



## Wildlife Interaction Plan

**Purpose:** To provide guidelines for assuring the prompt reporting, investigation, and documentation of Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*), and polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) sightings or incidents involving animals that are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 during the Colville River Delta-3D Seismic Survey in the Beaufort Sea. This plan is intended to meet the requirement of a site specific polar bear awareness and interaction plan as required by 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 18.124(c)(3) and to meet the requirements for a Letter of Authorization (LOA) for the non-lethal, incidental and intentional take of polar bear and Pacific walrus.

**Polar Bears:** The United States Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that approximately 1,500 polar bears occur in the southern Beaufort Sea (SBS). World wide there are approximately 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears. During the summer months polar bears typically remain on the southern edge of the sea ice. However, they are also known to swim long distances, haul out onto ice flows and barrier islands and can occasionally be found on the coast. It is expected that polar bears will be encountered on ice, in the water, on barrier islands and on the shoreline within the study area.

**Pacific Walrus:** The Pacific walrus occurs in the Chukchi and Bering Seas. Typically the eastern range ends at Point Barrow although there have been occasional (every few years) sightings of walrus in the southern Beaufort Sea. Walrus are dependent on sea ice and typically migrate northward as the sea ice retreats. It is unlikely that survey crews will encounter a Pacific walrus during the survey. If one is observed SAE will follow the interaction plan to reduce potential harassment of the animal.

**Responsibility:** The Project Manager and PSO's have overall responsibility. They are responsible for coordination and implementation of all surveillance or monitoring personnel who deal with wildlife/human encounters, sightings and reporting on the North Slope.

### Procedure:

Crews will be trained to maintain a constant level of awareness for the potential conflict with polar bears. In areas where high potential of conflict exists, SAE will evaluate and if required, place a dedicated watch for polar bears in the area of operations. This is not to



say that a continuous watch is not always in effect but rather that the crew will have a dedicated person or persons for oversight in areas of known activity. A polar bear education program will be given to all workers at a pre-job conference or on-site prior to the start of operations or at commencement of employment on the North Slope. Polar bear awareness refresher briefings will be held as part of regular safety briefings. A dedicated Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) Advisor will be based with the survey crew for the duration of the seismic program, and workers will be instructed to notify the Project Manager, PSO or HSE Advisor immediately whenever a bear is detected. All personnel will be aware of the restrictions regarding "taking" of polar bears as described by the Marine Mammals Protection Act. When a bear is in the immediate area of the crew location, workers will stay inside vehicles or aircraft and away from the bear. Approaching a bear for taking pictures or any other reason is strictly forbidden. USFWS will be called immediately.

***Land based activities:***

1. When a polar bear is detected near any part of the operation, any employee (permanent, temporary, or contract) or visitor shall immediately notify the Project Manager, PSO or HSE Advisor.
2. The first priority is the protection of human life. The second priority is to avoid any situation in which a bear will be harmed.
3. In a camp situation, the lead person with crew shall radio Project Manager/Administrative Office. The Administrative Office will sound the "air horn" with 5 short blasts and make a radio announcement on all crew channels of the sighting. At the sound of the air horn, EVERYONE is to go to the nearest vessel, helicopter, or vehicle and remain inside with doors and windows secured until the ALL CLEAR is given over the radio. The all clear signal is a long blast on the "air horn".
4. In the field, drivers of each vehicle will advise the personnel they are responsible for and have them get inside the vehicles and wait until further notice.
5. If the bear takes refuge near or in a vehicle and does not appear likely to move, crew HSE will be notified depending on the location of operation. No action will be taken unless authorized by the USFWS or their designated agents. The District Manager and North Slope Security must be contacted at this time.
6. When a sighting is made by a stand alone vehicle, such as the survey crew, they must not approach the bear further. The crew will notify the Project Manager, HSE Advisor or PSO via radio to alert them. The crew must avoid the bear and if



necessary cease operations until the bear has left the area. The bear's distance from the crew will determine whether intentional harassment is required.

