

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY

**UNITED STATES
COAST GUARD**



**DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
ARCTIC OPERATIONS AND TRAINING EXERCISES**

ALASKA

May 2014

U.S. Coast Guard
District Seventeen
Juneau, Alaska

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| ACRONYMS | Full Phrase or Definition |
|-----------------|---|
| ANIMIDA | Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in the Development Area |
| ANS | Arctic Natural Sciences |
| AOOS | Alaska Ocean Observing System |
| ARCSS | Arctic System Science |
| ASAMM | Aerial Surveys of Arctic Marine Mammals |
| AtoN | aids to navigation |
| BMP | best management practice |
| BOEM | Bureau of Ocean Energy Management |
| BRAC | Base Realignment and Closure |
| BSAI | Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands |
| BWASP | Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project |
| CEQ | Council on Environmental Quality |
| CERCLA | Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act |
| COMIDA | Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area |
| CFR | Code of Federal Regulations |
| CGD17INST | Coast Guard District 17 Instruction |
| COMDTINST | Commandant Instruction |
| CSESP | Chukchi Sea Environmental Studies Program |
| CWA | Clean Water Act |
| DEW | distant early warning |
| DGPS | Differential Global Positioning System |
| FOL | Forward Operating Location |
| EA | Environmental Assessment |
| EFH | Essential Fish Habitat |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| ESA | Endangered Species Act |
| FONSI | Finding of No Significant Impact |
| GPS | Global Positioning System |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| kHz | kilohertz |
| LORAN | Long-Range Navigation |
| LRRS | Long Range Radar Station |
| MARES | Marine Arctic Ecosystem Study |
| MBTA | Migratory Bird Treaty Act |
| MMPA | Marine Mammal Protection Act |
| MOA | memorandum of agreement |
| MRO | Mass Rescue Operation |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| nm | nautical miles |
| NMFS | National Marine Fisheries Service |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NPDES | National Pollution Discharge Elimination System |
| NPFMC | North Pacific Fishery Management Council |

| | |
|---------|---|
| NSF | National Science Foundation |
| NSIDC | National Snow and Ice Data Center |
| OCS | Outer Continental Shelf |
| OPA | Oil Pollution Act |
| RDC | Research & Development Center |
| RUSALCA | Russian-American Long-term Census of the Arctic |
| SBI | Shelf Basin Interactions |
| SAR | search and rescue |
| SOLAS | Safety of Life at Sea |
| SONS | Spill of National Significance |
| SRRS | Short Range Radar Station |
| TAPS | Trans-Alaska Pipeline System |
| TOWEX | Towing Exercise |
| UAV | unmanned aerial vehicle |
| U.S. | United States |
| USC | United States Code |
| USGS | United States Geological Survey |
| UUV | unmanned underwater vehicle |
| USFWS | United States Fish and Wildlife Service |
| VGP | Vessel General Permit |
| VOSS | Vessel of Opportunity Skimming System |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The information and analysis contained in this EA will determine whether an increased Coast Guard presence in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas would result in a significant impact on the environment, requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement, or if no significant impacts would occur and a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) would be appropriate.

The United States (U.S.) Coast Guard's mission is to protect the public, the environment, and U.S. economic interests, in the nation's ports and waterways, along the coast, on international waters, or in any maritime region, as required to support national security. The Coast Guard proposes to conduct Arctic operations and training exercises in order to fulfill this mission in the Arctic in response to a substantial increase in Arctic maritime activity.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide consistent and reliable Coast Guard presence in the Arctic to fulfill the Coast Guard's Arctic Strategy, guided by direction from the President of the United States, including the National Security Strategy, National Military and Maritime Strategies, National Strategy for the Arctic Region, Arctic Region Policy NSPD-66/HSPD-25, National Strategies for Homeland Security and Maritime Domain Awareness, National Ocean Policy, and Executive Order 13580. The need for the proposed action is to meet the Coast Guard's mandated missions in the Arctic where, to date, except for U.S. Coast Guard cutter HEALY, there has not been a consistent, established Coast Guard presence. The increased levels of human activity in the Arctic will result in an increase in maritime activities, particularly during the mid-March to mid-November seasonal surge.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

The proposed action is to conduct increased operations and training exercises in the Arctic to meet Coast Guard mission responsibilities due to the increase of national and international activities in the area. This would provide a shore, air, and sea Coast Guard presence to meet the seasonal surge mission requirements, typically mid-March through mid-November. These activities support the Arctic Strategy (U.S. Coast Guard 2013a) and enable the Coast Guard to fulfill its 11 mandated missions.

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative consists of five main elements: shore, air, and sea operations; training exercises, and tribal/government engagement. Specific activities related to these five elements are described below.

1. Shore Operations:

- Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) and logistics/staging locations would serve as temporary Coast Guard homebases for sea and air support during the seasonal surge of Arctic activities, mid-March to mid-November. Locations include Barrow and could also

include Nome, Kotzebue, Port Clarence, and various air strips and Distant Early Warning (DEW) line sites.

- The Coast Guard would conduct inspections of commercial and non-commercial vessels in major ports in Alaska to ensure compliance with law and further the missions of drug and migrant interdiction and marine safety. The Coast Guard would discuss boating safety with recreational boaters during port facility inspections or in a public school classroom setting.

2. *Air Operations:*

- The Coast Guard would execute air searches to locate missing persons and vessels.
- Routine Patrols and Arctic Domain Awareness Flights serve to locate, identify, and document human contacts north of the Arctic Circle. The flights would gather and verify data on coastal erosion, ice observation, and other scientific data requests. Arctic domain awareness flights provide an opportunity for pilot and crew familiarization with the Arctic Circle and provide a safe opportunity for media coverage of events.

3. *Sea Operations:*

- The Coast Guard would use satellite emergency position-indicating radio beacon locators, cell phones, satellite phones, distress flares, and by conducting search patterns in last known locations of missing boats.. Searching vessels may employ radar and sonar technologies to aid in detection. Deployment of self-locating buoys can assist in determining set and drift from last known position. Vessels are required for search and rescue (SAR) as a helicopter alone cannot carry numerous additional passengers.
- Up to two icebreakers would operate to support oceanographic and meteorological research, SAR, and law enforcement missions.
- Safety zones may be established around offshore oil exploration vessels engaged in drilling operations in agreement with the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 USC § 1331 et seq., usually from July through October. Other safety zones would be enforced as needed to protect divers and prevent vessel interference during salvage work, enforce flight restrictions, and maintain standoff distances to any other event that presents a hazard to navigation. Flight restrictions are communicated through Notice to Airmen and Federal Aviation Administration bulletins and could be in place where high tempo Coast Guard operations are occurring.
- The Coast Guard would routinely patrol Arctic waters to detect, deter, and disrupt maritime terrorist attacks, sabotage, or subversive acts; detect and investigate violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA); and to reduce the threat of foreign poaching of U.S. natural resources such as fish stocks or mineral deposits.
- An at-sea berthing and support facilities (modular messing, berthing, recreation facilities; ocean-capable barges; mobile seas base) are being considered to give Coast Guard the ability to persist on-scene and conduct an effective response to increasing needs within the action area. provide

4. *Training Exercises:*

- Rescue Exercises would practice towing distressed vessels (TOWEX) or simulate evacuation of passengers from a stricken ship (Mass Rescue Operation [MRO]).

- Flight crews would log in-flight hours to meet ongoing training requirements while at their FOL.
- Small boat training would include boat launching and maneuvers from cutter deployed boats. Some shore-based boats may be transported to facilities by air and then launched via vehicle on a case-by-case basis. Specific exercises include coxswain training, SAR, and vessel boarding and inspections. Cutters can also practice launching and recovering small boats
- Oil recovery training exercises would use simulated spill products that include buoyant, organic, and biodegradable items such as moss or fruit or fluorescein or rhodamine water-tracing dye. Use of these products provides the Coast Guard with the opportunity to study spill drift and practice skimming. Various skimming systems would be deployed.

5. *Building Partnerships: Tribal/Local Government Engagement.*

Formal and informal government-to-government and community engagement with tribes and local community leadership is vital to all of the Coast Guard’s missions. Engagement includes:

- (1) Local government and community engagement - sustained relationships with local governments and other community leaders.
- (2) Education and training outreach- Kids Don’t Float, Water Safety, Commercial Fishing Vessel Standards Outreach.
- (3) Tribal and native community engagement – sustained relationships with federally recognized tribes (tribes) and Alaska Native Organizations, and other community leaders.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Coast Guard would not be able to fulfill its mandated missions in the Arctic. The Coast Guard also enforces the MMPA and ESA, and without a Coast Guard presence in the Arctic, enforcement of these laws would be significantly reduced. The No Action Alternative would simply use existing assets from their normal operating locations (i.e., Kodiak for aviation assets, Kodiak or, if deployed, the Gulf of Alaska or Bering Sea for surface assets), and therefore would not be positioned for immediate emergency response.

The No Action Alternative would not meet the Coast Guard's mandate to provide a proactive air, surface, and shore-side Coast Guard presence in the Arctic to meet statutory mission requirements. As such, it is not a viable alternative and does not meet the purpose and need, but is included here for comparison of environmental effects with the Preferred Alternative.

Summary of Potential Environmental Consequences

A summary of the environmental impacts of the alternatives is provided in Table ES-1. The proposed action includes best management practices (BMPs) developed during federal and state agency permitting and approval processes, or as standard provisions for Coast Guard work. These BMPs would be employed to avoid or minimize adverse effects on the environment.

Table ES-1 Summary of Environmental Effects of the Alternatives

| Resource Area | No Action Alternative | Preferred Alternative |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Water Quality | Delay in response to environmental emergencies could negatively impact water quality in the region. | No significant impacts to water quality as BMPs would be in place for Coast Guard activities and Incident Control Centers would be established to handle environmental emergencies. |
| Biological Resources | Coast Guard would not be present in the area to take enforcement action against poaching of U.S. fish stocks and observed violations of the ESA, MMPA, Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable laws. | No significant adverse impacts to habitats, fish and essential fish habitat (EFH), marine mammals, birds, threatened or endangered species, or land mammals present in the action area are anticipated with implementation of the BMPs in Section 2.5. Positive impacts would result from Coast Guard's presence and ability to take enforcement action against poaching of U.S. fish stocks and observed violations of the ESA, MMPA, Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable laws |
| Cultural Resources | The Coast Guard would not proceed with tribal outreach and coordination efforts. No areas containing resources utilized for subsistence would be affected. | No significant adverse impacts to subsistence resources are anticipated as Coast Guard would have ongoing communications with potentially affected communities. |
| Socioeconomics | Lack of Coast Guard presence could inhibit at-sea commerce and increase poaching of fishing stocks. | No significant adverse impacts to socioeconomics, with minor positive impacts from local economic stimulation at Forward Operating Locations and increased sustainable fisheries through fisheries law enforcement. Coast Guard assets would also ensure the safe and efficient flow of marine traffic and commerce in the region. |
| Public Health and Safety | The Coast Guard would not be present to assist with navigation, commercial and non-commercial vessel safety, law enforcement, and the absence of previous outreach and educational programs. | No significant adverse impacts on public health and safety, and is likely to have positive impacts through faster response times to emergencies and continued education and outreach programs. Coast Guard assets would also ensure the safe and efficient flow of commerce in the region. |



Chapter 1 Purpose and Need for Action

The Arctic region is very dynamic and strategically important to global transportation, resource management, and international cooperation. The United States Coast Guard's (Coast Guard) vision for the Arctic Region is to "ensure safe, secure, and environmentally responsible maritime activity in the Arctic" (U.S. Coast Guard 2013a). This document presents the anticipated effects from Coast Guard operations and training exercises that occur at sea and over land in the Alaskan Arctic region. For the purposes of this Environmental Assessment (EA), the Arctic is defined as the waters of the United States (U.S.) and the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone and adjacent shoreline areas of Alaska from latitude 62.5°N westward to the U.S. and Russian border, northward through the Bering Sea and into the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas and eastward to the U.S. and Canadian border (Figure 1-1).

This EA has been prepared to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposed action. This EA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 United States Code [USC] §4321 *et seq.*); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §1500 *et seq.*); Department of Homeland Security Directive Number 023-01; and U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Instruction M16475.1D.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

There has been a progressive, year-by-year decline in the thickness and extent of Arctic sea ice. Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3 compare Arctic sea ice extent, human activities, and natural resources in 1992 versus 2012. The retreat of ice has created navigation routes through what is now called the Northwest Passage and Northern Sea Route (Figure 1-3). Arctic sea ice reached a record minimum of 3.61 million square kilometers (1.39 million square miles) in September 2012 (National Snow and Ice Data Center [NSIDC] 2012).

Vessel activity in the Arctic has increased with the retreating sea ice. Expanding commercial ventures in the Arctic have increased maritime traffic in the Bering Strait. From 2008 to 2012, traffic through the Bering Strait increased by 118 percent (U.S. Coast Guard 2013a). These activities include a broad range of vessels including icebreakers, research, oil industry, ore carriers, coastal resupply, cruise ships, recreational/adventurer vessels, and commercial fishing boats. With increased traffic comes an increased potential for search and rescue, water pollution, illegal fishing, and infringement on the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

The world's eight Arctic nations are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. These nations are developing agreements to operate effectively in the area, while pushing toward further aggressive growth of commercial shipping, exploration, and tourism. International energy companies with U.S. subsidiaries have reinvigorated their plans to conduct drilling operations in the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea.

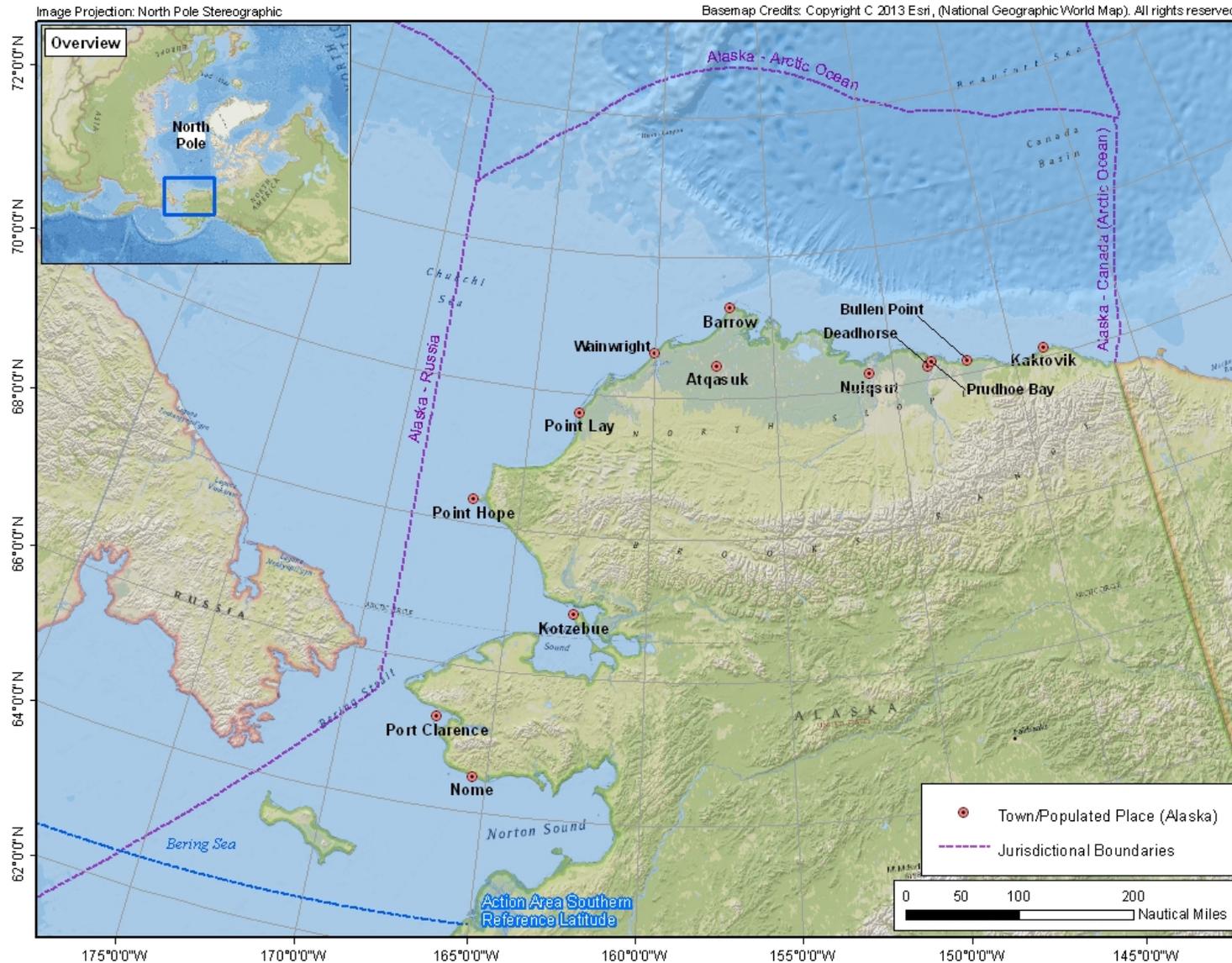


Figure 1-1 Action Area

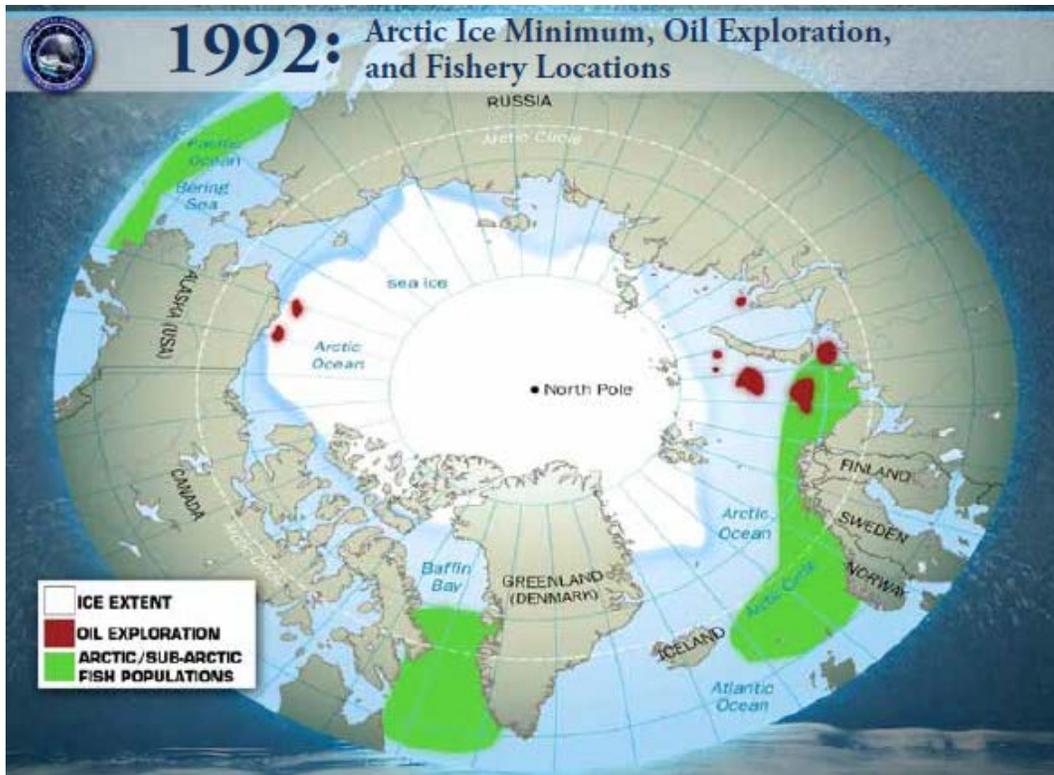


Figure 1-2 Sea ice extent and Arctic activities in 1992



Figure 1-3 Sea ice extent and Arctic resources and activities in 2012

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1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Though U.S. Coast Guard cutter HEALY has operated in the Arctic for over a decade, Coast Guard District Seventeen has routinely conducted exercises, trained personnel, and tested equipment in the Arctic for only six years. These activities have occurred by overcoming obstacles to communications, logistics, and harsh weather. The lessons learned have informed the Coast Guard about the specific requirements needed to succeed in this environment. In 2012 and 2013, the Coast Guard increased the tempo of training and exercises through Operation Arctic Shield.

Arctic Shield 2012 focused on operations, outreach, and an assessment of the Coast Guard's capabilities above the Arctic Circle. The forward operating location in Barrow consisted of two Kodiak-based MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters with supporting air, ground, and communications crews. The Coast Guard deployed several surface assets to the Arctic that provided a persistent operational presence and command and control capability in an area where the Coast Guard lacks the permanent infrastructure of a coastal sector. Two light-ice capable 225-foot sea-going buoy tenders, a 282-foot medium endurance cutter, and a 378-foot high endurance cutter were also deployed to the region to increase offshore operational capability, ensure the safety of mariners, patrol international borders, and provide additional search and rescue capabilities.

As part of Arctic Shield 2013, the Coast Guard opened its seasonal forward operating location in Kotzebue, Alaska in preparation for the anticipated increase of maritime activities in western Alaska and the Bering Strait. Deploying helicopters and personnel at the Alaska National Guard hangar in Kotzebue afforded the opportunity to leverage existing infrastructure and strategically positioned the Coast Guard to conduct standard operations and effectively respond to maritime emergencies in the Arctic area.

Coast Guard District 17 encompasses the entire state of Alaska and 44,000 miles of coastline. District 17 performs its missions in Alaska with 2,500 active duty, civilian, reservists and auxiliary members. As the Nation's lead federal agency for ensuring maritime safety and security in the Arctic, District 17 began Arctic Shield in 2012 to perform its statutory missions in the region. Arctic Shield consists of a three-pronged approach of operations, outreach and an assessment of the Coast Guard's capabilities in the Arctic.

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide consistent and reliable Coast Guard presence in the Arctic to fulfill the Coast Guard's Arctic Strategy, guided by direction from the President of the United States, including the National Security Strategy, National Military and Maritime Strategies, National Strategy for the Arctic Region, Arctic Region Policy NSPD-66/HSPD-25, National Strategies for Homeland Security and Maritime Domain Awareness, National Ocean Policy, and Executive Order 13580. The need for the proposed action is to meet the Coast Guard's mandated missions in the Arctic where, to date, except for U.S. Coast Guard cutter HEALY, there has not been a consistent, established Coast Guard presence. The increased levels of human activity in the Arctic will result in an increase in maritime activities, particularly during the mid-March to mid-November seasonal surge.

1.3 COAST GUARD MISSIONS

The legal basis for the Coast Guard is Title 14 of the United States Code (USC), which states: "The Coast Guard as established January 28, 1915, shall be a military service and a branch of the armed forces of the United States at all times."

Coast Guard District 17's overarching mission is to serve and safeguard the public, protect the environment and its resources, and defend the Nation's interest in the Alaskan maritime region. To do this, the Coast Guard has 11 statutory missions (6 USC § 468), each described in more detail below:

2. Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security
3. Drug Interdiction
4. Aids to Navigation
5. Search and Rescue
6. Living Marine Resources Law Enforcement
7. Marine Safety
8. Defense Readiness
9. Migrant Interdiction
10. Marine Environmental Protection
11. Ice Operations
12. Other Law Enforcement

1.3.1 Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security

The statutory mission described as ports, waterways and coastal security includes the following elements:

- Develop maritime security regimes,
- Detect, deter, and disrupt maritime terrorist attacks, sabotage, or subversive acts,
- Respond to and recover from attacks that may occur, and
- Work with port partners and review vessel and facility security plans to ensure responsible security planning in the private sector.

1.3.2 Drug Interdiction

The statutory mission described as drug interdiction includes the following elements:

- Reduce the supply of illegal drugs entering the United States via maritime routes through interdiction of smugglers and their illicit cargos at sea, and
- Counter drug trafficking organizations through the use of counterdrug bi-lateral agreements with partner nations.

1 **1.3.3 Aids to Navigation (AtoN)**

2 The statutory mission described as aids to navigation (AtoN) includes the following elements:

- 3 • Provide visual and electronic navigational aids, navigation information, and
4 vessel traffic management services for U. S. navigable waterways, and
- 5 • Ensure that bridges and causeways allow for the safe passage of waterborne
6 commerce and other marine traffic.

7 **1.3.4 Search and Rescue (SAR)**

8 The statutory mission described as search and rescue (SAR) includes the following elements:

- 9 • Provide immediate response to save lives and property in peril to minimize loss of
10 life, injury, and property damage,
- 11 • Coordinate search and rescue efforts of afloat and airborne Coast Guard assets
12 with those of other federal, state, and local responders,
- 13 • Coordinate response efforts on waterways after accidents or disasters, exercising
14 our Captain of the Port authorities and responsibilities, and
- 15 • Partner with the world's merchant fleet to rescue mariners in distress around the
16 globe through the Automated Mutual-assistance Vessel Rescue system.

17 **1.3.5 Living Marine Resources (fisheries law enforcement)**

18 The statutory mission described as living marine resources law enforcement includes the
19 following elements:

- 20 • Project federal law enforcement presence over the entire U.S. Exclusive
21 Economic Zone, covering nearly 3.4 million square miles of ocean,
- 22 • Ensure compliance with fisheries and marine protected species regulations on
23 domestic vessels,
- 24 • Prevent over-fishing, reduce mortality of protected species, and protect marine
25 habitats by enforcing domestic fishing laws and regulations, and
- 26 • Enforce the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered
27 Species Act (ESA).

28 **1.3.6 Marine Safety**

29 The statutory mission described as marine safety includes the following elements:

- 30 • Enforce safe and environmentally sound operation of U.S. flagged vessels
31 throughout the world,

- 1 • Assert authority over foreign vessels operating in U.S. waters to enforce safe,
2 secure, and environmentally sound operations in U.S. waters,
- 3 • Issue licenses and documents to qualified mariners, and promote competency
4 through a combination of training courses, requisite experience, and
5 examinations,
- 6 • Conduct inspections of U.S. and foreign vessels, marine facilities, and review
7 plans for vessel construction, alteration, equipment, and salvage, and
- 8 • Develop and monitor vessel construction and performance.

9 **1.3.7 Defense Readiness**

10 The statutory mission described as defense readiness includes the following elements:

- 11 • Support U.S. Combatant Commanders including:
 - 12 ○ Deploying law enforcement teams aboard U.S. Navy ships to stem the
13 flow of illegal drugs,
 - 14 ○ Train foreign nations in maritime law enforcement, security, and search
15 and rescue, and
 - 16 ○ Conduct alert, intercept, communication, surveillance, and escort activities
17 for National Air Defense.
- 18 • Provide capabilities and resources in support of naval warfare mission areas, and
- 19 • Function as a service under the Navy in time of war or when directed by the
20 President.

21 **1.3.8 Migrant Interdiction**

22 The statutory mission described as migrant interdiction includes the following elements:

- 23 • Reinforce the Nation's border security by providing a layered defense to deter,
24 detect, and interdict undocumented migrants attempting to enter the United States
25 illegally, and
- 26 • Preserve safety of life at sea and respect the human rights of migrants while
27 aboard Coast Guard assets.

28 **1.3.9 Marine Environmental Protection**

29 The statutory mission described as marine environmental protection includes the following
30 elements:

- 31 • Stop unauthorized ocean dumping and regulate the discharge of oil, hazardous
32 substances, and other shipboard wastes into U.S. and international waterways,

- 1 • Protect marine mammals,
- 2 • Regulate the introduction of invasive species into waterways,
- 3 • Respond to oil and hazardous substance accidents and reduce their impact on the
- 4 marine environment, and
- 5 • Develop environmental regulations and standards for domestic vessels and marine
- 6 facilities.

7 **1.3.10 Ice Operations**

8 The statutory mission described as ice operations includes the following elements:

- 9 • Keep critical U.S. waterways open for commercial traffic, assist vessels transiting
- 10 in ice-filled waterways, free vessels stuck in ice, and break ice dams to prevent ice
- 11 related flooding,
- 12 • Provide the means in ice-laden waters to allow scientific research, and
- 13 • Broadcast information on iceberg locations to vessels transiting Arctic waters.

