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Eskimo Walrus Commission
"To protect the pacific walrus population."

Eskimo Walrus Commission

Resolution 2014-01

A Resolution Urging the United States Government and the State of Alaska to Take Immediate Action to Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Urging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Revise Its Approach to Pacific Walrus Conservation

Member
Communities;

Barrow

Brevig Mission

Gambell

King Island

Kivalina

Kotzebue

Kwigillingok

Little Diomedea

Manakotak

Mekoryuk

Nome

Point Hope

Point Lay

Savoonga

Shishmaref

Stebbins

Unalakleet

Wainwright

Wales

WHEREAS, the Eskimo Walrus Commission was formed in 1978 and represents 19 coastal walrus hunting communities in Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Eskimo Walrus Commission is "to protect the Pacific walrus population;" and

WHEREAS, the continued subsistence harvest of the Pacific walrus is necessary to support the cultural and nutritional needs of coastal Alaska Native people represented by the Eskimo Walrus Commission; and

WHEREAS, the exemption for the subsistence harvest of marine mammals by Alaska Natives in Section 101 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act is a reflection of the United States Government's trust responsibility toward Alaska Natives to protect their subsistence needs; and

WHEREAS, Section 2 (6) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act states that "marine mammals...should be protected and encouraged to develop to the greatest extent feasible commensurate with sound policies of resource management and that the primary objective of their management should be to maintain the health and stability of the marine ecosystem;" and

WHEREAS, the Eskimo Walrus Commission collaborates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the management of the Pacific walrus population through a cooperative agreement in accordance with Section 119 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act; and

WHEREAS, in its April 2014 Stock Assessment Report on the Pacific walrus the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that "summer sea ice loss would result in a reduced walrus population over time and that subsistence harvests could become unsustainable if not reduced in concert with any decline in the population;" and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has suggested that reductions in the subsistence harvest of Pacific walruses may be necessary in the future due to climate change without proposing that the root cause of the issue be addressed; and

WHEREAS, the Pacific walrus population will continue to be threatened by the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification into the future, regardless of subsistence harvests being reduced at some point in response to environmental changes; and

WHEREAS, subsistence harvest reductions are therefore not a solution to the issue facing the Pacific walrus population; and

WHEREAS, the Pacific walrus has been declared a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act due to threats posed by climate change; and

WHEREAS, climate change and resulting sea ice loss is largely precipitated by excessive anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions, and has already resulted in the increased use of terrestrial haul-outs by Pacific walruses, which presents the threats of increased stampede deaths and increased energy exertion by walruses to obtain food, among other impacts; and

WHEREAS, excessive anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions are also resulting in ocean acidification, to which Alaskan waters are particularly vulnerable, and which will increasingly impact the food resources of the Pacific walrus and possibly the Pacific walruses themselves; and

WHEREAS, current carbon dioxide emission levels present an immediate threat to the Pacific walrus population and therefore also to the cultural and nutritional needs of the Alaska Native communities who depend on them for subsistence; and

WHEREAS, the United States of America is one of the world's largest producers of carbon dioxide emissions; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the state and federal governments to protect the wellbeing of their citizens, and the federal government has a particular obligation, due to its trust responsibility toward Native American tribes, to protect Alaska Native subsistence needs;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Eskimo Walrus Commission strongly urges the United States Government and the State of Alaska to take immediate action to effectively reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Eskimo Walrus Commission strongly urges the United States Government and the State of Alaska to invest in more renewable energy solutions and transition away from dependence on carbon emitting energy, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Eskimo Walrus Commission strongly urges the United States Government and the State of Alaska to invest in more research on ocean acidification in Alaskan waters so that we may attempt to mitigate its impacts on our marine ecosystems, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Eskimo Walrus Commission strongly urges that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revise its approach to the conservation of the Pacific walrus by not suggesting to place the burden of conservation on subsistence users because they are the easiest to manage, and instead recommend actions to the United States Government that would halt further damage to the Pacific walrus habitat.



Charles D.N. Brower, Chair

CERTIFICATION:

I, the undersigned Vice Chair of the Eskimo Walrus Commission hereby certify that the foregoing resolution 2014-01 was adopted by a majority vote of the Commissioners. Passed this 18th day of December 2014 at a duly called meeting of the Eskimo Walrus Commission.

Elmer Seeta Jr.