

# Community Coastal Impact Assistance Program

## Bristol Bay Youth Stewardship Program Round Island Internship

### Award Amount

\$ 13,800

### Grantee

Bristol Bay Native Association

### Project Contact

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### Location

Dillingham, Alaska main work station; field duty-Round Island, Alaska

### Project Duration

**Project Start date:** April 1, 2013

**Project End Date:** December 30, 2013

**Project Duration:** 7 months

### Project Description

The Bristol Bay Summer Youth Stewardship Program (BBSYSP) Round Island Internship Project has been in existence since 1998. The program is a cooperative educational effort designed to provide Alaska Native students with the opportunity to experience the science and research of natural resource management.

The BBSYSP places two interns on Round Island (Qayassiq in Yup'ik) each summer. The interns work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) on walrus haulout monitoring techniques, seabird monitoring techniques, and other sanctuary related field operations such as Steller sea lion monitoring and the visitor program. Interns are mentored and receive hands-on training with all the equipment and techniques necessary to conduct these duties. Alaska Native traditional ecological knowledge literature is provided which includes information on traditional walrus subsistence uses including hunting, preservation techniques and local edible plants. Also, the interns will be working with a University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Bristol Bay Campus Environmental Scientist to learn about marine habitat techniques. This study of the shallow benthic habitats of Round Island also has two main goals: 1) collect baseline data on benthic fauna distribution and abundance in the shallow marine habitats and 2) provide an educational experience to university students and interns on marine field techniques. The purpose of the baseline study to collect baseline data on benthic species found in the shallow marine waters surrounding Round Island (especially invertebrates). This study will allow us to better understand the ecology of the area by generating a preliminary benthic

species list and collect abiotic factors including benthic sediments types and water quality (pH, salinity, dissolved oxygen and conductivity). The interns will have the option of earning college credit.

The CIAP funds will pay for travel, equipment and a stipend for two interns for one season.

The participants in this project do not physically contact any birds or mammals. The research methods are described below.

### **Research Methods:**

The marine mammal population counts use the shore base survey methods. Marine mammals are observed using binoculars and counted twice per observation site for accuracy. The walrus on the shore and water are counted on the daily surveys. After the first initial count, the observers wait 15 minutes and conduct another walrus count per observation site. Round Island has eight walrus observation sites, and on the east cape side of the island, Steller sea lion counts are conducted. For seabird productivity counts, the Pelagic cormorant counts occur on island seabird colony on two or three observation sites using binoculars.

### **Measurable Goals and Objectives**

The goal and objective of this project is to increase stewardship and motivation of area residents to participate in the protection, conservation and restoration of coastal areas. This will be achieved by hiring two BBSYSP Round Island interns for the summer who will work with the ADF&G biologists to learn about walrus haulout monitoring techniques, seabird monitoring techniques, Steller sea lion monitoring and the Round Island visitor program.

### **CIAP Authorized Use**

This project is consistent with Authorized Use #1 Projects and activities for the conservation, protection, or restoration of coastal areas.

This project will enable two interns to participate in research on Round Island for a summer to learn about walrus haulout monitoring techniques, seabird monitoring techniques, and other sanctuary related field operations such as Steller sea lion monitoring and the visitor program. Interns with an understanding of coastal environmental systems will be better coastal stewards and be motivated to participate in conservation, protection and restoration of coastal areas.

Round Island is one of seven small islands protected as part of the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary. The Sanctuary was created to protect the last remaining terrestrial haulout for Pacific walruses and provides important habitat for many marine mammals, and marine and terrestrial birds. This area is managed primarily to protect these habitats and species, and secondarily to provide public access for education, viewing and photography. Interns will monitor the populations of walruses, seabirds, Steller sea lions and other species on Round Island each year throughout the summer months. Accurate information on the health marine mammal and bird populations is required to manage the Sanctuary effectively, and changes in species numbers over time will guide decisions about regulations, access permitting or other management strategies to ensure adequate protection of key habitat.