

Large Marine Ecosystem: #12 Northern Bering-Chukchi Sea

Theme: Governance and Scale Integration

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Title: *Cross-scale co-management successes: A case study of government-to-government and Native-to-Native governance in the Bering Strait Region*

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This study evaluates if and how international bilateral agreements can support the Bering Strait's local-scale traditional communities who depend on the transboundary Northern-Bering Chukchi Sea marine ecosystem. The nutrient-rich "Northern Bering-Chukchi Sea" supports large numbers of marine mammals including polar bear and Bowhead whale. While the border states, the United States and Russia (previously the U.S.S.R.), have not been known to agree politically, they do share interests in the Bering Strait Region's (BSR) natural resources and strategic geography. Before the Cold War, the BSR's indigenous communities regularly interacted for trade and seasonal festivals. As a result, their cultures and traditional management practices are still used in both Russian and American communities within the BSR. Despite the Cold War's relocation of communities away from the coasts and the Ice Curtain, the border between the United States and Russia, which stood in defiance of the transboundary population's millennia of contact, the traditional management practices are still used today. Broadly my research asks to what extent bilateral agreements have been able to manage transboundary ecological challenges? More specifically, what lessons can be applied from current conditions in order to design a successful bilateral agreement for Pacific walrus in the future?

In order to evaluate this research question I first focus on two bilateral treaty case studies. The two existing bilateral treaties *Polar Bear Agreement* and the *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling*, have developed differently and, as a consequence, their respective target species have fared differently.

Ronald Mitchell's four mechanisms for describing variation of international environmental regimes' effectiveness are used to evaluate the effectiveness of these two bilateral treaties (Mitchell 2006):

1. Incentives: Drivers for coordination, collaboration, and up/downstream problems,
2. Capacities: The level of financial, administrative, and technical found within the region,
3. Information: The extent to which scientific certainty is communicated,
4. Norms: how influential norms exists (informally) outside of the agreement.

Early research indicates that the *Polar Bear Agreement*, as of 2016, has decreased in effectiveness due to the reduction of local representation within the "capacities", while the *Whaling conventions*' effectiveness is increasing (see Table 1). Today, the United States and Russia's political relations are strained, yet local populations continue to collaborate through traditional management practices. Because the possibility of another marine mammal federal bilateral agreement is being discussed for Pacific walrus my research provides guidance for that future treaty by drawing upon the successes found within the four elements of variation. The whale and polar bear successes, Pacific walrus specific characteristics, and present US-Russia bilateral political capacity can offer policy recommendations to a range of Arctic actors beyond the scope of the BSR.