

# THE SEA ICE FOR WALRUS OUTLOOK

## 13 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE BERING STRAIT REGION

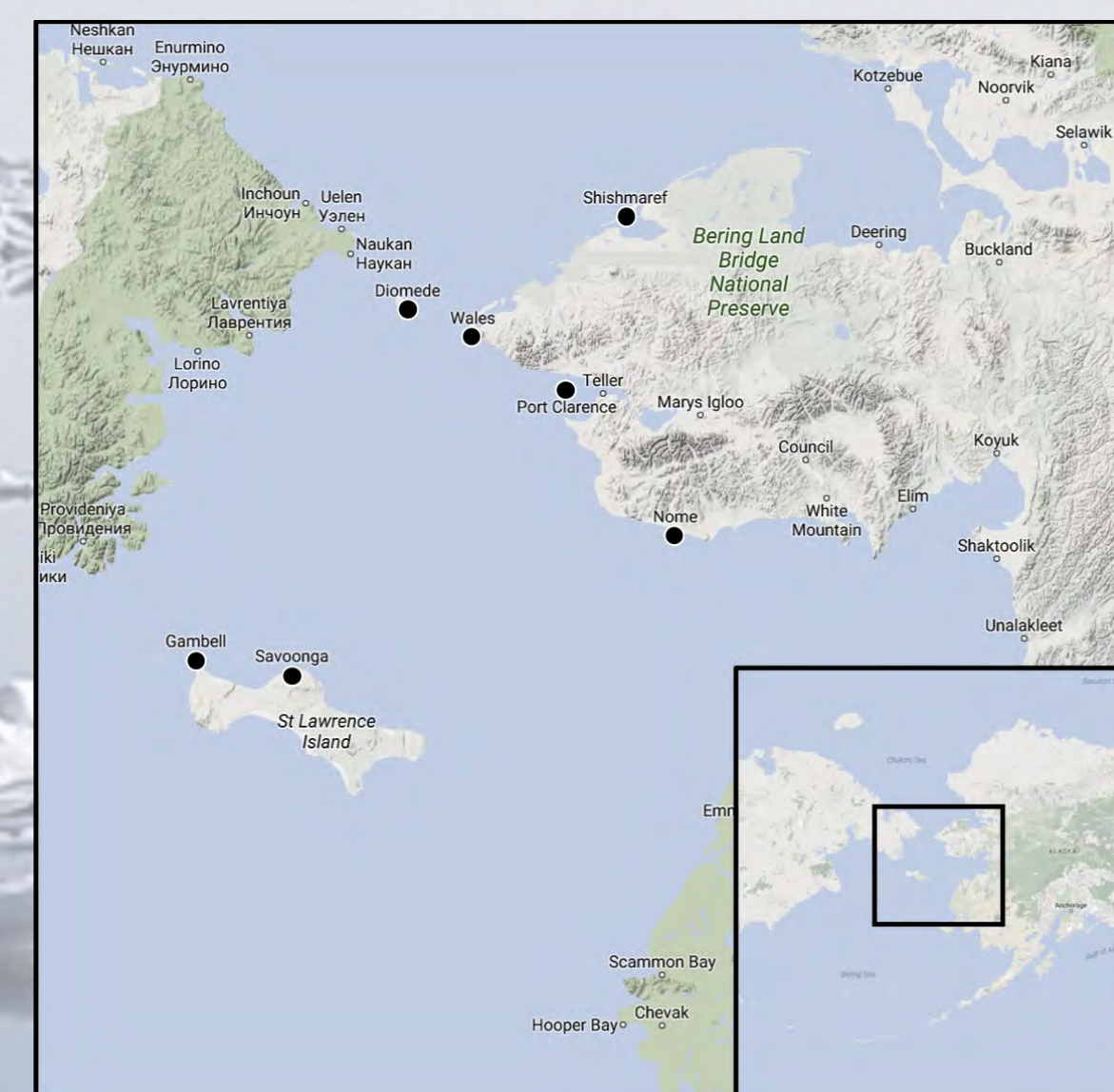
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### BACKGROUND

The Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook (SIWO; <https://www.arcus.org/siwo>) is a resource for Alaska Native subsistence hunters, coastal communities, and others interested in sea ice and walrus. The SIWO provides weekly reports during the spring sea-ice season with information on weather and sea-ice conditions relevant to walrus in the northern Bering Sea and southern Chukchi Sea regions of Alaska. Partners of the Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook program met for a two-day workshop hosted by the Arctic Research Consortium of the US (ARCUS; <https://www.arcus.org/>) and the Eskimo Walrus Commission ([www.eskimowalruscommission.org](http://www.eskimowalruscommission.org)), 25–26 March 2023 in Nome, Alaska to focus on relationship building, steering the future of the SIWO following an evaluation completed in early 2023, and capacity-building for SIWO observers.



Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook meeting participants. Left to right: Vera Metcalf, Sarah Rosengard, Kitty Sopow, Curtis Nayokpuk, Amy Hendricks, Mary-Beth Schreck, Ryan Metzger, Jill Prewitt, Robert Tokeinna, Jr., Marcus Barr, Lisa Sheffield Guy, Clarence Irrigoo, Jr., Marty Eleengayouq Ozenna, and Rick Thoman. Not pictured: Gay Sheffield. Photo courtesy of Miles Guy.



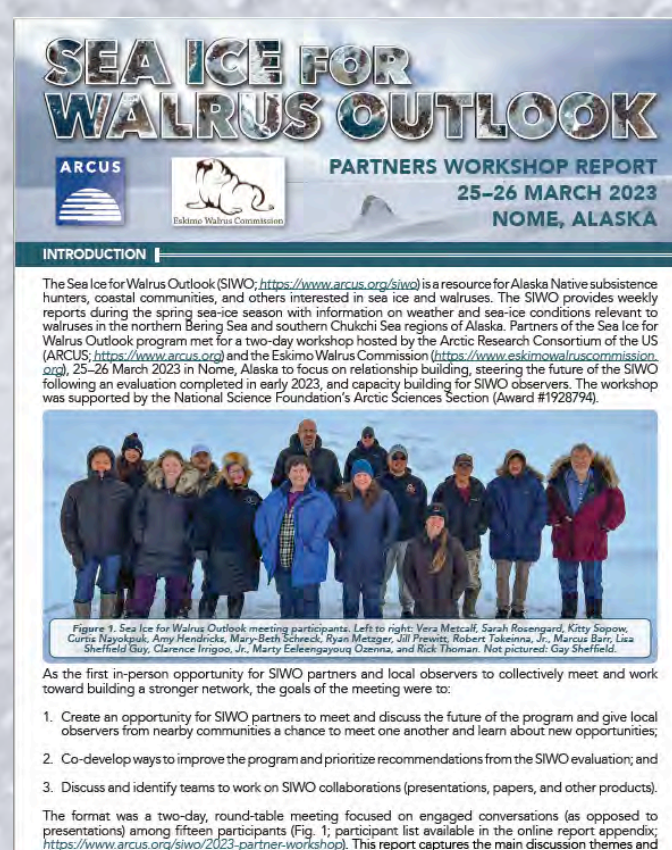
Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook serves the Bering Strait Region, with observers in seven Bering Strait communities: Curtis Nayokpuk–Shishmaref; Marty Eleengayouq Ozenna–Diomede; Robert Tokeinna, Jr.–Wales; Marcus Barr–Brevig Mission/Port Clarence; Frank Boogles Johnson–Nome; Clarence Irrigoo, Jr.–Gambell; Brandon Aqef Waghiyi–Savoonga.

### MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Early spring sea-ice conditions were similar to 2022, following a relatively warm winter with some rain, and ice was slow to form for most areas, often going out after forming.
- The SIWO program should prioritize youth engagement in the future through new platforms and outreach.
- SIWO should continue to focus on sea ice, weather, and walrus hunting in the Bering Strait region and maintain good communication with local networks and other organizations in the region.
- A good future activity of SIWO partners would be mapping NWS sea-ice terminology against local terms for SIWO communities.
- The lack of operational FAA weather stations is a major concern and public safety issue for several Bering Strait communities.
- SIWO information has been valuable in supporting community harvest disaster claims.
- The SIWO should be expanded to include more Bering Strait region communities, but any work beyond the region would be better approached through partnership with similar programs.
- Expansion of the SIWO season length will require more funding, but some off-season information from NWS can be shared.
- Increased outreach about SIWO—via outreach materials, radio, and conferences—would benefit the program.
- SIWO observers now have the training and option to use the SIKU app to record observations and share info outside of SIWO with others.
- SIWO observers learned about the different types of satellite imagery and where/how to access this information on their own.
- A new partnership with AOOS provides SIWO observers with hand-held weather stations and travel support to attend conferences/workshops.
- A SIWO partners meeting every 1–2 years would be best for the program.

### MEETING GOALS

As the first in-person opportunity for SIWO partners and local observers to collectively meet and work toward building a stronger network, the goals of the meeting were to: (1) create an opportunity for SIWO partners to meet and discuss the future of the program and give local observers from neighboring communities a chance to meet one another and learn about new opportunities; (2) co-develop ways to improve the program and prioritize recommendations from the SIWO evaluation; and (3) discuss and identify teams to work on SIWO collaborations/projects (presentations, papers, etc.).



Sheffield Guy, L., V. Metcalf, M. Barr, C. Irrigoo, A. Hendricks, R. Metzger, C. Nayokpuk, M. Ozenna, J. Prewitt, G. Sheffield, S. Rosengard, M. Schreck, K. Sopow, R. Thoman, and R. Tokeinna. 2023. *Workshop Report: Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook Partners Workshop, 25–26 March 2023, Nome, Alaska*. 8 pp.

Kettle, N. P., A. Hendricks, L. Sheffield Guy, O. A. Lee, V. Metcalf & D. Holen. 2023. Climate Services in a Rapidly Changing Environment: An Evaluation of the Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook (SIWO). *Polar Geography* 46:4 206–227.



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Background image courtesy of Frank Boogles Johnson