

A Socioeconomic Baseline Assessment of the Pribilof Islands

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The Pribilof Islands - Project Background

- Research supports the Pribilof Islands Collaborative (PIC).
- Issues of common concern among the stakeholders are declines in fur seal and seabird populations, diminishing halibut catches, and the attendant effects on the local communities.
- In 2004, the PIC identified several socioeconomic data gaps that would help them and others plan for and mitigate eventual fishery management measures and enhance local stewardship of marine resources.



The Pribilof Islands - Objectives

The overarching objectives were to:

1. Establish the value of the halibut and other fisheries in the Bering Sea
2. Identify community and island-specific impacts of changes in fisheries
3. Document history of and potential for local stewardship of marine resources and economic development
4. Quantify the economic importance of subsistence harvests



The Pribilof Islands - Methods

1. Compiled existing data from key information sources

- Local: Tribal Governments of St. Paul and St. George, Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association
- Regional: Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference
- State: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- National: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Census
- International: International Pacific Halibut Commission

2. Conducted an on-island survey

- Worked in collaboration with tribal entities, on-island partners, local knowledge specialist and the PIC
- The focus was to gather information specifically related to the social and economic components of (a) subsistence, (b) fisheries, (c) economic development, and (d) environmental stewardship

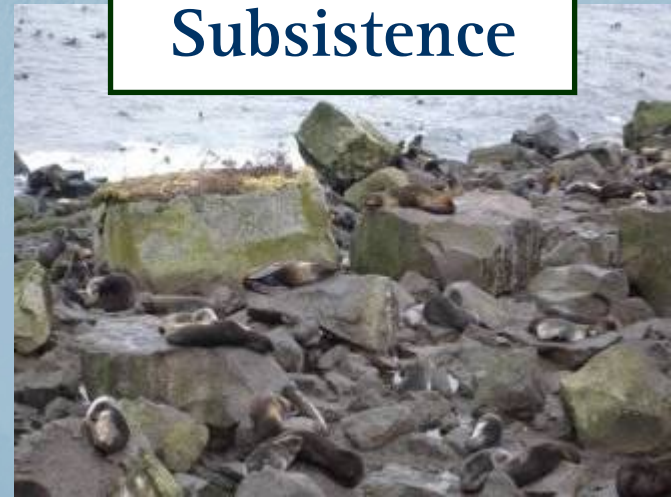
3. Combined and analyzed new and existing data to create baseline

The Pribilof Islands - Results

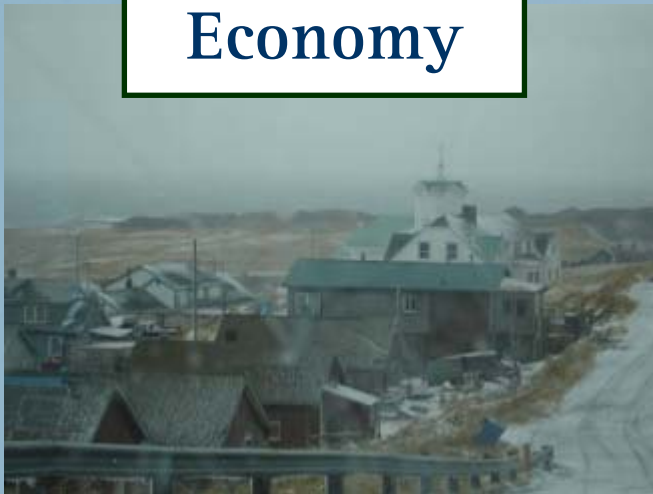
Fisheries



Subsistence



Economy



Environment



The Pribilof Islands - Fisheries

Recent changes have reduced the role of fisheries

- A 2005 NOAA study established 11 criteria for Alaskan fishing communities. St. Paul met 3 and St. George did not meet any.
- Evidence suggests that both islands very much used to be fishing communities, but have undergone changes in recent years.
- Evidenced by declines in 1) city operating revenues, 2) employment by CDQ groups and 3) individuals employed as fishermen.

- In 1999, total revenues for the City of St. Paul were \$3.67 million. In 2005 were only \$590,000.
- In 1999, total general fund revenues to the City of St. George were \$1.2 million. In 2004 were only ~\$40,000.
- In 1999, CBSFA employed 177 people. In 2004, they had 87 employees.
- More respondents “used to be” fishermen (27%) than currently are fishermen (16%).

