



**ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS
P.O. BOX 219
BETHEL, ALASKA 99559**

**ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

EXECUTIVE BOARD
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA DECEMBER 2023

RESOLUTION 23-12-02

TITLE: A Resolution in Opposition to the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center Bottom Trawl Research Project “Nets”

- WHEREAS The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) is the recognized tribal organization and non-profit Alaska Native regional corporation for its fifty-six member indigenous Native villages within Western Alaska and supports the endeavors of its member villages; and
- WHEREAS AVCP fully supports its member villages in all aspects of their self-determination, health, and well-being; 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 AVCP 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

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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

WHEREAS The AVCP Executive 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

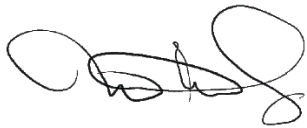
WHEREAS The AVCP Executive Board is also concerned about the damaging effects of this proposed research trawl activity itself (in addition to commercial bottom trawling).

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Executive Board of the Association of Village Council Presidents 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).

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Executive 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.

ADOPTED by the Association of Village Council Presidents Executive Board during an Executive Board Meeting held at Anchorage, Alaska, this 7th day of December 2023 with a duly constituted quorum.

CERTIFICATION



Thaddeus Tikiun, Jr., Chairman



Vivian Korthuis, Chief Executive Officer