14 **1.3.11 Other Law Enforcement**

15 The statutory mission described as other law enforcement includes the following elements:

- 16 • Enforce foreign fishing vessel laws,
- 17 • Patrol the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone boundary areas to reduce the threat of
- 18 foreign poaching of U.S. fish stocks,
- 19 • Monitor compliance with international living marine resource regimes and
- 20 international agreements, and
- 21 • Deter and enforce efforts to eliminate fishing using large drift-nets, a method of
- 22 high seas fishing considered to be one of the main obstacles to sustainable world
- 23 fisheries and healthy ocean ecosystems.

24 **1.4 COAST GUARD ASSETS**

25 Air and surface assets for Arctic operational support may come from Coast Guard District 17
 26 covering the state of Alaska, or other Coast Guard areas of operation. These vessels may include
 27 air assets such as fixed wing aircraft and helicopters, and surface assets such as cutters, small
 28 boats, buoy tenders, and icebreakers.

29
 30 Coast Guard District 17 aviation resources include both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. The
 31 HC-130H fixed-wing aircraft are used for long-range search, surveillance (i.e., usually law
 32 enforcement searches to locate a specific vessel or concentration of vessels), and support.
 33 Helicopters perform short and medium range rescue, recovery, coastal surveillance, and aids to
 34 navigation support roles. Increased use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems would be undertaken as
 35 feasible to assist in achieving Coast Guard missions, while not replacing the need for manned

1 assets, eg for SAR All of these could potentially operate in the Arctic, but it is more likely that
2 these assets would be dispersed on various missions including the Arctic, more southern areas of
3 Alaska, or forward deployed to other districts (continental U.S. or Hawaii) at any given time.

4
5 Surface assets could include National Security Cutters, High Endurance Cutters, or Medium
6 Endurance Cutters. Cutters also usually have a motor surf boat and/or a rigid hull inflatable boat
7 on board. The Cutters are commissioned vessels of the Coast Guard. They are 65 feet or greater
8 in length, have a permanently assigned crew, and have accommodations for the crew to live
9 onboard. There are three main types of large Cutters within the Coast Guard's command.
10 National Security Cutters are 418 feet in length, and are the largest and most technologically
11 sophisticated cutters in the Coast Guard. Each National Security Cutter is capable of operating in
12 the most demanding open ocean environments. The 378-foot High Endurance Cutters are
13 equipped with a helicopter flight deck, retractable hangar, and the facilities to support helicopter
14 deployment. The Medium Endurance Cutters vary in length from 210 to 282 feet, and have
15 supported Coast Guard missions around the world throughout their time in service. All National
16 Security Cutters, High Endurance Cutters, and Medium Endurance Cutters are flight deck
17 equipped. Helicopters are assigned on flight-deck equipped cutters on a case-by-case basis, but
18 typically all the large cutters will have a Coast Guard helicopter detachment assigned to them
19 when working with the District 17 area.

20
21 Other cutters that may operate in the action area are not flight deck equipped. Currently, 110'
22 Island-class patrol boats may operate in the action area and are used for search and rescue and
23 law enforcement. In the near future, Coast Guard District 17 will likely acquire Sentinel-class
24 fast response cutters. The Sentinels have been commissioned to help meet the Coast Guard's
25 need for additional patrol boats. They are 154 ft long, with crew capabilities to hold 24 people. It
26 will enhance Coast Guard response times with a top speed of 28 kts, an improvement over the
27 existing patrol boat speeds of 26 kts. The fast response cutter will be able to operate in rougher
28 sea states compared with the 110' Island-class patrol boats, which will allow the fast response
29 cutter to patrol a larger area and remain on patrol longer during heavier weather than the current
30 patrol boats.

31
32 During Arctic Shield 2013, several Coast Guard cutters were deployed to the Arctic, including:
33 the ice breakers POLAR STAR and HEALY (homeported in Seattle, Washington); the National
34 Security Cutter WAESCHE (homeported in Alameda, California); the patrol boat NAUSHON
35 (homeported in Ketchikan, Alaska); and the seagoing buoy tender SPAR (homeported in Kodiak,
36 Alaska).

37
38 The 225-foot Seagoing Buoy Tender is equipped with a single controllable pitch propeller, bow
39 and stern thrusters, which give the cutter the maneuverability it needs to tend buoys offshore and
40 in restricted waters. A Dynamic Positioning System can hold the vessel within a 10 meter circle
41 using the Global Positioning System allowing the crew to service and position floating aids to
42 navigation more efficiently in winds up to 30 knots and 8-foot seas.

43
44 The largest cutters operated by the Coast Guard are the icebreakers. These cutters, specifically
45 designed for open-water icebreaking have reinforced hulls, special icebreaking bows, and a
46 system that allows rapid shifting of ballast water to increase the effectiveness of their

1 icebreaking. The POLAR SEA and POLAR STAR were built in the 1970s and the newest and
2 most technologically advanced icebreaker, the Cutter HEALY was added to the fleet in
3 November 1999. At this time POLAR SEA is not operational and is not expected to be so in the
4 near future. They serve in the Arctic and Antarctic, serving science and research as well as
5 providing supplies to remote stations. Polar Class icebreakers also carry an Arctic Survey Boat
6 and Landing Craft on board, and are flight deck equipped. On the Polar Class vessels, helicopter
7 support is likely to be contracted or civilian helicopter support for specific scientific missions
8 while in the Arctic.

9 10 1.5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

11 Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA require federal agencies to
12 “involve environmental agencies, applicants, and the public, to the extent practicable, in
13 preparing [environmental] assessments” (40 CFR 1501.4[b]). The Coast Guard has coordinated
14 with several regulatory agencies, as appropriate (see Chapter 6). The public comment period for
15 the EA is Tuesday, May 6, 2014 – Wednesday, May 28, 2014. A Notice of Availability for the
16 EA will be published in the Nome Nugget, Anchorage Daily News and the Arctic Sounder in
17 May 2014 (Appendix B). Public meetings will be held in Nome on Monday, May 12, 2014,
18 Anchorage on Tuesday, May 13, 2014, Kotzebue on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 and Barrow on
19 Friday, May 16, 2014. Comments and questions received during the comment period, and
20 responses to any substantive comments, will be included in Appendix C to the Final EA.

21
22 In addition, the Coast Guard engages with Alaska local governments and communities, including
23 local governments, tribes, subsistence user groups, and other leaders of the communities, prior to
24 and during Coast Guard operations. The Coast Guard works to address any concerns or questions
25 and keep them informed of anticipated Coast Guard actions in their area.



Chapter 2 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the Coast Guard’s proposed action and alternatives for meeting increased mission demands in the Arctic. This chapter also includes the No Action Alternative, a discussion of the alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed consideration, and a discussion of best management practices (BMPs) included in the proposed action.

2.2 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to conduct operations and training exercises in the Arctic to meet Coast Guard mission responsibilities due to the increase of national and international activities in the area. This objective would provide a shore, air, and sea Coast Guard presence to meet the seasonal surge mission requirements, typically mid-March through mid-November. These activities support the Arctic Strategy and enable the Coast Guard to fulfill its 11 mandated missions, as described in Section 1.3, Coast Guard Missions.

2.3 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Preferred Alternative consists of five main elements: shore, air, and sea operations; training exercises, and tribal/government engagement. Specific activities related to these five elements are described below.

2.3.1 Shore Operations

2.3.1.1 Forward Operating Locations and Logistics/Staging Locations

These locations serve as temporary Coast Guard homebases for sea and air support during the seasonal surge of Arctic activities, mid-March to mid-November.

Barrow is a forward operating location (FOL) for deployment of air assets supporting Coast Guard seasonal missions using leased hangar facilities. Barrow serves as a refueling station for Coast Guard aircraft and up to two helicopters. Missions include support for SAR and Arctic domain awareness flights as well as support for other federal agency missions as requested.

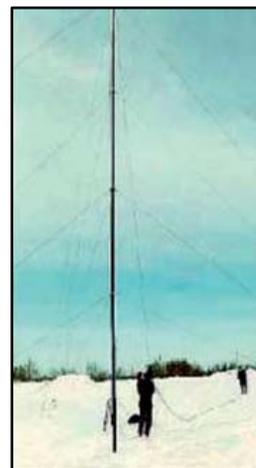


Figure 2-1 Fanlight antenna

The Coast Guard may construct permanent facilities on a previously disturbed site in close proximity to existing infrastructure to support air operations. This may include installing a temporary 50-foot Fanlite™ high frequency antenna (Figure 2-1) on a developed gravel or asphalt area, an 80- to 120-foot permanent antenna, and a radio room. Antennae would be outfitted with bird diverters on all guy wires. As further specifics are developed, environmental documentation and permit applications with applicable details will be prepared, as necessary.

1 Flight and service crews resided in hotels during Arctic Shield 2012 and 2013. In the future, the
2 Coast Guard may build permanent, fixed facilities near existing facilities and services to support
3 30 or more personnel for berthing, dining, support, and recreational services. As further specifics
4 are developed, environmental documentation and permit applications with applicable details will
5 be prepared, as necessary.

6
7 **Nome and Kotzebue** may serve in the future as FOLs in a capacity similar to that of Barrow.
8 Both locations have good potential for deep-water ports with close proximity to outer continental
9 shelf oil and gas endeavors and potential mining operations. In April of 2012, Alaska House Bill
10 286 awarded \$10,000,000 in state bonds for Port Design and Construction to each locality (U.S.
11 Army Corps of Engineers 2013). Development of deep-water ports would require adding aids to
12 navigation and the accompanied increase in commercial shipping would increase the need for
13 Coast Guard presence and development of facilities to meet mission requirements.

14
15 In January of 2012, Nome was the focus of international attention and awareness for the need of
16 Coast Guard presence when the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker HEALY carved a path through the
17 frozen Bering Sea for the RENDA, a Russian tanker carrying 1.3 million gallons of emergency
18 gasoline and diesel fuel.

19
20 During the Coast Guard's Arctic Shield 2013, personnel from Coast Guard Base Kodiak and Air
21 Station Kodiak spent nine days operating out of an Alaska Army National Guard hangar as part
22 of an FOL in Kotzebue. An MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew and support staff flew throughout
23 the region to increase the Coast Guard's knowledge about Western Alaska and met with local
24 leaders to strengthen the Coast Guard's bonds with the community.

25
26 **Port Clarence.** In 2013 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Alaska State Department of
27 Transportation and Public Facilities published a co-sponsored three-year study to enhance the
28 Alaska Deep-Draft Arctic Port System. The analysis identified candidate sites for consideration
29 to develop into a deepwater port as a logistics and staging location for vessel maintenance,
30 refueling, and resupplying. One of these candidate sites was Port Clarence. Port Clarence is a
31 natural deep-water bay with no improved waterfront facilities (note: there are no construction
32 activities currently taking place in Port Clarence).

33
34 The former Coast Guard's Long-Range Navigation (LORAN) Station Port Clarence is now
35 decommissioned. The facility, situated on 2,648 acres on a spit of land named Pt. Spencer, is
36 adjacent to the Bay of Port Clarence. It has a runway, fuel tanks, several buildings, and
37 generators in caretaker status in alignment with Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)
38 Maintenance Service Level III standards.

39
40 The Arctic Deep Draft Port Study is underway and analyzed in Cumulative Effects, Chapter 4.
41 As further specifics are developed, environmental documentation and permit applications with
42 applicable details will be prepared, as necessary.

43
44
45 **Airports, airstrips, and distant early warning (DEW) line sites.** Within the study area,
46 numerous airports with services and facilities may serve as FOLs for deployment of air assets.

1 Additionally, repairs to support air operations may occur on DEW line sites and other airstrips
 2 with limited or no facilities. Upgrades would occur after the polar bear birthing season to avoid
 3 disturbing mothers and cubs, as bears have been known to use berms along unused airstrips for
 4 birthing dens. The following airports, airstrips, and DEW line sites in Table 2-1 and Figure 2-2
 5 are under consideration as future FOLs or logistics and staging locations for deployment of air
 6 assets in support of Coast Guard seasonal missions. Missions could include support for SAR and
 7 Arctic domain awareness flights. Some of the airports are Long Range Radar Stations (LRRS) or
 8 Short Range Radar Sites (SRRS). DEW line sites in the Arctic region have useable or upgradable
 9 infrastructure such as runways, generators, fuel tanks, and hangars. Many of these DEW line
 10 sites are currently not maintained.

11
 12 **Cold Bay, Dutch Harbor, and Unalaska.** Though not within the defined Arctic region, these
 13 locations provide support for activities that further the Coast Guard's efforts in the Arctic. For
 14 short durations, the Coast Guard may deploy additional air assets using existing leased facilities
 15 to support missions such as SAR and law enforcement in the Arctic.

16
 17
 18 **Table 2-1 Airports, airstrips, and DEW lines for possible future use**

| | |
|---|--|
| Point Hope Airport | CD-3 Airstrip |
| Cape Lisburne LRRS Airport | Helmericks Airport |
| Cape Sabine DEW Line Station | Oliktuk Point DEW Line Station |
| Point Lay LRSS Airport | Oooguruk Island Heliport |
| Icy Cape DEW Line Station | Pioneer Helipad |
| Wainwright Air Force Station | Northstar Heliport |
| Wainwright DEW Line Station | Seal Island Heliport |
| Wiley Post-Will Rogers Memorial Airport | Deadhorse Airport |
| Point Barrow DEW Line Station | Prudhoe Bay Landing Strip |
| Lonely DEW Line Station | Bullen Point Air Force Station Landing Strip |
| Kogru DEW Line Station | Brown Low Point Landing Strip |
| Nuiqsut Landing Strip | Barter Island DEW Line Station |
| Port Clarence Airstrip | |

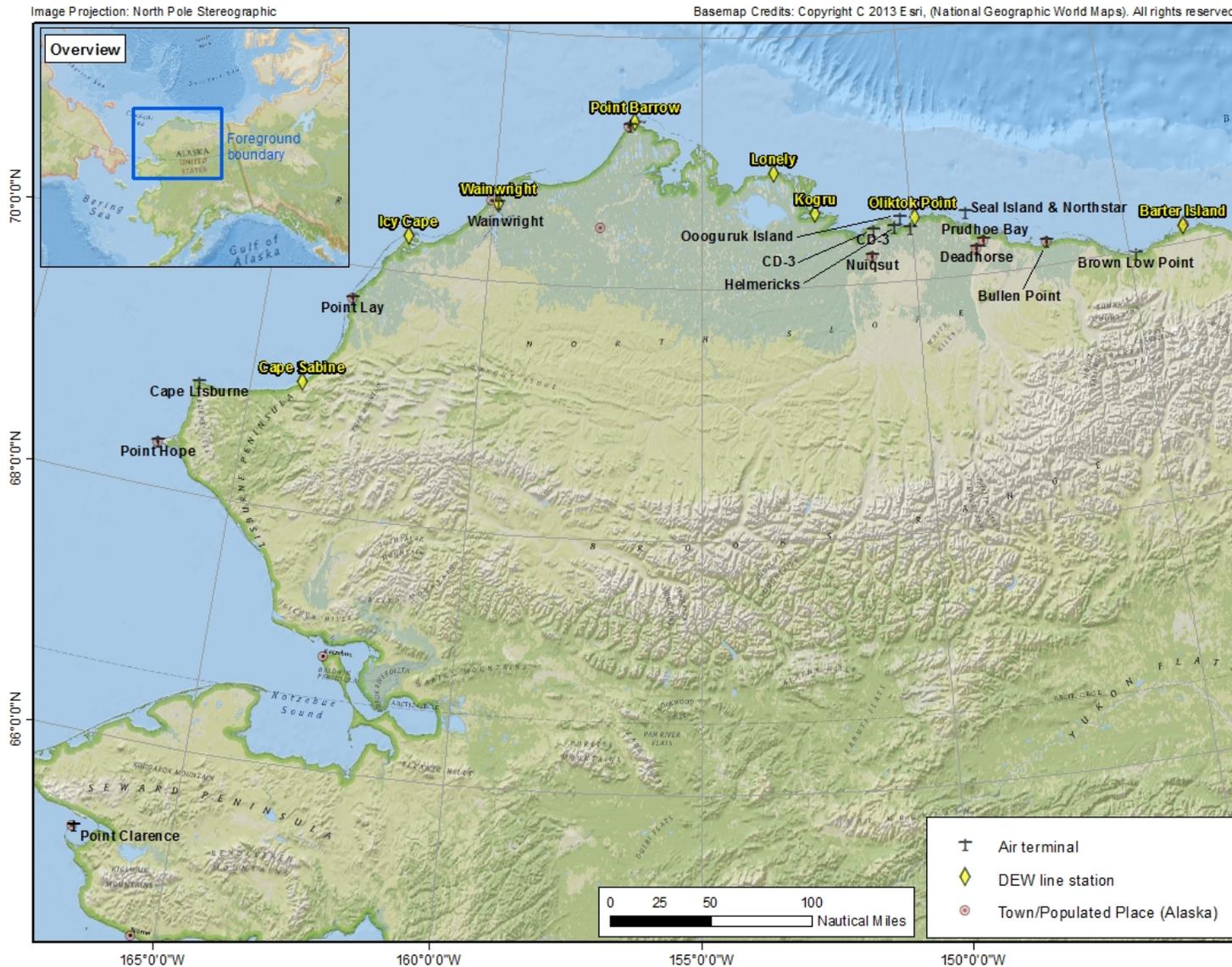


Figure 2-2 Air strips and DEW line stations within the proposed action area

2.3.1.2 *Inspections and Safety*

The Coast Guard would conduct inspections of vessels in major ports in Alaska to ensure cargos are as claimed, safety standards are intact, and construction or maintenance plans meet established standards. Inspections of both commercial and non-commercial vessels further the missions of drug and migrant interdiction and marine safety. Lasers could be used underwater for threat detection. These lasers are typically used at ranges less than 20 feet to create detailed imaging of a ship's hull. These lasers can be used to detect damage and screen for explosives. The Coast Guard would discuss boating safety with recreational boaters during port facility inspections or in a public school classroom setting.

2.3.2 *Air Operations*

2.3.2.1 *Search and Rescue*

Search and rescue missions are those that have the goal of preventing the loss of life and property. Because of the vast area of Coast Guard SAR responsibilities in Alaska, an aircraft often is sent to find the vessel and report its location and status before a Coast Guard vessel is sent for the rescue. Air searches for persons in the water must be performed at an altitude below 500 feet to be effective. Recovering persons in the water and dropping rescue equipment must also be done while the helicopter is hovering below 500 feet. Materials that may be left behind during an SAR operation include dye packs, life rafts, and flares. Dye packs are diluted and non-toxic, typically fluorescein.



Figure 2-3 MH-60T Helicopter participation in SAR training

2.3.2.2 *Routine Patrols and Arctic Domain Awareness Flights*

These operations serve to locate, identify, and document human contacts north of the Arctic Circle. The flights would also gather and verify data on coastal erosion, ice observation, and other scientific data requests (carcass surveys, walrus haulout locations, etc.). Arctic domain awareness flights provide an opportunity for pilot and crew familiarization with the Arctic Circle and can be the only safe opportunity for media coverage of events. Routine patrols and Arctic domain awareness flights are typically performed above 500 feet, weather permitting.

2.3.3 *Sea Operations*

All Coast Guard vessels are equipped with standard navigational technologies, including radar and navigation sonars (Table 2-2). These devices allow ships to operate safely in the complex arctic environment, and will be used by all relevant platforms during standard operations, training, and other missions. These devices allow ships to operate safely in the complex arctic environment, and will be used by all relevant platforms during standard operations, training, and other missions. Additionally, unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) used in emergency response and training operations may be equipped with sonar equipment to aid in obstacle detection. Effects of these acoustic sources are discussed in detail in the Biological Evaluation in Appendix A.

1 **Table 2-2 Active Acoustic Sources associated with Sea Operations and Training**

| Source type | Frequency range [kHz] | Source level [dB re 1µPa @ 1m] | Associated Action |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Small vessel | 1 – 7 | 175 | Small boat training, routine patrols |
| Large vessel | 0.02 – 0.30 | 190 | All sea operations and training |
| Icebreaking | 0.01 – 0.1 | 205 | Icebreaking activities |
| Echosounder (single-beam) | 3.5 -1,000 | 205 | All sea operations and training, research and development |
| Echosounder (multi-beam) | 180 – 500 | 242 | Icebreaking activities, Oil Recovery Exercises, research and development |
| Side-scan sonar | 100 – 1,600 | 249 | Icebreaking activities, Oil Recovery Exercises, research and development |

2 kHz: kiloHertz;

3 References: Richardson et al. 1995; NMFS 2012; U.S. Coast Guard 2013b; Roth et al. 2013.

4

5 **2.3.3.1 Search and Rescue**

6
7 When air support provides the location, Coast
8 Guard vessels can transit to the rescue location
9 of a vessel in distress. Flight deck equipped
10 vessels provide logistical support to aircraft
11 (Figure 2-4). Cutters can carry and deploy
12 small boats to assist with rescues.
13



Figure 2-4 High Endurance Cutter with helicopter flight deck



Figure 2-5 Fast Response Cutter

15 Coast Guard vessels can locate victims
16 without air support through satellite
17 emergency position-indicating radio beacon
18 locators, cell phones, satellite phones, distress
19 flares, and by conducting search patterns in
20 last known locations. Searching vessels may
21 employ radar and sonar technologies to aid in
22 detection. Deployment of self-locating buoys
23 can assist in determining set and drift from last
24 known position. When vessels carrying a large
25 number of souls aboard require rescue, Coast
26 Guard vessels must get to the site quickly, as a helicopter alone cannot carry numerous additional
27 passengers. Island class patrol boats support search and rescue (SAR) and fast response cutters
(Figure 2-5) could act as aids to Arctic SAR.

2.3.3.2 Icebreaking

The Coast Guard operates two icebreakers in Arctic waters, one heavy polar icebreaker POLAR STAR (Figure 2-6) and one medium polar icebreaker HEALY. Both icebreakers are homeported in Seattle, Washington, and operate in the Arctic between March and November each year, mainly in the Chukchi Sea west to the Russian border and in the Beaufort Sea east to the Canadian border. The main mission of the HEALY is oceanographic and meteorological research. More information on the HEALY and science missions can be found at www.icefloe.net. Icebreakers also participate in a few SAR and law enforcement missions each year, and are prepared to collaborate with the domestic sector in ship escort, towing, and oil-spill response activities. Most expeditionary missions last approximately 60 days, although missions of 180 - 200 days will routinely occur on the HEALY.

Each icebreaker can carry up to two MH-65C helicopters for ice reconnaissance, logistics supply, and support of specific science projects, and several boats up to a length of about 37 feet. The icebreakers have a cruising speed of 10 to 12 knots and a maximum speed of about 17 knots. During icebreaking operations, they usually travel at 3 to 8 knots, and may travel even slower when breaking heavy ice. The general method for icebreaking is simply driving the ship up on top of the ice until the weight of the ship breaks the ice. The blunted bow of the icebreaker



Figure 2-6 Icebreaker POLAR STAR

enables it to ride up on top of the ice while the stern sinks lower in the water. The force of buoyancy acting on the submerged portion of the stern creates a lever-like action bringing the icebreaker's weight down onto the ice and breaking it. The noise is essentially the same as noise from natural icebreaking that occurs when the ice pack shifts. Another lesser-used and less preferable method of icebreaking is backing and ramming, which is repeatedly striking the ice in a controlled manner to break through a ridge. When backing and ramming is needed, the "best practice" of not throwing the ship into full reverse, but rather reaching that state gradually, then ramming, would be used.

Helicopters conduct reconnaissance flights to detect open water leads in the ice, through which the icebreaker can more easily transit. This typically occurs at 400-1,500 feet in altitude. Additionally, personnel use a combination of satellite imagery, ice reports from the National Weather Service, and cameras and radar on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to identify leads and areas of reduced ice coverage or thickness.

The primary mission of the icebreakers in Arctic waters is scientific research. The POLAR STAR serves as a scientific research platform with five laboratories and accommodations for up to 20 scientists. Cranes and work areas near the stern and port side of ship give scientists the capability to do at-sea studies in the fields of geology, volcanology, oceanography, sea-ice physics, and other disciplines. The HEALY conducts a wide range of research activities,

1 providing more than 4,200 square feet of scientific laboratory space, numerous electronic sensor
2 systems, oceanographic winches, and accommodations for up to 50 scientists. The POLAR
3 STAR is able to ram through ice up to 21 feet thick and steam continuously through 6 feet of ice
4 at 3 knots and operate at -60° Fahrenheit. The HEALY can ram through ice 8 feet thick and
5 break 4.5 feet of ice continuously at 3 knots and operate at -50° Fahrenheit. Scientific equipment
6 may include 3-24 kHz bottom mapping echosounders and Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers in
7 the 38-150 kHz range sonar systems used for mapping and obstacle detection tasks.

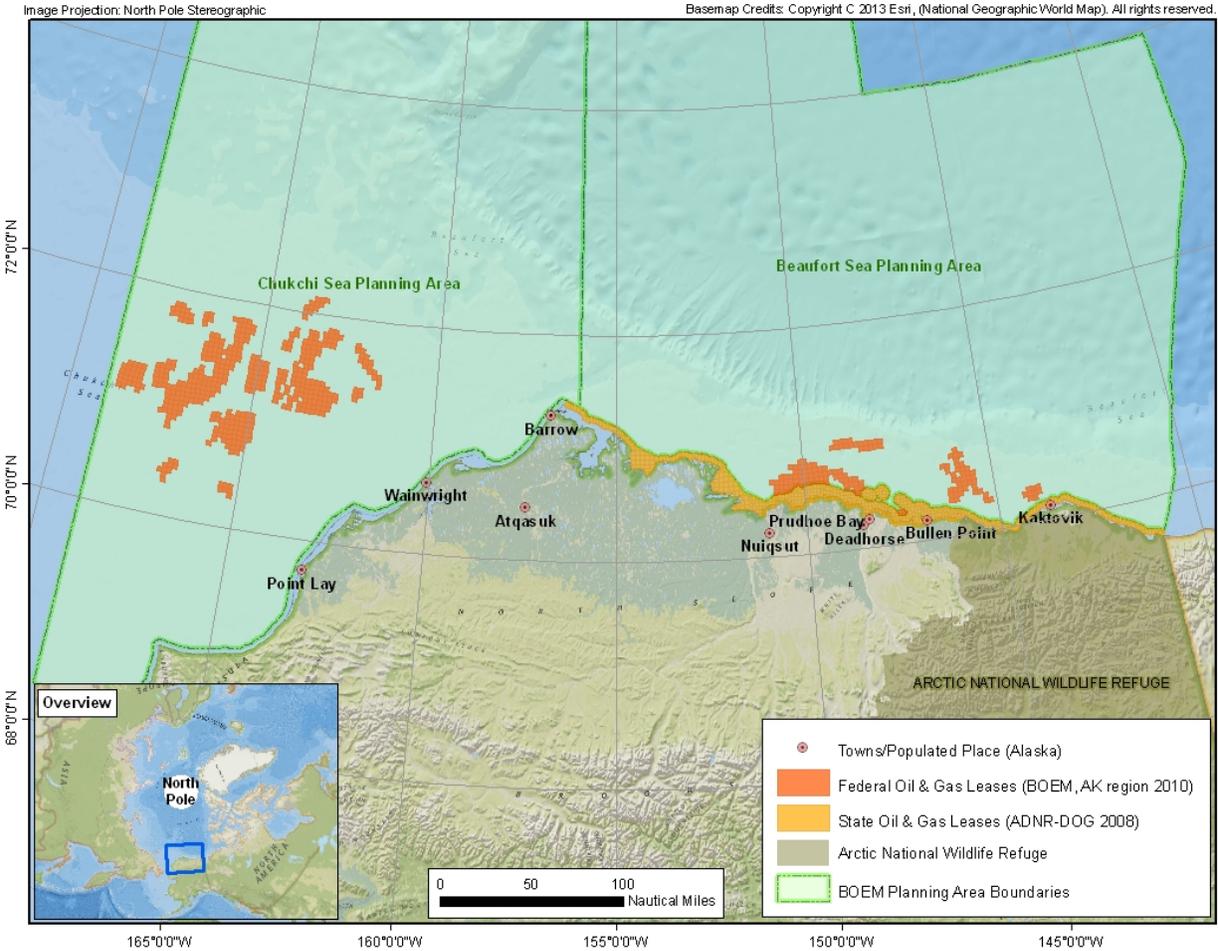
8
9 Unless the icebreaker's mission specifically involves investigating an endangered species, the
10 icebreaker will plan its passage through the ice to avoid any known sanctuaries or feeding
11 grounds. Trained crewmembers look specifically for marine mammals during operations. Their
12 reports provide scientists and biologists invaluable information on endangered and threatened
13 species and their habitats. When marine mammals are spotted, the icebreaker changes course
14 unless there is a threat to navigational safety. After consulting with local communities, the
15 vessels avoid active subsistence whale hunting areas during spring and fall migrations of
16 bowhead whales so as not to interfere with subsistence whale hunting.

