

BERING SEA ELDERS GROUP RESOLUTION

Resolution to Regain and Sustain Tribal Safety and Food Security in the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait Region and to promote the self-determination of our people in the management of natural resources and habitat in the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait Region.

WHEREAS, The mission of the Bering Sea Elders Group is to bring together and work with elders as one voice to protect and respect our traditional ways of life, the ocean web of life that supports the resources we rely on, and our children's future. As Elders, we are messengers to our children, our tribal councils and the people who make decisions that affect our marine resources, ecosystem and ways of life.

WHEREAS, According to Presidential Executive Order, federal agencies are required to provide notice directly to the appropriate leadership of federally recognized tribes at the beginning of agency process affecting tribes, and

WHEREAS, We, through our tribal governments, have the right to participate fully in all levels of decision-making in policies which may have tribal implications, and to exercise our government-to-government responsibilities with each other and with other governments, and

WHEREAS, the culture and food security of coastal and mainland Yup'ik, Cup'ik and Inupiaq peoples is grounded in the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait which we have relied on for its rich resources since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous knowledge (IK) is a living body of knowledge that is acquired and utilized by indigenous communities and individuals in and through long-term resources use and environmental observation. It is transmitted intergenerationally. IK is a practically applicable body of knowledge, one that integrates personal experience with oral traditions. It provides perspectives applicable to an array of human and non-human phenomena. It is deeply rooted in history, time, and place, but is adaptable and dynamic in ways that keep it relevant and useful in contemporary life. This knowledge is part of, and used in, everyday life, and is inextricably intertwined with peoples' identity and cosmology. Tradition – and IK – does not preclude change, nor does it equal 'the past.' In fact, it inherently entails change (e.g. in adaptation processes). The definition

establishes full respect for the authority of the indigenous peoples of the region and will guide federal agencies in its decision making,

WHEREAS, We rely on a diversity of marine mammals, fish, birds and other resources from the ocean to sustain our way of life and food security, and

WHEREAS, Every fall and spring, with the annual formation and retreat of sea ice, large migrations of marine mammals and seabirds move through our waters, making valuable resources available to us, and

WHEREAS, Large areas of the ocean are used for hunting because of the movement of sea ice and the variable location of good hunting conditions, and

WHEREAS, Local fisheries for halibut, salmon, herring and crab provide important food that is shared and preserved for winter as well as commercial fishing opportunities for the cash economy, and

WHEREAS, The Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region is a sensitive marine ecosystem subject to significant effects of climate change, and

WHEREAS, Rapid depletion of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean and climate change are causing the Bering Sea and Bering Strait to be vulnerable to expanded shipping, and oil and gas development. Increased ship traffic presents potential risks such as negative impacts on habitat, noise pollution, boating accidents, contaminated discharges, oil spills and potential conflicts and safety hazards within hunting and fishing areas, and

WHEREAS, Climate warming and associated ecosystem changes may affect commercially valuable fish species and fisheries in uncertain ways that are of concern to Tribes in the region.

NOW THEREFORE THE BERING SEA ELDERS GROUP resolves that:

- (1) The President should take executive action to ensure the natural resources of the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region are protected so subsistence uses by the federally recognized tribal communities of the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region can be sustained into the future, and
- (2) The President should designate an area in which the federally recognized tribal governments of the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region have formal roles, beyond consultation, in federal agency decision-making regarding

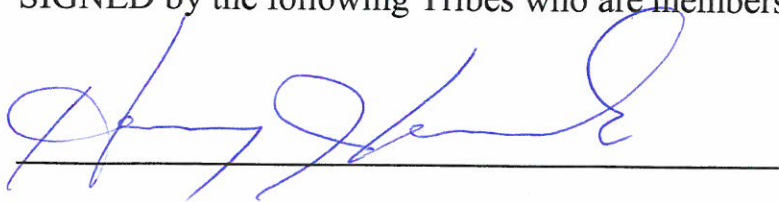
resource development that may harm tribal abilities to continue hunting and fishing or harm their food security

(3) In the designated area:

- a. No discharge from all vessels should be permitted including: sewage, oil, ballast water, garbage and noxious chemicals or anything else that would harm the ecosystem, wildlife or fisheries;
- b. Bottom trawling must be prohibited, and other new fisheries should only be allowed pursuant to the standards and processes that are used in the Arctic Fishery Management Plan;
- c. Oil and gas or mineral activity or leasing must be prohibited;
- d. Indigenous knowledge must be considered equivalent to western science in federal decisions;
- e. There must be spill prevention and response training and equipment provided to all the island and coastal villages;
- f. A plan must be developed with the federally recognized tribes to address marine debris collection and removal by 2018;
- g. A mandatory vessel traffic monitoring and compliance system must be put in place;
- h. All vessel traffic routing and safety measures and processes including the Port Access Route Study (PARS) must be subject to mandatory consultation under Executive Order 13175;
- i. The government must undertake formal government-to-government consultation with the federally recognized tribes on the determination of areas to be avoided (ATBAs) by vessel traffic;
- j. An advisory body must be created to inform and guide federal management and decision making. This advisory body must have broad representation from and put forward by federally recognized tribes.

We make this request of the President on this 15th day of June 2016.

SIGNED by the following Tribes who are members of BSEG.



Harry Lincoln, Chair, Bering Sea Elders Group (2016-2019)