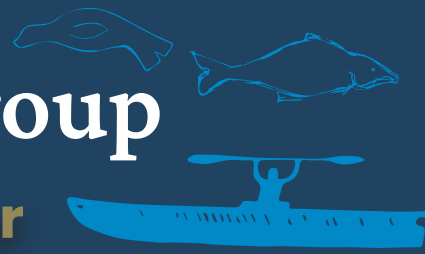


# Bering Sea Elders Group

## Fall/Winter 2024 Newsletter



### BSEG WRAPS UP 2024 SUMMIT



The Bering Sea Elders Group (BSEG) held its Summit on October 1-2, 2024, in Anchorage, Alaska.

During the Summit, Elder Representatives exchanged knowledge and received programmatic updates about BSEG and the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area (NBSCRA) work. Participants also celebrated BSEG's recent accomplishment of becoming a standalone nonprofit.

"The Summit is a powerful gathering of Elder Representatives from the Kuskokwim Bay to the Bering Strait," said BSEG Executive Director Jaylene Wheeler. "Our organization's mission is to speak and work together 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."

At the Summit, Elder Representatives successfully passed two resolutions. These included (see page 2):

- 2024-01. Title: A Resolution Uplifting Our Traditional Ways of Life, Committing to Sharing Those Ways of Life with Our Youth, and Recognizing that Indigenous Voices and Ways Must Be Centered in the Stewardship of Our Lands, Waters, and Resources; and
- 2024-02. TITLE: A Resolution to Address Waste of Our Resources, Increase Accountability, and Fully Honor the Promises that the United States Made to Alaska Native People.

This year, elections were also held to fill four Executive Committee vacancies. New members include:

- Lucy Apatiki (Native Village of Gambell)

- Mary Ann Mike (Village of Kotlik)
- Ferdinand Carter (Native Village of Eek)
- Charles Moses (Nunakauyak Traditional Council)

Jerry Ivanoff, Chair (Native Village of Unalakleet), John Waghiyi, Jr., Vice-Chair (Native Village of Savoonga), Axel Jackson, Member (Native Village of Shaktoolik) and John Twitchell, Sr., Member (Native Village of Kasigluk) continue to serve in their respective roles. William Igkurak (Native Village of Kwigillingok) was elected as Treasurer and Mary Ann Mike as Secretary.

The date for the next Summit has not yet been determined.



### ABOUT BSEG FROM CHAIRMAN IVANOFF



**BSEG Chairman  
Jerry Ivanoff,  
Unalakleet**

The Bering Sea Elders Group (BSEG) was formed over fifteen years ago by Bering Sea area Tribes as a result of their mutual desire to address food security and protect the health of our traditional waters. Today, BSEG has 38 member Tribes that span across the Yukon-Kuskokwim and Bering Strait regions.

Since 2008, BSEG has addressed a variety of issues that impact our regions. These include food security, fisheries, traditional knowledge, climate change, and co-management. A significant portion of our work has been done in partnership with key partners that include the Association of Village Council Presidents, Kawerak, Inc., and other Tribes and Tribal

organizations. BSEG values these relationships and believes that we are all stronger when we work together. BSEG's mission is to speak and work together as one voice to protect and respect the traditional ways of life of the Cup'ik, Yup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, and Inupiaq people who rely on the Bering Sea's web of life. As a result, we are committed to continue working with our coalition partners in a productive and beneficial manner to protect our ocean to ensure the survival of our traditions and the future of our children.

If you would like more information about BSEG or any of the topics discussed in this newsletter, please visit BSEG's website.

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# 2024 SUMMIT PASSES TWO NEW RESOLUTIONS

2024-01, is “A Resolution Uplifting Our Traditional Ways of Life, Committing to Sharing Those Ways of Life with Our Youth, and Recognizing that Indigenous Voices and Ways Must Be Centered in the Stewardship of Our Lands, Waters, and Resources.” This resolution reaffirms

BSEG’s commitment to sharing our traditional ways of life with our young people, despite the increasing challenges facing both Elders and youth and is committed to supporting communities in building their strength and resilience as guided by Elder teachings. This resolution calls for approaches to management that are guided by traditional teachings and recognize that our subsistence is our survival.

2024-02, “A Resolution to Address Waste of Our Resources, Increase Accountability, and Fully Honor the Promises that the United States Made to Alaska Native People.”

This resolution recognizes that the Bering Sea ecosystem



Photo used courtesy of David Akeya (Savoonga).

crash requires an intergovernmental approach that must include new, meaningful limits on bycatch, reconsidering the definitions of trawling, and protecting areas that are currently closed to bottom trawling from trawl-related bottom contact,

including in research. It

acknowledges that the burden of conservation efforts should fall first on the shoulders of the people and industries who have brought about this imbalance.

Through the resolution, BSEG calls for new legal frameworks that bring cohesion and alignment to in-river and at-sea fisheries management, prioritize Tribal leadership, affirm and forever protect Alaska Native hunting, fishing, and gathering rights, recognize the subsistence priority across all agencies and management bodies, and fully honor the promises that the United States made to Alaska Native people, our right to self-determination, and our right to steward our waters.