17
18 **2.3.3.3 Safety Zones**

19 A 500-meter safety zone may be established around offshore oil exploration vessels actively
20 engaged in exploratory drilling operations in agreement with the Outer Continental Shelf Lands
21 Act, 43 USC § 1331 et seq., usually from July through October. Figure 2-7 shows the lease
22 blocks established in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

23
24 The establishment of the zones would be conducted in accordance with the Notice of Proposed
25 Rulemaking Process and has been published in the Federal Register with an appropriate time for
26 public comment. These safety zones are intended to ensure the safe navigation of all vessels
27 transiting in the area. The safety zones would establish an area that is intended to be clear of
28 other vessels and people who may intentionally or unintentionally interfere with permitted
29 drilling operations. The Coast Guard would monitor and enforce the established safety zones. No
30 physical markers are used to delineate safety zones, but a Notice to Mariners is issued.

31
32 Other safety zones would be enforced as needed to protect divers and prevent vessel interference
33 during salvage work, enforce flight restrictions, and maintain standoff distances to any other
34 event that presents a hazard to navigation. Flight restrictions are communicated through Notice
35 to Airmen and Federal Aviation Administration bulletins and could be in place where high tempo
36 Coast Guard operations are occurring.



1

2 **Figure 2-7 Oil lease areas in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas**

3 **2.3.3.4 Routine Patrols**

4 The Coast Guard would routinely patrol Arctic waters to detect, deter, and disrupt maritime
 5 terrorist attacks, sabotage, or subversive acts; detect and investigate violations of the Marine
 6 Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA); and to reduce the
 7 threat of foreign poaching of U.S. natural resources such as fish stocks or mineral deposits.

8

9 **2.3.3.5 At-Sea Berthing and Support Facilities for Operations**

10 Lack of infrastructure, long distances, and limited at-sea endurance of vessels requires that the
 11 Coast Guard obtain at-sea direct support capability for Arctic contingency operations. The
 12 acquisition of support barges or obtaining access to support vessels will make the difference in
 13 the ability to persist on-scene and conduct an effective response to increasing needs within the
 14 action area. Various considerations to increase operational capacity and personnel support are
 15 under consideration such as:

16

- 17 • Construct joint use modular thirty man messing, berthing, recreation facility with radio
- 18 room and installed antenna

- 1 • Acquire ocean-capable barges to use for operational staging and support, thereby
2 providing faster response time during contingency operations, and
- 3 • Mobile sea bases could support spill response operations by assembling a floating island
4 of barges to serve as a mobile base of operations. These would provide command and
5 control, messing and berthing, helicopter support, decontamination, and logistics staging
6 for the operational personnel (Figure 2-8). The placement of an at-sea mobile sea base
7 would not be located in any sensitive areas, including critical habitat, subsistence use, or
8 areas of heavy marine traffic. As further specifics are developed, environmental
9 documentation and permit applications with applicable details will be prepared, as
10 necessary.



11
12 **Figure 2-8 Mobile sea base**
13

14 **2.3.4 Training Exercises**

15 The Coast Guard must continually assess the capability of personnel, assets, and resources
16 operating in the Arctic. Training is required for ice navigation, oil spill response, mass rescue
17 operations, and practicing Arctic logistics exercises for sea, land, and air. Training not only
18 hones skills relevant to operations today, but also helps assess future capability needs for the
19 Coast Guard. As Arctic operations expand, more joint service exercises will likely occur.
20 Involved agencies could include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and all
21 branches of the Department of Defense. Additionally, increasing efforts have been made in the
22 past two years to include local governments and tribes in these exercises.

23 **2.3.4.1 Rescue Exercises**

24 Historically, these Coast Guard exercises have utilized primarily Coast Guard resources.
25 Increasing effort has been made in the past two years to include local governments in these
26 exercises. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly likely and prudent that these exercises will
27 involve coordination with other nations such as Canada and Russia.

1
2 **Passing and Towing Exercise (TOWEX).** These exercises practice towing distressed vessels.

3
4 **Mass Rescue Operation (MRO) table-top exercise.** This exercise simulates a SAR mission
5 characterized by large numbers of persons in distress, such that the capabilities normally
6 available to search and rescue authorities are inadequate. It involves coordination with federal,
7 state, local, and possibly international entities, but does not occur in the field.

8
9 **Mass Rescue Operation (MRO) field exercise.** This exercise would involve the use of a
10 surface asset, typically a cutter, to simulate a stricken ship, and then deploys boats and life rafts
11 to simulate evacuation of passengers. Usually actual Emergency Medical Technicians and fire
12 equipment would be used to make the exercise more realistic. Materials such as dye packs or
13 flares could be expended during these exercises. These exercises would also include the use of
14 local community resources including hospitals, ambulances, and local rescue resources.

15 16 **2.3.4.2 Flight Training**

17 Flight crews would be required to log in-flight hours to meet ongoing training requirements
18 while at their FOL. As weather permits, MH-60T and MH-65D helicopters would be flown in
19 the FOL area to meet this requirement. Flight crews would coordinate with local tribes to ensure
20 their proposed flight paths would not interfere with subsistence harvest activities.

21 22 **2.3.4.3 Small Boat Training**

23 Small boat training would include boat launching and maneuvers, typically in the vicinity of
24 small boat stations. The majority of small boat training will be from cutter deployed boats, as no
25 small boat stations exist in the Arctic. Some shore-based boats may be transported to facilities by
26 air and then launched via vehicle on a case-by-case basis. Specific exercises include coxswain
27 training, SAR, and vessel boarding and inspections. All cutters have a training need to conduct
28 Deck Landing Qualifications or deck hoists, for those cutters that are not flight deck equipped.
29 Hoist altitude depends on the height of any obstacles in the area, but is anywhere between 25 to
30 100 feet above the surface where the hoist is being conducted. These activities would also be
31 coordinated with local communities to ensure there is no interference with subsistence harvest
32 activities.

33 34 **2.3.4.4 Oil Recovery Training Exercises**

35 Oil or hazardous materials spill response is not a Coast Guard action that is addressed in this EA.
36 Spill response planning in Alaska is accomplished through a series of inter-related plans. The
37 National Contingency Plan provides the overarching framework and sets up procedures that are
38 designed to minimize the imminent threat to human health or the environment from an
39 uncontrolled release of oil or other hazardous substances. The Alaska Federal/State
40 Preparedness Plan for Response to Oil and Hazardous Substance Discharges/Releases EPA uses
41 the framework and priorities set forth in the National Contingency Plan and applies them in the
42 context of Alaska. The EPA and Coast Guard are the federal agencies responsible for the
43 implementation of the Alaska Contingency Plan. The Alaska Contingency Plan is supplemented
44 by 10 subarea contingency plans, which provide greater detail for local response planning in

1 large inland and coastal areas of Alaska. The final level of response planning occurs at the local
2 level and includes vessel- and facility-specific plans.

3
4 EPA and Coast Guard are currently in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service
5 (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service,
6 under the authority of Section 7 of the ESA, regarding the potential for actions or planning
7 processes conducted under the authority of the Alaska Contingency Plan, that lead to decisions to
8 initiate actions pursuant that may affect protected species and habitats.

9
10 Historically, these U.S. Coast Guard exercises have been mostly confined to U.S. resources;
11 however, it is becoming increasingly likely and prudent that these exercises will involve
12 coordination with local and tribal governments, as well as other nations such as Canada and
13 Russia. The field exercises could use simulated spill products that included buoyant, organic, and
14 biodegradable items such as moss or fruit or fluorescein or rhodamine water-tracing dye. Use of
15 these products provides the Coast Guard with the opportunity to study spill drift and practice
16 skimming.

17
18 **Spill of National Significance (SONS) table-top exercise.** Coast Guard would conduct a joint
19 exercise with federal, state, and local participants to evaluate incident command procedures for
20 response to a SONS.

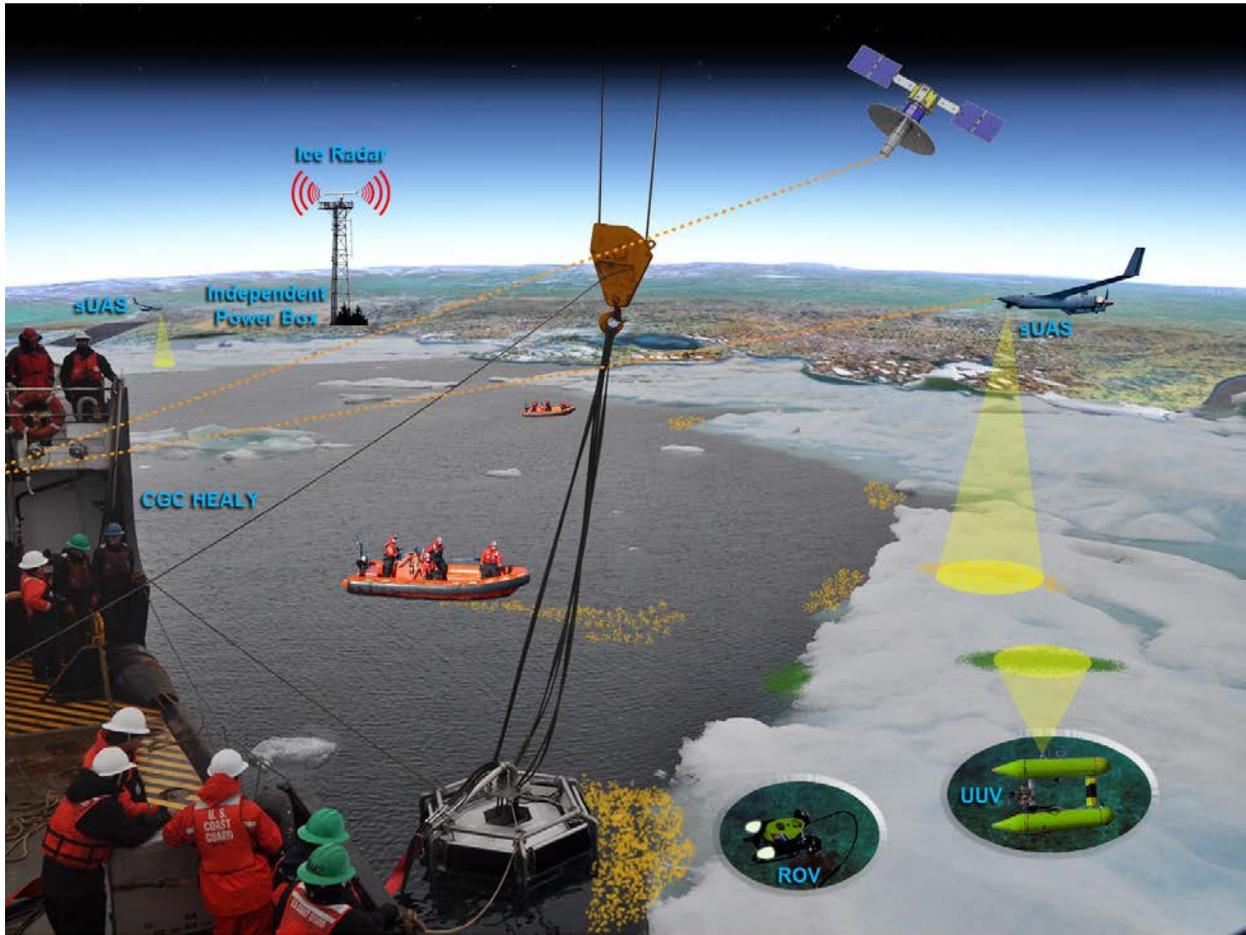
21
22 **Deployment of a Spilled Oil Recovery System (SORS) and Vessel of Opportunity**
23 **Skimming System (VOSS).** These skimming systems would be deployed over the side of vessels
24 to practice skimming spills and debris for planning purposes and future use in response to an
25 environmental emergency (Figure 2-9).



27
28 **Figure 2-9** Crewmembers testing the vessel's SORS
29

30 **Research and Development Center (RDC) Capabilities Demonstrations.** Coast Guard
31 Research and Development Center (RDC) would conduct tests of various technologies that

1 would enhance Coast Guard mission effectiveness and/or efficiency. Technologies would
 2 include unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) and UAVs to search and detect targets of interest
 3 under, in, and on ice (Spilled oil in ice is an example shown in Figure 2-10). UUVs would use
 4 downward and upward directed sensors and UAVs would use radars, optics and infrared
 5 detectors to search for the targets of interest. Lasers could also be used for detection, but would
 6 operate within 20 feet of a given target. Other sensors may include 3-24 kHz bottom mapping
 7 echosounders and Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers in the 38-150 kHz range sonar systems,
 8 and fluorometers. RDC Center would also conduct tests of various skimming systems for
 9 recovering spilled oil in, around, and from under ice. RDC testing would be discrete test
 10 evolutions of 2 weeks or less annually (the number of test days would depend on the nature of
 11 the capability being evaluated). Testing would be improved annually based on lessons learned
 12 and incorporation of newly available technologies
 13



14
 15
 16
 17

Figure 2-10 Spilled oil in ice recovery demonstration concept

18 **2.3.5 Building Partnerships: Tribal/Local Government Engagement**

19 Formal and informal government-to-government and community engagement with tribes and
 20 local community leadership is vital to all of the Coast Guard’s missions. Engagement categories
 21 include:

- 1 (1) Local government engagement
2 (2) Educational and training outreach
3 (3) Tribal and native community engagement
4

5 **Local Government Engagement**

6 Building partnerships is an important aspect of any Coast Guard activities in the Arctic region.
7 Coast Guard District 17 personnel would share information and communicate by phone or email
8 with local governments, elected officials, and other leaders in communities prior to and during
9 Coast Guard activities in their local area. Year-round sustained engagement would also occur
10 through conferences, meetings, and personal communications allowing the opportunity for
11 community and local governments to provide input on Arctic activities. This also allows the
12 Coast Guard to obtain key information from local stakeholders. During the summer surge of
13 Coast Guard activities in the Arctic, this would involve regular, sometimes daily
14 communications of Coast Guard actions and how they may interact with local governments.
15

16 **Educational and Training Outreach**

17 The Coast Guard would reach out to tribes and villages and offer classes such as:

- 18
 - 19 • Kids Don't Float - The Coast Guard would continue this program to maintain and
20 supply remote communities with proper safety equipment to ensure youths can
21 safely enjoy water and subsistence activities with their families.
 - 22 • Water Safety - The Coast Guard would educate children on water safety to ensure
23 that they understand proper water safety techniques and fewer lives are put at risk.
 - 24 • Commercial Fishing Vessel Standards Outreach - The Coast Guard would provide
25 additional outreach efforts, including dock-side exams, town hall meetings, and
26 forums in remote communities to increase knowledge of Commercial Fishing
27 Vessel Standards requirements, including new requirements that will go into place
28 in the next few years.

29 **Tribal and Native Community Engagement**

30 Building partnerships is an important aspect of any Coast Guard activities in the Arctic region.
31 Coast Guard District 17 personnel would share information and communicate by phone or email
32 with Tribal leadership, mayors, and other leaders in Native communities prior to and during
33 Coast Guard activities in their local area. Year-round sustained engagement would also occur
34 through conferences, meetings, and personal communications allowing the opportunity for tribal
35 governments to provide input on Arctic activities. This also allows the Coast Guard to obtain key
36 information from tribal stakeholders. During the summer surge of Coast Guard activities in the
37 Arctic, this would involve regular, sometimes daily communications of Coast Guard actions and
38 how they may interact with tribal activities.
39

40 **2.4 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

41 CEQ's regulations implementing NEPA require inclusion of a No Action Alternative to serve as
42 a baseline against which the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives can be evaluated.
43 The Coast Guard has not developed a comprehensive, long-term plan for mission execution in
44 the Arctic. Over the past six years, it has conducted single-year operations (mid-March through
45 mid-November) in the Arctic to test equipment and train personnel to operate in the Arctic by
46 overcoming obstacles to communications, logistics, and harsh weather.

1
2 Under the No Action Alternative, the Coast Guard would not be able to fulfill its mandated
3 missions in the Arctic. The Coast Guard also enforces the MMPA and ESA, and without a Coast
4 Guard presence in the Arctic, enforcement of these laws would be significantly reduced. The No
5 Action Alternative would simply use existing assets from their normal operating locations (i.e.,
6 Kodiak for aviation assets, Kodiak or, if deployed, the Gulf of Alaska or Bering Sea for surface
7 assets), and therefore would not be positioned for emergency response.

8
9 The No Action Alternative would not meet the Coast Guard's mandate to provide a proactive air,
10 surface, and shore-side Coast Guard presence in the Arctic to meet statutory mission
11 requirements. As such, it is not a viable alternative and does not meet the purpose and need, but
12 is included here for comparison of environmental effects with the Preferred Alternative.

13 14 **2.5 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CONSERVATION MEASURES**

15 The Proposed Action would require all Coast Guard staff, contractors, and subcontractors to
16 employ BMPs during Arctic activities to avoid or minimize potential impacts on the environment
17 and cultural resources. All BMPs and conservation measures will be implemented to the fullest
18 extent possible considering safety of personnel and equipment. However, during national
19 security, SAR or urgent law enforcement activities, the Coast Guard will prioritize mission
20 success over BMPs and conservation measures.

21 **2.5.1 Coast Guard Guidance**

22 All Coast Guard will conduct activities in accordance with the following Coast Guard guidance:

- 23
- 24 • Marine Protected Species Program for the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands,
25 and Arctic (Coast Guard District 17 Instruction [CGD17INST] 16214.2A) (U.S. Coast
26 Guard 2011a) - CGD17INST 16214.2A outlines procedures for avoiding marine
27 mammals and protected species; reporting whale and protected species sightings,
28 strandings, and injuries; and enforcing the MMPA and ESA.
 - 29
30 • Vessel Environmental Manual (COMDTINST M16455.1) – Chapter 11 of the Vessel
31 Environmental Manual describes measures for protection of marine wildlife applicable to
32 all waterborne Coast Guard assets. In accordance with this instruction, all Commanding
33 Officers and Officers in Charge must plan and act to protect marine mammals during
34 operations and planning. Whale avoidance measures are prescribed, including requiring
35 that vessels be especially alert for activity, and proceed with caution, in areas of known
36 whale migration routes or high animal density, and that vessels do not approach whales
37 head on during non-emergency maneuvering. Right Whales are to be avoided by 500
38 yards and all other species by 100 yards, except when assisting in an animal rescue effort
39 or enforcing the Endangered Species Act.

40
41 The Manual states ballasting and de-ballasting shall be conducted in a manner to
42 minimize the introduction of non-native species and reduce their impact. Ballast water
43 taken on board from a location more than 200 nm from any shore and in water of a depth
44 greater than 200 meters may be discharged without restriction. Ballast water taken on
45 board within 200 nm from any shore or in water less than 200 meters deep, must be

1 managed through step-wise protocol that ranges from ballast water exchange in waters
2 more than 200 nm from any shore and more than 200 meters deep, to discharge at an
3 approved receiving facility. In all cases, the minimum distance for de-ballasting shall be
4 12 nm from land. Any ballast water taken on board would likely be released (ballast
5 tanks cycled) in the Bering Sea, prior to entering any port (e.g., Dutch Harbor, Nome) for
6 refueling. Should any invasive species be in the ballast water, these species would be
7 released in the open ocean to minimize the potential for introduction into another area. It
8 is recognized that ship hulls can also be vectors for alien species, but at this time, only
9 ballasting and de-ballasting is restricted.

- 10
- 11 • Coast Guard Air Operations Manual (COMDTINST M3710.1G) – The Air Operations
12 Manual prescribes measures for protection of wildlife applicable to all Coast Guard air
13 assets. In accordance with this instruction, Commanding officers shall implement
14 standard operating procedures to prevent unnecessary over-flight of sensitive
15 environmental habitat areas, to include, but not be limited to, critical habitat designated
16 under the endangered species act, migratory bird sanctuaries, and marine mammal haul-
17 outs and rookeries. Environmentally sensitive areas will be properly annotated on pilot’s
18 charts as required. When it is necessary to fly over such areas, an altitude of 2,000 feet
19 above ground level shall be maintained, except during emergency or enforcement
20 operations. The amount of time spent at low altitudes should be limited to what is
21 necessary to accomplish the particular emergency or reconnaissance operation.
22
 - 23 • U.S. Coast Guard Approach, Vessel Speed and Strike Response Guidance
24 (COMPACAREA R142308Z DEC 11) – This guidance prescribes that vessel operators
25 shall use caution, be alert, maintain a vigilant lookout and reduce speeds, as appropriate,
26 to avoid collisions with whales during the course of normal operations. Appropriate
27 reduced speeds should be based on specific factors (see rule 6 [safe speed] of the
28 international/inland navigation rules). During routine operations, when whales are
29 sighted or known to be in the immediate vicinity, operators are required to employ all
30 possible precautions to avoid interactions or collisions with whales, including the
31 following:
 - 32 ○ Reducing speed,
 - 33 ○ Posting additional dedicated lookouts to assist in monitoring whales’ location,
 - 34 ○ Avoiding sudden changes in speed and direction, or if a swimming whale is
35 spotted, attempting to parallel the course and speed of the moving whale so as
36 to avoid crossing its path, and
 - 37 ○ Avoiding approach of sighted whales head-on, or from directly behind. Right
38 whales shall not be approached within 500 yards. The minimum approach
39 distance to all other whales is no closer than 100 yards. In the Bering Sea and
40 Gulf of Alaska, a whale should be treated as a Right whale unless the whale is
41 positively identified as another whale species.
42
 - 43 • Maritime Law Enforcement Manual (COMDTINST 16247.1) – In accordance with this
44 manual, during all maritime law enforcement activities the Coast Guard shall seek to
45 avoid collision with a whale during the course of normal operations, operators of Coast
46 Guard vessels transiting critical habitat, migratory routes, and high-use areas use caution,

1 remain alert, and reduce speeds, as appropriate. Additional reductions in speed are
2 considered when a whale is sighted or known to be in the vicinity or within five nautical
3 miles of the vessel.
4

- 5 • Protected Living Marine Resources Program (COMDTINST 16475.7) – This instruction
6 outlines Coast Guard actions, during Coast Guard operations, to support the recovery of
7 protected living marine resources through internal compliance with and enforcement of
8 Federal, State, and international laws designed to preserve marine protected species.
9

10 In addition, included in the proposed action are a number of conservation measures developed
11 through coordination with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife
12 Service (USFWS) during previous consultations and preparation of this EA. BMPs and
13 conservation measures that are part of the proposed action are described for each resource, as
14 applicable, below. These measures may not apply during an emergency operation involving
15 national security, search and rescue operations, or urgent law enforcement activities. The Coast
16 Guard also maintains an active marine mammal sighting and reporting program in cooperation
17 with NMFS and USFWS.
18

19 **2.5.2 Biological Resources**

20 Personnel involved in the proposed action would be made aware of these operating guidelines
21 through the Operational Order guiding Coast Guard participation in activities in the Arctic. The
22 following measures, developed by the Coast Guard in consultation with the USFWS and NMFS,
23 are included in the proposed action (and in addition to the guidance already outlined in Section
24 2.5.1) to avoid significant adverse effects on biological resources:
25

- 26 • An Interim Polar Bear Interaction Plan is under development in consultation with the
27 USFWS. The purpose of the plan is to avoid changing the behavior of bears from
28 helicopters, cutters, or small boat operations. The plan includes specific requirements for
29 personnel training, avoidance and encounter procedures, hazing, waste management,
30 monitoring requirements, etc., and will be approved by the USFWS.
31
- 32 • Crew members will be trained in marine mammal identification and will alert the
33 Command of the presence of marine mammals and initiate adaptive mitigation responses
34 including reducing vessel speed, posting additional dedicated lookouts to assist in
35 monitoring whales' location, avoiding sudden changes in speed and direction, or if a
36 swimming whale is spotted, attempting to parallel the course and speed of the moving
37 whale so as to avoid crossing its path, and avoiding approach of sighted whales head-on,
38 or from directly behind (see COMDTINST M16247.1).
39
- 40 • Vessels must maintain the maximum distance possible from concentrations of walruses
41 or polar bears. No vessels will approach within a ½ mile (805 meters) radius of walruses
42 or polar bears observed on land or ice.
43
- 44 • Vessel operators must take every precaution to avoid harassment of concentrations of
45 feeding walruses when a vessel is operating near these animals. Vessels will reduce speed

1 and maintain a minimum ½ mile (805 meters) operational exclusion zone around feeding
2 walrus groups. Vessels will not be operated in such a way as to separate members of a
3 group of walruses from other members of the group. When weather conditions require,
4 such as when visibility drops, vessels will adjust speed accordingly to avoid the
5 likelihood of injury to walruses.

- 6
- 7 • Subsistence Activities - All vessels and aircraft will avoid areas of active or anticipated
8 subsistence (whale, walrus, seal, caribou, and polar bear) hunting activities as determined
9 through community engagement and information.
- 10
- 11 • When traveling in icy waters or near barrier islands, vessel crews will not engage in
12 activities that will attract polar bears to the vicinity of the vessel such as cooking meat on
13 deck. Bears can smell the meat (including bacon) and can travel miles to investigate,
14 maybe leaving a high-resource area or carcass.
- 15
- 16 • Aircraft will, at all times, conduct their activities at the maximum distance possible from
17 concentrations of walruses or polar bears.
- 18
- 19 • Aircraft will not operate at an altitude lower than 1,500 ft (457 m) within 0.5 mi (805 m)
20 of polar bears observed on ice or land. Helicopters may not hover or circle above such
21 areas or within 0.5 mi of such areas. When weather conditions do not allow a 1,500 ft
22 flying altitude, such as during severe storms or when cloud cover is low, aircraft may be
23 operated below the 1,500 ft altitude stipulated above. However, when aircraft are
24 operated at altitudes below 1,500 ft because of weather conditions, the operator must
25 avoid areas of known polar bear concentrations and will take precautions to avoid flying
26 directly over or within 0.5 mi (805 m) of these areas.
- 27
- 28 • Fixed-wing aircraft will not operate at an altitude lower than 2,000 ft (610 m) within 0.5
29 mi (805 m) of walrus observed on ice or land. Helicopters will not operate at an altitude
30 lower than 3,000 ft (914 m) within one mile (1610 m) of walrus observed on ice or land,
31 and may not hover or circle above such areas or within one mile of such areas. When
32 weather conditions do not allow these minimum flying altitudes, such as during severe
33 storms or when cloud cover is low, aircraft may be operated below the 2,000 ft (610 m)
34 altitude stipulated above. However, when aircraft are operated at altitudes below 2,000 ft
35 (610 m) because of weather conditions, the operator must avoid areas of known walrus
36 concentrations and will take precautions to avoid flying directly over or within one mile
37 (1610 m) of these areas.
- 38
- 39 • Avoid the following known concentration areas for Pacific walruses along the coast to
40 the maximum extent practicable during training and routine flight activities:
 - 41 ○ Cape Lisburne (68° 52' 53" N, 160° 11' 39" W)
 - 42 ○ Corwin Bluff (68° 52' 30" N, 165° 06' 02" W)
 - 43 ○ Point Lay (69° 45 '39" N, 163° 03 20" W)
 - 44 ○ Icy Cape (70° 19' 45" N, 161° 52' 55" W)
 - 45

- 1 • Each time a walrus or polar bear is sighted; an interaction form will be filled out and
2 submitted to the USFWS.
3
- 4 • Reductions in vessel speed will be considered when a whale is sighted or known to have
5 been sighted within 5 nautical miles (nm). Vessels will use navigationally prudent
6 courses to avoid striking the whale and, if necessary, reduce speed to bare steerageway or
7 come to a stop. A dedicated marine mammal lookout after the initial sighting will be
8 recommended.
9
- 10 • To avoid potential impacts to seabirds from vessel lights, the Coast Guard will keep deck
11 lights at the minimum necessary for safety.
12
- 13 • Vessels that encounter flocks of spectacled eiders along their path will maintain a steady
14 speed (typically 3 to 9 knots) and divert around these flocks to avoid unnecessary
15 disturbance.
16
- 17 • Helicopters will avoid approaching flocks of spectacled eiders and other birds; aircraft
18 will maintain an altitude of at least 500 feet above sea level when flying over molting
19 spectacled eider flocks (late July through October, in the Chukchi Sea in Ledyard Bay).
20
- 21 • Coast Guard flight crews will coordinate with tribal representative to ensure proposed
22 flight paths will not interfere with planned land mammal hunts (caribou, muskox). Areas
23 of known land mammal congregations will be avoided to the maximum extent practicable
24 during flight operations through coordination with local and tribal governments.
25
- 26 • Vessels avoid active subsistence whale hunting areas during spring and fall migrations of
27 bowhead whales so as not to interfere with subsistence whale hunting.
28
- 29 • Trained crewmembers are posted during operations to look specifically for marine
30 mammals. When marine mammals are spotted, the icebreaker avoids them by changing
31 course unless there is a threat to safety. In addition, unless the icebreaker's mission
32 involves specifically investigating an endangered species, the icebreaker will plan its
33 passage through the ice to avoid any known sanctuaries or feeding grounds.
34

35 Mobile sonar science applications may require additional analysis beyond the scope of this EA.
36 However, during echosounder activities (excluding use of navigational sonar), the following
37 mitigation measures will be followed, as outlined in the Final Programmatic Environmental
38 Assessment for the Nationwide Use of High Frequency and Ultra High Frequency Active
39 SONAR Technology (U.S. Coast Guard 2013b):

- 40 • Coast Guard personnel would monitor the appropriately sized marine mammal mitigation
41 zone at all times of deployment. The size of the marine mammal mitigation zone would
42 be determined through sound propagation loss modeling based on empirical data and
43 sonar specifications, which will result in estimates of distance from source that sound will
44 dissipate to levels unlikely to cause harassment. All monitors would have marine
45 mammal monitoring training per Coast Guard standard lookout training, and vessels
46 would be equipped with whale wheels to aid in identification.