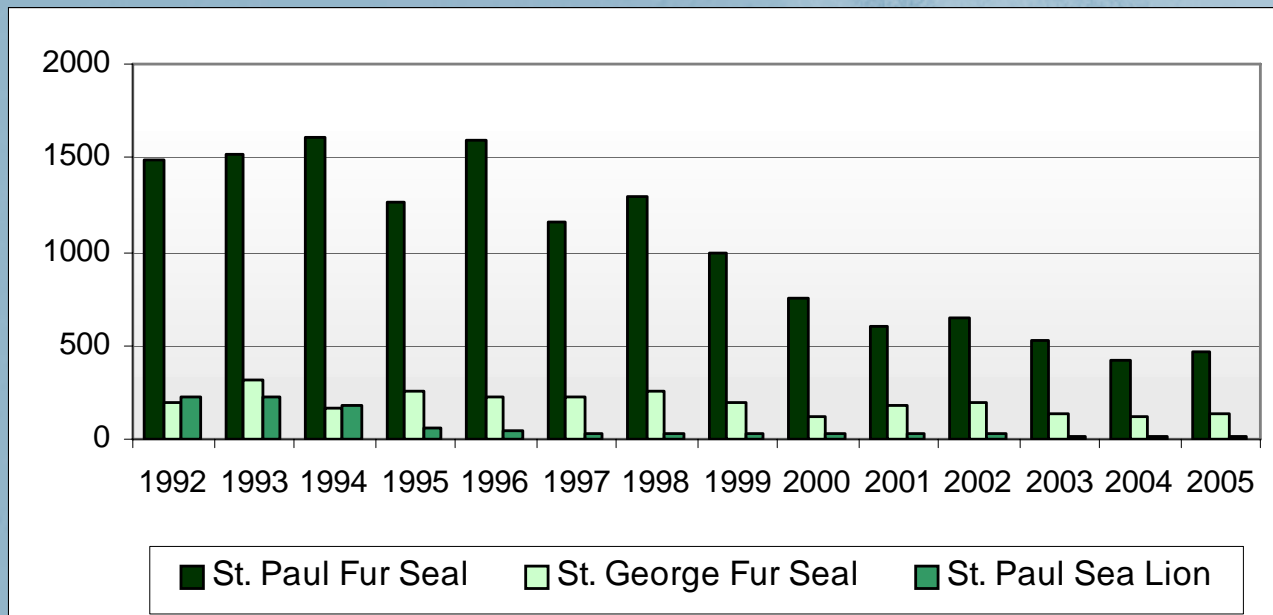
The Pribilof Islands - Fisheries

- **Halibut fishery is still important**
 - Evidenced by 1) contribution to personal income, 2) contribution to CDQ group revenues which are then used for local economic development and 3) use for subsistence purposes.
- **Lack of correlation between changes in fisheries and other common social and economic indicators**
 - One exception is relation between the opilio crash and population on St. Paul.



The Pribilof Islands - Subsistence

- **Subsistence harvests of marine mammals are declining**
 - This is occurring at the same time as marine mammal populations are declining.
- **Consumption of subsistence food is declining**
 - Study from the Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies found that 43% of study participants are consuming less subsistence food now than they were five years ago.

