

Bering Sea Elders Advisory Group

Yukon/Kuskokwim Summit Bethel * November 16-18, 2009

Summary Report

The meeting was mostly conducted in Yupik. Fred Phillip generously provided simultaneous interpretation to non-Yupik speakers by summarizing the presentations, comments and discussion. This report is not a detailed record of everything said but a summary of the main points and formal action taken by the Elders.

The summit was attended by Elders from 23 tribes participating in the Bering Sea Elders Advisory Group:

Elders Group Board of Directors (designated Elders or alternates from participating tribes):

David Bill Sr. – Toksook Bay (Chairman)
David O. David – Kwigillingok (Executive Committee)
David Carl – Kipnuk (Executive Committee)
Frank Fox – Quinhagak (Executive Committee)
John Phillip Sr. – Kongiganak (Executive Committee)
Dick Lincoln – Tununak Traditional Council (Executive Committee)
Peter Moore – Emmonak
Joseph David – Mekoryuk
Ben Phillip – Alakanuk
Nick Pavilla Sr. – Atmautluak
Tommy Kusaiaik – Chefornak
William F. Brown – Eek
Willie Ayojiak – Goodnews Bay
Moses F. Carl – Newtok
Andrew George – Umkumiute
Jimmy Stevens – Nunapitchuk
Peter Joseph Sr. – Tuntutuliak
John Walter – Tununak IRA
Gabriel Guest – Kasigluk
Theresa George – Nightmute
Henry Williams – Platinum
Cecelia Andrews – Chevak (cancelled)
Martha Owletuk – Nunam Iqua (cancelled)

Honored Guests:

Paul John – Toksook Bay
Peter Jacob – Bethel

Tribal offices or other tribal members:

Henry Kanuk, Tuntatuliak tribal office
Stanley Tom, Newtok tribal office
Ted Hamilton, Emmonak tribal office
Abraham David, Mekoryuk (pilot; hunter)
Eric Phillip, Kongiganak (former crew on trawlers)

Elders Group Staff:

Art Lake, Executive Director
Fred Phillip, Coordinator

Support:

Muriel Morse, Dorothy Childers, Julia Beaty - Alaska Marine Conservation Council

Presenters: See Day 1 below.

Visitors:

Mary Nelson, Donlin Creek, LLC
Nancy Lord, author

The invocation prayer was offered by Peter John.

Day 1 –

The Elders received several presentations as background to the primary focus of the Elders Group – the northern bottom trawl boundary and potential future bottom trawling in the northern Bering Sea:

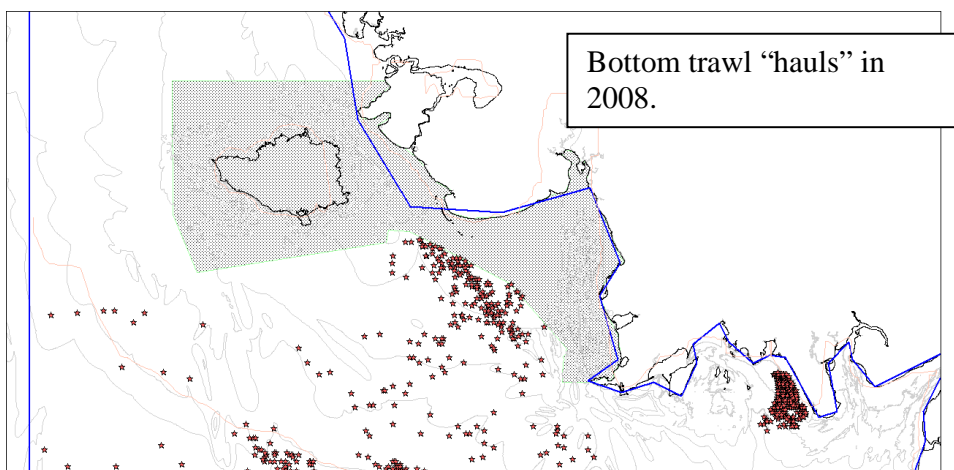
- Background and update on federal fishery management process related to the northern Bering Sea – Dorothy Childers (Alaska Marine Conservation Council)
- Marine research related to climate change and the Bering Sea ecosystem –
 - Tom van Pelt (North Pacific Research Board)
 - Henry Huntington (Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program - BSIERP) with comments by Ted Hamilton (Emmonak is one of the villages participating in the BSIERP)

Tom and Henry briefed the Elders Group on the large ecosystem research program going on in the Bering Sea sponsored by North Pacific Research Board and National Science Foundation. Tom explained that the scientists are studying how the ecosystem is changing, specifically looking at pollock, walrus, fur seals, seabirds and life on the seafloor. Henry is leading the part of the study looking at

subsistence patterns in 5 communities (Akutan, St. Paul, Togiak, Emmonak and Savoonga).

There were questions about how the communities were selected, bottom trawl effects, why they are not looking at salmon and whether or not tribes consulted in putting the research program together. Henry concluded his remarks by saying, *"It's very important to remember how abundant things used to be. If we look all around the world we see places where we say, "Oh, look. Isn't it nice, we have 100 fish?" There used to be 100 million, and we forget how productive the ocean can be. So remembering what it was like when you were young walking on the beach in Scammon Bay is very important so we remember what the Bering Sea is capable of. Because if we forget that we might be happy with something that is a small fraction of what it used to be. It's very important to remember what the ocean can be, to remember what a healthy ocean really means. So I thank you for that. That too is one of the things that the elders can contribute that no one else can."*

- Bottom trawl fisheries in the Bering Sea – Jason Anderson & Dorothy Lowman (Best Use Cooperative, the industry association of bottom trawl vessels). They provided information about 1) the fleet of 22 factory trawlers that target yellowfin sole and other flatfish species in the Bering Sea, and 2) ways they are addressing bycatch. They discussed the agreement made with AVCP in 2007 to reconsider the boundary from Nunivak Is. to Kuskokwim Bay in 2011 and expressed a commitment to working with the Elders to seek common ground.