- 1
2 • During a short-term emergency, if a marine mammal is observed in or approaching the
3 marine mammal mitigation zone, the operational commander would take prudent
4 measures to avoid impacting the wildlife, such as shutting down the system, moving
5 away from the animal, or slowing down the platform, tactical situation permitting.
6 Prudent measures are based on the operational commander’s knowledge and professional
7 assessment of the situation with respect to safety and feasibility as to whether or not to
8 operate the sonar in the presence of a marine mammal.
9
- 10 • If a threatened or endangered species of marine mammal is affected (i.e., “take” as
11 defined by the Endangered Species Act [ESA] or Level A or B harassment, as defined by
12 Marine Mammal Protection Act [MMPA]) during longer-term (i.e., more than two
13 weeks), emergency operational missions, the Coast Guard would conduct emergency
14 consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or U.S. Fish and
15 Wildlife Service (USFWS), as appropriate, and as provided for under 50 CFR §402.05.
16 During emergency consultation, the NMFS or USFWS can provide recommendations on
17 how to minimize or avoid adverse effects on listed species during the emergency
18 response. Such recommendations are strictly advisory and are to be implemented at the
19 discretion of the emergency response personnel. If, during an emergency situation, an
20 unauthorized take under the MMPA should occur, Coast Guard would conduct activities
21 that are necessary to protect human lives but consult with NMFS immediately to
22 investigate the circumstances of the unauthorized take and jointly consider the steps that
23 should be taken to avoid similar occurrences in the future.
24
- 25 • For training exercises and research and development missions, if a marine mammal is
26 detected within or approaching the marine mammal mitigation zone, sonar systems would
27 be shut down until the marine mammal has left the area or marine mammal mitigation
28 zone.
29
- 30 • Except for short-term emergency situations during which initial response time is crucial,
31 the marine mammal mitigation zone would be visually monitored for 30 minutes prior to
32 turning on the sonar device to ensure that marine mammals are not present.
33
- 34 • Ramp-up (also known as soft-start) would entail the gradual increase in intensity of a
35 sound source. When the operational situation allows, ramp-up or soft-start procedures
36 would be used prior to operating the sonar.
37
- 38 • Sonar systems would not be employed in a location that interferes with obvious marine
39 mammal movements, or prevents entry or exit of marine mammals into and out of an area
40 (e.g., the mouth of a bay or narrow chokepoints), where sonar could deter them from
41 traveling through or by. The only exception to this is under rare circumstances that
42 require deployment for emergency purposes. If the emergency is more than two weeks,
43 the Coast Guard will engage in emergency consultation as appropriate, and as provided
44 for under 50 CFR §402.05.
45

2.5.3 Cultural Resources

Since some subsistence hunting and fishing activities in the area of operations are unpredictable due to changing yearly conditions, the Coast Guard would coordinate with subsistence users throughout the period of operations, to try and ensure that any conflicts are avoided during planning, or any that may arise during the course of operations are addressed or avoided. Interactions with subsistence activities and marine mammal sightings are entered into operational summaries for data tracking and follow up with tribes and communities impacted by the interactions.

2.5.4 Hazardous Materials and Substances

The following BMPs and federal, state, Coast Guard, and local laws and regulations pertaining to hazards and hazardous materials and substances would be adhered to as follows:

- The Coast Guard would comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations regarding safety measures and precautions in the workplace as appropriate.
- The Coast Guard would handle all hazardous materials and substances in accordance with applicable federal regulations.
- Support for fueling aircraft and surface assets would be provided by existing facilities on shore, for example, the airport in Barrow and ports in Dutch Harbor and Nome. Any required maintenance would be performed at these existing facilities. Any solid or hazardous waste generated would be disposed of by Coast Guard facilities supporting this mission, or by existing local facilities that have these capabilities.

2.6 ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION

During the alternative concepts identification phase, several alternatives were initially identified but then dismissed from consideration. These alternatives and the rationale for not conducting an in-depth evaluation of them are presented below.

Three additional action alternatives (alternate timeframe and location, tabletop capabilities assessments, and varying levels of both air and surface assets) have been considered and subsequently eliminated from detailed analysis because they do not meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action.

Alternate Time Frame and Location

An alternate time frame to conduct Coast Guard Arctic activities does not exist. The mission needs for Coast Guard presence in the Arctic is based on the ice-free season, when increased vessel traffic and other activities will be taking place in the Arctic that requires a Coast Guard presence in the area. Time-space considerations within the ice-free season for specific activities (ie at shorter time frames) could be addressed as situations warrant. The proposed time frame of Coast Guard Arctic activities also aligns Coast Guard presence with activities related to existing leases for exploratory oil drilling in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.

1 Alternate locations would also not provide a feasible alternative for analysis. The requirement for
2 the Coast Guard presence in the Arctic in the summer is necessitated in the Bering, Chukchi, and
3 the Beaufort Seas to be able to react quickly to matters requiring a Coast Guard response,
4 including safety of life at sea, law enforcement, and potential marine collisions. Therefore, an
5 alternative considering an alternate time frame or location would not meet the purpose and need
6 for the proposed action.

7
8 **Air Assets**

9 Various levels of air asset support for Arctic activities in the summer were considered as an
10 alternative, including a permanent presence somewhere on the North Slope of Alaska for air
11 asset support year-round. However, it was determined that a permanent facility for Coast Guard
12 air support on the North Slope of Alaska would be cost-prohibitive and too difficult to complete
13 in the next few years. The Coast Guard has concluded that an alternate level of air asset support
14 for Arctic activities that meets the purpose and need does not exist. The proposed locations in
15 Alaska are strategically located in coastal towns and villages in the Arctic with existing air
16 facilities. This advances the mission of the Coast Guard to support safety of life and search and
17 rescue for persons within the U.S. coastal zone and the Exclusive Economic Zone.

18
19 **Surface Assets**

20 Alternative levels of surface asset support for Arctic summer activities were considered. The
21 Coast Guard has concluded that an alternate level of surface asset support that meets the purpose
22 and need and is feasible does not exist. The proposed locations in the Bering, Chukchi, and
23 Beaufort Seas advance the mission of the Coast Guard to support the law enforcement and safety
24 of life and property within the U.S. coastal zone and the Exclusive Economic Zone of the United
25 States. The continued support of up to three Coast Guard cutter-type surface vessels throughout
26 the summer surge of Arctic activities would adequately support Arctic needs, while balancing
27 needs for surface asset support and operational funding throughout the Coast Guard District 17
28 operational area, which includes the entire state of Alaska.

Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the existing environmental conditions in the action area, focusing on those resources potentially affected by the proposed action. When conducted as tabletop exercises, the MRO and SONS would have no impact on resource areas, therefore those two exercises are not analyzed. Resources potentially impacted by other proposed activities include water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, hazardous substances/contamination, and public health and safety. Following a discussion of the affected environment for each resource is a discussion of the environmental consequences that could result from implementing the alternatives described in Chapter 2.

Resources that would not be affected by the proposed action, and a summary of the rationale for this determination, are discussed below.

Geology and Soils. The proposed action would not result in any impacts on soils or geology. The majority of the activities in the proposed action are in-water with no dredging or impacts to bathymetry. Also, proposed land-based activities of establishing a Forward Operating Location in Barrow, Alaska, would only occur on previously disturbed soils.

Air Quality. The proposed action would not result in any impacts to air quality. The Northern Alaska Intrastate Air Quality Control Region is in attainment for all criteria pollutants. Up to two surface assets and three helicopters at any one time would be in the Northern Alaska Interstate Air Quality Control Region. Surface assets would spend the majority of their operational time at sea outside this Region. Helicopters would operate both inside and outside the Region, but emissions are very low and flight times are limited. No new shore-based emission sources are a part of the proposed action. Therefore, the proposed action would not result in a measureable increase in air emissions in the air basin and the temporary, limited operation of Coast Guard air and surface assets would result in *de minimis* levels of emissions.

Land Use. The proposed action would be consistent with existing land uses in the action area. Implementation of the proposed action would have no impact to the excellence of nearby residential or commercial areas in local communities. All wastes would be disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations. A list of known contaminated sites is available from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation 2013). These sites would be avoided or land use coordinated with proper regulatory authorities. Therefore, impact on land use is not considered further in this EA.

Utilities. No disruptive alterations would be made to sewer, sanitation, electricity, or water supplies; therefore, no impacts would occur to utilities in the action areas.

1 **Visual Resources.** The proposed action would have no effect on visual resources since the at-sea
2 activities are consistent with current vessel transits and traffic in the Arctic. Vessel mooring and
3 other on-shore activities would occur within existing support facilities.

4 5 3.2 WATER QUALITY

6 7 3.2.1 Affected Environment

8 The general water quality in offshore marine waters of the Alaskan arctic is pristine, especially
9 when compared with other areas of the world. However, detectable pollutants such as persistent
10 organic pollutants, heavy metals, acidifying substances, and petroleum hydrocarbons are present,
11 usually at non-threatening levels, in the Arctic marine environment (Arctic Monitoring and
12 Assessment Programme 2002). Pollutants reach the Arctic through direct anthropogenic inputs
13 (such as sewage discharge and drill cuttings), ocean currents (from the Pacific Ocean, through
14 the Bering Sea, to the Chukchi and then Beaufort Seas of the Arctic Ocean), rivers, and oil seeps.

15
16 The rivers carry suspended sediments with trace metals and hydrocarbons into the ocean, but
17 these pollutants are generally found in low levels except where industrial and municipal
18 activities occur (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme 2002; Alkire and Trefry 2006).
19 Still, the State of Alaska has identified no Clean Water Act Section 303(d) impaired water bodies
20 in the Arctic region (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation 2010). River sediment
21 load is highest during spring runoff, when rivers flow fast and high (Alkire and Trefry 2006). At
22 sea, large oil spills are considered the largest environmental threat in the Arctic region, though
23 naturally occurring oil seeps are also a major contributor to the low levels of petroleum
24 hydrocarbons present in Arctic waters (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme 2007).

25
26 Suspended sediment concentrations vary with wind-wave activity. High energy sea states melt
27 the permafrost and erode the organic-rich surface layer during the ice-free season, increasing
28 shoreline erosion and turbidity. Ice formation in the autumn locks particulates from the water
29 column into the ice cover, resulting in lower turbidity (Mineral Management Services 2002).

30 31 3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

32 33 3.2.2.1 No Action Alternative

34 Under the No Action Alternative, proposed Coast Guard Arctic activities in the Chukchi,
35 Beaufort, and Bering Seas would not take place unless an emergency requires a Coast Guard
36 response. No activities would occur that would input unauthorized contaminants or increase
37 sediments in the water column. No land based construction would occur that could increase run
38 off potential and therefore, water sediment load.

39
40 Companies sponsoring oil drilling and tankers in the Arctic are responsible for putting safety and
41 spill avoidance measures in place. They are also the responsible party for cleanup of a resulting
42 spill. In the event that a spill exceeds the ability of the responsible party to respond adequately,
43 the Coast Guard and Federal assets would be involved. Without a constant Coast Guard presence
44 in the Arctic, there could potentially be over 2,000 nm between a Coast Guard vessel in the Gulf
45 of Alaska and an emergency in, for instance, the Beaufort Sea. If an environmental emergency
46 occurred in the Arctic region, the Coast Guard response time could be up to one week. This

1 delay could negatively impact water quality and marine life in the region. The No Action
2 Alternative doesn't meet the purpose and need, but is provided as it represents a baseline
3 condition against which environmental consequences can be measured.
4

5 **3.2.2.2 Preferred Alternative**

6 Proposed activities of the Preferred Alternative include establishing forward operating locations
7 and possible repair of airstrips at old DEW line locations (Chapter 2, section 2.2.1). These would
8 be the only aspects of the Preferred Alternative likely to involve installing antennae,
9 construction, grading, or other ground disturbance that may affect water quality. The Coast
10 Guard would utilize best management practices (such as silt fencing or re-seeding) in compliance
11 with local and state regulations, to decrease or eliminate soil runoff potential into surface waters.
12 Upgrades to unused airstrips would occur after the polar bear birthing season when necessary to
13 avoid disturbing bears, as bears are sometimes known to utilize berms along unused runways as
14 birthing dens.
15

16 Support for fueling aircraft and surface assets would be provided by the Coast Guard, but in
17 existing facilities on shore, for example, the airport in Barrow and ports in Dutch Harbor and
18 Nome. Any required maintenance would be performed at these existing facilities. Any solid or
19 hazardous waste generated would be disposed of by Coast Guard facilities supporting this
20 mission, or by existing local facilities that have these capabilities and should not impact water
21 quality.
22

23 The risk of a spill is low since all appropriate control measures would be adhered to for safe
24 management and control of hazardous materials, and all observed spills would be cleaned up in
25 accordance with applicable state and federal laws. There would be no intentional unauthorized
26 discharges from Coast Guard vessels or aircraft; therefore, any effects would be due to accidental
27 or incidental discharges. Should any spills of hazardous materials or substances occur it would
28 be cleaned up in accordance with applicable state and federal laws (as noted in Section 2.5).
29 Buoyant, organic, and biodegradable items used during spill skimming exercises would be
30 retrieved as much as possible. Any remaining items would naturally degrade and should not
31 adversely impact water quality. Prior to the use of any dyes during SAR and spill response
32 exercises, Coast Guard would ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal
33 regulations.
34

35 The primary responsibility for spill response lies with the responsible party; for instance, the
36 owner of the vessel or oil rig causing a spill. In the event that a spill exceeds the ability of the
37 responsible party to respond adequately, the Coast Guard and Federal assets would be involved.
38 With an increased Coast Guard presence in the Arctic region, spill response would be nearly
39 immediate and much more effective. The Coast Guard's spill cleanup capabilities make their
40 presence in the Arctic likely to have a positive impact on marine life and long-term water
41 quality, should a spill occur.
42

43 With BMPs in place for Coast Guard activities and Incident Control Centers established to
44 handle environmental emergencies, the Preferred Alternative would not have significant impacts
45 to water quality.
46

1 3.3 **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

2
3 This section describes biological resources in the project area, with special attention focused on
4 federally protected species, including marine mammals and birds. These resources are managed
5 by USFWS and NMFS.
6

7 **Applicable Laws and Regulations**

8 *National Invasive Species Act.* This Act amended the Non-indigenous Aquatic Nuisance
9 Prevention and Control Act of 1990 to mandate regulation of ballast water to prevent the
10 introduction of invasive aquatic species.
11

12 *Threatened and Endangered Species.* The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 USC §§
13 1531 *et seq.*), as amended, protects species that are endangered, threatened, or proposed for
14 listing. Species with Federal status that potentially occur in the affected area of the proposed
15 action are discussed in more detail below. The species included here are analyzed based on
16 current data from the NMFS and USFWS showing which species are typically using waters of
17 the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas or coastal zones.

- 18 • North Pacific right whale
- 19 • Steller sea lion
- 20 • Bearded seal
- 21 • Bowhead whale
- 22 • Fin whale
- 23 • Humpback whale
- 24 • Pacific walrus (candidate species)
- 25 • Ringed seal
- 26 • Polar bear
- 27 • Short-tailed albatross
- 28 • Spectacled eider
- 29 • Steller's eider
- 30 • Yellow-billed loon (candidate species)

31
32 *Marine Mammals.* The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972, as amended in 1994
33 (16 USC §§ 1431 *et seq.*) governs activities with the potential to harm, disturb, or otherwise
34 "harass" marine mammals. All marine mammals are protected under the MMPA (NOAA 2013a).
35 The MMPA prohibits, with certain exceptions, the "take" of marine mammals in U.S. waters and
36 by U.S. citizens on the high seas. It prohibits the importation of marine mammals and marine
37 mammal products into the U.S. Marine mammals that may be present during the operational
38 2013 timeframe of the proposed action in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, in addition to the
39 marine mammals in the Threatened and Endangered list above, include:

- 40 • Beluga whale
- 41 • Gray whale
- 42 • Harbor porpoise
- 43 • Killer whale
- 44 • Minke whale
- 45 • Northern fur seal

- 1 • Ribbon seal
- 2 • Spotted seal

3
4 *Migratory Birds.* The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (16 USC §§ 703-712) is the
5 domestic law that affirms, or implements, the United States' commitment to four international
6 conventions (with Canada, Japan, Mexico, and Russia) for the protection of a shared migratory
7 bird resource. Each of the conventions protect selected species of birds that are common to both
8 countries (i.e., species occur in both countries at some point during their annual life cycle). The
9 Act protects all migratory birds and their parts (including eggs, nests, and feathers). Executive
10 Order 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, directs federal
11 agencies to take certain actions to further implement the MBTA and to conserve migratory birds.
12 The order prohibits the take of migratory birds or their eggs, feathers, or nests. Many waterfowl,
13 songbirds, raptors, and other species are migratory and are protected under the MBTA.

14
15 *Fish and Essential Fish Habitat.* The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management
16 Act (16 USC §§ 1801-1802), as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 (Public Law
17 104-267), established a new requirement to describe and identify Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in
18 each fishery management plan. Essential Fish Habitat includes those waters and substrate
19 necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity (NMFS 2009a). The
20 North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) is responsible for designating EFH and
21 Habitat Areas of Particular Concern for all federally managed species occurring in the estuarine
22 and marine waters off the coast of Alaska. The NPFMC designated EFH for these species within
23 the fishery management plans for each of the six primary fisheries that they manage: Bering Sea
24 and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fishery (NPFMC 2013), Gulf of Alaska (GOA)
25 groundfish fishery, BSAI king and tanner crab fishery (NPFMC 2011), salmon fishery (NPFMC
26 2012), scallop fishery off Alaska, and the Arctic fishery (NPFMC 2009). Of these fisheries, only
27 four (BSAI groundfish, BSAI king and tanner crabs, salmon, and Arctic) contain species for
28 which EFH and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern have been designated within the Action
29 Area.

- 30
- 31 • Walleye pollock
- 32 • Pacific cod
- 33 • Yellowfin sole
- 34 • Flathead sole
- 35 • Alaska Plaice
- 36 • Red king crab
- 37 • Pacific salmon (pink, chum, sockeye, chinook, coho)
- 38 • Arctic cod
- 39 • Saffron cod
- 40 • Snow crab

41
42 **3.3.1 Affected Environment**
43 **Terrestrial Habitats - Barrow**

44 The City of Barrow is located approximately 16 kilometers southwest of Point Barrow, the
45 northernmost point in Alaska, and therefore lies within the treeless region of continuous

1 permafrost. The Barrow peninsula is the northernmost extremity of the Arctic Coastal Plain,
2 which extends from the foothills of the Brooks Range in the south to the Arctic Ocean in the
3 north in an area collectively called the Arctic Slope. The area is characterized by low relief;
4 numerous lakes, ponds, and drained thaw lake basins.

5
6 The Barrow peninsula is bounded on the west by the Chukchi Sea and on the east by the
7 Beaufort Sea and a long chain of offshore islands, called the Plover Islands.

8
9 Habitats at other airports, airstrips, and DEW line sites include Arctic tundras where trees grow
10 sparsely due to a short growing season, low precipitation, and strong winds. Tundras are often
11 found near permanent ice sheets where, during summer, the ice and snow recede to expose the
12 ground and allow vegetation to grow.

13 14 **Marine Habitats – Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas**

15 The Chukchi and Beaufort Seas are the northernmost seas bordering Alaska. The Chukchi and
16 Beaufort Seas are both part of the Arctic Ocean, but both are linked, atmospherically and
17 oceanographically, to the Pacific Ocean. The atmospheric connection involves the Aleutian Low,
18 which affects regional meteorological conditions. The oceanographic link is through the Bering
19 Strait, which draws relatively warm nutrient-rich water into the Arctic Ocean from the Bering
20 Sea (Weingartner and Danielson 2010).

21
22 The Chukchi and Beaufort Seas are covered by the arctic ice pack 7–10 months each year, but
23 support a diverse biological ecosystem driven primarily by the seasonal presence of sea ice. The
24 ice pack shapes the habitat for many of the biological organisms. The Arctic Ocean sea ice
25 conditions are influenced by weather, wind, ocean currents, and extreme daylight conditions. Ice
26 coverage of the Bering Sea is highly variable, but can be anticipated about seven months a year
27 from November through June. The Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas support a diverse
28 assemblage of marine species: lower trophic organisms; freshwater, anadromous, and marine
29 fishes; marine and coastal birds; and marine mammals (NMFS 2012). Lower trophic organisms
30 serve as the basis of the food web in the Arctic and Pacific Oceans. They provide nutrition for
31 birds, fish, and marine mammals throughout the ecosystems.

32 33 **Fish and Essential Fish Habitat**

34 Over 400 fish species are known to inhabit Arctic seas and adjacent waters, which include
35 marine, migratory, and freshwater fish species that enter brackish water. The Chukchi and
36 Beaufort Seas off the coast of Alaska support at least 107 fish species, representing 25 families
37 (Mecklenburg et al. 2002; Logerwell and Rand 2010; Love et al. 2005; Harris 1993; Johnson et
38 al. 2010). Families include lampreys, sleeper sharks, dogfish sharks, herrings, smelts, whitefish,
39 trout, salmon, lanternfish, cods, sticklebacks, greenlings, sculpins, poachers, lumpsuckers,
40 snailfish, eelpouts, pricklebacks, gunnels, wolffish, sand lances, and righteye flounders.

41
42 Few species currently covered by fishery-management plans occur in these waters; however, an
43 Arctic Fishery Management Plan was approved in August 2009 by the North Pacific Fisheries
44 Management Council to address Arctic fisheries issues. The policy in that plan is to “prohibit
45 commercial harvest of all fish resources of the Arctic Management Area until sufficient
46 information is available to support the sustainable management of a commercial fishery”

(NPFMC 2009). The moratorium does not manage targeted commercial fishing for Pacific salmon and Pacific halibut. At this time, no further decision has been made on commercial fisheries in the Arctic.

The Bering Sea supports over 450 species of fish and shellfish, many of which have commercial value. Commercial stocks include salmon, halibut, polluck, cod, flatfish, sablefish, Atka mackerel, herring, rockfish, sole, and crab, to name a few. Over half of the fish consumed in the U.S. comes from the Bering Sea (International Bering Sea Forum 2013).

Species with EFH in the proposed Action Area are Walleye pollock, Pacific cod, Yellowfin sole, Flathead sole, Alaska Plaice, Red king crab, Pacific salmon (pink, chum, sockeye, chinook, coho), Arctic cod, Saffron cod, and Snow crab. Descriptions of these species are in the Biological Evaluation, Appendix A.

Federally Listed Species

Table 3-1 summarizes the federally-listed species potentially occurring in the project area that are under the jurisdiction of NMFS and USFWS and protected by the Endangered Species Act. More details on these species are available in the Biological Evaluation, Appendix A.

Table 3-1 Sensitive Species Potentially Occurring in the Project Area

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Federal Status | Critical Habitat / in Action Area | Habitat and Distribution |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Jurisdiction | | | | |
| Cetaceans | | | | |
| Bowhead whale | <i>Balaena mysticetus</i> | E | Not designated | Chukchi and Beaufort Seas |
| Fin whale | <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i> | E | Not designated | Chukchi and Bering Seas, Gulf of Alaska, and North Pacific Ocean |
| Humpback whale | <i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i> | E | Not designated | Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, and North Pacific Ocean |
| North Pacific right whale | <i>Eubalaena japonica</i> | E | Yes / No | Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, and North Pacific Ocean |
| Pinnipeds | | | | |
| Bearded seal | <i>Erignathus barbatus nauticus</i> | T | Not designated | Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas |
| Ringed seal | <i>Phoca hispida hispida</i> | T | Not designated | Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas |
| Steller sea lion | <i>Eumetopias jubatus</i> | E | Yes/Yes | Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, and North Pacific Ocean |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Jurisdiction | | | | |
| Marine Mammals | | | | |
| Pacific walrus | <i>Odobenus rosmarus divergens</i> | C | Not designated | Continental shelf waters of the Bering and Chukchi Seas |
| Polar bear | <i>Ursus maritimus</i> | T | Not designated | On sea ice and coastline of Chukchi and Beaufort Seas |
| Birds | | | | |

3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------|---|
| Short-tailed albatross | <i>Phoebastria albatrus</i> | E | Not designated | U.S. Territorial waters, Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea Coast, Japan, Russia, high seas |
| Spectacled eider | <i>Somateria fischeri</i> | T | Yes / Yes | Western and northern Alaska in coastal environments |
| Steller's eider | <i>Polysticta stelleri</i> | T | Yes / No | Southwestern, western and northern Alaska |
| Yellow-billed loon | <i>Gavia adamsii</i> | C | Not designated | Arctic Coastal Plain, Seward Peninsula, St. Lawrence Island, and all coastal waters |

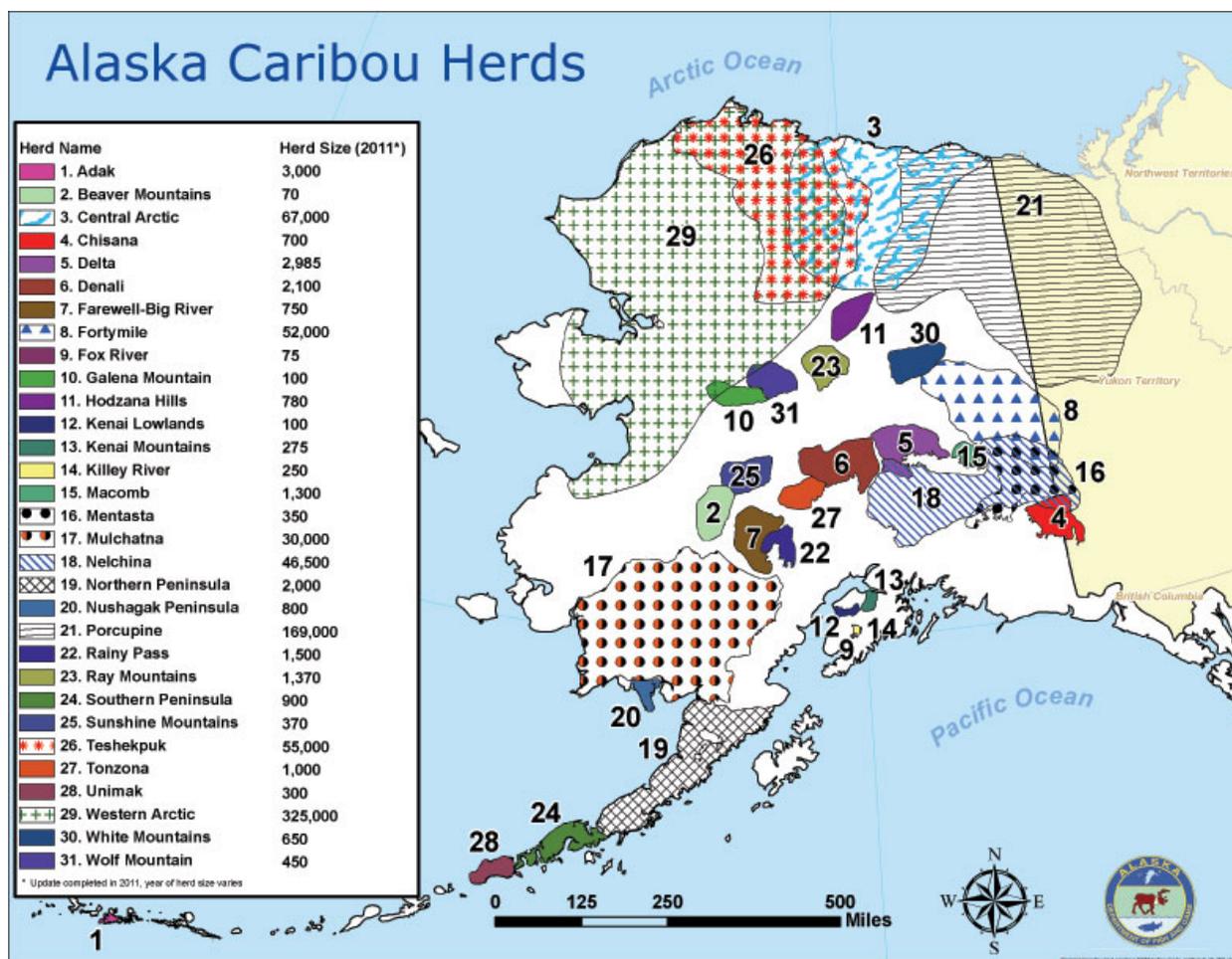
Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, Listed Species in Alaska (NMFS 2013a); E = Endangered; T = Threatened; C = Candidate species for listing

Migratory Birds

Most marine birds that occur in the Bering, Beaufort, and Chukchi Seas are there during the open-water season. Arrival times usually coincide with the formation of leads during spring migration to coastal breeding areas. Migration times vary between species, but spring migration for most species takes place between late March and late May. Some birds that breed on the North Slope migrate to or through the project area twice each year. Some marine and coastal birds may breed outside the project area, but spend time in the Beaufort Sea after breeding or during their non-breeding seasons. Departure times from the Beaufort Sea for the fall and winter vary between species and often by sex within the same species, but most marine and coastal birds will have moved out of the Beaufort Sea by late October before the formation of sea ice. Each winter, the world's entire population of Spectacled eiders gathers to feed in the St. Lawrence Island Polyna. Some migratory birds also go through a process called molting, in which they replace some or all of their existing feathers with new feathers. During this period, these birds cannot fly, since their new feathers are not completely in or established.

