



Tungwenuk Family Qupak Design, used with permission

**KAWERAK, INC.**

**KAWERAK RESOLUTION 2023-09**

*REPRESENTING*

**Brevig Mission**

*Sitaisaq*

**Council**

*Akauchak*

**Diomedede**

*Inqaliq*

**Elim**

*Neviarcuarluq*

**Gambell**

*Sivuqaq*

**Golovin**

*Chinik*

**King Island**

*Ugiuvak*

**Koyuk**

*Kuuyuk*

**Mary's Igloo**

*Iglaaruk*

**Nome Eskimo**

*Sitnasuami Inuit*

**Savoonga**

*Sivungaq*

**Shaktoolik**

*Saktuliq*

**Shishmaref**

*Kigiqtaq*

**Solomon**

*Anqutaq*

**St. Michael**

*Taciq*

**Stebbins**

*Tapraq*

**Teller**

*Tupqaqruk*

**Unalakleet**

*Uqalaqfiq*

**Wales**

*Kinjigin*

**White Mountain**

*Natchigvik*

**A RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO THE NOAA ALASKA FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER BOTTOM TRAWL RESEARCH PROJECT "NETS"**

**WHEREAS**, Kawerak, Inc. is a tribally authorized non-profit consortium whose mission is to assist, promote and provide programs and services to improve the social, economic, educational, and cultural well-being of Bering Strait region people; AND

**WHEREAS**, the tribes within the Kawerak region include: Brevig Mission, Council, Diomedede, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, King Island, Koyuk, Mary's Igloo, Nome, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, Solomon, Stebbins, St. Michael, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales and White Mountain; AND

**WHEREAS**, Tribes recognize research activities as actions requiring prior consultation and coordination with federally recognized tribes that may be impacted by such research or its results; AND

**WHEREAS**, To date, there has been no tribal consultation on any proposed bottom trawl research with the Northern Bering Sea Research Area and boundaries of the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area, AND

**WHEREAS**, Tribes and Tribal organizations have not been collaborated with since the early stages of this project (including with regard to the decision whether or not to do the research, which is not co-productive); AND

**WHEREAS**, decades of research and hundreds of academic publications have irrefutably illustrated that bottom trawl fisheries are destructive to benthic habitat and species; AND

**WHEREAS**, marine animals that Kawerak region residents depend on as subsistence resources, and that are food for animals used for subsistence, are highly dependent on a healthy and undisturbed benthic habitat; AND

**WHEREAS**, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) has proposed to do bottom trawl research within the Northern Bering Sea Research Area and boundaries of the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area. This research involves using commercial bottom trawl gear on undisturbed tracts of sea floor to determine the effects of trawling on the benthos and benthic species; AND

**WHEREAS**, the nature of the controlled study means that the study area will be off limits to subsistence hunting, fishing and other activities within its boundary for multiple years; AND

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Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.

**WHEREAS**, the Kawerak Board does not support expansion of commercial bottom trawl fisheries into the northern Bering Sea and believes this research will likely facilitate that expansion; AND

**WHEREAS**, the Kawerak Board is also concerned about the damaging effects of this proposed research trawl activity itself (in addition to commercial bottom trawling); AND

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Kawerak Board is opposed to bottom trawl research in the northern Bering Sea, supports a precautionary approach to protecting the northern Bering Sea – particularly in this time of rapid ecosystem change – and desires that the northern Bering Sea be designated permanently off limits for vessels using bottom trawl gear and other gear that is known to frequently hit the sea floor (such as ‘pelagic’ trawl gear); AND

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Kawerak Board requests that NOAA AFSC cancel their proposed “NETS” research project (Northern Bering Sea Effects of Trawling Study) in the northern Bering Sea. The Board also encourages NOAA, including AFSC, to rapidly make significant steps forward with regard to tribal consultation, engagement, and outreach, as well as co-production of knowledge.

**CERTIFICATION**

We, the undersigned 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair and Secretary of the Kawerak, Inc. Board of Directors, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by majority vote of the Board during a duly called meeting on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

By:   
Kawerak 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair

  
Kawerak Board Secretary

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