**The Cook Inlet Beluga Whale:**

**Research**

- Sound science: Listening to whales using sound recording instruments anchored in and near river mouths helps detect when and where belugas feed, and human-caused noise that may displace whales.
- Prey Tell: By collecting and analyzing water samples in areas where belugas feed, environmental DNA (eDNA) may tell us which fish species belugas are eating.
- Aquariums are Scientific Gems: New methods are tested before working with belugas to ensure the best practices.

**Potential Threats to Recovery**

- Catastrophic events (natural disasters, chemical spills, mass strandings)
- Cumulative effects of multiple stressors
- Noise (ship traffic, construction projects, oil & gas activities, airplanes)
- Disease agents (pathogens, parasites, harmful algal blooms)
- Habitat loss or degradation
- Reduction in prey (overfishing, climate change)
- Unauthorized take (entanglement, vessel strikes, poaching, harassment)
- Pollution (sewage, runoff, discharge, dumping)
- Predation

**A Population in Decline**

Cook Inlet belugas are an isolated, endangered population of whales. They live year-round in the muddy waters of Cook Inlet, Alaska, and swim up silty glacial rivers in search of food. They are genetically different from other beluga whales found in Alaska, or anywhere else in the world. Historically a valuable part of the regional Alaska Native subsistence diet, belugas have not been hunted since 2005 due to their drastic population decline. Despite recovery efforts the 10-year (2008-2018) population trend is declining 2.3% per year. Once so abundant that white whales were visible ‘as far as the eye could see,’ sightings are less frequent. The public is encouraged to report all beluga sightings to provide scientists with clues to help solve the mystery of their lack of recovery.

**How to Help**

**Report all beluga whale sightings**

- See a live whale? Tell us at www.cookinletbelugas.com
- Provide photos to contribute to research on habitat use, social structures, and reproduction.
- See a stranded, injured or dead whale? Call NOAA Fisheries Alaska Science Center at 1-877-925-7773

**Learn about outreach events and community whale monitoring programs:**

- www.facebook.com/AlaskaBMP
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**The Cook Inlet Beluga Recovery Timeline**

- **1987** - Beluga hunting household permits in effect.
- **1988** - The Alaska Beluga Whale Committee’s first meetings.
- **1999** - Methods developed to document distribution and abundance of Cook Inlet belugas.
- **2003** - Draft Conservation Plan completed.
- **2005** - Proposed rule to list as Endangered.
- **2006** - Start of Volunteer Center
- **2007** - Draft Conservation Plan finalized.
- **2011** - USEPA Criteria of Cook Inlet Habitat.
- **2012** - Recovery Plan Finalized.
- **2014** - Belugas listed as Endangered under the Endangered Species Act.
- **2018** - Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Recovery Implementation Task Force established.

**Research Committee**

- Understanding and monitoring the Cook Inlet beluga population.
- Assessing, preventing, mitigating or abating threats to the population’s recovery.

**Outreach Committee**

- Garnering public support through improved outreach and education.

**Cook Inlet Beluga Whale:**

The primary role of the Committees of the Task Force is to engage the expertise of researchers, managers, communicators, and various other stakeholders to advise NOAA Fisheries and the State of Alaska, Department of Fish and Game on specific topics or issues relating to Cook Inlet beluga whale recovery.

- Habitat and Threats Management
- Research Committee
- Outreach Committee
- NOAA Fisheries
- Beluga Whale Alliance
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska SeaLife Center
- Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson
- The Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Photobiodiversity Project
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Anchor Management
- Marine Mammal Network
- University of Washington
- Tyee Nature Corporation
- Hilcorp Alaska LLC.