

**Program Name:** Alaska Beluga Monitoring Partnership

**Program Website:** <https://akbmp.org>

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**Locations:** Alaska



### Project Summary:

The Alaska Beluga Monitoring Partnership (AKBMP) is a collaboration between several organizations that offer opportunities for volunteer citizen scientists to contribute to endangered beluga monitoring efforts in Alaska's Cook Inlet. Together we design standardized scientific monitoring protocols, train volunteers to support monitoring efforts, and coordinate shore-based beluga monitoring activities at five sites throughout Cook Inlet. As part of their involvement participants learn about Cook Inlet beluga whales including; how to count them, how to identify age groups, behavior, and record human activities that might have an impact on this endangered species. We conduct a spring (March 15th - May 15th) and fall (August 15th - November 15th) monitoring field season at our five sites that are known foraging areas for these animals. After attending a volunteer orientation, a volunteer will sign-up for a monitoring session with one of our lead observers who is experienced in marine mammal observation and will be trained on how to properly fill in our datasheets. Once the participant feels comfortable monitoring they can freely sign up for sessions that fit their schedule. There is a 2 hour monitoring session scheduled every day at every site which is determined by the tidal schedule. The data from our field seasons is used directly by researchers and NOAA Fisheries for the management of Cook Inlet beluga whales. Additional programs have been created from AKBMP for grade school students and college students.

### Potential for application to the following STEM concepts:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biology/Ecology  | <input type="checkbox"/> Measurement and Scale                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Precision/Accuracy                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical Analysis and Patterns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earth Sciences              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graphing Trends                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cause and effect | <input type="checkbox"/> Stability and change                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hypothesis testing          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                 |

### Requirements of Participation

**Time/Physical Commitment:** 2 hour sessions standing along the shore, as many sessions as a volunteer wants

**Tools Needed:** binoculars, clipboard, writing utensil, datasheets

**Target Age for *Independent* Participation:** all ages, if under 18 need to be accompanied by an adult

### Other Requirements:

1) Attend an orientation (we have one virtual one at the beginning of the season and it is record for anyone to watch later on 2) complete volunteer form and waiver 3) Monitor at least one session with a lead observer to get field training before a participant can monitor on their own

We ask that after we train them that they at least monitor 3 sessions in a season.