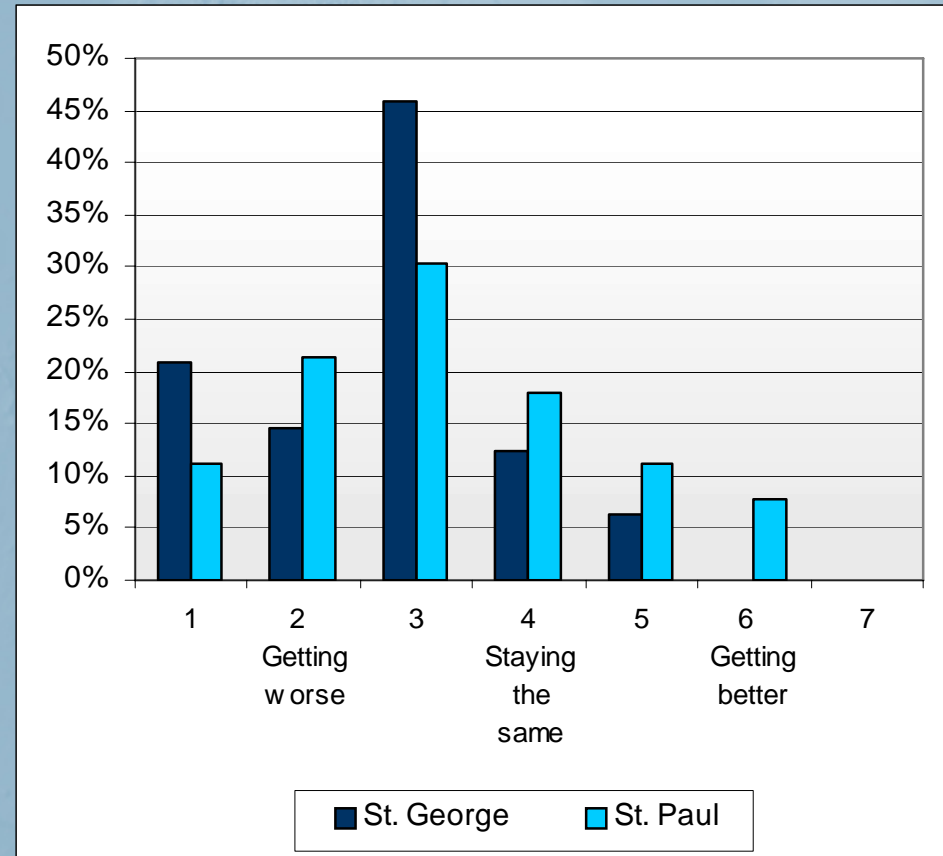


The Pribilof Islands - Subsistence

- **Subsistence harvests are important for sustenance**
 - 80% consume subsistence foods at least occasionally.
 - For 65%, subsistence foods account for 20% or more of overall consumption.
- **They contribute to a sense of health and well-being**
 - The majority of subsistence harvesters (81%) share their harvests at least occasionally.
 - The majority of individuals on St. George (70%) and St. Paul (84%) who do not participate in subsistence harvests receive subsistence food from others.
- **There is considerable variability in participation, consumption and perceived importance between the islands**
 - Cost (St. George) and taste (St. Paul) are the primary reasons for consumption of subsistence foods. Other major reasons are health and culture/tradition.
 - Personal choice (St. George) and natural factors (St. Paul) are most likely to affect participation in subsistence harvests.

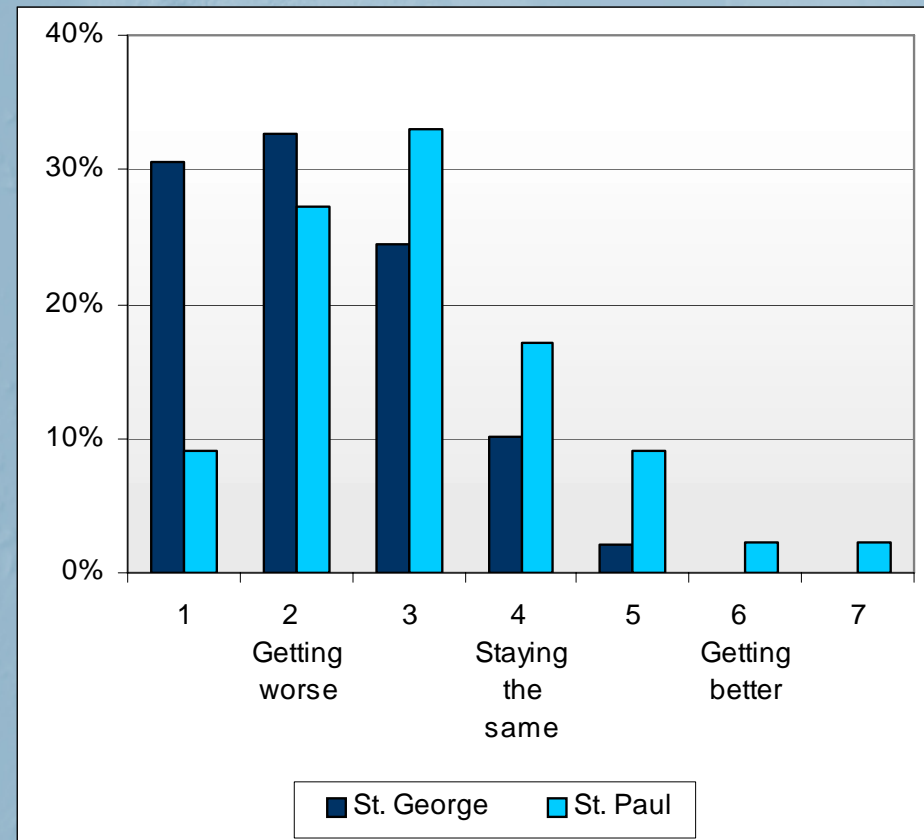
The Pribilof Islands - The Environment and Environmental Stewardship

- Perceptions of similar environmental signals differ between the two islands
 - 44% of St. Paul respondents feel the environmental quality is “very good” or “extremely good”. Only 31% of St. George respondents feel similarly.
 - 81% of St. George respondents feel that, at least to some degree, the environmental quality of the islands is getting worse. Only 63% of St. Paul respondents feel similarly.



The Pribilof Islands – The Economy

- Perceptions of the economy also differ
 - 31% of St. George respondents feel the economy is “not stable at all”. Only 6% of St. Paul respondents feel similarly.
 - 88% of St. George respondents feel that, at least to some degree, the economic stability of the islands is getting worse. Only 69% of St. Paul respondents feel similarly.
- The majority of respondents on St. Paul (70%) and St. George (73%) have lived off-island



The Pribilof Islands - Conclusions

There does not appear to be a simple, stable socioeconomic “baseline” for the Pribilof Islands

However –

- The use of methods to gather local and traditional knowledge provided key information not previously available, particularly socioeconomic information.
- Results show that residents of the Pribilof Islands are keenly aware of changes that are occurring on their islands— notion of adaptability.
- A repeat of this study in five or ten years would give some indication of trends in comparison with the baseline we’ve established.

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