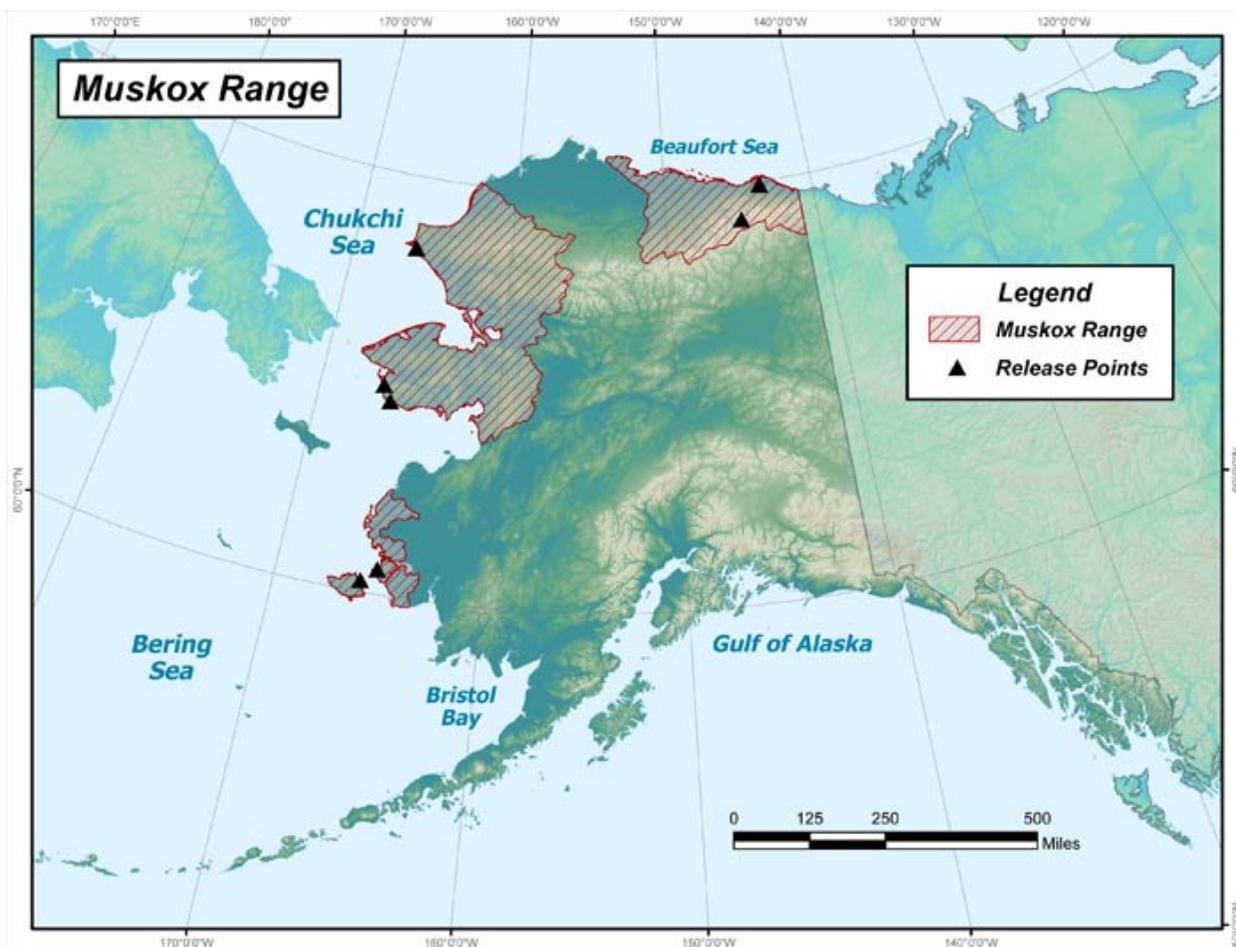
Land Mammals

Four caribou herds are anticipated in the action area (Figure 3-1): Western Arctic, Teshekpuk, Central Arctic, and Porcupine. Caribou is an important year-round subsistence resource and herds are very sensitive to sound disturbance.



1
2 **Figure 3-1 Caribou herds** (Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2011)
3
4

5 Muskoxen (*Ovibos moschatus*) are native to Alaska but were extirpated by the 1920s. In 1930,
6 34 muskoxen were captured in East Greenland and brought to Nunivak Island, a large island in
7 the Bering Sea. The muskoxen thrived there and, by 1968, the herd had grown to 750 animals.
8 Muskoxen from the Nunivak herd were later translocated throughout Alaska (Figure 3-2). There
9 are now about 4,000 muskoxen in Alaska (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2014).
10 Muskoxen are an important year-round subsistence resource and herds could be sensitive to
11 sound disturbance.



1
2 **Figure 3-2 Current muskox range and reintroduction points**
3

4 **3.3.2 Environmental Consequences**

5 Effects on biological resources would be considered significant if project-related actions were to
6 result in the temporary or permanent loss of any sensitive or protected habitat or in the direct loss
7 or damage of any sensitive resource. Effects to protected species, including critical habitat and
8 essential fish habitat, are summarized in this section. Detailed analysis is available in the
9 Biological Evaluation in Appendix A.

10
11 **3.3.2.1 No Action Alternative**

12 Under the No Action Alternative, Coast Guard Arctic activities would not occur unless an
13 emergency requires a Coast Guard response. No Coast Guard FOLs would be established, so
14 associated construction, training, and operations would not occur. In addition, the Coast Guard
15 would not be present in the area to take enforcement action against poaching of U.S. fish stocks
16 and observed violations of the ESA, Clean Water Act, MMPA, Magnuson-Stevens Act, and
17 other applicable laws. The No Action Alternative doesn't meet the purpose and need, but is
18 provided as it represents a baseline condition against which environmental consequences can be
19 measured.
20

1 **3.3.2.2 Preferred Alternative**

2 Under the Preferred Alternative, the Coast Guard would conduct operations and training
3 activities in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas. FOLs and logistics/staging locations could
4 be established to provide resupply and refueling points for Arctic-deployed Coast Guard assets.
5 Helicopter overflights, vessel transits, and icebreaking would implement established protective
6 measures for all non-emergency activities as described in Section 2.5 of this EA. These
7 protective measures are designed to reduce and avoid impacts to habitats, threatened and
8 endangered species, marine mammals, and migratory birds, and have been implemented through
9 various Coast Guard Instructions to all personnel operating in and around the state of Alaska.
10 These protective measures would be implemented for Coast Guard Arctic activities under the
11 Preferred Alternative, and would be issued as a part of the Operational Order guiding these
12 activities. Table-top exercises and Tribal/Local Government engagement would help ensure
13 Coast Guard operational sensitivity on habitats or terrestrial, marine, or avian species, and
14 impacts to subsistence activities.

15
16 **Terrestrial Habitats – Barrow**

17 The town of Barrow is already developed and proposed construction would occur on previously
18 disturbed soils, therefore no significant impact to terrestrial habitats would occur. No permanent
19 facilities are proposed for construction at other locations. Airstrips, airports, helipads, or
20 heliports already exist at proposed logistics and staging locations, so no new construction would
21 occur under this proposed action. Repair to runways could occur. Because no land uses would
22 change, terrestrial habitats would not be significantly impacted by the Preferred Alternative.

23 **Marine Habitats – Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas**

24 Following the BMPs listed in Section 2.5, including the Vessel Environmental Manual
25 (COMDTINST M16455.1) for ballasting procedures, proposed Coast Guard actions would have
26 no significant impact on marine habitats. More discussion on potential impacts, particularly to
27 Essential Fish Habitat and critical habitat for endangered or threatened species can be found
28 below and in Appendix A.

29
30 **Fish and Essential Fish Habitat**

31 Only a few of the operations and training activities proposed as part of the Proposed Action have
32 the potential to impact EFH:

- 33 • Search and rescue missions: Considering expendable materials, the relative infrequency
34 of annual SAR operations, the few number of self-locating buoys deployed per operation,
35 and the amount of designated EFH available relative to the size of the impact, the **overall
36 potential impact to designated EFH would be minimal.**
- 37 • Icebreaking: While icebreaking has the potential to expose fish occupying the water
38 column to sound and general disturbance, potentially resulting in short-term behavioral or
39 physiological responses, such responses would not be expected to compromise the
40 general health or condition of individual fish. Therefore, **icebreaking operations would
41 have no adverse effect on any designated EFH.**
- 42 • Rescue exercises: Considering potential expendable materials, **no adverse effects to
43 designated EFH are anticipated from rescue exercises.**
- 44 • Oil recovery training exercises: Any simulated spill products missed during the exercises
45 would remain floating at the sea surface or would become entrapped in the ice and would

1 breakdown or degrade over time with no harm to the environment. **These exercises and**
2 **tests would have no adverse effect on designated EFH.**

3
4 Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would potentially have a minor beneficial impact on
5 fish and fish habitat in the action area due to the improved Coast Guard support to respond to any
6 kind of environmental emergency that may potentially occur in the Arctic. In addition, Coast
7 Guard presence in the area would benefit fish stocks because the Coast Guard would be nearby
8 to enforce the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

9
10 **Federally-Listed Species**

11 Coast Guard Arctic activities by the Coast Guard could potentially result in some short-term
12 impacts to federally listed species or candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. The
13 Biological Evaluation considered all aspects of the proposed action, including: FOLs and
14 logistics and staging locations; inspections and safety; air operations and training; sea operations
15 and training; icebreaking; safety zones; and oil recovery training exercises. The determinations
16 are summarized in Table 3-2.

17
18 The protective measures detailed in Section 2.5 have been developed by the Coast Guard, in
19 consultation with NMFS and USFWS, to prevent any disturbance to federally listed species as a
20 result of Coast Guard activities. The Coast Guard would comply with these protective measures
21 during Coast Guard Arctic activities with the exception of an emergency situation involving
22 safety of life at sea or an emergent environmental emergency.

23
24 Implementation of the prescribed protective measures would reduce short-term impacts and
25 would not cause significant adverse effects to any species or population in the action area. The
26 Preferred Alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the federally listed species
27 in the action area, including the bearded seal, bowhead whale, fin whale, humpback whale, North
28 Pacific right whale, polar bear, ringed seal, Steller sea lion, short-tailed albatross, spectacled
29 eider, and Steller's eider. The Preferred Alternative also would not adversely affect the candidate
30 species for listing, including Pacific walrus and yellow-billed loon. In addition, Coast Guard
31 presence in the area may benefit threatened and endangered species because the Coast Guard
32 would be nearby to take enforcement actions against observed violations of the ESA.

1 **Table 3-2 Determination for ESA-Listed species**

| Species | Population/DPS | Federal Status ¹ | Coast Guard Determinations | |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| | | | Species | Critical Habitat |
| NMFS Jurisdiction | | | | |
| Cetaceans | | | | |
| Bowhead whale | Western Arctic | E | NLAA ² | N/A |
| Fin whale | Alaska (Northeast Pacific) | E | NLAA | N/A |
| Humpback whale | Western and Central North Pacific Stocks | E | NLAA | N/A |
| North Pacific right whale | Eastern North Pacific | E | NLAA | No effect |
| Pinnipeds | | | | |
| Bearded seal | Beringia Stock | T | NLAA | N/A |
| Ringed seal | Arctic Stock | T | NLAA | N/A |
| Steller Sea Lion | Western DPS | E | NLAA | NLAA |
| USFWS Jurisdiction | | | | |
| Marine Mammals | | | | |
| Pacific walrus | N/A | C | NLAA | N/A |
| Polar bear | Chukchi Sea, Southern Beaufort Sea | T | NLAA | N/A |
| Birds | | | | |
| Short-tailed albatross | | E | NLAA | N/A |
| Spectacled eider | | T | NLAA | No effect |
| Steller's eider | | T | NLAA | No effect |
| Yellow-billed loon | | C | NLAA | N/A |

2 1 - E: Endangered, T: Threatened, C: Candidate for listing; 2 - NLAA: May affect, not likely to
3 adversely affect.
4

5 **Marine Mammals**

6 The Preferred Alternative would not result in any significant impacts to marine mammals or
7 habitats in the action area because the activities are minor, and mainly involve the movement of
8 surface vessels in Port Clarence, Kotzebue, Nome, and Barrow and helicopter support out of
9 existing facilities in Barrow, Alaska. With implementation of protective and avoidance measures
10 issued by NMFS and USFWS (see Section 2.5), Coast Guard Arctic activities would have no
11 permanent impacts on marine mammal populations in the Bering, Chukchi or Beaufort Seas. The
12 potential for vessel interactions with marine mammals, including collisions, would be minimized
13 as a result of vessel avoidance measures, as described in Section 2.5. No permanent disturbance
14 of any marine mammal habitats or populations would result from the implementation of the
15 Preferred Alternative, as the proposed actions are minimally invasive and do not permanently
16 alter the environment. Sonar would be utilized within the guidelines set forth in Section 2.4.
17 Many species of marine mammals are likely to avoid icebreakers at ranges from 1 to several tens
18 of kilometers (Richardson et al. 1995), and would not be exposed to noise at injurious levels.
19 Behavioral responses are likely to subside within hours of the ship's passage and ultimately not
20 significantly affect the survival or reproduction of disturbed individuals. Implementation of the
21 Preferred Alternative would potentially have a minor beneficial impact on marine mammals and

1 their habitat in the action area due to the improved Coast Guard support to respond to any kind of
2 environmental emergency that may occur in the Arctic. In addition, Coast Guard presence in the
3 area may benefit marine mammals because the Coast Guard would be nearby to take
4 enforcement actions against observed violations of the MMPA.
5

6 **Migratory Birds**

7 The Preferred Alternative would not result in any significant impacts to migratory birds in the
8 action area because the activities are minor, and mainly involve the movement of surface vessels
9 in Port Clarence, Nome, and Barrow and helicopter support out of existing facilities in Barrow,
10 Alaska. These activities would have no permanent impacts to bird populations or movements in
11 the Bering, Chukchi, or Beaufort Seas or on shore in the Barrow area. No disturbance of
12 migratory bird habitats or populations would result from the implementation of the Preferred
13 Alternative, as the proposed actions are minimally invasive and do not involve any construction
14 or permanent alteration of the environment. BMPs specific to birds include Coast Guard
15 diverting around at-sea flocks and maintaining slow and steady speeds. Aircraft would also
16 maintain altitudes of at least 500 feet above sea level when flying over spectacled eiders and
17 avoid approaching flocks of all birds. Section 2.5 of this EA details all BMPs employed to
18 protect species. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would potentially have a minor
19 beneficial impact on migratory birds in the action area due to the improved Coast Guard support
20 to respond to any kind of environmental emergency that may occur in the action area.
21

22 **Land Mammals**

23 Under the Preferred Alternative, flight crews would be required to log in-flight hours to meet
24 ongoing training requirements. Fog and cloud cover could create a low ceiling in which pilots
25 would be forced to maneuver their aircraft at low altitudes. This noise could spook large game,
26 causing a change in herd direction, but would not impact a population's long-term survival.
27 Flight operations are not expected to have a significant impact on caribou or muskox, but crews
28 must communicate with the native people daily to ensure flight paths would not interfere with
29 planned subsistence hunts.
30

31 The Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to significantly impact biological resources.
32

33 **3.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

34
35 Cultural resources consist of districts, buildings, sites, structures, areas of traditional use, or
36 objects with historical, architectural, archaeological, cultural (those important to living Native
37 Americans, including Alaska Natives, for religious, spiritual, ancestral, or traditional reasons), or
38 scientific importance. Maritime cultural resources can include submerged prehistoric sites,
39 shipwrecks and associated debris, and historic materials intentionally dumped or lost.
40

41 The proposed action has no activities disturbing the sea floor. Land-based activities would not
42 include new ground disturbance (proposed construction is on already developed land), but would
43 include in-flight training. For purposes of this EA, analysis will focus on marine and land-based
44 subsistence resources used by local tribes within the proposed action area.
45

1 Numerous laws and regulations mandate that possible effects on important cultural resources be
2 considered during the planning and execution of federal undertakings. These laws define the
3 compliance process and federal agency responsibilities. Federal mandates include Sections 106
4 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act and their implementing regulations in 36 CFR
5 800. As required in these regulations, the Coast Guard has complied with the requirements for
6 using the NEPA process to achieve Section 106 compliance. Coast Guard District 17 has a
7 designated Tribal Liaison who has ongoing communications with Alaska Native tribes, villages,
8 and corporations in the action area about the proposed Coast Guard Arctic activities.

10 3.4.1 Affected Environment

11 Subsistence

12 Subsistence harvest plays an important role in all Native communities of the action area. The are
13 multiple organizations that cooperatively and jointly manage subsistence resources and
14 information. The majority of permanent residents of the Arctic and Bering Sea coasts are Alaska
15 Natives who value many subsistence activities as group activities that further core values of
16 community, cooperation, and kinship. Subsistence use means the customary and traditional uses
17 by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption
18 as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft
19 articles out of nonedible byproducts of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family
20 consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade
21 (36 CFR 242.4). Section 109 of the MMPA applies the same definition explicitly to the
22 subsistence harvesting of marine mammals (NOAA 2013a).

23
24
25 Subsistence harvesting follows a seasonal pattern constrained by changes in season and by the
26 migration patterns of whales, fishes, birds, and terrestrial mammals such as caribou. Muskoxen
27 don't migrate. A recent study of subsistence harvesting patterns in Beaufort Sea communities
28 suggests that subsistence marine harvesting can occur anywhere along the coast, but tends to be
29 concentrated in areas directly offshore from the villages and regularly used whaling camps.
30 Seaward harvesting occurs within 25 miles of shore but may extend to as much as three times
31 that distance depending on the conditions of ice and sea. Harvesters prefer locations where they
32 do not have to fight against the currents to bring their harvest home (SRBA 2010).

33
34 Marine mammals are culturally most important
35 even in villages where caribou, muskox, or fish
36 supply more meat. Bowhead whale (Figure 3-3)
37 meat is most preferred, and seal oil is an
38 important addition to meals based on the sea
39 harvest (MMS 2008). Seal oil is a significant
40 source of calories and used in almost all meals
41 by the Inuit and Yup'ik households (Alaska
42 Department of Fish and Game 1988).

43
44 Subsistence species supply more than meat.
45 Skins and furs go into the production of
46 clothing while bone, baleen, and ivory provide



Figure 3-3 Bowhead whale

1 raw materials for handicrafts. Wild foods, clothing, construction, arts, crafts, furs, and other
 2 products are traditionally traded among households through extensive, non-commercial, kinship-
 3 based networks. Coastal resources such as seal oil and fish commonly are traded inland, while
 4 inland resources such as muskox and caribou are traded toward the coast (NMFS 2009b).

5
 6 Overall subsistence consumption varies, and the composition of subsistence consumption varies
 7 as well, reflecting the availability of commercial sources of food and the composition of the
 8 resource base on which the community draws (Figure 3-4).

9
 10 In Alaska, the U.S. government and the
 11 Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission have
 12 jointly managed the traditional subsistence
 13 harvest of the bowhead whale under a
 14 cooperative agreement since 1981. All stocks
 15 of bowhead whales are classified as
 16 protected by the International Whaling
 17 Commission. The United States has
 18 classified bowhead whales as endangered
 19 under the Endangered Species Act and
 20 depleted under the Marine Mammal
 21 Protection Act.

22
 23 Eleven Alaskan coastal villages within the
 24 action area participate in traditional
 25 subsistence hunts of bowhead whales (Table
 26 3-1) Gambell, Savoonga, Little Diomede,
 27 and Wales (on the Bering Sea coast);
 28 Kivalina, Point Hope, Point Lay,
 29 Wainwright, and Barrow (on the coast of the
 30 Chukchi Sea); and Nuiqsut and Kaktovik (on
 31 the coast of the Beaufort Sea). The bowhead
 32 whale hunt constitutes an important
 33 subsistence activity for these communities,
 34 providing substantial quantities of food, as
 35 well as reinforcing the traditional skills and
 36 social structure of local Alaska Native
 37 culture. Such hunts have been regulated by a
 38 catch limit adopted by The International
 39 Whaling Commission regulates the catch
 40 limit, with Alaska Native subsistence hunters
 41 from northern Alaskan communities taking
 42 less than one percent of the stock of bowhead
 43 whales per year.

44
 45 Contemporary hunts occur twice a year in the spring and autumn seasons based on ice and
 46 weather conditions. In the autumn season, aluminum skiffs or small open boats with outboard

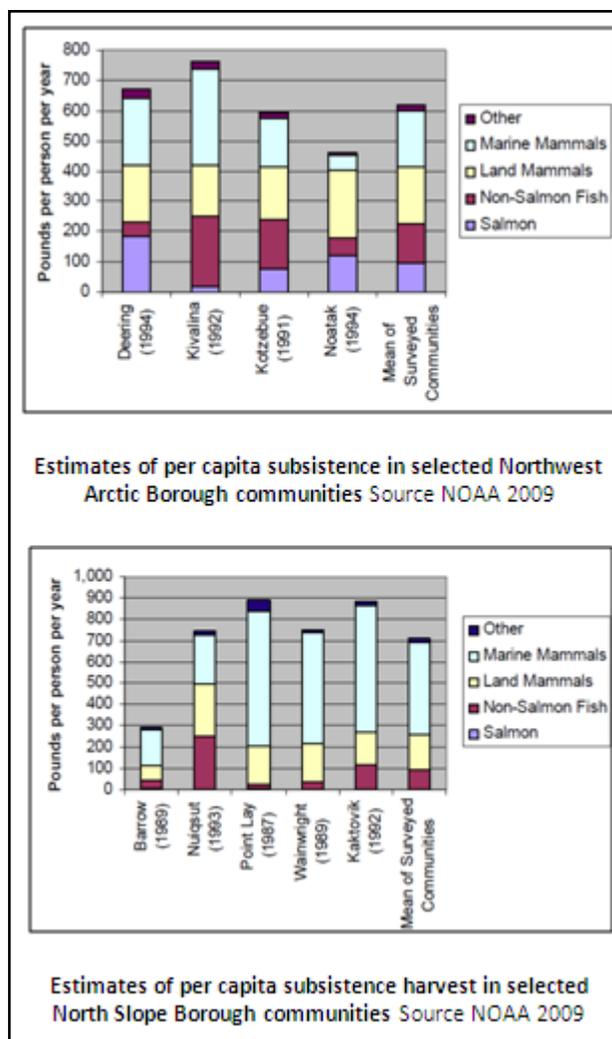


Figure 3-4 Per capita subsistence harvest in Northwest Arctic Borough and North Slope Borough

1 motors are used for the hunt due to the open water conditions. In the spring, traditional skin-
2 covered *umiaks* are preferred because they are quieter and therefore more effective in the ice
3 leads.

4
5 Traditionally, most of the whale was used for food, though other parts of the whale were used to
6 make whaling gear, fishing equipment, traps, tools, and for many other practical day-to-day uses.
7 The gut was made into translucent windows, and the oil was used for heating, cooking, and
8 lighting. The bones were used for fences, house construction, and sled runners. Baleen and bone
9 were used in many forms of handicraft, including baleen baskets, and carvings.

10
11 Today, bowhead is still an important source of subsistence where the skin and blubber are eaten
12 either raw or boiled in salted water. Subsistence foods also include muscle, tongue, flukes,
13 flipper, tongue, intestines, heart and kidney, as well as stomach and liver in Point Hope. The
14 membrane on the liver is used for drum skins (NMFS 2013b).

15
16 Bowhead subsistence whaling represents an especially important source of subsistence food
17 among the communities in the action area. During the past 10 years (2002 – 2011), the villages
18 have landed 388 bowhead whales, or an average of 38.8 whales per year (Table 5), the largest
19 community of Barrow takes over half of the total, with an average of 21.0 bowhead whales
20 landed per year in the last decade. Most of the rest of the communities take one to three whales
21 per years, while the small communities of Wales, Point Lay, and Little Diomedede have highly
22 intermittent harvests, and Kivalina has taken no whales in this period (NMFS 2013b).

