

Two villages stop whale hunt

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With their strike limit reached, the whaling villages of Point Hope and Kivalina have stopped whaling activities for this year. Point Hope whalers have landed four bowhead this season while the hunters from the whaling village of Kivalina has struck and lost the villages two whale strike limit.

The only villages whaling this week are Wales, Wainwright and Barrow. Barrow whalers had landed one whale and struck and lost two, leaving them with seven whales they can pursue legally.

"There have been eight whales landed at Savoonga, one whale landed at Gambell, four whales landed at Point Hope and one whale landed at Barrow," Marie Adams, Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission executive director said. Adams also said that the whaling communities were supporting the AEWC's monitoring of this year's whale hunts.

Weather on Monday was

reported warm with southeast winds which were replaced by northeast winds which closed the open leads near Barrow. Several whaling crews were reported to be at the closed lead waiting for the lead to open up again while other whaling crews had moved their boats and equipment closer to shore because of unsafe ice conditions.

Winds also were blowing from the northeast at the whaling village of Wales on the tip of the Seward Peninsula, Monday.

The whalers there have not had much chance to hunt for the bowhead because of strong winds and unfavorable ice conditions and a lack of open leads.

On Monday, a lead opened two miles west of Wales, offshore from a landmark there at the 'lighthouse.'

"There was too much ice, but right now there's a big lead out there," Ernest Oxereok, a lifetime resident at Wales said. "So the crews are hunting today."

Oxereok said although the winds were about 20 to 25 miles per hour from the northeast, Vincent Okpealuk's crew, Toby

Ahnangasuk's boys and Andrew Seetook's crews were hunting for sea mammals they had an opportunity to take.

"The hunters are hardly going out because of the ice and strong winds," said Oxereok. "The weather here has not been good for hunting and there's too much ice."

No walrus have been reported taken at Wales and no word was received from Little Diomed Island which traditionally takes many walrus each spring. Walrus hunting at Gamell on St. Lawrence Island was still the main subsistence activity there this week.

To the west of Wales, the Bering Strait is still choked with ice from it's American eastern shore to it's Siberian western shore.

Oxereok said he spotted a walrus herd on the ice but the herd could not be reached because they were too far inside the ice pack from an open lead.

He said many geese and cranes are flying north although there is still much snow covering the tundra north of Wales.