7. Personnel must remain at least a one half mile distance in all directions from any known bear. The radio announcement must indicate whether this will be necessary or not. An all-clear signal will be sounded when the area is determined to be safe.
8. After any individual sighting or interaction with polar bears during operations on the North Slope, a Polar Bear Sighting Report shall be completed by the HSE Advisor or the PSO. The SAE Permits Manager will forward this report to the Office of Marine Mammals Management, Craig Perham, 786-3810 by phone, 786-3816 fax, within 24 hours.

***Marine based activities:***

1. Vessels will have a Protective Species Observer (PPO) onboard who will be responsible for locating marine mammals and warning the crew of their location.
2. Vessels will not operate within one half mile (0.8 km) of walruses or polar bears.
3. When a marine mammal appears within the 0.5 mile exclusion zone, the vessel will reduce speed, change course, and avoid separating members from a group.
4. Vessels will avoid ice flows to protect equipment and attempt to reduce harassment of the marine mammal.
5. During inclement weather with reduced visibility, vessels will reduce speed to avoid collisions with marine mammals.

***Aircraft:***

1. Aircraft will not operate within 0.5 miles of walruses or polar bears.
2. Aircraft will avoid flying over ideal polar bear habitat including but not limited to sea ice and barrier islands.
3. When marine mammals are encountered aircraft will not operate below 1,500ft unless the aircraft is engaged in marine mammal monitoring, approaching,



landing, taking off, or as conditions allow.

***Subsistence Hunting:***

1. SAExploration will employ a subsistence advisor to reduce impacts on polar bear subsistence hunting.
2. Vessels and aircraft will avoid areas in which subsistence hunting is being conducted.

**Reporting:**

*Polar Bears:* When a polar bear is observed the PSO or crew member they shall immediately notify the HSE who will be responsible for filling out the polar bear report form. Reports of sightings will be sent to the USFWS on a regular basis through the Permits Manager.

Reports will be sent to:

Craig Perham  
USFWS-Marine Mammals Section  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
Telephone: 907-786-3800  
Fax: 907-786-3816

*Walrus:* The PSO will be responsible for recording information about the encounter on the walrus report form. The reports will be sent by the Permits Manager to the USFWS in accordance with the requirements stated in the LOA.

Reports will be sent to:

Joel Garlich-Miller  
USFWS- Marine Mammals Section  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
Telephone: 907-786-3800  
Fax: 907-786-3816



United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
Fax: 907-786-3816

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Polar Bear Sighting Report

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Observer name: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather conditions: Fog \_\_\_ Snow \_\_\_ Rain \_\_\_ Clear \_\_\_ Wind Speed \_\_\_  
Wind Direction \_\_\_ Approx. Temp \_\_\_

Total number of bears: \_\_\_ Sow/cubs \_\_\_/\_\_\_ Adult \_\_\_ Subadult \_\_\_

Estimated distance of bear from personnel/facility: \_\_\_/\_\_\_

Possible attractants present: \_\_\_\_\_

Bear behavior: Curious \_\_\_ Aggressive \_\_\_ Predatory \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

Description of encounter: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Injuries sustained: Personnel \_\_\_\_\_  
Polar bear \_\_\_\_\_

Deterrents used/distance: Vehicle \_\_\_ Noise-maker \_\_\_ Firearms \_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_

Duration of encounter: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Contacts: USFWS \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ADF&G \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SAE \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SAE Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
1011 East Tudor Road  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
Fax: 907-786-3816

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pacific Walrus Sighting Report

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Observer name: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather conditions: Fog \_\_\_ Snow \_\_\_ Rain \_\_\_ Clear \_\_\_ Wind Speed \_\_\_  
Wind Direction \_\_\_ Approx. Temp \_\_\_

Total number of walrus: Adult \_\_\_ Subadult \_\_\_ Unknown \_\_\_

Estimated distance of walrus from personnel/facility: \_\_\_/\_\_\_

Possible attractants present: \_\_\_\_\_

Walrus behavior: Curious \_\_\_ Aggressive \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

Description of encounter: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Injuries sustained: Personnel \_\_\_\_\_  
Walrus \_\_\_\_\_

Deterrents used/distance: Vehicle \_\_\_ Noise-maker \_\_\_ Firearms \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

Duration of encounter: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Contacts:

USFWS \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ADF&G \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SAE Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_