



February 25, 2023

Alaska Board of Fisheries,

Aleut international Association (AIA) submits this written testimony in support of the initiatives brought to your attention by the Eastern Aleutian communities of: King Cove, Sand Point, Cold Bay, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon and Akutan at this week's Board of Fish meetings.

Aleut International Association was formed in 1998 to address the environmental and cultural concerns of the extended Aleut family whose well-being has been connected to the rich resources of the Bering Sea for millennia. Our mission is to promote the continuity of Aleut culture while protecting the resources needed to sustain it.

The rich resources of the Bering Sea and North Pacific Ocean have sustained our Unangan communities and people for millennia. Unangan, means "People of the Sea". We have always been fishermen, navigators and ocean stewards. Our continued access to subsistence and commercial fishing resources are key to ensure the survival of our communities. This access is also imperative to the continuation of our cultural practices. AIA and the larger Unangan communities have been actively working to preserve and revitalize our language, dance and traditional food practices including, processing and preserving fish, birds and marine mammals as we have since time immemorial. Net sewing is another traditional practice that we still teach our youth, and has been a cultural practice forever, in many of our archaeological and old village sites finding net sinkers is common.

Along with these cultural activities, AIA works to contribute to research that assists to understanding the rapidly changing climate, including marine heat wave events. We work directly with Aleut Tribal communities on local monitoring programs that document changes to our subsistence patterns while simultaneously working to keep our lands clean and contaminant free. AIA collaborates with governments, scientists, local and regional communities, and other Aleut entities to develop research, products and policies to improve the well-being of the Aleut people and the environment on which they depend. Like most, we strive to understand the best available science behind the changes we are seeing in our environment today.

As illustrated above, fishing has always been a cornerstone of our culture and Aleut people and especially our youth are immersed in our subsistence and commercial ways of living. Subsistence fishing and commercial fishing happen simultaneously and harmoniously as they always have. This is one example of the adaptive strategies that our people have taken to ensure resilient and thriving communities well into the future.

**THE ALEUT INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**Permanent Participant of the Arctic Council**

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AIA recognizes the importance of healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries for the food security and economic needs of everyone. We hope that your numerous years of sustainable fisheries management practices continue to be fair and equitable and are based on the best available science.

Respectfully,

Amy Foster,  
AIA Board Member

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