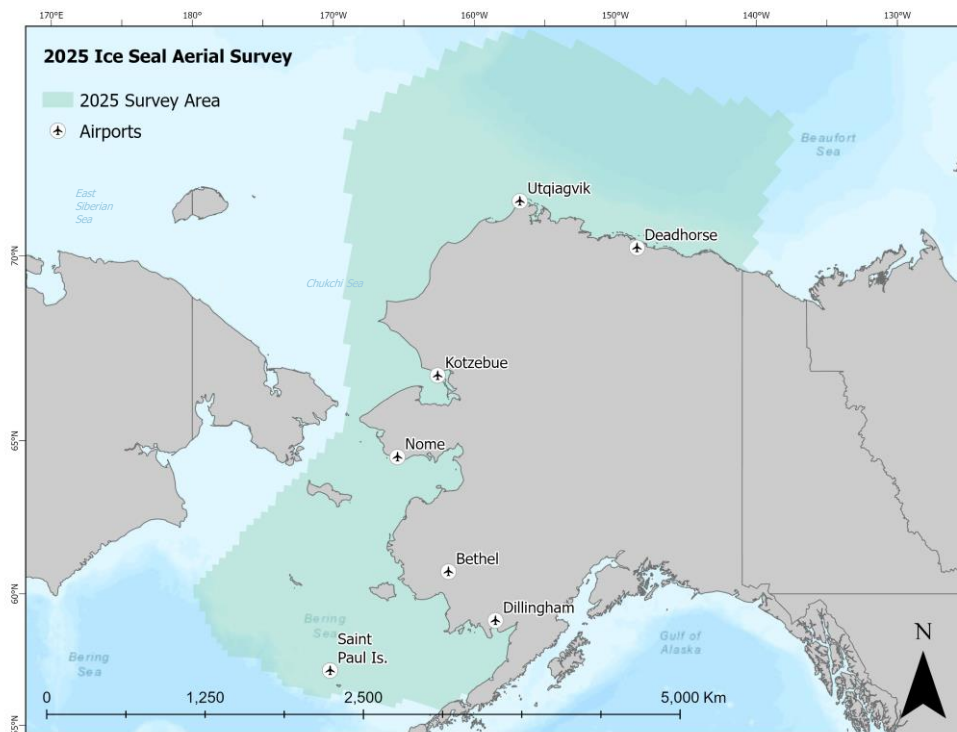


2025 Aerial Survey of Ice Seals in the Bering, Chukchi, & Beaufort Seas

April - June 2025



Who is conducting the research?

Scientists from NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Fisheries Science Center and the University of Washington's Cooperative Institute for Climate, Ocean, and Ecosystem Studies will be conducting the research.

This project is included in the annual Alaska Ice Seal Research Plan which describes research priorities for ice-associated seals in Alaska, and was developed by the Alaska Native Ice Seal Committee's Co-management Working Group.

What is the objective?

The objective of the project is to estimate the abundance and distribution of bearded, ringed, ribbon, and spotted seals in U.S. waters of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas to understand how these species are responding to changes in sea ice conditions.

Where is the survey area and how are data collected?

Flights will occur over U.S. waters of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas throughout the extent of spring sea ice. Two NOAA aircraft will fly at a target altitude of 1,000 feet and use cameras to collect color, thermal, and ultraviolet images of the sea ice habitat below. These images will be processed using machine learning algorithms to identify animals on the sea ice and species will be determined by experienced ice seal biologists.

Flight lines will be developed to target sea ice using current satellite imagery. Daily flight plans will be distributed to interested parties via email prior to each flight. If you would like to be added to this email list, please contact us!

Why are the data important?

Survey data are needed to derive abundance estimates of ice seals for sound planning and management decisions by agencies, and to conserve these species for the communities that rely on them as traditional resources.

See estimated timetable on back

Timetable. Proposed Operations*

Schedule for the 2025 Aerial Surveys of Ice Seals

Survey team arrives	1 April
Survey operations begin	3 April
Survey operations end	9 June
Survey team departs	10 June

*Tentative schedule as of November 2024.

What steps are you taking to prevent conflicts with subsistence hunting?

- We are contacting communities to discuss operations and communication plans.
- We will maintain a survey altitude of 1,000 feet (+/- 200 feet temporary variations).
- We will divert our flight path if any human activity is observed ahead of the aircraft.
- We will distribute daily flight plans with contact information for the field team.
- We are working with the Ice Seal Committee to include subsistent hunters on the survey aircraft.
- We will work directly with communities to determine whether and how to do the project to ensure the safety and well-being of local communities and the survey team.

How do you plan to communicate survey results?

The Marine Mammal Laboratory will prepare a report summarizing the preliminary results of the survey. We will present that report to the public by participating in various local and regional outreach activities including webinars with communities and radio interviews.



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