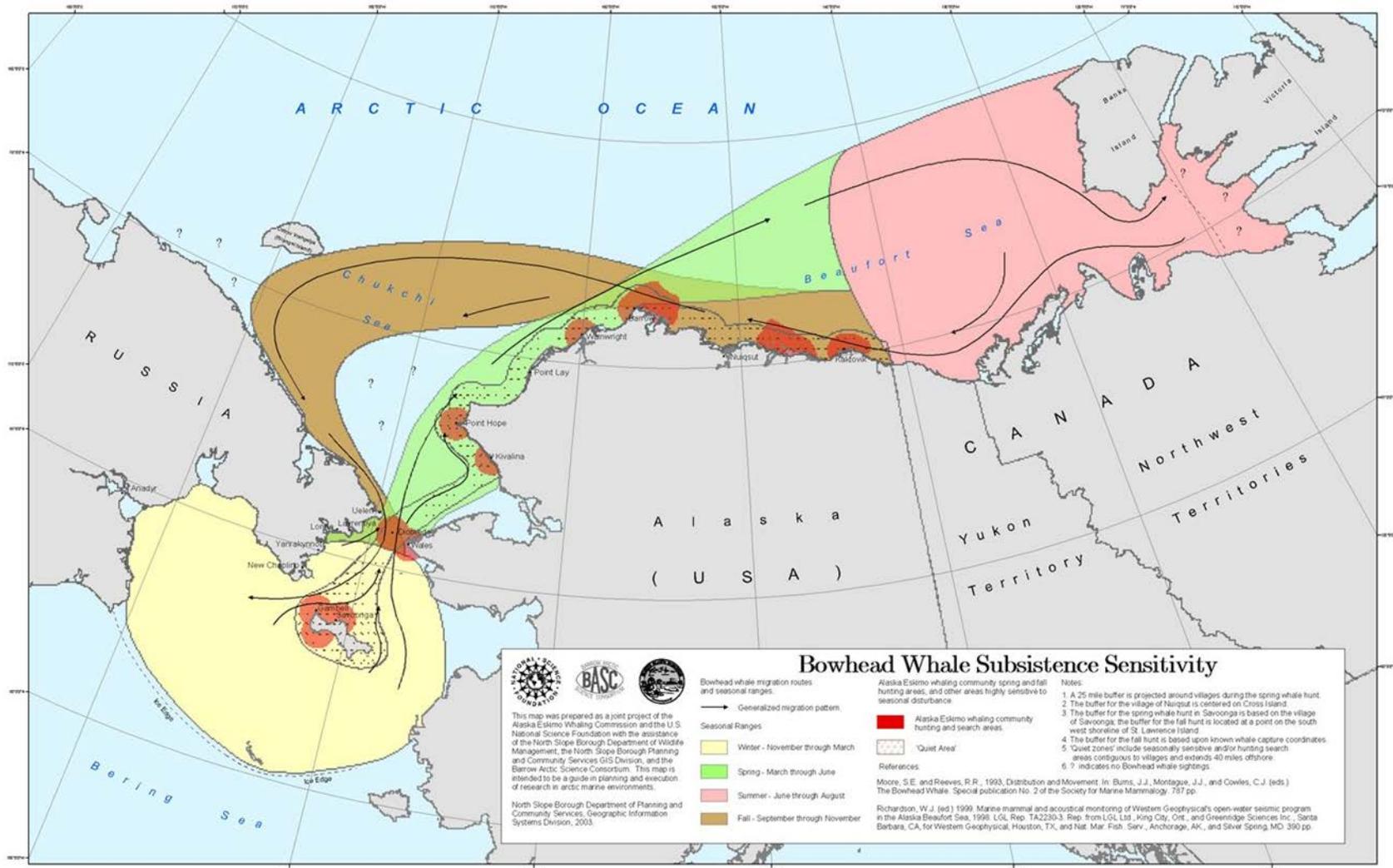


Figure 3-5 Bowhead whale subsistence areas

Table 3-3 Bowhead whale harvests

| Bowhead Whales Landed 2002 - 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|----------|-------|----------------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|--------|---------|----------|-------|
| | Gambell | Savoonga | Wales | Little Diomede | Kivalina | Point Hope | Point Lay | Wainwright | Barrow | Nuiqsut | Kaktovik | Total |
| Total Landed | 25 | 32 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 25 | 2 | 30 | 210 | 32 | 30 | 388 |
| Annual Ave. | 2.5 | 3.2 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0 | 2.5 | 0.2 | 3.0 | 21.0 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 38.8 |

Source: NMFS Bowhead Whale Final EIS January 2013

Increased vessel traffic in the Bering, Beaufort, and Chukchi Seas would be likely to result in greater incidents of disturbance effects on foraging bowheads or other marine mammals and could result in a higher incidence of ship strikes with the potential for serious injury and mortality. However, if bowhead whales and other marine mammals are able to move away from future shipping lanes and still find suitable foraging areas, the increased risk of ship strikes and disturbance could be reduced (NMFS 2009b).

Alaska Natives have also voiced concerns over increased shipping facilitated by the opening of the Northwest Passage, since shipping noise may interfere with marine subsistence hunts. They are currently adapting to later ice formation in the fall and earlier ice retreat in the spring. The lengthening of the ice-free season allows more shipping to support the oil and gas industry, community resupply, or tourism. With increased traffic, there is a tendency to stretch the ice-free season even longer by the use of icebreakers. It follows that shipping plays a role and has an impact on the formation of sea ice not only on its own, but also through combining with other drivers of change (e.g., climate change) (Arctic Council 2009). Annual sea ice formation is critical for Alaska Natives as well as marine fish and mammals. Alaska Natives are very concerned by the loss of multiyear ice, which forms a sturdy platform of sufficient depth to allow for camping, butchering whales, and hunting along sea ice routes that remain passable for hunters as well as for the migratory game they pursue (Arctic Council 2009).

Many of the most important subsistence resources are in or near the sea and are thus potentially subject to the effects of increased commercial vessel traffic, oil and gas exploration, production, and any spills associated with them, and increased Coast Guard activity.

Residents of coastal communities have been remarkably consistent in their primary concerns during the more than 20 years of public hearings and meetings on State and Federal oil development on the Alaska coast (Mineral Management Service 1996). Cultural concerns mentioned include:

- The effects that oil spills are likely to have the largest and longest lasting effects on Alaska Natives, primarily in terms of subsistence activities.

- 1 • There is a general fear of cultural change, especially in terms of the loss of the
2 subsistence lifestyle, which may lead to social disruptions or social problems in local
3 communities (including youth becoming less interested in traditional ways). One single
4 incident would have devastating impacts to lifestyle.
5
- 6 • Oil development will result in an influx of population and other influences, which will
7 disrupt and degrade Alaska Native community life. In addition, oil development and its
8 effects will impose additional demands on Alaska Native communities and individuals.
9 Appearances at numerous hearings and the review of numerous documents are only the
10 most visible of such demands.
11
- 12 • Whales will follow pathways created by icebreakers, which could deflect whales away
13 from typical subsistence hunting grounds.
14
- 15 • The breaking of sea ice by icebreakers causes dark water to be exposed, instead of light
16 ice. The dark water absorbs heat and causes the remaining ice to melt faster. If the ice
17 remained intact, it is believed that the ice sheet would be more persistent.
18
- 19 • Marine mammals, especially whales, are sensitive to noise. Hunters avoid making any
20 sort of extraneous noise, and the loud and relatively constant noises associated with
21 seismic testing, drilling, and boat and air transport will cause whales (and other marine
22 mammals) to avoid areas where such noise is audible to them. The range of whale
23 sensitivity to noise is quite large, and noise effects on bowhead whales may be the
24 biggest concern.
25
- 26 • Many Alaska Natives believe that the technology to clean up oil spills in Arctic waters,
27 and especially in broken ice conditions, is poorly developed and has not been adequately
28 demonstrated to be effective.
29
- 30 • Many residents believe that public comments at public hearings and other public forums
31 may be noted, but they have little or no effect on project decisions or the overall direction
32 and philosophy of the leasing program.
33

34 Living off the land, or “subsistence,” is a lifestyle adhered to by many Alaska Natives. Coastal
35 communities subsist principally off marine mammals and fish.
36

37 Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments*, issued in
38 2000, established collaboration with American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The
39 Coast Guard District 17 also has policies regarding Government-to-Government Consultation in
40 the United States that are outlined in CGD17INST 5726.1B, Tribal Consultation and
41 Engagement Guidance (U.S. Coast Guard 2011b). The instruction includes several BMPs for
42 Coast Guard units within District 17 to coordinate and make sure no conflicts exist between their
43 actions and any identified tribal activities, such as subsistence harvest of fish, marine mammals,
44 and land mammals within the area of Coast Guard activities. Table 3-4 outlines the tribes,
45 tribal entities, and governments that the Coast Guard has engaged to discuss Coast Guard Arctic
46 activities.

Table 3-4 Tribes, Tribal Entities, and Governments Contacted by the Coast Guard

| Name of Tribe or Tribal Entity | Location |
|---|------------------------------------|
| North Slope Borough Mayor's Office | Barrow, Alaska |
| North Slope Assembly | Barrow, Alaska |
| Inuit Circumpolar Conference | Anchorage, Alaska |
| Native Village of Barrow | Barrow, Alaska |
| Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope | Barrow, Alaska |
| Maniilaq | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Arctic Slope Regional Corporation | Barrow, Alaska |
| Northwest Arctic Leadership Team | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Northwest Arctic Borough | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Bering Straits Native Association | Nome, Alaska |
| Kawerak, Norton Sound Health Consortium | Nome, Alaska |
| Northern Waters Task Force (formed by Alaska State Legislature) | Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow, Alaska |
| Native Village of Kotzebue | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Kiana Traditional Council | Kiana, Alaska |
| Native Village of Kivalina | Kivalina, Alaska |
| Kotzebue IRA Council | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Native Village of Noatak | Noatak, Alaska |
| Noorvik Native Community | Noorvik, Alaska |
| Selawik Village Council | Selawik, Alaska |
| Native Village of Shungnak | Shungnak, Alaska |
| Village of Anaktuvuk Pass | Anaktuvuk, Alaska |
| NANA Regional Corporation, Inc | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Atqasuk Village | Atqasuk, Alaska |
| Kaktovik Village | Kaktovik, Alaska |
| Native Village of Nuiqsut | Nuiqsut, Alaska |
| Native Village of Point Hope | Point Hope, Alaska |
| Native Village of Point Lay | Point Lay, Alaska |
| Native Village of Wainwright | Wainwright, Alaska |
| Arctic Slope Native Corporation | Barrow, Alaska |
| Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission | Barrow, Alaska |
| Eskimo Walrus Commission | Nome, Alaska |
| Alaska Nanuuq Commission | Nome, Alaska |
| Alaska Beluga Whale Committee | Kotzebue, Alaska |
| Ice Seal Committee | Nome, Alaska |
| North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management | Barrow, Alaska |

Subsistence hunting is very important in these communities and occurs in various timeframes and locations throughout the year. Important subsistence species include fish, bowhead whale, various seals, walrus, sea lion, caribou, and muskox.

1 **3.4.2 Environmental Consequences**

2
3 **3.4.2.1 No Action Alternative**

4 Under the No Action Alternative, Coast Guard Arctic activities would not occur unless an
5 emergency requires a Coast Guard response. The Coast Guard would not proceed with tribal
6 outreach and coordination efforts. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and
7 need, but is provided as it represents a baseline condition against which environmental
8 consequences can be measured.

9
10 **3.4.2.2 Preferred Alternative**

11 Potential impacts to subsistence activities within the action area could occur based on
12 subsistence harvest activities. Noise from ships, helicopters, and planes could result in these
13 species avoiding the area. Flight crews would coordinate with local tribes to ensure their
14 proposed flight paths would not interfere with subsistence harvest activities. Flight plans would
15 be altered to accommodate any planned hunts. This coordination would ensure that no significant
16 impact occurs to caribou and muskox subsistence activities. Ship crews would also coordinate
17 with local tribes in the same manner, including communicating established safety zones.

18
19 The Coast Guard strives to communicate on a regular basis with affected tribes and communities
20 regarding Coast Guard activities and presence. For the Coast Guard Arctic activities, the Coast
21 Guard has been proactively engaging with many communities, tribes, and corporations of the
22 North Slope area and affected communities, as listed in Table 3 4. With the BMPs defined in the
23 Coast Guard District 17 Instruction 5726.1B, such as de-conflicting Coast Guard activities and
24 promoting continued communication with the appropriate tribal governments and communities,
25 impacts to subsistence use of the land and Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas from Coast Guard
26 activities would be minimized. Therefore, it is anticipated that the Preferred Alternative would
27 have no significant impacts to tribal rights and resources, including subsistence activities.

28
29 **3.5 SOCIOECONOMICS**

30
31 **3.5.1 Affected Environment**

32 **Population and Employment**

33 Among the Nome Census area, the North Slope Borough, and the Northwest Arctic Borough,
34 there are approximately 27,000 people in the action area (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). The Arctic
35 region is projected to experience average annual increases in population of 1.08% between 2010
36 and 2020, with a slightly lower average annual rate of 0.95% over the period 2020 to 2030.
37 Projections of demographic and economic data assume the continuation of existing social,
38 economic, and technological trends at the time of the forecast, including employment associated
39 with the continuation of current oil and gas leasing activity, as well as the continuation of trends
40 in other industries important to the region (Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce
41 Development 2007).

42
43 The largest employing sectors by place of work in the Arctic region in 2008 were mining and oil
44 and gas development, with 8,477 people employed representing 49% of total employment,
45 service industries with 6,025 employees at 35% of total employment, and State and local
46 government with 2,859 employees at 17% of total employment. Between 2001 and 2006,

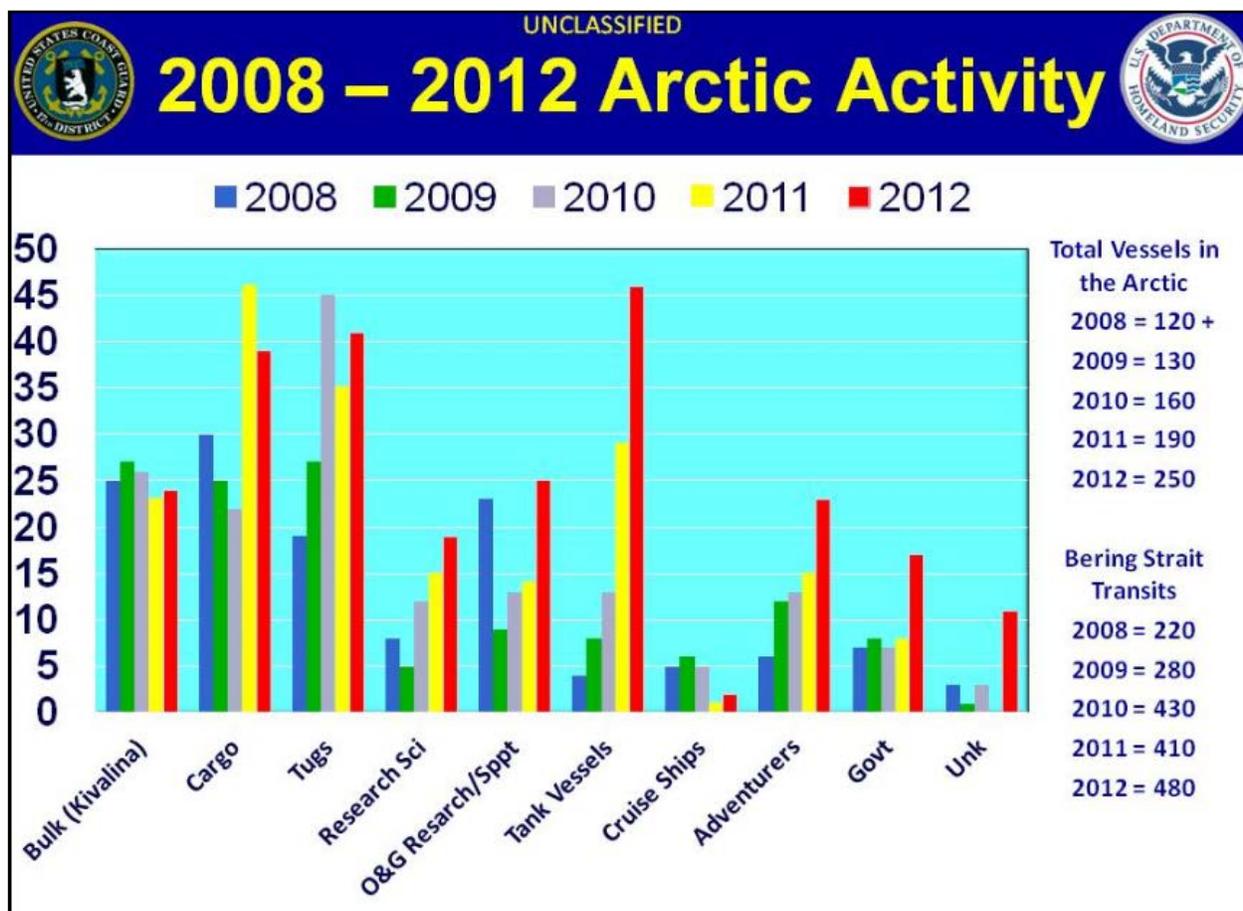
1 approximately 70% of North Slope workers in the oil and gas industry commuted to and from
2 permanent residences elsewhere in Alaska (Mineral Management Services 2008).

3
4 The NANA Regional Corporation owns the Red Dog Mine, which is located in the DeLong
5 Mountains about 90 miles north of Kotzebue, Alaska, and is the world's largest zinc mine. It
6 contributes nearly one billion dollars in State and regional taxes, as well as serving as a
7 significant source of employment in the surrounding area. Estimates credit Red Dog Mine with
8 creating roughly 2,800 jobs statewide and paying more than \$166 million in total compensation.
9 In 2009, Red Dog Mine purchased approximately \$173 million in goods and services, including
10 work with 10 Alaska mining support companies. Alaska Native peoples throughout the state also
11 benefit from the mine through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act's 7(i) sharing provision.
12 In 2011, NANA distributed \$82 million dollars through this agreement to all Alaska Natives
13 (NANA 2013).

14
15 About 9,600 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2012) live in the North Slope borough, most of them in
16 Barrow, but the greatest impact the oil and gas industry has on them is through oil-related
17 property tax revenues. The North Slope oil industry infrastructure and work sites are self-
18 contained and hundreds of miles away from most of the borough's resident population. Prudhoe
19 Bay, the largest oilfield in North America, is the hub for most oil and gas related activity in the
20 borough. Oil producers provide about 20 percent of the jobs in Prudhoe Bay and oil support
21 services companies provide another 65 percent. The remaining jobs are other industries, such as
22 construction, transportation, or professional services but directly tied to Prudhoe Bay or other
23 area oil operations (Alaska Oil and Gas Association 2011).

24 25 **Commercial Shipping and International Routes**

26 Currently, commercial traffic within the action area supports oil and gas industries and the Red
27 Dog mine, as well as barges or cargo vessels used to supply coastal villages and international
28 shipping. Shipping traffic is rapidly increasing in the study area. The Bering Strait is the entry
29 and exit point to the western Arctic. As reported by Coast Guard District 17 for 2008 to 2012,
30 annual vessel traffic transiting the Bering Strait increased from 220 vessels a year to 480 vessels
31 a year (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), a more than 100 percent increase. Total vessel
32 traffic in the Arctic has more than doubled as well. The growth rate was particularly high for
33 tank vessels; tugs and other cargo vessels were the second and third largest categories of
34 movements



1 **Figure 3-6 Vessel activity in the Arctic**

2
3 Another near-term example of an increase in U.S. Arctic marine traffic has been the 2012
4 exploratory oil drilling in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. A July 2012 *Bloomberg* government
5 article reports that Royal Dutch Shell PLC has spent \$4.5 billion on Arctic drilling preparations
6 since 2005 (U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System 2013). This and other
7 indicators of private sector intent to expand exploration in the region, both within and beyond
8 U.S. waters, highlight the potential for economic development in the Arctic.

9
10 Commercial shipping activity in the U.S. Arctic is primarily regional, centered on the transport
11 of natural resources from the Arctic and the delivery of general cargo and supplies to
12 communities and natural resource extraction facilities. Diminished Arctic ice is now creating
13 growth potential for commercial shipping on trans-Arctic routes. This could reduce existing
14 transit distance between Europe and Asia by roughly 4,500 nautical miles. For commercial
15 interests, saving a week's time and 40 percent in freight shipping costs presents a compelling
16 case to consider routing vessels through the Arctic. Regardless of purpose, commercial vessel
17 traffic into and through the Arctic is increasing and will continue to increase underscoring the
18 need for emergency preparedness.

19
20

1 **Commercial and Recreational Fishing**

2 The Arctic Management Area, consisting of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone of the Chukchi
3 and Beaufort Seas from 3 nm offshore the coast of Alaska is currently closed to commercial
4 fishing. In the State waters of the Beaufort Sea, there is a single commercial fishery targeting
5 cisco and whitefish in the Colville River Delta that operates in the summer months. Markets for
6 these fish are primarily regional, although some fish are sent to Anchorage and to markets that
7 are more distant. In the Chukchi Sea, there is a relatively small summer salmon fishery (NPFMC
8 2009).

9
10 The number of commercial fishing vessels is expected to stay relatively consistent due to a
11 moratorium on commercial fishing in U.S. Arctic waters instituted in 2009. The moratorium is in
12 effect until appropriate scientific information is available to manage the resources in this region.
13 The moratorium does not manage targeted commercial fishing for Pacific salmon and Pacific
14 halibut, so commercial vessels fishing for those species are present in the area. Extensive
15 commercial fishing can be expected in the Bering Sea.

16
17 There is little data on recreational (non-commercial) fishing in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.
18 The North Pacific Fishery Management Council concluded that there are few fisheries in the
19 Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Planning Areas. Sport fishing likely occurs at the larger population
20 centers such as Barrow. Alaska State law would regulate any recreational fisheries that do occur
21 in State waters. The available data is not adequate to determine the population trends in
22 recreational and subsistence harvests in the Arctic Management Area.

23
24 **Economy and Tourism**

25 There is lodging available in Barrow during the months that the proposed action would occur.
26 Available accommodations include three hotels in Barrow. The Barrow Arctic Science
27 Consortium hotel, Atmospheric Radiation Measurement Climate Research Facility, and DEW
28 Line Facility are also available for Coast Guard use. The Coast Guard has a hangar in Barrow
29 under lease for the duration of the proposed action. This hangar has basic infrastructure for
30 aircraft support. There are also 3 hotels or bed and breakfasts in Kotzebue and numerous lodging
31 options in Nome.

32
33 Eco-tourism and recreational vessel activity in the Arctic have increased due to consistent
34 opening of the Northwest Passage from sea ice retreat during the summer months. Numerous
35 sailing and yachting publications have shared Arctic routes, recommendations, and experiences.
36 Cruise ships are increasingly present in the Arctic during the summer months. Adventurers also
37 attempt to cross the Bering Strait using various modes of transportation, but many adventurers
38 are not successful and abandon their attempt or require rescue.

39
40 **Subsistence**

41 Alaska Native tribes utilize caribou and marine fish and mammals for subsistence. The
42 adaptations of native Alaskans to the harsh Arctic environment have enabled their people and
43 culture to survive and thrive for thousands of years. Subsistence requires cooperation on both the
44 family and community level. More information on subsistence can be found in Cultural
45 Resources, Section 3.4. Each hunting excursion costs time, money, and resources for those
46 involved, so it is important that Coast Guard actions not interfere with subsistence hunts.

1 **3.5.2 Environmental Consequences**

2
3 **3.5.2.1 No Action Alternative**

4 Under the No Action Alternative, Coast Guard Arctic activities would not increase operations
5 and training within the action area. Income to communities for lodging, food, and sundry
6 purchases made by Coast Guard personnel stationed at seasonal forward operating locations
7 would not increase. Coast Guard assets in the Arctic would not increase to assist with
8 enforcement of fish and game laws, subsistence hunting rights, and outreach programs. The
9 Coast Guard would not increase its presence to ensure the safe and efficient flow of commerce as
10 activities increase in the Arctic. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need,
11 but is provided as it represents a baseline condition against which environmental consequences
12 can be measured.

13
14 **3.5.2.2 Preferred Alternative**

15 The proposed action is to conduct increased operations and training exercises in the Arctic to
16 meet Coast Guard mission responsibilities due to the increase of national and international
17 activities in the area.

18
19 Relative to the preceding discussion regarding noises, the NMFS summary in the Final
20 Environmental Impact Statement for Issuing Annual Quotas to the Alaska Eskimo Whaling
21 Commission for a Subsistence Hunt on Bowhead Whales for the years 2013 through 2018 states
22 that “the effects of vessel and aircraft noise on bowhead whales are primarily related to
23 temporary disturbances in limited geographic areas and are expected to make only minor
24 contributions to cumulative impacts on bowhead whales” (NMFS 2013b). In the Biological
25 Evaluation in Support of the Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Exploration, the U.S. Environmental
26 Protection Agency (EPA) stated, “The overall impacts to whales and pinnipeds from noise and
27 vessel disturbances are expected to be temporary, resulting in a short-term alteration of
28 behavior.” Effects determinations for all ESA listed and proposed species potentially present
29 within the Action Area were “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” (U.S. EPA 2012).

30
31 Considering the available vessels and aircraft assets in District 17 and coverage for all of Alaska;
32 it is likely that the Coast Guard would have only an estimated two to four vessels and two to four
33 aircraft and helicopters in operation in throughout the action area at any one time from March
34 through November. By comparing the context and intensity of input from other sources, and
35 given the limited number of exposures and short length of time of exposure by Coast Guard
36 vessels and aircraft, there are not likely to be significant impacts to marine mammals or
37 endangered species within the action area. Other aspects of socioeconomic effects, such as
38 income to localities from seasonal forward operating locations and law enforcement reducing
39 poaching would be beneficial because of the preferred alternative.

40
41 **Community and Economy**

42 Lodging for Coast Guard personnel in Barrow would be in a newly constructed 30-man messing,
43 berthing, recreation facility, so no strain on hotel occupancy would occur. Barrow hotels would
44 still have lodging available for summer tourists. As more details and designs are developed,
45 environmental documentation and permit applications would be pursued. The approximately 30
46 Coast Guard personnel living temporarily in Barrow would increase local restaurant and grocery

1 store revenues. If Nome, Kotzebue, or Port Clarence became FOLs, similar accommodations
2 may take place in those areas as well.

3
4 The proposed action would not affect the ecotourism and recreational vessel activities, as the
5 Coast Guard would transit in established shipping lanes, which would not interfere with
6 commercial or private vessel transits. The proposed action increases Coast Guard presence to
7 respond to emergencies encountered by tourists.

8 9 **Subsistence**

10 The proposed action involves areas that used for subsistence hunting and fishing by Alaska
11 Natives. Since some subsistence hunting and fishing activities are somewhat predictable, but
12 variable due to yearly conditions, Coast Guard personnel would closely coordinate with
13 subsistence users at the time planning details develop to avoid conflicts during operations. With
14 ongoing coordination with Alaska Natives, no significant impact to subsistence resources would
15 occur.

16 17 **Commercial Activities**

18 The proposed action would increase Coast Guard presence in the Arctic. The Coast Guard would
19 be present in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas to respond to potential issues and to ensure
20 a safe and efficient flow of commerce; therefore, a positive impact on commercial activities
21 would occur. Exercises occurring in the Bering Sea would coincide with commercial fishing
22 harvest, but through coordination and Notice to Mariners, no significant impact to commercial
23 fisheries is anticipated.

24
25 It is likely that the Coast Guard's increased presence in the Arctic would have a minor positive
26 impact on socioeconomics due to improved safety and efficiency of commerce, but no significant
27 impacts would occur as a result of the Preferred Alternative.

28 29 **3.6 PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

30
31 The evaluation of impacts to public health and safety considers whether the proposed action
32 compromises public health and safety directly or indirectly.

33 34 **3.6.1 Affected Environment**

35 The U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center is the official government source of information for
36 civil users of the Global Positioning System (GPS). The Navigation Information Service is
37 available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Coast Guard Navigation Center also
38 disseminates GPS and differential GPS (DGPS) safety advisory broadcast messages. The
39 broadcasts provide the GPS and DGPS user in the marine environment with the status of the
40 navigation systems, as well as any planned/unplanned system outages that could affect GPS and
41 DGPS navigational accuracy. These navigational systems are very important to public and
42 commercial safety in the Arctic where traditional aids to navigation are lacking, the coastline and
43 ice are virtually featureless for miles, and celestial navigation is inhibited due to fog or overcast.

44
45 The increase in human activity in the Arctic, including Arctic marine shipping and the continued
46 overflight of the Arctic region by commercial aircraft, will place increasing demands for public
47 health and safety infrastructure in the study area. As more ships and planes venture into the

1 Arctic, the demand for aids to navigation, vessel escorts, law enforcement, and SAR in the
2 Arctic, will continue to increase.

3
4 As large passenger vessels continue to operate more frequently and farther north in the Arctic,
5 the prospect of having to conduct mass rescue operations with limited SAR resources increases.
6 The potential number of people on cruise ships that would need rescue exceeds the capacity of
7 most SAR response vessels and aircraft available in the Arctic. While the North Slope Borough
8 does have search and rescue capabilities, their capacity could become limited as Arctic activities
9 increase. The nearest permanent Coast Guard aviation asset capable of responding to a search
10 and rescue situation is located over 820 nm away in Kodiak; which takes over four hours flight
11 time.

