



Bering Sea Elders Group

BERING SEA ELDERS GROUP

RESOLUTION 2023-01

TITLE: RESOLUTION EXPRESSING APPRECIATION AND CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE NORTHERN BERING SEA CLIMATE RESILIENCE AREA EXECUTIVE ORDER AND CALLING FOR SUSTAINED FUNDING AND PROTECTIONS FOR THE NORTHERN BERING SEA

Whereas, the Bering Sea Elders Group (BSEG) is an organization comprised of 38 federally recognized Tribes on the west coast of Alaska; and

Whereas, our people have subsisted from the Bering Sea for millennia, and are committed to continuing stewardship of the Bering Sea for millennia to come; and

Whereas, our federally recognized Tribal Governments have government-to-government relationships with the other sovereigns that have management power and authority over the Bering Sea, and have the right to participate fully in all decisions that affect our Tribes; and

Whereas, the Bering Sea is integral to our cultural identity and well-being as Yup'ik, Cup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, and Inupiaq people, and the water is as important to us as the land; and

Whereas, the Bering Sea Elders Group was formed more than fifteen years ago out of a mutual concern in our regions about threats to the health and well-being of the Bering Sea; and

Whereas, the Tribal members of the Bering Sea Elders Group represent Cup'ik, Yup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, and Inupiaq people who rely on subsistence fish, marine mammals, birds, berries, and other traditional irreplaceable resources found in the Bering Sea and surrounding lands; and

Whereas, as Traditional Knowledge holders, our people hold a living body of knowledge that we have passed on from generation to generation. Our knowledge of the Bering Sea has been developed over millennia, is invaluable, and is intertwined with our peoples' identity, culture, values, and way of life; and

Whereas, since its founding, the Bering Sea Elders Group has been working in coalition with other tribal organizations for long-term protections for the Bering Sea and to restore the ability of federally-recognized Tribes to steward the region; and

Whereas, in 2008, BSEG entered into MOUs with partners Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and Kawerak, Inc., and in December 2010, BSEG, AVCP, and Kawerak jointly submitted a Recommendation for Protection of the Northern Bering Sea to the White House; and

Whereas, at every BSEG Summit since its founding, BSEG has passed a resolution affirming its support for the long-term protection of the Bering Sea; and

Whereas, BSEG's partners AVCP and Kawerak have also passed multiple identical or substantively similar resolutions calling for stronger and more lasting protections for the Bering Sea, as have dozens of Tribes and other Alaska Native organizations; and

Whereas, on December 9, 2016, President Obama issued Executive Order 13754 creating the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area (NBSCRA), and its provisions were substantially similar to those BSEG requested in our Resolutions; and

Whereas, in January 2017, members of BSEG went to Washington, D.C. to urge Alaska's Congressional Delegation to protect the NBSCRA Executive Order and not allow it to be changed or revoked; and

Whereas, on April 28, 2017, with no notice to or consultation with Tribes, BSEG, or BSEG's partners, President Trump revoked the NBSCRA Executive Order; and

Whereas, BSEG, AVCP, and Kawerak sent multiple joint letters to Alaska's Congressional Delegation asking the Delegation to work together to reinstate the provisions of the NBSCRA Executive Order in legislation; and

Whereas, on his first day in office, January 20, 2021, President Biden reinstated the NBSCRA Executive Order; and

Whereas, since the reinstatement of the NBSCRA Executive Order, BSEG has worked with partners AVCP, Kawerak, and the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island to form the NBSCRA Coalition and implement the NBSCRA Executive Order, including by lifting up the Bering Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council (BITAC) and working with federal partners to co-produce a new co-management structure for the Northern Bering Sea; and

Whereas, the efforts over the past two years to enforce the NBSCRA Executive Order and protect the NBSCRA have taken a tremendous amount of resources from BSEG and its partners; and

Whereas, over the last two years, the Biden Administration has also expended a large amount of resources forming the federal Bering Task Force and working with the NBSCRA Coalition and the BITAC to co-produce a new co-management structure for the Northern Bering Sea.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group expresses its gratitude to President Biden for his actions to restore the NBSCRA Executive Order; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group commends its federal partners for their efforts thus far to implement the NBSCRA Executive Order; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group calls for increased and consistent funding to the Bering Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council and its supporting NBSCRA Coalition so that the NBSCRA Executive Order can be fully implemented; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group requests that the federal government and Alaska's Congressional Delegation explore all possible options for making permanent the NBSCRA Executive Order in its entirety and/or the protections for the Northern Bering Sea and the management structures contained therein.

ADOPTED by the tribally designated Elder Representatives of the Bering Sea Elders Group, and signed on behalf of those Tribes during its Annual Summit held in Anchorage, Alaska on this 4th day of May, 2023.