

Traditional Ecological Knowledge of whitefish in Kotzebue sound. Study No. 02-040
Final

Abstract: Whitefish are a key subsistence resource in the Kotzebue Sound region, one of the few fish available to every community in any abundance. This report documents traditional ecological knowledge and subsistence fishing of whitefish in a sample of communities representing different ecological areas in the Kotzebue Sound region in northwest Alaska. The study covered five species of small whitefish: broad whitefish *Coregonus nasus*, humpback whitefish *Coregonus pidschian*, least cisco *Coregonus sardinella*, Bering cisco *Coregonus laurettae*, and round whitefish *Prosopium cylindraceum*. A total of 57 individuals, mostly Ifiupiaq elders, were interviewed between 2002 and 2004 in Kobuk, Kotzebue, Noatak, Noorvik, Selawik, and Shungnak. Topics covered by these interviews and summarized in this report include the following: Ifiupiaq taxonomy of whitefish (species available, their characteristics, and their local names); distribution, seasonal movements, spawning, and feeding habits of whitefish; observations on whitefish abundance and health; interactions of whitefish with other animals; traditional lore; subsistence fishing practices by community; and the processing, storage, and preparation of the whitefish harvest. Estimates of whitefish harvests from secondary sources are also included. The interviews brought to light previously undocumented details about whitefish, one of the values of a small, focused study such as this.

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