12
13 Currently, vast areas of the Arctic have insufficient infrastructure to support safe marine shipping
14 and respond to marine incidents in the Arctic. Large areas of white space on U.S. Arctic nautical
15 charts highlight a disturbing fact: less than 1 percent of Arctic waters have been surveyed with
16 modern technology to determine depths and depict hazards to navigation (Committee on Marine
17 Transportation System 2013).

18
19 Planned activities by the oil industry and increased vessel traffic in the Chukchi and Beaufort
20 Seas heightens the threat of an oil spill in the area. The primary responsibility for spill response
21 lies with the responsible party, the owner of the vessel or oil platform causing the spill. In the
22 event that a spill exceeds the ability of the responsible party to respond adequately, the Coast
23 Guard and Federal assets would be involved. The Coast Guard's capability to assist in the clean-
24 up of oil in the event of an offshore or nearshore oil release is limited due to the lack of adequate
25 land-based infrastructure in the Arctic. Dedicated support vessels, such as tugs and barges that
26 would allow the safe deployment of the oil recovery system without use of a pier and maximize
27 the amount of oil cleanup, are not readily available in the Arctic.

28
29 During the Arctic Shield 2012 and 2013 trainings and exercises, the Coast Guard conducted
30 other efforts relative to public health and safety. Coast Guard personnel conducted the "Kids
31 Don't Float" and water safety programs to provide personal flotation devices and educate
32 children on water safety. Further public safety improvements included the Commercial Fishing
33 Vessel Standards Outreach to increase knowledge of current and upcoming standards of safety
34 requirements.

35
36 These outreach efforts will continue and additional public safety benefits will become evident
37 with increased Coast Guard presence to establish safety zones around oil rigs, inspect
38 commercial shipping and future ports, and conduct drug interdiction and security missions.
39 Training for mass rescue operations and spills of national significance may prove to be additional
40 future public health and safety benefits if those emergencies arise.

41 42 **3.6.2 Environmental Consequences**

43 44 **3.6.2.1 No Action Alternative**

45 Under the No Action Alternative, Coast Guard Arctic activities would not occur unless an
46 emergency requires a Coast Guard response. The Coast Guard would not be present in the Arctic
47 and therefore, could not quickly respond to law enforcement or search and rescue emergencies,

1 which would negatively affect human health and safety in the region. The Coast Guard would
2 not be present to assist with navigation, commercial and non-commercial vessel safety, law
3 enforcement, and provide outreach and educational programs. The No Action Alternative does
4 not meet the purpose and need, but is provided as it represents a baseline condition against which
5 environmental consequences can be measured.

6
7 **3.6.2.2 Preferred Alternative**

8 The proposed action would establish an FOL in Barrow to create a central location along the
9 North Slope from which Coast Guard helicopter search and rescue teams could deploy. The
10 establishment of an FOL in Barrow, (and potentially Nome, Kotzebue, Port Clarence and
11 possibly certain DEW line sites) increases the ability of the Coast Guard to respond to incidents
12 in a timely manner, therefore increasing the chance of a successful effort.

13
14 As part of the Coast Guard's proposed action, flight deck-equipped cutters and oil skimmers
15 would be present in the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea from July to October to respond to SAR and
16 environmental incidents. Being close to where emergencies may occur shortens response time.
17 Quick response times by the Coast Guard would decrease the risk of loss of life at sea and reduce
18 the negative impacts of an emergency on marine life and humans. The primary responsibility for
19 spill response lies with the responsible party, the owner of the vessel or oil rig causing the spill.
20 In the event that a spill exceeds the ability of the responsible party to respond adequately, the
21 Coast Guard and Federal assets would be involved. The flight deck-equipped cutters also
22 accommodate MH-65D helicopters for search and rescue operations. As part of the Preferred
23 Alternative, an Incident Control Center would manage logistics. With an increased presence at
24 sea, the Coast Guard has a positive impact on human health and safety by providing faster search
25 and rescue services and law enforcement. Coast Guard assets would also ensure the safe and
26 efficient flow of commerce in the region. Outreach and educational efforts including the Kids
27 Don't Float and water safety programs would continue having a positive impact on public health
28 and safety.

29
30 The Preferred Alternative would not have a significant adverse effect on public health and safety,
31 and is more likely to have positive effects on public health and safety

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Chapter 4 Cumulative Effects

The analysis of cumulative impacts presented in this section follows the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality guidance (Council on Environmental Quality 1997). The Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] §§ 1500-1508) provide the implementing regulations for NEPA. The regulations define cumulative impacts as:

“...the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to the other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 C.F.R. §1508.7).”

While a single project may have minor impacts, overall impacts may be collectively significant when the project is considered together with other projects on a regional scale. A cumulative impact is the additive effect of all actions in the geographic area. As directed by CEQ’s NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1502.16), direct and indirect impacts on specific physical, biological, and social resources are discussed in combination with varying levels of effects, ranging from negligible to major. The cumulative effects analysis focuses on impacts to long-term productivity and sustainability of valued ecosystem components.

4.1 APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

Cumulative impacts were analyzed for each resource addressed in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) for the Proposed Action in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The cumulative impacts analysis included the following steps:

1. Identify appropriate level of analysis for each resource.
2. Define the geographic boundaries and timeframe for the cumulative impacts analysis.
3. Describe current resource conditions and trends.
4. Identify potential impacts of the Proposed Action that might contribute to cumulative impacts.
5. Identify past, present, and other reasonably foreseeable future actions that affect each resource.
6. Analyze potential cumulative impacts.

The geographic boundaries for the cumulative impacts analysis include the Arctic Ocean north of the coastline of the state of Alaska study area (Figure 1-1). Determining the timeframe for the cumulative impacts analysis requires estimating the length of time the impacts of the Proposed Action would last and considering the specific resource in terms of its history of degradation (Council on Environmental Quality 1997). The Proposed Action includes ongoing and anticipated future response, training and testing activities. The general types of activities addressed by this EA are expected to continue indefinitely, and the associated impacts would

occur indefinitely. Likewise, some reasonably foreseeable future actions and other environmental considerations addressed in the cumulative impacts analysis are expected to continue indefinitely (e.g., aviation traffic, maritime traffic, subsistence harvest). Therefore, the cumulative impacts analysis is not bounded by a specific future timeframe. For past actions, the cumulative impacts analysis only considers those actions or activities that have ongoing impacts.

In Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences), the Coast Guard describes current resource conditions and trends, and discusses how past and present human activities influence each resource. The current aggregate impacts of past and present actions are reflected in the baseline information presented in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences). This information is used in the cumulative impacts analysis to understand how past and present actions are currently impacting each resource and to provide the context for the cumulative impacts analysis.

4.2 PROJECTS CONSIDERED

Table 4-1 lists the past, present and future actions for consideration in the cumulative impacts analysis. For the purposes of this EA, present actions are those that are ongoing and have activities that contribute to potential cumulative effects. Future actions are those that are reasonably foreseeable within the next five to ten years. Table 4-1 separates specific actions by category to place similar actions together.

Table 4-1 Actions for Consideration Identified for the Cumulative Impacts Analysis

| Project Location | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Oil and Gas Exploration, Development and Production Projects | | | |
| Beaufort Sea - Offshore | Shell Beaufort Sea Camden Bay Planning Area Exploration Plan | Exploratory drilling to evaluate the oil and gas resource potential of three of the company's Outer Continental Shelf leases. Shell proposes to drill four exploration wells, two on the Sivulliq oil and gas prospect and two on the Torpedo oil and gas prospect, near Camden Bay in the Beaufort Sea. | July 2015 – multiple years Future |
| Chukchi Sea - Offshore | Shell Chukchi Sea Proposed Exploration Plan | Multiple-well exploration drilling on leases in the Chukchi Sea during the summer of 2015 and beyond. The proposed Chukchi Sea exploration plan envisions drilling up to six exploration wells in one prospect located 64 miles offshore and 410 miles west of the Beaufort Sea drilling locations. | July 2015 – multiple years Future |
| Beaufort Sea – Coastal | Beaufort Sea Coastal – Badami Unit | Production currently 1,500 bopd, pipeline to Endicott, additional exploration ongoing, winter sea ice road access | Past, Present |
| Beaufort Sea – Nearshore | Beaufort Sea Nearshore - Duck Island Unit | Endicott, Eider, Sag Delta and Ivishak – currently producing offshore facility, pipeline and vehicle access to Prudhoe Bay. Liberty – past exploration, future development and construction, onshore drilling of offshore field | Past, Present, Future |
| Beaufort Sea – Coastal | Milne Point Unit (Milne Point, Kparuk, Sag River, Schrader Bluff, Ugnu) | Currently producing oil, access by road system from Prudhoe Bay | Past, Present |
| Beaufort Sea – Offshore | Northstar Unit Offshore – Northstar, Kugaruk | Currently producing offshore production facility, buried pipeline to onshore | Past, Present |
| Beaufort Sea – Coastal and Inland | Prudhoe Bay – multiple areas | Currently producing, pipeline and road access, central North Slope processing facilities, start of Trans-Alaska Pipeline | Past, Present |

| Project Location | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------|
| Beaufort Sea – Nearshore | Oooguruk Unit – Ooogurukm Kuparuk, Nuiqsut | Currently producing offshore production facility, buried pipeline to shore | Present |
| Beaufort Sea – Nearshore and Coastal | Nikaitchuq Unit – Nikaitchuq, Ivisak, Scharder Bluff | Currently producing from onshore production facility at Oliktok Point, pipeline to Kuparuk, proposed drilling from constructed offshore artificial island at Spy Island, pipeline to shore | Present |
| Beaufort Sea – Coastal | Point Thomson Unit | Exploratory drilling completed, future potential expanded gas cycling, onshore pipeline to Badami, barge, air, and ice road access | Past, Present, and Future |
| Beaufort Sea Nearshore, Coastal, Inland | Prudhoe Bay – Alaska Producers Pipeline Project | Dredging and improvements to West Dock for pipeline and processing module delivery, large multi-year sealifts delivering processing modules and pipeline to West Dock, construction of large gas processing plant, construction of large diameter gas pipeline | Future |
| Oil/Gas Exploration Canadian Beaufort Sea | Multiple Beaufort Sea projects in Canadian Beaufort Sea | Multiple seismic surveys and exploration work related to oil and gas development in the Canadian Beaufort Sea. | Past, Present and Future |
| Oil/Gas Exploration Arctic Islands (Canadian) | Canadian Polar Margin Seismic Reflection Survey | Natural Resources Canada and Fisheries Ocean Canada, acting on behalf of the Government of Canada, is operating a project in the western Arctic Ocean (Canada Basin) to acquire necessary marine geophysical and geological data. | Past, Present |
| Oil/Gas Exploration (Canadian) | Arctic Islands and Mackenzie Delta offshore | Ongoing exploration activities within existing oil and gas lease areas for future efforts. | Past, Present |
| Russian Chukchi Sea – offshore | Oil/gas exploration (seismic surveys, exploratory drilling, shallow hazards) | Multiple projects to explore for oil and gas development in the Russian Chukchi Sea. These include exploring subsoil use and seismic data gathering. | Past, Present and Future |

| Proponent | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|---|--|---|--|
| Federal Agency Activities | | | |
| U.S. Coast Guard | Port Access Route Study at Bering Strait | A study being done by the U.S. Coast Guard District 17 to evaluate proposed traffic separation schemes in the Bering Strait to accommodate increased maritime traffic in the region. | Ongoing |
| U.S. Coast Guard | Aids to Navigation Maintenance (AtoN) | U.S. Coast Guard activities to service and repair floating and land-based AtoN to maintain safe navigation signals within the action area. | Year-round, ongoing and future |
| U.S. Military | Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line Sites | The Distant Early Warning Line was a system of 63 radar stations located across the northern edge of the North American Continent. These were constructed between 1954 and 1957, and decommissioned in the 1990s. Multiple sites within the EA action area still exist, including Barter Island, Bullen Point, Point Barrow, Wainwright, Cape Lisburne, and Kotzebue. | Past and present |
| U.S. Navy | Ice Exercises | U.S. Navy submarine transits through the Bering Strait and the Arctic conducting under-ice operations. These have been conducted for more than 50 years in support of transit, training, engagements with allies and military operations. | Past, present, and future |
| State of Alaska and Army Corps of Engineers | Arctic Deep Draft Port Study | Deep draft port facilities to accommodate the increasing human presence in the Arctic. Several port configurations are being explored, but will likely include 2 or 3 locations. It is currently believed that Nome and Point Spencer will likely be included. | Study through 2014. Actual port completion target of 2020. |
| U.S. Coast Guard and EPA | Unified Plan | A preparedness plan for responding to oil and hazardous substances discharges or releases | Current and future |

| Proponent | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|--|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Scientific Research Projects | | | |
| NOAA | Arctic Action Plan | Outlines efforts to improve forecasts for sea ice, weather, and water; detect Arctic climate and ecosystem changes; advance resilient and healthy Arctic communities and economies; strengthen international cooperation and partnerships | Current and future (2014 and 2015) |
| Various stakeholders | Chukchi Sea Environmental Studies Program | The Chukchi Sea Environmental Studies Program (CSESP) is a multi-year, multi-disciplinary marine science research program in the northeastern Chukchi Sea, funded by various stakeholders in oil and gas leases in the area. | Started in 2008, ongoing |
| University of Alaska Fairbanks | Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey (2014) | Multiple studies designed to provide enhanced baseline information on the species composition, abundance, distribution, and ecology of the pelagic and demersal communities of the Northern Bering and Chukchi Seas. | Ongoing and future |
| Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) | Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in the Development Area (ANIMIDA III) | ANIMIDA III is a two-pronged monitoring project to continue environmental monitoring research in the Beaufort Sea, including comprehensive scientific studies to characterize the oil and gas lease areas of the Beaufort Sea that expand beyond past sampling efforts conducted during prior ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA work.. | Future (2014-2017) |
| BOEM and various other partners | Marine Arctic Ecosystem Study (MARES) | Integrated ecosystem dynamics & monitoring (physics, chemistry, biology, social) through coordinated observational & modeling efforts in Beaufort Sea | Future (2015-2016) |

| Proponent | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|--|--|---|-----------------------------|
| NMFS National Marine Mammal Lab | Aerial Surveys of Arctic Marine Mammals (ASAMM) | The Aerial Surveys of Arctic Marine Mammals project is a continuation of the Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project (BWASP) and Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA) marine mammal aerial survey project. The goal of these studies is to document the distribution and relative abundance of bowhead, gray, right, and fin whales, belugas, and other marine mammals in areas of potential oil and natural gas exploration and development activities in the Alaskan Beaufort and northeastern Chukchi Seas. | Ongoing and future |
| BOEM and various universities | Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area-Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study | This project is a multi-disciplinary investigation to examine the biological, chemical and physical properties that define the ecosystem in the northern Chukchi Sea where shallow depths (40-55 meters) and high bottom flow facilitate high standing stocks of biota. | Ongoing and future |
| National Science Foundation | Western Arctic Shelf-Basin Interactions, Arctic Natural Sciences Program, Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), Arctic Observing Network Program | A range of science including Arctic System Science (ARCSS) global change program project to learn physical and biogeochemical connections between the Arctic shelves, slopes, and deep basins that could be influenced by global change; Arctic Natural Sciences (ANS) Program supporting disciplinary and interdisciplinary research on arctic processes and phenomena; and development of integrated ocean observing system | Ongoing and future |

| Proponent | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| NOAA/Russian Academy of Sciences | Russian-American Long-term Census of the Arctic (RUSALCA) | This project fosters the joint pursuit of world oceans and polar regions science and technology activities between the U.S. and Russia, taking into account the mutual interests and experience of both countries. | Past, present and future |
| Mining | | | |
| Red Dog Port | Southwest Chukchi Sea Coastal area mining and minerals export | Large inland zinc mine, vessel traffic bringing in supplies, transshipping processed mineral product, and aircraft traffic related to mining activities. | Past, present and future |
| Western Arctic Coal Project | Western Chukchi Sea Coastal Coal exploration and development | Vessel traffic related to exploration and development bringing in supplies and equipment. | Future |
| Transportation | | | |
| Various | Beaufort and Chukchi Seas – Coastal areas | There are various modes of transportation in these coastal areas, including community roads and vehicular traffic, air transportation and aircraft traffic, marine vessel movements, and pipeline transport of petroleum products. | Past, present and future |
| Various | Beaufort and Chukchi Seas – Offshore | There are various modes of transportation in the offshore areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, including marine vessel traffic and aircraft traffic. | Past, present and future |
| Community Development Projects | | | |
| Various | U.S. Community Development/Capital Projects | Various community development projects in coastal North Slope villages, including Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Barrow, Wainwright, Point Lay, Point Hope, Kivalina, and Kotzebue. | Past, present and future |
| Various | Submarine fiber optic cabling | Multiple communications companies in Canada, the U.S. and Russia are considering submarine fiber optic cable projects in the Arctic. | Future |

| Proponent | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Subsistence Activities | | | |
| Various Tribes | Bowhead Whale Harvest | Activities by various Alaska Native tribes in the North Slope communities to harvest bowhead whales, including marine vessel traffic and transportation. | Past, present and future |
| Various Tribes | Harvest of beluga, walrus, and seals | Activities by various Alaska Native tribes in the North Slope communities to harvest beluga whales, walrus and seals, including marine vessel traffic and land-based transportation. | Past, present and future |
| Various Tribes | Hunting, gathering, fishing, trapping and associated activities | Activities by various Alaska Native tribes in the North Slope communities to conduct hunting, gathering, trapping and fishing activities, including marine vessel traffic and land-based transportation. | Past, present and future |
| Recreation and Tourism | | | |
| Various | Recreation/Tourism (wildlife watching, cruise ships) | Multiple locations within the EA action area, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the eastern Beaufort Sea, the Kaktovik area in the eastern Beaufort Sea, and offshore and nearshore areas of the Beaufort Sea. | Past, present and future |

| Project Location | Project Name | Project Description | Timeframe of Project |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Various | Recreational/Sport Hunting/Fishing | Various locations within the EA action area, including the Arctic Wildlife Refuge in the eastern Beaufort Sea and offshore areas of the Chukchi Sea. | Past, present and future |

4.3 OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION PROJECTS

Oil and gas development is the main agent of industrial-related change within the action area. There are a number of past, present, and ongoing oil and gas projects that contributed to past and present cumulative effects (Table 4-1). Among the cumulative effects issues associated with these activities are effects on marine mammals, subsistence, and air and water quality. The majority of exploration activities and all of the production and transportation systems have occurred in the central Beaufort Sea, mainly the eastern portion of the EA action area. Although oil from seepages was used as fuel by Iñupiat people prior to western contact, the first modern program of oil and gas exploration on the North Slope was conducted by the U.S. Navy and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) during the 1940s and 1950s. Federal leasing on the North Slope began in 1958 and led to several industry-sponsored exploration programs. The discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1968, followed by discoveries at Kuparuk, West Sak, and Milne Point in 1969, marked the beginning of commercial oil development in the region (National Research Council 2003). Completion of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) in 1977 allowed year-round transport of North Slope oil to the marine terminal in Valdez and efficient export to market. Leasing of state and federal outer continental shelf (OCS) areas began in 1979, and offshore discoveries were made at Endicott, Sag Delta, Point McIntyre, Niakuk, and Northstar (National Research Council 2003). The Point McIntyre and Niakuk pools, as well as the more recently discovered Liberty field, are located mostly in the offshore area; the Point McIntyre and Niakuk production facilities are located either onshore or on existing nearshore production facilities (Mineral Management Service 2008). Several additional developments including Nikaitchuq, Northstar, and Ooguruk operate in nearshore areas of the Beaufort Sea. Currently there are 35 fields and satellites producing oil on the North Slope and in nearshore areas of the Beaufort Sea, and additional discoveries are under development.

Oil and gas exploration activities have also occurred over the last 60 years throughout the action area, but unless they lead to development of a project, are generally limited in time to a specific seasonal period over the course of one or two years, and are individually limited in geographic extent. As a result, the impacts from exploration activities tend to be limited in duration and occur in the immediate vicinity of exploration activities and transportation support routes. Exploration activities include seismic exploration (on land, over ice, open water) and exploratory drilling (onshore gravel pads and ice pads, offshore drillships and artificial islands). By far, the majority of onshore and offshore exploration activities have taken place in the Beaufort Sea and have occurred on a regular basis since the late 1960s, although some military programs date back to the 1940s. More limited and intermittent exploration activities have taken place in offshore areas of the Chukchi Sea since the 1980s. However, it should be noted that barge traffic to and from the Prudhoe Bay area passes through the Chukchi Sea in early summer, returning in late fall.

There are currently no State of Alaska leases in the Chukchi Sea, and no onshore oil and gas production along the Chukchi Sea coast. The State of Alaska has scheduled lease sales that would offer exploratory rights in certain regions, including the Beaufort Sea nearshore areas. Activities in these areas are considered reasonably foreseeable; however, the exact locations and amount of acreage available for leasing are yet to be determined. In its most recent five-year plan, the State of Alaska does not intend to hold lease sales in the nearshore waters of the Chukchi Sea (Alaska Department of Natural Resources 2014). There are a number of onshore and nearshore exploration wells being proposed on state oil and gas leases in the Beaufort Sea

1 region. State lease sales in this region, as well as Bureau of Land Management lease sales for the
2 National Petroleum Reserve-A, are proposed for 2014. However, these prospects are primarily
3 onshore or inshore with little potential for affecting the action area.
4

5 Internationally, but within the geographic scope of the proposed area, there are a number of past,
6 present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities related to oil and gas exploration,
7 development, and production located in Canadian and Russian waters. Oil and gas exploration
8 has occurred in the Canadian Arctic, specifically in the eastern Beaufort Sea, off the Mackenzie
9 River Delta and in the Arctic Islands. Characteristics are similar to exploration activities in
10 Alaska (shallow hazards, site clearance, two-dimensional and three-dimensional seismic surveys,
11 exploratory drilling), except that the majority of support is provided by road access and coastal
12 barges. Oil and gas exploration has also occurred in offshore areas the Russian Arctic and in
13 areas around Sakhalin Island to the south of the Bering Strait. Sakhalin Island is located
14 approximately 2,000 mi (3,220 km) from Kotzebue at a latitude approximately the same as
15 British Columbia. There is little information on specific plans, but the effects of Canadian and
16 Russian activities are expected to be similar to those resulting from activities occurring in the
17 Alaskan Arctic OCS.
18

19 It is anticipated that industry will develop considerable amounts of undiscovered fossil fuels and
20 natural resources in the action area in the near future. Recent estimates of the total mean volume
21 of undiscovered, technically recoverable resources in the action area by the U.S. Geological
22 Survey are nearly 30 billion barrels of oil and 181 trillion cubic feet of nonassociated gas in the
23 Arctic Alaska petroleum province, which includes lands north of the Brooks mountain range and
24 the adjacent continental shelf areas (USGS 2012). Since 2005, commercial investments in
25 offshore leases in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas exceeded \$3.7 billion (U.S. Coast Guard 2013).
26 In the near-term, mineral resources, particularly rare earth and strategic minerals, including iron
27 ore, zinc, nickel, coal, graphite, palladium, and many others will also be important drivers for
28 economic growth in the Alaskan Arctic Region.
29

30 From the perspective of cumulative effects, multiple exploration activities that may occur over a
31 large geographic area, with some level of activity going on from year to year, raise concerns
32 about disturbance to fish and wildlife and response in behavior and distribution. The potential
33 geographic extent of exploration activities, along with air and marine support, implies that sound
34 producing activities are occurring across much of the range of many marine mammal species. In
35 addition, the availability of fish and wildlife for subsistence harvest based on response to
36 exploration activities and interference with subsistence hunting is also of concern to North Slope
37 Native Alaskans.
38

39 Activities related to natural gas development in the EA project area are reasonably foreseeable,
40 assuming a market is found for the gas, and a gas pipeline is constructed to transport the gas.
41 Such activities may include the construction and installation of a gas pipeline to shore from
42 existing offshore production facilities in the Beaufort Sea, and expansion of existing offshore and
43 shore-based facilities to accommodate natural gas production. There is interest in the
44 development of pipelines to carry natural gas from the North Slope across Alaska and the Yukon
45 to connect with the continental pipeline system in northern Alberta. Two competing proposals
46 are under development. One, proposed by the TransCanada pipeline company, has received a
47 license from the state of Alaska. Another sponsored by British Petroleum and ConocoPhillips is

1 proceeding independently of the state. While it is not clear which, or if any, line will be built, the
2 state of Alaska and several companies have taken significant steps towards pipeline
3 development. At this time, the North Slope does not produce natural gas because of the lack of
4 transportation infrastructure. Construction of a natural gas pipeline would be likely to lead to
5 additional, gas-related development activity in Northern Alaska, in the Beaufort Sea, and
6 possibly in the Chukchi Sea (NMFS 2009c).

7 8 **4.4 OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY ACTIVITIES**

9 Other federal agency (including military) activities are also ongoing in the EA action area that
10 could contribute to cumulative impacts. This category includes two ongoing U.S. Coast Guard
11 activities, the Bering Strait Port Access Route Study and ongoing and continuing Aids to
12 Navigation maintenance. The Bering Strait Port Access Route Study is being prepared to study
13 vessel movements in the restricted areas of the Bering Strait to accommodate future vessel traffic
14 and increase in vessel movements through the area. Ongoing Aids to Navigation maintenance is
15 conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard, District 17 as necessary for established Aids to Navigation
16 in the EA action area, including the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. Maintenance would involve
17 vessel transits and activities at existing buoy locations.

18
19 Other military activities in the EA action area include U.S. Navy submarine transits and activities
20 in support of Ice Exercises. These are seasonal activities, typically in the spring time, are planned
21 and coordinated by the U.S. Navy's Arctic Submarine Laboratory. Submarines have conducted
22 under-ice operations in the Arctic region for more than 50 years to support of inter-fleet transit,
23 training, engagements with allies and military operations.

24
25 The Coast Guard is working with EPA on the proposed implementation of the Alaska
26 Federal/State Preparedness Plan for Response to Oil and Hazardous Substance
27 Discharges/Releases (a.k.a. the Unified Plan). In consideration of the increased activity in the
28 Arctic region, this project is an integral part of protecting the resources, ecosystem, and
29 subsistence lifestyle.

30
31 NOAA recently released its Arctic Action Plan for 2014 and 2015. The Plan outlines numerous
32 projects to advance U.S. security interests with improved weather and sea ice forecasts; pursue
33 Arctic region stewardship through ecosystem studies and management and advance native
34 communities and economies; and strengthen international partnerships.

35 36 **4.5 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROJECTS**

37 Scientific research in the Arctic region has been increasing as the interest and awareness of
38 climate change and Arctic activities have heightened. There are a number of scientific research
39 programs that take place in offshore areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas. This section cannot
40 be exhaustive in the listing of all studies funded by federal and industry partners in these waters.
41 The following is a representative sample of the number and types of studies that have been and
42 continue to be pursued in Alaskan Arctic waters. These activities involve vessel, air, and over-ice
43 support which may contribute to cumulative effects through disturbance of marine mammals and
44 impacts to subsistence harvest through marine vessel and aircraft traffic, and disturbance of
45 bottom sediment through sampling. Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) supports
46 a variety of research programs aimed at understanding the Arctic OCS environment and
47 associated ecosystems. BOEM Alaska OCS regional research in 2013 included physical

1 oceanography studies, habitat and ecology studies including mapping the distribution of marine
2 mammals, shorebirds, fish, benthic, and epifaunal communities in the northern Chukchi Sea and
3 central and eastern Beaufort Sea, studies designed to understand the rate and effects of climate
4 change, modeling of weather and changing patterns of ice formation and loss, atmospheric
5 effects from increased economic development, and effects of development and climate change
6 on native subsistence and cultures. These studies included the Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study and
7 the Synthesis of Arctic Research study, both designed to attempt synthesizing past and future
8 information being collected in the Alaskan Arctic. Marine mammal research studies were also
9 included, such as the Bowhead Feeding Variability in the Western Alaska Beaufort Sea, as well
10 as the Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA) program to establish an
11 integrated knowledge of the Chukchi Sea ecosystem (National Marine Mammal Laboratory
12 2014). These programs conduct studies to understand bowhead whale population and migration
13 structures and include a range of biological, chemical, and physical processes. These include
14 collections to establish baseline data sets for benthic infauna and epifauna, organic carbon and
15 sediment grain size, radioisotopes for down core dating, trace metals in sediments, biota and
16 suspended particles, as well as associated parameters. The program operates annually in the
17 Chukchi Sea.

