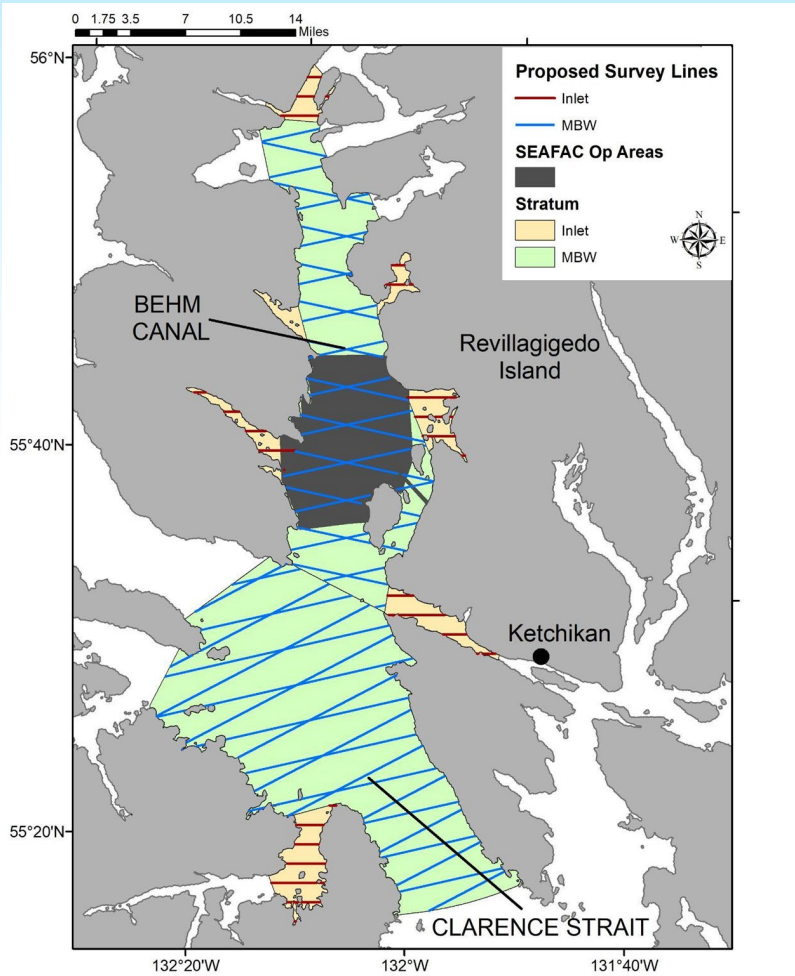




## Acoustic and visual survey for cetaceans in Behm Canal and Southern Clarence Strait, Alaska

April 8-15, 2023



Map showing the cetacean line transect survey planned for Behm Canal and lower Clarence Strait.

### Who is conducting the research?

Scientists from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center’s Marine Mammal Division, Auke Bay Laboratory, and Alaska Region, with colleagues from the University of Washington, on the charter vessel *Alaskan Song*. This is a joint project conducted by NOAA and the U.S. Navy.

### What is the research objective?

The overall research objectives are to conduct visual and acoustic surveys for marine mammals, primarily cetaceans, to estimate density and abundance in this area. Photographs of key species (for example, humpback and killer whales) will be collected when practicable for purposes of stock identification and abundance estimation. Incidental sightings of pinnipeds and sea otters will also be documented. Biopsy and water samples (for eDNA analysis) will be collected opportunistically and sonobouys will be deployed to detect rare and cryptic cetacean species.

### Where is the research being conducted?

The survey will occur in Behm Canal and southern Clarence Strait, Alaska.

### Why are the data important? How will data be used?

These data will contribute to information needed for compliance with environmental assessment requirements for a U.S. Navy operational area in Behm Canal. Prior NMFS surveys in this region were focused during the summer so are not informative for densities of marine mammals that occur in the spring. In addition, this survey provides an opportunity to collect eDNA and potentially biopsy samples of key cetacean species to better understand which stocks occur in this area. Harbor porpoise eDNA samples are of particular interest, as this area has not been sampled previously.

## Schedule for the Spring 2023 Behm Canal Marine Mammal Survey

Event	Date
Science team flies to Ketchikan, AK	April 7
Science team boards ship and starts survey operations	April 8
Survey ends in Ketchikan, Alaska	April 15
Science team travels home by air	April 15

### What steps are you taking to prevent spread of COVID-19? (bulleted list, cite only high level activities from SOP)

- Scientists are fully vaccinated and following AFSC SOPs in compliance with Discovery Health.
- Crew and scientists self-monitor for COVID symptoms daily and follow rules regarding personal infection controls and disinfection of surfaces.
- All hands aboard the vessel maintain a 'bubble' of isolation from outside contact until the survey is completed.

### How do you plan to communicate research results? (e.g., outreach document, webstory, radio interview, community meeting, etc.)

The project PIs will report results to NMFS and to the U.S. Navy. A short written summary of preliminary results will also be available to the public after the survey end. Final results will be presented at conferences (e.g., Alaska Marine Science Symposium), symposiums, seminars, and research meetings.

### Contacts:

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