

**NATIVE VILLAGE OF WHITE MOUNTAIN
RESOLUTION NO. 2024-02**

**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION OF BOTTOM-TRAWLING IN THE
NORTHERN BERING SEA, INCLUDING THE NOAA AFSC ‘NETS’ RESEARCH
PROJECT**

WHEREAS, the Native Village of White Mountain is a federally recognized sovereign Tribe with the power to take actions that further the best interests of Tribal members; and

WHEREAS, our Tribal Government is determined to lead efforts to ensure and strengthen sovereignty, ensure a healthy ecosystem that supports food security, economic self-sufficiency, continued cultural practices, Tribal self-determination, self-governance, and the overall health, safety, well-being, and welfare of Tribal Members; and

WHEREAS, the Native Village of White Mountain has an expressed interest in the Bering Sea, its ecosystem, and the land, animals, and Peoples that are in relationship with the Bering Sea; it is our garden, where our People have hunted, fished, gathered, and lived with secure food sources for millennia; and

WHEREAS, the United States government recognized the importance of the northern Bering Sea with Executive Order 13754, creating the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area (NBSCRA) in 2026, affirmed in 2021, providing that, “[i]t shall be the policy of the United States to enhance the resilience of the northern Bering Sea region by conserving the region’s ecosystem, including those natural resources that provide important cultural and subsistence value and services to the people of the region; and

WHEREAS, the United States government via EO 13754 recognizes that we, the Native Village of White Mountain “possess a unique and understanding of the Arctic ecosystem, and (our) traditional knowledge should serve as an important resource to inform Federal decision making,” and also directs all federal agencies “conducting activities in the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area shall do so with attention to the rights, needs, and knowledge of Alaska Native tribes”; and

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) has proposed to use commercial non-pelagic bottom trawl gear within the boundaries of the NBSCRA on undisturbed tracts of the sea floor to measure the effects of commercial non-pelagic bottom trawl gear on benthic and epibenthic species for their Northern Bering Sea Effects of Trawling Study (NETS); and

WHEREAS, agencies have responsibility to consider Tribes' interests, and proactively offer information, engagement, outreach, Consultation, and coordination on all matters that are relevant to Tribes' interests, including research activities; and

WHEREAS, NOAA AFSC has failed to engage in any outreach to, or Consultation with, our Tribal Government in relation to the NETS project or any other proposed bottom trawl efforts imagined for Northern Bering Sea; and

WHEREAS, decades of research and hundreds of academic publications have illustrated that trawl fisheries are destructive to benthic habitat and species, on which we rely as a matter of food security and cultural wellness; and

WHEREAS, no one has requested any bottom trawl research or that may commercial non-pelagic trawl gear be used for any purpose in the Northern Bering Sea; and

WHEREAS, we do not support the expansion of commercial bottom trawl fisheries into the Northern Bering Sea, which is the implicit purpose of proposed research by NOAA AFSC in using commercial non-pelagic gear in this protected and sensitive area; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Native Village of White Mountain requests that NOAA AFSC halt all activities related to the NETS project, and any other bottom trawl and/or commercial non-pelagic trawl gear research within the Northern Bering Sea.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Native Village of White Mountain opposes any use of bottom trawl and/or commercial non-pelagic trawl gear for any purpose, including research, in the Northern Bering Sea.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Native Village of White Mountain opposes agency activities that would disrupt our food security by harming the ecosystem, sea floor, benthic habitat, and species in the Northern Bering Sea, and activities that would restrict, limit, or disrupt our access to successful subsistence practices.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Native Village of White Mountain requests that NOAA AFSC uphold their responsibilities to engage in proactive engagement and Tribal Consultation for any and all activities that are potentially of interest to our Tribal Members, in respect of our rights as a federally recognized tribe, the principles of responsible public stewardship entrusted to all federal agencies, and in recognition of the importance of the Bering Sea to Alaska Native Tribes ahead of any further action in the area.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by a majority vote of members of the Native Village of White Mountain at a duly convened meeting of the Council in which a quorum was present by a vote of 7 for, 0 against, and 0 abstaining, this 26th day of February, 2024.



President



Secretary