18
19 In the past, the Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in the Development Area (ANIMIDA) and
20 the continuation (c)ANIMIDA Projects operated during the summers of 2004, 2005, 2006, and
21 2007. An explicit goal of the (c)ANIMIDA Project is to examine temporal and spatial changes in
22 chemical and biological characteristics of the oil and gas exploration and development area of
23 the Alaskan Beaufort Sea and to determine if any observed changes are related to the Northstar
24 development and production operations. From 1997 through 2008, BOEM developed and
25 conducted 31 projects directly related to improving equipment and processes for the prompt
26 identification and removal of oil from harsh Arctic environments. The ANIMIDA III project was
27 awarded in January 2014 to continue this research in the Beaufort Sea during the timeframe of
28 2014 – 2017.

29
30 The Russian-American Long-term Census of the Arctic (RUSALCA) is funded by NOAA and
31 the National Science Foundation (NSF) Arctic Observing Network Program to understand and
32 ultimately predict the effects of climate change in the northern Bering and Chukchi seas. To this
33 end, the RUSALCA program collects information related to changes in physical and
34 biogeochemical processes, and alteration of biomass and productivity of organisms and their
35 associated marine food webs. The census involves a series of biophysical moorings in the
36 western Bering Strait; Conductivity, Temperature, Depth transects conducted across the Herald
37 Shelf Valley; and a series of shipboard projects aimed at understanding biogeochemical
38 processes that influence climate and ecosystem dynamics in the study area. RUSALCA operates
39 annually during the open water season and overlaps with the EA project, in particular, in the
40 Chukchi Sea near Cape Lisburne and Point Hope, and in the northern Beaufort Sea.

41
42 The Alaskan Ocean Observing system (AOOS) has various sensors and monitors deployed
43 throughout the EA action area to measure and record meteorological conditions and other
44 environmental variables. AOOS also coordinates a seabird monitoring network in the proposed
45 action area.

1 The Western Arctic Shelf Basin Interactions (SBI) project, sponsored by the NSF and the Office
2 of Naval Research, was a multi-year, interdisciplinary program aimed at investigating the impact
3 of global change on physical, biological and geochemical processes over the Chukchi and
4 Beaufort Sea shelf basin region in the Western Arctic Ocean. The goal was to improve
5 understanding of shelf-basin exchange, and to improve predictions of global change impacts in
6 the Arctic. The SBI program includes both field and modeling studies. The project collected data
7 during the 2002 to 2004 field seasons.

8
9 The Marine Arctic Ecosystem Study (MARES) is planned for 2015-2016 and will study
10 integrated ecosystem dynamics and monitoring (physics, chemistry, biology, social) through
11 coordinated observational and modeling efforts in Beaufort Sea. MARES is directed at the
12 development and use of unmanned systems in the Arctic. The results of this study are of
13 particular importance to the Coast Guard as they involve the development and use of
14 autonomous underwater vehicles that can map oil under ice.

15
16 There are also various research projects for activities within the Chukchi Sea. Chukchi Sea
17 baseline studies, titled the Chukchi Sea Environmental Sciences Program, and funded by
18 ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc., Statoil, and Shell, include physical oceanography, benthic,
19 zooplankton, fish, acoustics, and ice studies in the Chukchi Sea.

20 21 4.6 MINING

22 Mineral resources in the Arctic region are substantial, estimated at some one trillion dollars'
23 worth of minerals including gold, zinc, palladium, nickel, platinum, lead, rare-earth minerals,
24 and gem-quality diamonds (U.S. Coast Guard 2013a). Mining takes place in onshore areas of the
25 Chukchi Sea portion of the EA action area. While the majority of mining activities take place
26 onshore, marine and air transportation could contribute to potential cumulative effects through
27 the disturbance of marine mammals and impacts to the subsistence harvest. The Red Dog
28 deposit, located in the western Brooks Range, is one of the largest zinc deposits in the world.
29 Mining of this deposit at the Red Dog Mine of lead and zinc began in 1990 and continues today
30 (USGS 2013). As sea ice recedes, ore shipments from the Red Dog Mine will likely extend
31 further into spring and fall, which will increase dependence on vessel transits and risk of
32 accident. This is especially true for transits through the Bering Strait.

33
34 There are also untapped coal deposits along the Chukchi Sea, and massive sulfide deposits with
35 high grades of graphite, copper, silver, and gold in the western Arctic. In addition to known
36 mineral deposits, increased exploration efforts may lead to discovery of more resources. This in
37 turn would lead to a greater dependence on marine transport of equipment, supplies, personnel,
38 and mineral ores. This includes potential seabed resources located on the extended continental
39 shelf of the United States. Past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities related to
40 mining activities within the EA action area are summarized in Table 4-1.

41 42 4.7 TRANSPORTATION

43 In addition to marine and air transportation associated with the previously mentioned activities,
44 there is frequent marine and air traffic associated with coastal communities on the North Slope
45 and in Northwest Alaska. Marine and air transportation could contribute to potential cumulative
46 effects through the disturbance of marine mammals and impacts to the subsistence harvest. It is
47 reasonable to assume that trends associated with transportation to facilitate the maintenance and

1 development of coastal communities will continue. In some specific cases, described below,
2 transportation and associated infrastructure in the proposed action area may increase as a result
3 of increased commercial activity in the area.
4

5 Vessel traffic through the Bering Strait has risen steadily over recent years, according to Coast
6 Guard estimates, and Russian efforts to promote a Northern Sea Route for shipping may lead to
7 continued increases in vessel traffic adjacent to the western portion of the EA action area. An
8 analysis done by Shell Oil as part of a Revised Outer Continental Shelf Lease Exploration Plan
9 for the Chukchi Sea (Shell 2013) indicated that barge traffic passing through the Chukchi Sea
10 during the month of July through October has increased from roughly 2000 miles of vessel
11 traffic in 2006 to roughly 11,500 miles of vessel traffic in 2010. In 2012, over one million tons of
12 cargo transited an Arctic route that reduces thousands of miles off of traditional voyages between
13 the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (U.S. Coast Guard 2013a). Vessel traffic within the EA action
14 area can currently be characterized as traffic to support oil and gas industries, barges or cargo
15 vessels used to supply coastal villages, smaller vessels used for hunting and local transportation
16 during the open water period, military vessel traffic, and recreational vessels such as cruise ships
17 and a limited number of ocean-going sailboats. Barges and small cargo vessels are used to
18 transport machinery, fuel, building materials and other commodities to coastal villages and
19 industrial sites during the open water period. The Coast Guard anticipates a continued increase in
20 vessel traffic in the Arctic. Changes in the distribution of sea ice, longer open-water periods, and
21 increasing interest in studying and viewing Arctic wildlife and habitats may support an increase
22 in research and recreational vessel traffic in the proposed action area regardless of oil and gas
23 activity.
24

25 Aircraft traffic in the EA action area includes helicopters and fixed wing aircraft to support
26 routine activities. In addition, at least four companies operate passenger and air cargo services
27 between North Slope communities and population centers, flying inland and along the coast.
28 These may involve several scheduled flights daily using small propeller-driven aircraft. The
29 majority of air travel and freight hauling between Arctic coastal communities involves small
30 commuter-type aircraft, and government agencies and researchers often charter aircraft for travel
31 and research purposes. These activities are expected to continue, and the level of aircraft traffic
32 within the EA action area may increase as a result of climate change and/or increased industrial
33 activity and community development.
34

35 4.8 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

36 Community development projects in Arctic communities involve both major infrastructure
37 projects, such as construction of airports and response centers, as well as smaller projects. These
38 projects could result in construction noise in coastal areas, and could generate additional amounts
39 of marine and aircraft traffic to support construction activities. Marine and air transportation
40 could contribute to potential cumulative effects through the disturbance of marine mammals and
41 impacts to the subsistence harvest. Major community development projects that are foreseeable
42 at the present time include the construction of a new airport at the village of Kaktovik and
43 potentially a new emergency response facility at Wainwright on the North Slope.
44

45 Communications companies are also considering the Arctic as a new home for submarine fiber
46 optic cables. Shorter distances, decreased latency, and reduced likelihood of damage from
47 anchors are compelling reasons for laying cable through the region, despite the harsh conditions.

1 Two cables are planned through the Northwest Passage above North America, while a third is
2 planned along the Russian coast. The longest of these links will become the world's longest
3 single stretch of optical fiber (Hecht 2012). Canadian, Russian, and an Alaska Corporation have
4 applied for permits to begin in 2014 and be operational by 2016 (CBC News 2013).

6 4.9 SUBSISTENCE

7 Subsistence activities occur in coastal and offshore portions of the EA action area. Subsistence
8 hunting of cetacean species is regulated by the International Whaling Commission, which in
9 2012 renewed catch limits for bowhead whales for Russian Natives and Alaska Natives through
10 2018. The maximum annual strike quota is 82 strikes per year for both groups combined; per
11 international agreement, no more than 306 whales will be landed by Alaska Natives between
12 2012 and 2018 (78 FR 4143). This amounts to less than one percent of the Bering-Chukchi-
13 Beaufort stock of bowhead whales each year. Only a single humpback whale has been reported
14 as a subsistence take since 2006. Subsistence harvest data on NMFS' jurisdictional species is no
15 longer being collected (Allen and Angliss 2013), but harvest of bowhead whales, bearded seals,
16 ringed seals, and Steller sea lions is important to the communities of northern Alaska. Of U.S.
17 Fish and Wildlife Service species, polar bears, Pacific walrus, spectacled eider, Stellar's eider,
18 and yellow-billed loons are harvested during subsistence hunts. Harvested animals are used for
19 food, traditional ceremonies, and handicrafts. Hunting is regulated, monitored and managed by
20 State and Federal agencies. Subsistence hunters primarily use boats and snow machines for
21 access. In addition to the harvest of marine mammals, boat and snow machine traffic could lead
22 to the disturbance of marine mammals as well. Current and past hunting, gathering, fishing, and
23 trapping subsistence activities would be similar in the types of activities and areas utilized for the
24 communities associated with the EA action area in the future. A pending revision to the
25 Magnuson-Stevens Act could require subsistence fish harvests be documented.

27 4.10 RECREATION AND TOURISM

28 Recreation and tourism activities are generally pursued by non-residents of the EA action area.
29 Marine and coastal vessel and air traffic could contribute to potential cumulative effects through
30 the disturbance of marine mammals or impacts to the subsistence harvest. With the exception of
31 adventure cruise ships that transit the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea coasts in small numbers, much
32 of the air sightseeing traffic is concentrated in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The types of
33 recreation and tourism activities that were described in Chapter 3 are expected to continue into
34 the future. Current and past sport hunting and fishing, or other recreation or tourism-related
35 activities would be similar in the types of activities and areas utilized for the communities
36 associated with the EA action area in the future.

38 4.11 CLIMATE CHANGE

39 Climate change is an ongoing factor in the consideration of cumulative environmental effects on
40 the Arctic region. It has been implicated in changing weather patterns, changes in the
41 classification and seasonality of ice cover, and the timing and duration of phytoplankton blooms
42 in the Beaufort Sea. Climate conditions in the EA action area have been undergoing remarkable
43 changes, particularly over the past 20 years. Alaska has warmed more than twice as rapidly as
44 the rest of the United States over the past 60 years, with state-wide average annual air
45 temperature increasing by three degrees Fahrenheit and winter temperature by six degrees
46 Fahrenheit. This warming involves more extreme hot days and fewer extreme cold days.
47 Climate-change impacts in Alaska are already apparent, including earlier spring snowmelt,

1 reduced sea ice, widespread glacier retreat, warmer permafrost, drier landscapes, and more
2 extensive insect outbreaks and wildfires (U.S. Coast Guard 2013a). In addition, due to the
3 changing extent and thickness of sea ice, resulting from changes in the temperature regime, there
4 is more open water during the summer season. The lack of sea ice also leads to the creation of
5 wind driven waves, which in turn contribute to coastal erosion. These changes have been
6 attributed to rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere and corresponding increases in
7 CO₂ levels in the waters of the world's oceans. These changes have also led to the phenomenon
8 of ocean acidification (IPCC 2007). This phenomenon is often called a sister problem to climate
9 change, because they are both attributed to human activities that have resulted in increased CO₂
10 levels in the atmosphere. Ocean acidification in high latitude seas is happening at a more
11 advanced rate compared to other areas of the ocean. The capacity of the Arctic Ocean to uptake
12 CO₂ is expected to increase in response to increased levels as a result of climate change (Bates
13 and Mathis 2009). This is due to the loss of sea ice that increases the open water surface area of
14 the Arctic seas. Exposure of cooler surface water lowers the solubility (or saturation) of calcium
15 carbonate within the water, which in turn leads to lower available levels of the minerals needed
16 by shell-producing organisms (Fabry et al. 2009). Other factors such as seawater temperature, the
17 presence or absence of ice, the degree of freshwater input, the degree of mixing and increases in
18 phytoplankton also affect the amount of CO₂ taken up by the sea. Therefore, other aspects of
19 climate change, such as melting ice, increased riverine discharge, storm frequency and intensity,
20 and changes in precipitation type, volume and timing also play into acidification of the ocean
21 (IPCC, 2007; Mathis 2011). Climate change could affect the habitat, behavior, distribution, and
22 populations of marine mammals, fish, and other wildlife within the EA action area. Climate
23 change could also affect the availability of, or access to, subsistence resources, particularly
24 spring hunts for bowhead whales and other marine mammals. Climate change also affects the
25 length of seasons that ice roads are operable, potentially leading to more reliance on marine
26 access.

27

28 4.12 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ANALYSIS

29 In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality guidance, the cumulative impacts analysis
30 focused on impacts that are “truly meaningful.” The level of analysis for each resource was
31 commensurate with the intensity of the impacts identified in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment
32 and Environmental Consequences). Detailed analysis of cumulative impacts on the following
33 resources was not necessary as the incremental contribution of the Proposed Action to
34 cumulative impacts would be low. Further analysis of cumulative impacts is not warranted on the
35 following resources:

- 36 • Geology and Soils
- 37 • Air quality
- 38 • Land Use
- 39 • Utilities
- 40 • Visual Resources

41

42 Water Quality

43 The principal regulatory method for controlling pollutant discharges into waters of the U.S. is the
44 Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972, as amended. Section 402 establishes the National Pollution
45 Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The General NPDES Permit issued by EPA for
46 offshore oil and gas exploration facilities in Alaska (AKG280000) permits authorized discharges,
47 with restrictions, into the Beaufort Sea. EPA regulations (40 CFR 125.122) require a

1 determination that the permitted discharge will not cause unreasonable degradation of the marine
2 environment. EPA issued an NPDES Vessel General Permit (VGP) for “Discharges Incidental to
3 the Normal Operation of a Vessel;” the EPA VGP for Alaska took effect December 19, 2013
4 (U.S. EPA 2013). The final VGP applies to owners and operators of non-recreational vessels that
5 are 79 feet (24.08 meters) and greater in length, as well as to owners and operators of
6 commercial vessels of less than 79 feet which discharge ballast water.

7
8 The proposed action and the cumulative actions listed in Table 4-1 would have no significant
9 incremental adverse impacts on water resources or the coastal zone in the EA action area.
10 Because of the existing increase and anticipated future increase in commercial activity in the
11 Arctic, the proposed action will help safeguard against oil spill threats, through enforcement of
12 safety zones.

13 14 **Biological Resources**

15 The proposed action and cumulative actions would have no significant cumulative impacts on
16 federally listed or protected species. Each project listed in Table 4-1 that could potentially affect
17 biological resources has individually complied with the Endangered Species Act and the Marine
18 Mammal Protection Act as appropriate. Human activities in the Arctic are still at a low tempo
19 compared to many other commercially developed parts of the world. Established protective
20 measures and monitoring from the proposed action and each of the cumulative projects will
21 increase knowledge of the Arctic and its unique characteristics and life cycles. Each of these
22 individual projects will incorporate similar protective measures to protect these sensitive species
23 during a time of unprecedented change in the Arctic. For these reasons, cumulative impacts to
24 biological resources are not anticipated to be significant from the implementation of the
25 proposed action and other cumulative projects in the Arctic region.

26 27 **Cultural/Subsistence Resources**

28 The proposed action and cumulative actions would have no significant cumulative impacts on
29 underwater cultural resources or subsistence resources. Because the Preferred Alternative has no
30 effect on the sea floor (and therefore, underwater cultural resources), no combined effect is
31 possible. All Coast Guard Arctic Domain Awareness flights and Arctic helicopter flights would
32 be coordinated with North Slope Borough, local governments, tribes, etc. to ensure that flight
33 paths do not disrupt planned subsistence hunts. Coordination would occur between the Coast
34 Guard and Alaska Native subsistence hunting groups during vessel movements once subsistence
35 whaling and fishing seasons begin. The Preferred Alternative is not likely to affect subsistence
36 resources.

37 38 **Socioeconomics**

39 A Notice to Mariners would inform boaters of any safety zones enforced around Shell drilling
40 platforms. Coast Guard will coordinate flight paths from the proposed action and Arctic Domain
41 Awareness flights with tribal representatives. Coordination would also between Coast Guard and
42 tribes during vessel movements once subsistence whaling and fishing season begins. With
43 coordination and enough notice, no incremental impacts to ecotourism or commercial or
44 subsistence fishing and hunting are anticipated. The proposed action and cumulative actions
45 would have no significant cumulative impacts on socioeconomics.

46 47 **Public Health and Safety**

1 The Coast Guard will provide support for several of the evaluated actions in Table 4-1. The
2 proposed action together with cumulative projects is likely to have minor, positive impacts, but
3 no significant cumulative impacts on public health and safety.
4

5 **Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change**

6 Climate change is having an effect on the Arctic environment now and is anticipated to have
7 major effects in the future including warming sea surface, reduction in sea ice, and increased
8 ocean water acidity (U.S. Navy 2011). The number of cargo, tourism, and research vessels in the
9 region is increasing as the ice cover is reduced. This increases the risk of vessel accidents,
10 groundings, potential oil and cargo spills, and introduction of marine invasive species. These
11 ongoing effects would be the background on which Coast Guard Arctic activities would occur.
12

13 Coast Guard assets that would be used during Arctic activities are existing assets that, if not
14 operating as part of Arctic Coast Guard support, would otherwise be operationally engaged
15 elsewhere. Consequently, to the extent that emissions may be a factor in climate change, these
16 assets would not result in any new anthropogenic sources and a further contribution to climate
17 change. Coast Guard vessels and air support are not significant contributors to greenhouse gas
18 emissions. Greenhouse gases include: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxides
19 (N₂O), and fluorinated gases such as chlorofluorocarbons (compounds consisting of chlorine,
20 fluorine, and carbon) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (compounds consisting of hydrogen and
21 sulfur hexafluoride—SF₆).
22

23 Actions in Table 4-1 would be associated with temporary increases in air emissions; however
24 these increases would be minor and temporary. Coast Guard Arctic activities will employ
25 currently active Coast Guard assets. When evaluated against greenhouse gas emissions for the
26 entire Coast Guard's operations, greenhouse gas emissions for these operations are expected to
27 be neither appreciable nor significantly additional; as a result, the proposed action and
28 cumulative actions would have no significant impact on global climate change is expected.
29 While Coast Guard Arctic operations would not represent an increase in emissions that may
30 contribute to climate change, Coast Guard presence in the Arctic would help to protect this
31 vulnerable ecosystem from other potential threats and therefore have a positive impact on
32 cumulative resources.
33

Chapter 5 Other NEPA Considerations

5.1 CONSULTATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

The Coast Guard has initiated consultation or coordinated with a number of regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over the proposed action. As described previously, a number of conservation measures or conditions have been identified through this process and included in the proposed action to ensure that the action alternatives avoid or reduce impacts on sensitive resources to less than significant levels. Regulatory compliance that would be required for the proposed action is described below.

Table 5-1 Laws and Executive Orders

| Law or Executive Order | Responsible Agency | Determination |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 USC §§ 4321 et seq.) CEQ Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR §§ 1500-1508) | Coast Guard | Public review and outreach regarding this EA is being conducted in compliance with NEPA, and this Draft EA is being released for a 19-day public comment period to support the requirements of NEPA (see Appendix B). |
| Clean Water Act (33 USC §§ 1344 et seq.) | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | The Coast Guard would follow all applicable regulations to maintain compliance with the Clean Water Act. No intentional releases to Arctic waters are proposed as a part of the Preferred Alternative. |
| National Invasive Species Act | Coast Guard | The Coast Guard would follow all applicable regulations, particularly pertaining to ballast water management, to maintain compliance with the National Invasive Species Act. |
| Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 USC §§ 1801-1802) | NMFS | The Coast Guard determined that SAR would have a minimal overall potential impact to designated Essential Fish Habitat. Other activities of the proposed action would have no adverse effect on designated EFH. |
| Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 USC §§ 1531 et seq.) | NMFS and USFWS | The Coast Guard has determined that the Preferred Alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, threatened and endangered species protected by the ESA. Communication with USFWS and NMFS is ongoing. |

5. Compliance with Other Environmental Laws and Regulations

| Law or Executive Order | Responsible Agency | Determination |
|---|---|---|
| Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) (16 USC §§ 1361 et seq.) | NMFS | Coast Guard adheres to practices outlined in their Marine Protected Species Program for the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, and Arctic (U.S. Coast Guard 2011a). The Coast Guard will continue consulting with USFWS and NMFS to address potential impacts to marine mammals. |
| Migratory Bird Treaty Act | USFWS | Vessels and aircraft are a bird strike hazard. A bird handling and reporting protocol for strike incidents on routine sea patrols is in the Appendix A of the Biological Evaluation (Appendix A) |
| Coastal Zone Management Act | Alaska Department of Natural Resources | The Alaska Coastal Management Program expired on July 1, 2011 (Alaska Department of Natural Resources 2011), resulting in a withdrawal from participation in Coastal Zone Management Act's National Coastal Management Program. The Federal Coastal Zone Management Activity consistency provision no longer applies in Alaska. |
| National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC §§ 470 et seq.) | Alaska State Historic Preservation Office | The Coast Guard has determined that the proposed action would have no effects on cultural and historic resources. The Coast Guard would work closely with tribal governments throughout the summer to ensure subsistence hunting and fishing are not impacted. |
| Executive Order 13175, <i>Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments</i> | Coast Guard | The Coast Guard has informed tribal governments of the proposed action and responded to all comments and questions. |
| Executive Order 13045, <i>Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks</i> | Coast Guard | The proposed action would not result in environmental health and safety risks to children. |
| Executive Order 12898, <i>Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations</i> | Coast Guard | The Proposed Action would not result in any disproportionately high adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations. |

1
2 **5.2 IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES**

3 NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1502.16) require an analysis of significant irreversible or
4 irretrievable effects resulting from implementation of proposed actions. Resources that are
5 irreversibly or irretrievably committed to a project are those that are typically used on a long-
6 term or permanent basis. However, those resources used on a short-term basis that cannot be
7 recovered (such as metal, wood, fuel, paper, and other natural resources) are also irretrievable.
8 Human labor is also considered an irretrievable resource. These resources are irretrievable in that
9 they would be used for one project when they could have been used for other purposes. Another
10 impact that falls under the category of irretrievable commitment of resources is the destruction of
11 natural resources that could limit the range of potential uses of that particular environment.
12 Implementation of the proposed action would not limit the range of potential future uses of the
13 action area, nor is it anticipated to destroy natural resources. Human labor, fuel, construction
14 supplies to build FOL facilities, and unrecoverable search and rescue equipment are irretrievable
15 resources required to fulfill the Coast Guard's mission.

16
17 **5.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LONG-
18 TERM PRODUCTIVITY**

19 NEPA requires consideration of the relationship between short-term use of the environment and
20 the impacts that such use could have to long-term productivity of the affected environment.
21 Impacts that narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment are of particular concern.
22 Such impacts include the possibility that choosing one alternative could reduce future flexibility
23 to pursue other alternatives.

24
25 Implementation of the preferred alternative would not result in any such environmental impacts
26 because it would not pose long-term risks to health, safety, or the general welfare of the
27 communities surrounding the action area that would significantly narrow the range of future
28 beneficial uses. In addition, biological productivity would not be affected, as implementation of
29 the preferred alternative would not result in significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to
30 any biological resources.

31
32 **5.4 ANY PROBABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED AND
33 ARE NOT AMENABLE TO MITIGATION**

34 This EA has determined that the Preferred Alternative would not result in any significant
35 impacts; therefore, there are no probable adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided or
36 are not amenable to mitigation.

37
38 **5.5 POSSIBLE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE PROPOSED ACTION AND THE OBJECTIVES OF
39 FEDERAL ACTS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, POLICIES, AND PLANS**

40 Implementation of the Proposed Action would comply with existing federal regulations. The
41 federal codes, acts, Presidential Directives, and Interagency Agreements that apply include the
42 following:

43
44 U.S. Code

- 45 • Title 6 – Domestic Security
- 46 • Title 14 – Coast Guard
- 47 • Title 15 – Commerce and Trade

- 1 • Title 16 – Conservation
- 2 • Title 18 – Crimes and Criminal Procedure
- 3 • Title 33 – Navigation and Navigable Waterways
- 4 • Title 46 – Shipping

5

6 Statutes

- 7 • Homeland Security Act of 2002
- 8 • Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984
- 9 • Ports and Waterways Safety Act of 1972
- 10 • Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (as amended)
- 11 • Port and Tanker Safety Act of 1978
- 12 • Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)
- 13 of 1980
- 14 • Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships of 1980
- 15 • Oil Pollution Act (OPA) of 1990
- 16 • Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002
- 17 • Maritime Pollution Prevention Act of 2008 Treaties and Conventions
- 18 • Convention on International Civil Aviation, 1947
- 19 • Convention of the High Seas, 1958
- 20 • International Convention on the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (modified in
- 21 1978)
- 22 • Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974
- 23 • International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979

24

25 Presidential Directives

- 26 • PDD 36 – U.S. Policy on Protecting the Ocean Environment
- 27 • NSPD 41/HSPD 13 – Maritime Security Policy
- 28 • NSPD 66/HSPD 25 – Arctic Region Policy

29

30 Interagency Agreements

- 31 • Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of the Navy and the
- 32 Department of the Treasury on the Operation of Icebreakers, 1965
- 33 • MOA between the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security on
- 34 the Use of U.S. Coast Guard Capabilities and Resources in Support of the U.S. Military
- 35 Strategy, 2008, with a 2010 update to Annex E of the 2008 MOA

36

Chapter 6 List of Agencies and Persons Contacted

Resource Agency or Individual

Shannon Torrence, USFWS
Craig Perham, USFWS
Joel Garlich-Miller, USFWS
Brad Smith, NMFS Alaska
Keri Lestyk, NMFS Alaska

Chapter 7 List of Preparers

U.S. Coast Guard

Post Office Box 21747
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1747

| Staff Member | Project Role |
|----------------------|---|
| Michael Dombkowski | Project Manager, Environmental Assessment |
| Dean Amundson | Project Reviewer, Coast Guard PACAREA |
| Sudie Hargis | Coast Guard D17 Tribal Liaison, Project Reviewer |
| LCDR Stanley Fields | Legal Counsel, Project Reviewer |
| LCDR John Cashman | Legal Counsel, Project Reviewer |
| Jamie Robinson | Arctic Shield Operation Planner, Project Reviewer |
| Dave Forcucci | HEALY Marine Science Coordinator |
| Dr. Phil McGillivary | PACAREA & Icebreaker Science Liaison |

Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Environmental Division

1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203
Silverdale, WA 98315-1101

| Staff Member | Project Role |
|---------------------|---|
| Amy Burt | Project Manager, Environmental Assessment |
| Sara Longtin | Primary Author, Environmental Assessment |
| Cara Hotchkin | Author, Biological Evaluation |
| Charlie Escola | Section Author, Environmental Assessment |

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Appendix A

Agency Correspondence and Coordination
