



ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS  
P.O. BOX 219  
BETHEL, ALASKA 99559

---

ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS  
EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE BOARD  
BETHEL, ALASKA      OCTOBER 19, 2016

**RESOLUTION 16-10-02**

**TITLE:            Resolution to Sustain Tribal Safety and Food Security in the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait Region and to promote the self-determination of our people in the management of natural resources and habitat in the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait Region.**

**WHEREAS,** The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) is the recognized tribal organization and non-profit Alaska Native regional corporation for its fifty-six member indigenous Native villages within Western Alaska and supports the endeavors of its member villages; and

**WHEREAS,** AVCP fully supports its member villages in all aspects of their self-determination, health and well-being; and

**WHEREAS,** According to Presidential Executive Order, federal agencies are required to provide notice directly to the appropriate leadership of federally recognized tribes at the beginning of agency process affecting tribes, and

**WHEREAS,** AVCP, through our tribal governments, have the right to participate fully in all levels of decision-making in policies which may have tribal implications, and to exercise our government-to-government responsibilities with each other and with other governments, and

**WHEREAS,** The culture and food security of Yupik, Cupik and Inupiaq peoples are grounded in the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait on which we have relied for its rich resources for thousands of years; and

**WHEREAS,** Indigenous knowledge (IK) is a living body of knowledge that is acquired and utilized by indigenous communities and individuals in and through long-term resources use and environmental observation. It is transmitted intergenerationally. IK is a practically applicable body of knowledge, one that integrates personal experience with oral traditions. It provides perspectives applicable to an array of human and non-human phenomena. It is deeply rooted in history, time, and place, but is adaptable and dynamic in ways that keep it relevant and useful in contemporary life. This knowledge is part of, and used in, everyday life, and is inextricably intertwined with peoples' identity and cosmology. Tradition – and IK – does not preclude change, nor does it equal 'the past.' In fact, it inherently entails change (e.g. in adaptation

EXECUTIVE BOARD RESOLUTION 16-10-02

processes). The definition establishes full respect for the authority of the indigenous peoples of the region and will guide federal agencies in its decision making,

**WHEREAS,** We rely on a diversity of marine mammals, fish, birds and other resources from the ocean to sustain our way of life and food security, and

**WHEREAS,** Every fall and spring, with the annual formation and retreat of sea ice, large migrations of marine mammals and seabirds move through our waters, making valuable resources available to us, and

**WHEREAS,** Large areas of the ocean are used for hunting because of the movement of sea ice and the variable location of good hunting conditions, and

**WHEREAS,** Local fisheries for halibut, salmon, herring and crab provide important food that is shared and preserved for winter as well as commercial fishing opportunities for the cash economy, and

**WHEREAS,** The Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region is a sensitive marine ecosystem subject to significant effects of climate change, and

**WHEREAS,** Rapid depletion of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean and climate change are causing the Bering Sea and Bering Strait to be more vulnerable to expanded shipping. Increased ship traffic presents potential risks such as noise pollution, boating accidents, contaminated discharges, oil spills and potential conflicts and safety hazards within hunting and fishing areas, and

**WHEREAS,** Climate warming and associated ecosystem changes may affect commercially valuable fish species and fisheries in uncertain ways that are of concern to Tribes in the region.

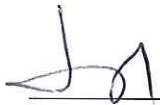
**NOW THEREFORE THE ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS resolves that:**

- (1) The President should take executive action to ensure the natural resources of the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region are protected so subsistence uses by the tribal communities of the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region can be sustained into the future, and
- (2) The President should designate an area in which the tribal governments of the Northern Bering Sea and Bering Strait region have formal roles, beyond consultation, in federal agency decision-making regarding resource development that may harm tribal abilities to continue hunting and fishing or harm their food security
- (3) In this area:
  - a. No discharge from vessels should be permitted including: sewage, oil, ballast water, garbage and noxious chemicals or anything else that would harm the ecosystem, wildlife or fisheries;



EXECUTIVE BOARD RESOLUTION 16-10-02

- b. Bottom trawling should be prohibited, and other new fisheries, other than small local fisheries, would only be allowed pursuant to the standards and processes that are used in the Arctic Fishery Management Plan;
- c. Oil and gas or mineral activity or leasing should be prohibited;
- d. Indigenous knowledge should be considered equivalent to western science in federal decisions;
- e. There should be spill prevention and response training and equipment provided to all the coastal villages and this should be directed at tribal Police Officers (TPOs) and Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs);
- f. A port needs to be established on Nunivak Island to assist ships in complying with these mandates and to provide a docking location in the event of an emergency.
- g. A plan should be developed with the tribes to address marine debris collection and removal;
- h. A mandatory vessel traffic monitoring and compliance system should be put in place;
- i. All vessel traffic routing and safety measures and processes including the Port Access Route Study (PARS) should be subject to mandatory consultation under Executive Order 13175;
- j. The government should undertake formal government to government consultation with the tribes on the determination of areas to be avoided (ATBAs) by vessel traffic;
- k. An advisory body should be created to inform and guide federal management and decision making. This advisory body must have broad representation from federally recognized tribes.



James Paul, Vice-Chair



Vivian Korthuis, Chief Executive Officer