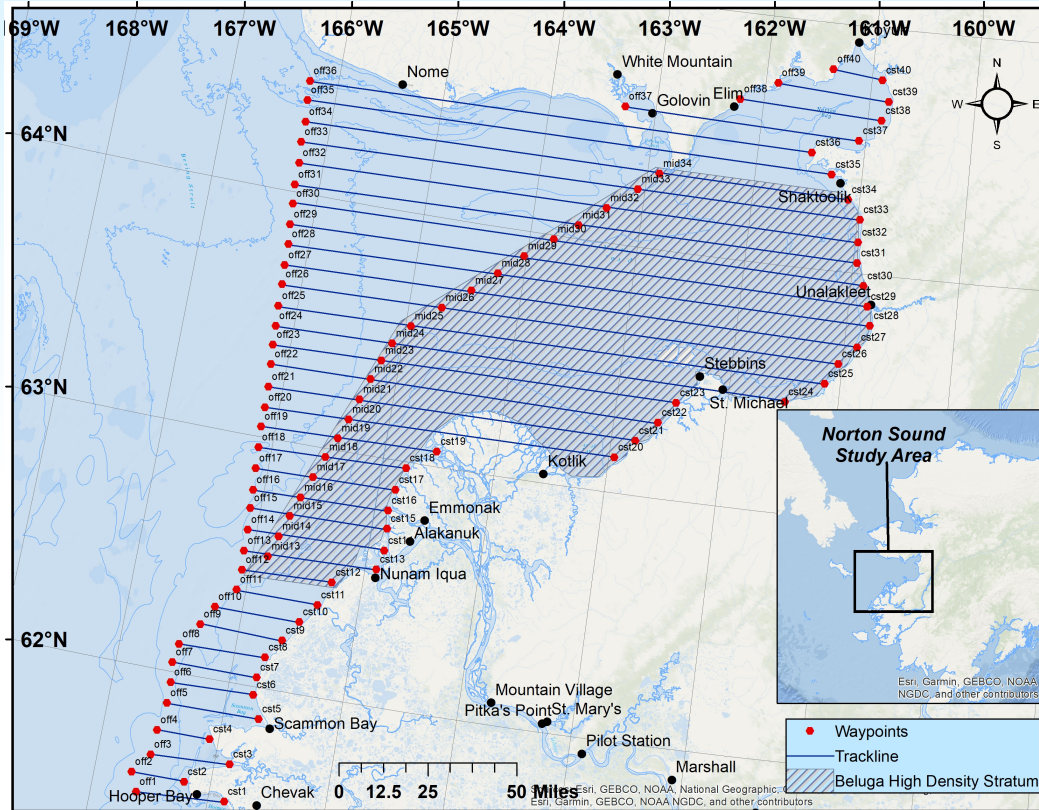




2024 Eastern Bering Sea Beluga Whale Aerial Abundance Survey

June 17 – July 5, 2024



Map showing the working area for the Eastern Bering Sea beluga whale aerial abundance survey. The aircraft will follow a series of offshore tracklines. This survey was last conducted in 2022, and additional tracklines and a high density stratum were added for the 2024 survey, extending the study area south of Norton Sound and the Yukon River Delta.

Who is conducting the research?

Scientists from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Marine Mammal Lab, and University of Washington, Cooperative Institute for Climate, Ocean, & Ecosystem Studies in collaboration with the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee.

What is the research objective?

The overall research objective is to obtain an abundance estimate for the population of beluga whales in Norton Sound, referred to as the Eastern Bering Sea Stock. This is achieved by locating and counting beluga whales encountered within and south of Norton Sound. The number of whales identified during the line transect survey is then corrected for whales that may have been missed because they were below the surface or too close or far from the aircraft to be detected.

Where is the research being conducted?

The survey will begin and end in Nome, Alaska. The primary operating area is offshore waters of Norton Sound and the coastal area south of the sound along the Yukon River delta.

Why are the data important? How will data be used?

These data are used to provide an estimate of abundance and to document habitats currently used by this population. When compared to previous estimates it will be possible to look at the population trend, whether it is increasing, declining, or stable.

Schedule for the 2024 EBS Beluga Aerial Abundance Survey

Science Team flies to Nome, AK, from Seattle, WA, by Commercial Airline	June 17
Science Team begins aerial surveys	June 18
Daily flights using Charter Aircraft/pilots	June 18-July 4
Survey operations end, Science Team travels either to Seattle by Commercial Airline or to next project	July 5

How do you plan to communicate research results? (e.g., outreach document, webstory, radio interview, community meeting, etc.)

The project PIs will present their results virtually to interested members of Alaskan communities and the public. A short written summary of preliminary results will be available to the public after the survey ends. Final results will be presented at conferences (e.g., Alaska Marine Science Symposium), seminars, research meetings, and published in an AFSC Report.

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