

CITY OF UNALASKA
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October 25, 2022

The Honorable Rick W. Spinrad, Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Undersecretary for Oceans & Atmosphere
1401 Constitution Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Undersecretary Spinrad:

The Unalaska City Council is writing to express our great concern and trepidation as NOAA considers the establishment of the Heart of the Ocean Marine Sanctuary off the coast of St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea.

The City of Unalaska, location of the International Port of Dutch Harbor, has for 25 years been the nation's number one commercial fishing port in terms of volume of the catch (700-800 million pounds landed annually), and the number two port in terms of value of landings during the same period (\$200 million ex-vessel value range annually).

The Eastern Bering Sea Pollock fishery is the nation's largest fishery, with annual harvests of more than 3 billion pounds, and is the nation's most valued fishery, with annual ex-vessel value of over \$400 million, and a first wholesale value of \$1.2 billion.

This critically important fishery is of the utmost importance to Bering Sea fishery dependent communities, the State of Alaska and the Nation. Without knowing the proposed location or the number of square miles that could be included in the proposed sanctuary, it is very troubling and of great concern for Unalaska. Both the onshore and offshore commercial fisheries are of critical importance to Unalaska harvesters and processors, and are the economic engine for the entire community.

The fisheries of the Bering Sea not only support the harvesters and processors located in the community, but also the at-sea processors that use Unalaska as their base of support for shipping millions of pounds of finished product through the International Port of Dutch Harbor, which is one of the busiest shipping ports in the Alaska.

Unalaska has a whole host of support sector businesses that depend on the commercial fishing industry for their livelihood. This includes marine repair and supply facilities, fuel suppliers, shipping companies, grocery stores, restaurants, school teachers, longshoreman, and City and State employees. Commercial fishing is the only industry in Unalaska and is of critical importance to Unalaska's harvesters, processors and support sector businesses, which supply the revenue and employment that is the economic engine for the entire community.

The success of this thriving community is due to the sustainably managed fisheries of the Bering Sea. We believe in the fishery management process that is in place, and do not want it changed. It is of critical

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importance to Unalaska and to other fishery dependent communities in the Bering Sea region that establishment of a marine sanctuary be fully vetted by the rules and procedures under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) which is a transparent and science-based process that allows stakeholder input through hearings and deliberations through the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). The NPFMC is regarded as one of the nation's best fishery management councils and works in concert with the State of Alaska, with guidance and expert review from National Marine Fisheries Service. We realize that other activities and elements fall under the purview of the National Ocean Service, but request your support in excluding commercial fisheries management from the outlined objectives of any marine sanctuary management plan, should it advance to a proposed or final designation.

In closing, the City of Unalaska requests your support in excluding commercial fisheries management from the outlined objectives of any marine sanctuary management plan. The City of Unalaska also aligns our comments with those you have received from the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska, which will be properly consulted in the sanctuary development process, and the Ounalashka Corporation, the Native Village Corporation for Unalaska.

Thank you for consideration of our comments on this extremely critical issue.

Sincerely,

CITY OF UNALASKA

Vincent M. Tutiakoff, Sr.
Mayor

cc: Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan
Congressman Mary Peltola
Governor Mike Donleavy
Ms. Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service
Ms. Nicole LeBoeuf, Assistant Administrator, National Ocean Service
Mr. Jon Kurland, Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region
Mr. Simon Kinneen, Chair, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Mr. David Witherell, Executive Director, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Unalaska City Manager, Chris Hladick
Unalaska City Council Members