

Norton Bay Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

P.O. Box 15332

Homer, AK 99603

Phone: (907)371-0085

chadcooknbwc@gmail.com

RESOLUTION 24-01

TITLE: Resolution in opposition to the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center Bottom Trawl Research Project “NETS”

Whereas, The Norton Bay Watershed Council (NBWC) is a non-profit tribal organization having tribal council representatives and members from the Native Villages Of Elim, Shaktoolik, Golovin, Unalakleet, Brevig Mission, Mary’s Igloo, Teller, St. Michael And White Mountain on its Board of Directors; and

Whereas, NBWC fully supports its member villages in all aspects of their self-determination, health, and well-being; and

Whereas, Many Norton Sound region fish dry racks have been largely empty for the past several years due to poor salmon returns likely due to the impacts of climate change which is impacting Alaska at 4 times the rate elsewhere in the globe; and

Whereas, NBWC believes that research activities are 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 or outreach 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, 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), no tribes or tribal organizations have been consulted with; 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 Norton Sound 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

Whereas, the NBWC 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 NBWC 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 Norton Bay Watershed Council 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 before moving forward again with the NETS or similar project.

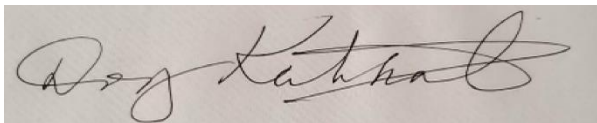
ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was by e-mail poll vote of the NBWC Board Alaska, this 29th day

of February, 2024 with a duly constituted quorum and the vote for the Resolution: 5;
opposing: 0; and votes for abstention: 0.

President

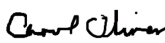


Doug Katchatag

Attest:

Secretary: _____

Carol Oliver

DocuSigned by:

29B6D73308A14A9...