

Kasegaluk Lagoon Special Area

Where the seals and beluga whales play.



About

Kasegaluk Lagoon is **one of the largest, undiminished coastal lagoon systems in the world**, spanning nearly 125 miles of the Chukchi Sea coast.

This sheltered, shallow lagoon is an **important habitat for calving and molting beluga whales**. Hundreds of spotted seals and walrus haul out along the barrier islands and is also a **frequent denning destination for polar bears**.



Of all Arctic Alaska's coastal lagoons, **Kasegaluk Lagoon supports the highest diversity of bird life**. As many as half of the world's Pacific black brant migrate to this before beginning their journey to wintering grounds in Baja Mexico. **Spectacled eiders nest on the mainland**, while Pacific loons seek out inland lakes, nest on tiny ponds and fish in the lagoon itself.

Threats to this Special Area

OFFSHORE OIL

Offshore oil leases in the nearby Chukchi Sea are some of the most immediate threats to Kasegaluk Lagoon. Many companies are eager to explore offshore leases within three miles of the coast as well as further offshore. Kasegaluk Lagoon is technically protected from drilling within the Special Area boundaries, but **it is not protected from pipeline construction to transport that oil.**

There have already been at least two oil spills into wetlands near Kasegaluk Lagoon, which, in **this extremely sensitive Arctic tundra**, can leave devastating impacts on fish, wildlife, and downstream water users.



Photo: Steven Kazlowski

Spills in this region are **especially likely to be magnified by ocean currents** which can easily move oil and other chemicals extremely far distances.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is also having a profound effect on the region – **rising temperatures and the disappearance of sea ice is causing more and more marine mammals**, such as seals and walrus, to haul-out on the mainland, resulting in **greater vulnerability to predators and hunters.**