



## Bering Sea Elders Group

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The Bering Sea Elders Group strongly condemns yesterday's action by the Trump Administration to include the northern Bering Sea in their Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Leasing Program. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has promised the Bering Sea Elders Group time and again that it would *meaningfully* consult with Tribes and communities on any proposal to drill in our region's waters, but yesterday's announcement indicates the Administration and BOEM have not listened to the *unanimous* opposition we have voiced. We told them that in person last October and again in writing, that there were 76 tribes in these regions opposed to this. The draft plan implies that Bering Sea communities were "generally supportive of some" oil and gas activity. This is not accurate and there is no evidence of this from Bering Sea communities. For decades, our people have opposed oil and gas activity and we continue to oppose it today.

The northern Bering Sea is a very fragile ecosystem. The marine mammals that we rely on use it as their highway and they follow specific migration routes. That is how we know when and where to find them. The noise and vibration associated with drilling will interfere with their sonar and disrupt their migrations. Then we the coastal people will lose our primary food source.

It is not clear to us why our many requests have been ignored. It cannot be because there is so much potential for profit here — there isn't. Exploratory wells were drilled in this area in the 1980s and nothing valuable was found. There is no oil there. Our people and our way of life are being exposed to danger and we do not understand why.

The people of the northern Bering Sea rely on the waters off our coast for subsistence and survival and we will not stand by while our way of life is threatened. We will take all legal means necessary to fight offshore drilling in our waters. We have used the legal system to fight it before and we will do it again. We were made for times like these and we will stand strong and united.

We have made it clear to Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young multiple occasions that drilling in the northern Bering Sea is off limits. We now call on them to communicate that directly to Secretary Zinke. We, the people of the Bering Sea, are more valuable than drilling.