Bottom trawl catcher-processors (the 'head and gut' fleet). There are 22 vessels.

Many concerns about bottom trawling were raised such as bycatch, waste, and disturbance to habitat. A few comments from Elders:

"We are talking about this for the next generations. They will have resources later if we do something today."

"Moose need undisturbed area to come back to. It's the same in the ocean – we need to not disturb the bottom where they eat."

"My mother told me not to bring anything home from the ocean that you're not going to eat."

There was a request for there to be tribal observers on bottom trawl vessels.

Day 2 –

On Day 2, the Elders Group reviewed draft maps provided by Alaska Marine Conservation Council. The maps were generated from interviews with Elders and active hunters in Y/K region villages on behalf of the Elders Group. The Elders divided into three groups and each reviewed maps showing subsistence use of walrus, seals, whales and fish. They also reviewed a map showing important areas for spectacled eiders because the birds winter offshore in the northern Bering Sea. (The maps do not denote hunting areas because spectacled eiders are currently not open to hunting.)

Elders made corrections or improvements to the maps based on their life experience. Any changes recommended were drawn on mylar overlays. A map facilitator from AMCC was present with each group to record the changes they recommended and to take notes.

Each group also reviewed "science" maps for each species. These maps were drawn from information provided in a NOAA Atlas for the Bering Sea. Groups were asked to comment on any concerns or ideas regarding ocean areas beyond those used for subsistence. There was broad agreement that migration pathways, feeding areas and other habitats for the animals and their food should be protected – "We need them to be healthy everywhere that they go." Alaska Marine Conservation Council will work on a good way to display the important areas for the animals beyond where subsistence hunting and fishing occurs.

Day 3 –

On Day 3, the Elders completed the map review. AMCC explained that the revised maps will be returned to the tribes where interviews were done for their final review.

Then Mary Nelson and her co-workers from Donlin Creek, LLC made a presentation about the proposed mine and how they company is working to minimize impacts to subsistence resources and water quality.

Nancy Lord reported that she is writing a book about climate change in Alaska and would like to include a chapter about the Elders Group's effort to address the northward movement of industrial scale fisheries. The Elders said they hope the book can help to share their concerns.

Formal actions taken by the Elders Group:

- Approved making a request to Cenaliulriit Coastal Resources Service Area to allow us to incorporate their subsistence map data into this project.
- In the afternoon, the Elders Group was visited by Myron Naneng (AVCP president), Tim Andrew (AVCP Natural Resource Department) and John Oscar (AVCP grant writer and former Cenaliulriit coordinator). They discussed AVCP and AFN resolutions supporting the establishment of a no-trawling buffer zone along the Yukon/Kuskokwim coastline and 2) amending the Magnuson-Stevens Act to require tribal representative on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Elders Group voted to support both of those resolutions.
- The Elders Group asked Peter Jacob to feel free talking on KYUK about the Elders Group and concerns about bottom trawling.

Final comments

- Elders gave final comments in Yupik. Theresa George told a story described by the interpreter as the creation story (and earlier Paul John told a famine story). The outcome from the stories was a message of taking care of what we are given and our catch; the importance of sharing

because everything that is brought to us is for all of us; how we treat our catch and how we treat each other comes back to us.

- The chairman talked about the importance of working together – all the tribes together. He talked about the traditional way of Elders passing knowledge on to the next generation; sharing knowledge is *for* the next generation. He said we need to work together as one mind, rather than each of us working for ourselves.

Acknowledgements:

- The Elders Group appreciated support for the summit provided by grants from Alaska Conservation Foundation, Donlin Creek, LLC, and Honor the Earth Fund.
- The chairman, Elders and visitors appreciated the simultaneous interpretation provided by Fred Phillip.
- AMCC was acknowledged for support on the mapping project as well as helping with the logistics for this meeting.
- YKHC and AVCP were thanked for providing meeting space for the Elders.

The meeting adjourned after lunch.

Closing Prayer.

Attachments:

Agenda

BERING SEA ELDERS ADVISORY GROUP

Yukon/Kuskokwim Region Summit
November 16-18, 2009
Bethel

AGENDA

Monday, November 16

- Invocation
- Welcome by David Bill, Sr., Chair
- Approve agenda
- Review of northern bottom trawl boundary & upcoming fishery management decisions
- Guest presentations:
 - Jason Anderson – Best Use Cooperative (fishing industry)
 - Tom Van Pelt – North Pacific Research Board (scientist)
 - Henry Huntington – Bering Sea Ecosystem Research Program (invited)
 - Nancy Lord – writer

Tuesday, November 17

- Presentation & discussion of subsistence maps
- Discussion of fishery management process & next steps

Wednesday, November 18

- New issues
 - request from AVCP and others to support new tribal seats on North Pacific Fishery Management Council
- Business meeting
- Closing prayer
- Adjourn