## NPFMC TO HOLD SPECIAL MEETING TO ADDRESS CHUM BYCATCH

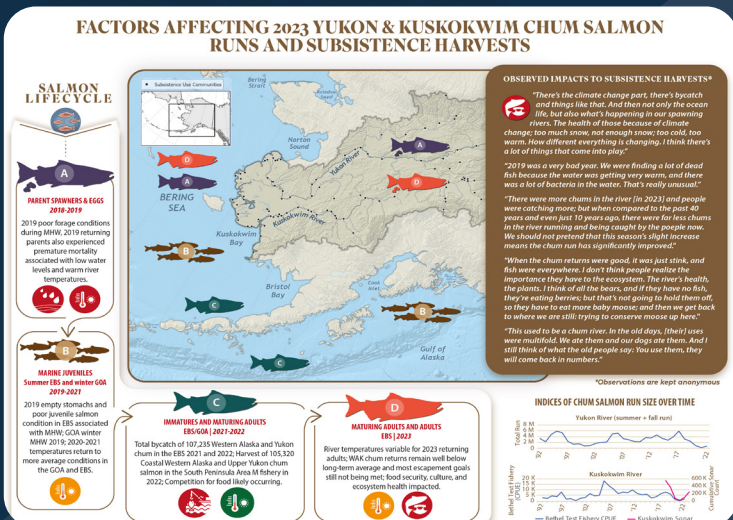
Chum salmon bycatch continues to occur unchecked without an established hard cap or limit in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. Meanwhile, chum salmon runs are depressed throughout western Alaska, with many regions not meeting escapement goals and communities facing restricted subsistence.

In response to significant pressure from Tribes across Alaska, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) will hold a special meeting on February 3-10, 2025, at the Egan Center in Anchorage, Alaska. At the meeting, NPFMC will consider new management measures to reduce western Alaska chum salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery.

At this stage in the process, the Council will review a second Initial Review draft and consider selecting a preliminary preferred management alternative (PPA) for further analysis.

The measures considered as part of chum action at the Council in February will include an overall cap on the number of chum salmon that could be incidentally taken by the fishery, as well as closures of times and areas when western Alaska chum salmon are more likely to be encountered on the pollock fishing grounds.

Opportunities for public and written testimony will occur prior to and during the February 2025 Council meeting.



Graphic used courtesy of NOAA Fisheries from its Ecosystem Status Report 2023 Eastern Bering Sea.





# YOUR INPUT MATTERS: GET INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

One of the ways to make a difference on fishing issues is by engaging with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

## 1. BE PREPARED



- **VISIT** the NPFMC website to view the issues that you wish to engage on. The calendar on the main page offers a look ahead on upcoming meetings.
- **LEARN** about your issue by reviewing relevant documents, speaking with staff or Council members, and asking questions.
- **TALK** to other stakeholders such as managers, council, or advisory board members.
- **SIGN-UP** for the Council newsletter to stay-up-to date on your issue.

## 2. SHOW UP



- **ATTEND** a Council meeting in person or online.
- **LISTEN** to earlier discussions on your issue including staff reports, public testimony, and Council meetings.

## 3. PARTICIPATE



- **PROVIDE WRITTEN COMMENTS** to the Council Chair or Director through the e-portal on the council website or via mail. Be sure to clearly state your interest in the issue, your opinion, and the steps you'd recommend the Council take.
- **TESTIFY** at the meeting. Be sure to plan your testimony ahead of time to give a clear and informed opinion.
- **SERVE** on committees or advisory boards. Vacancies are announced in the Council newsletter.
- **FOLLOW-UP** on your issue to find out what action the Council took.

For more information, go to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council website at <https://npfmc.org>

Photo used courtesy of Frances Ozenna (Diomedes).



## NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN FOR YOUNG PROVIDER & CULTURE BEARER AWARDS



Photo by Donna Pushruk (Teller). Used courtesy of Bering Straits Native Corporation.

BSEG is pleased to announce that nominations are now open for our Young Provider and Young Culture Bearer Awards. These awards recognize two young people who serve as positive examples and contribute to the health and well-being of their community.

To be considered for an award, a young person must perpetuate his/her Alaska Native culture in one or more of the following ways:

- Engaging in activities that are grounded in

Indigenous Knowledge and responsible stewardship of traditional lands and waters.

- Caring for Elders, family and young people through participation in subsistence activities.
- Being involved in activities that benefit and promote community health and well-being.

Each recipient will receive an award of \$250. The deadline for nominations is Monday, November 18, 2024. Nominations can be made by a family member, community member, Tribal and corporation board member, school teacher or administrator.

Nominees must be affiliated with a BSEG Member Tribe or reside in a Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area community.

If you'd like to nominate a young person up to age 25, prepare a short statement about him/ her (one page or less) and submit it to BSEG's Executive Director Jaylene Wheeler via email at [director@beringseaelthers.org](mailto:director@beringseaelthers.org) or via **fax (907) 276-2466**.

For questions, call **(907) 891-1229**.

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