derelict vessel requires immediate attention to prevent a hazard to other vessels or environmental harm, contact the Coast Guard's 24-hour watch center at (907) 428-4100.

State legislation was passed in 2018 (SB92) that elevates the capabilities of the State to take action to address derelict and abandoned vessels, including required funding. This provides another avenue to pursue when there is no oil, chemicals or hazardous materials on an abandoned vessel.

B.16. MEDICAL TRANSFERS

There are few medical facilities in the Aleutian Islands, and facilities that exist provide primary care and emergency services. Patients with serious medical problems requiring hospital services are transported to Anchorage or Seattle, Washington for treatment.

B.16.1. Transport of Sick or Injured Crew Member to Shore

When a crew member becomes ill or is injured, and requires shore-based medical attention, transportation from the vessel to shore can take place by helicopter or by vessel. An accident or

injury may qualify as a hazardous condition or a marine casualty that should be reported immediately to the nearest USCG office.

B.16.2. Helicopter Evacuations

In cases involving serious medical conditions, the USCG may dispatch a helicopter to transfer the affected crew member from the vessel to shore. The Coast Guard determines whether to dispatch a helicopter based on its evaluation of several factors, including the seriousness of the medical emergency, weather, location of the vessel, and availability of helicopters. The Coast Guard monitors VHF FM Channel 16 and can be reached by telephone at (907) 463-2000.

When the USCG decides to deploy a helicopter to evacuate a crew member to shore, the Coast Guard will ordinarily only transfer the crew member to the nearest suitable airport. When the community to which the Coast Guard is evacuating the crew member does not have adequate medical facilities, the vessel owner may need to arrange for the further transportation of the crew member onward to Anchorage or Seattle for medical treatment. This may require the owner to arrange for the services of a medical evacuation jet.

When a foreign crew member is transported ashore, the vessel owner will need to retain the services of local maritime agents to deal with U.S. customs and immigration requirements, and to oversee the crew member's medical care and repatriation.

In urgent cases, local Emergency Management Service (EMS) should be advised and involved to assist in the transfers and to advise the receiving medical facility of an inbound patient.

B.16.3. Ship to Shore Evacuations

In cases where a helicopter evacuation is not available, the vessel may need to divert to a port to evacuate the crew member. Non-U.S. flag vessels will need to retain the services of a local maritime agent to arrange for entry in port, to deal with U.S. Customs and Immigration requirements, and to oversee the crew member's medical care and repatriation.

Because medical facilities at local ports are limited, the owner may need to arrange for the further transportation of the crew member from the port to which the transporting vessel delivers the crew member onward to Anchorage or Seattle for medical treatment. This may require the owner to arrange for the services of a medical evacuation jet.

In urgent cases, local EMS should be advised and involved to assist in the transfers and to advise the receiving medical facility of an inbound patient.