

# BERING SEA ELDERS GROUP

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## **Resolution Expressing Our Mission**

**November 3, 2011**

**WHEREAS**, our tribes along the coast have depended on the abundant resources of the Bering Sea, the land and air from time immemorial, and our spirit and ways of life are inseparable from them; and

**WHEREAS**, the knowledge of the Elders about how to live with the ocean and the land was given to us by our ancestors with instructions not to keep it for ourselves, but to pass it on to our children so that they may continue to prosper and continue our way of being; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bering Sea is a whole ecosystem, in which each part is connected to all other parts in an inter-dependent web of life; and

**WHEREAS**, the resources we rely on were given to us by the Creator, and we have a responsibility to care for those resources and to pass on this inheritance to our children and grandchildren; and

**WHEREAS**, the Elders are messengers about our traditional values and how to live on the land and ocean; and

**WHEREAS**, we are stronger by working together as one voice and one mind.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** the mission of the Bering Sea Elders Group is to bring together elders as one voice to protect our traditional ways of life and the ocean web of life that supports the resources we rely on, and our children's future.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Bering Sea Elders Group will serve as a messenger to our children, our tribal councils and the people who make decisions that affect our marine resources, ecosystem and ways of life.

The Bering Sea Elders Group seeks to work together with:

- Youth – to support our children in retaining our Native languages, hands-on learning about plants and animals, and learning about how to protect their rich cultural and natural inheritance; and
- Our tribes – to support their strong and full engagement in the management of our marine resources and ecosystem; and
- Our Native organizations, corporations and CDQ groups – to support their understanding of and engagement in the protection of our marine resources, ecosystem and ways of life; and
- Religious organizations; and
- City and borough governments, state and federal political leaders and agencies, including Alaska's congressional delegation.

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Although issues that we face may evolve, and new issues may arise, the Bering Sea Elders Group aims to focus its support for our tribes in:

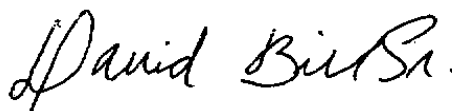
- Protecting our traditional marine hunting and fishing areas, the migration routes of the animals we rely on, and the whole ecosystem from harmful activities. This includes creating habitat conservation zones to address future concerns, and resolving conflict with the bottom trawl industry regarding the Nunivak Island-Kuskokwim Bay boundary; and
- Establishing a Northern Bering Sea reserve to protect the marine and coastal resources and our food security from future large-scale industrial activity thereby preserving the area as an inheritance for future generations; and
- Addressing threats to our salmon culture through protection of marine habitat and spawning grounds, and the reduction in salmon bycatch; and
- Addressing climate change and its effects on the ocean and the resources we rely on.

The Bering Sea Elders Group identifies the following ways, among others, to address these issues:

- Support amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act that are necessary to provide for greater protection for our marine resources and ecosystem, and to ensure a greater role for our tribes in fisheries management – options include creating a Bering Sea Fishery Management Council that represents our values, and establishing 1-2 tribal seats on North Pacific Fishery Management Council; and
- Create a management plan for our traditional marine hunting and fishing area designed to protect the resources and ecosystem and to ensure our access and continued use of the resources that our people depend on; and
- Collaborate with federal and state resource managers to apply traditional knowledge in real decisions; and
- Seek to incorporate the indigenous peoples from the Russian side of the Bering Sea because the Bering Sea is one ecosystem and the people on both sides have the same needs.

The Bering Sea Elders Group is committed to working with our tribes, including regularly sharing information about activities of the Elders Group, and supporting them on issues affecting our traditional marine territory in the Bering Sea, the ecosystem and our children's future.

**Passed November 3, 2011 at the Bering Sea Elders Group Summit – Bethel, Alaska.**



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**David Bill, Sr. – Chair**