



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

Resolution 2024-18

WHEREAS, Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) is the federally recognized consortia authorized to contract and compact for health and health related services by the 20 federally recognized tribes in the Bering Strait region; AND

WHEREAS, the Norton Sound Health Corporation recognizes 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, the GOCADAN (Genetics of Coronary Artery Disease in Alaska Natives) STUDY conducted for a period of two decades in the Bering Strait Region found that traditional foods, including marine mammals, is the healthiest diet in the world.

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 habit and species; AND

WHEREAS, marine animals that the Bering Strait region residents depend on as 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

WHEREAS, the NSHC 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 NSHC 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 NSHC 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 a pelagic” trawl gear); AND

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Norton Sound Health Corporation Board of Directors 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 in support of its twenty Tribes: Native Village of Brevig Mission, Native Village of Council, Native Village of Diomedea, Native Village of Elim, Native Village of Gambell, Chinik Eskimo Community, King Island Native Community, Native Village of Koyuk, Mary’s Igloo, Nome Eskimo Community, Native Village of St. Michael, Native Village of Savoonga, Native Village of Shaktoolik, Native Village of Shishmaref, Village of Solomon, Stebbins Community, Native Village of Teller, Native Village of Unalakleet, Native Village of Wales, and Native Village of White Mountain.

Passed this 31st day of January, 2024 by unanimous consent, at the duly convened meeting of the Norton Sound Health Corporation Board of Directors.

By: *Anomay P. Hanger*
Signature

NSHC Board Chair

Attest: *Brida Wilson*
Signature

NSHC Board Secretary