UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

211 Fourth Street, Suite 110
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1172
(907) 586-2820
(907) 463-2545 Fax
E-Mail: ufa@ufa-fish.org
www.ufa-fish.org

February 2, 2012

Representative Paul Seaton, Co-Chair
Representative Eric Feige, Co-Chair
House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
120 4th St, State Capitol, Room 3
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Support for HJR 26 regarding Re-introduced Sea Otters

Dear Co-Chairmen Seaton & Feige, and Committee Members,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the largest statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 37 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and its offshore federal waters. Fishermen in Southeast Alaska and UFA member groups for years have been alarmed by the rapid increase in sea otter populations, and noticeable impacts on shellfish and fishery resources throughout the region.

In 2009, UFA unanimously adopted Resolution 2009-1 (attached) supporting:

-research on sea otter populations and their effects;

- decreasing hurdles to Alaska Natives in their utilization of this resource;

-requesting the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game to become more actively involved with USFWS in the management of sea otters and documenting their effect.

-requesting the Federal and State agencies, Tribal community organizations and other entities affected by sea otters in the area to meet regionally and develop ecosystem-based sea otter management plans benefiting all users of these resources and protecting the fishery resources from depletion by sea otters, and providing for access to resources in areas of sea otter depletion.

This December, the McDowell Group released a report sponsored by UFA member group Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association (SARDFA), titled Sea Otter Impacts on Commercial Fisheries in Southeast Alaska, which can be found online at:
http://www.scribd.com/doc/74857876/MCDOWELL-GROUP-2011-Sea-Otter-Impacts-Report
This report estimates a direct loss of $12.8 million in ex-vessel value, and $22.4 million in first wholesale value to the Southeast Alaska economy attributable to increased sea otter

Alaska Scallop Association
PO Box 8989
Kodiak, AK 99615
(907) 512-7018
Jim@AlaskaScallop.net

January 29, 2012

Representative Paul Seaton, Co-Chairman
Representative Eric Feige, Co-Chairman
House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, 120 Fourth Street
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE; House Joint Resolution No. 26

Dear Co-Chairmen Seaton and Feige
I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Scallop Association. The Alaska Scallop Association (ASA) represents the majority of the Scallop boats in the State. We are a member in good standing in the United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA). Our organization is in support of this resolution. We also voted in favor of a similar UFA resolution in 2009.

For good sound management purposes ADFG does not allow the Commercial Scallop fishery to be prosecuted in the same areas inhabited by the Sea Otters. The Commercial Scallop beds are offshore in deep waters, out of the otters range. There are however large populations of Scallop in these areas of high Sea Otter densities. The Scallop Statewide population is dependent on a reproductive system involving 30 days and longer free floating larvae and water mixing with the wind and tidal currents. It is the Scallop fishermen's belief that these scallop populations within the Sea Otters reach play an important role in rejuvenating the off shore commercial scallop beds in the rest of the state, as their larvae free floats with the currents. Our concern is that the Sea Otter's unchecked expansion and appetite for all shellfish could have a large negative impact on this important reproductive component of the Scallops in Alaska.

ASA is also concerned about other State shellfish fishermen losing their livelihoods as the Sea Otter populations explode and their voracious appetites are turned loose on South East's shellfish. We have been told these animals eat on average about 15 pounds a day. With population estimates between 11,000 and 20,000 animals, that is 165,000 to 300,000 pounds a day, times 365 days, that's as much as 50 to 100 million pounds out of SE, of mostly Shellfish consumed annually by these Sea Otters. These shellfish stocks cannot take this for long, before all the fisheries, the jobs and the small family businesses collapse.

For the good of the State, her coastal communities and commercial, subsistence and sport fishermen, it seems reasonable to find a way to control the unchecked population boom of the Sea Otter. The high value of Sea Otter pelts creates an added opportunity to assist local communities, while keeping the Sea Otter/Shellfish populations in balance.

A well thought out and well managed sea otter harvesting plan could offer some residents of SE a good income and be done responsibly so as not to endanger the Sea Otter population or the existing shellfish fisheries.

Regards, Jim Stone,
President Alaska Scallop Association.

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Bertrand Adams Sr., Chair

kaadashan@alaska.net

April 7, 2010

Mr. Geoffrey L. Haskett
Alaska Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Haskett:

The Council appreciates the effort you and Mr. Burns made to attend the Council meeting in Saxman on March 16, 2010. We are encouraged by your commitment to form a new partnership with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska for addressing sea otter concerns. The Alaska Native Sea Otter Co-management Committee (ANSOCC) appears to be well suited to address issues associated with sea otter management in the Southeast Alaska Region. The Council also welcomes the commitment by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to engage in an outreach program to educate users of sea otters, as mentioned in your letter to the Council on January 19, 2010.

In a March 24, 2009 letter, the Council expressed its unanimous support for a proposed study, "Ecological, economic and social changes as a result of sea otter recolonization in southern Southeast Alaska." The Council was pleased to hear the USFWS was supportive and instrumental in obtaining this funding. Thank you; completion of this study will be necessary to determine the true impact of sea otters to the communities and subsistence users we represent.

The Council continues to receive testimony on reasons for the underutilization of sea otters and the devastating affects the expanding sea otter population is having on shellfish stocks important to subsistence users and the economies of local communities. In previous correspondence, we recommended joint management plus an education program to familiarize users with current rules and are encouraged that progress is being made along those lines. The Council has several additional recommendations for consideration by the ANSOCC and the USFWS to further facilitate the subsistence use of sea otters.

Council Recommendations:

1. The Council recommends a thorough review of current regulations. Regulations appropriate to protect a small fragile population are likely too restrictive to encourage harvest of a robust and rapidly increasing population.

2. Regulations need to be amended to encourage harvest when and where there is a significant level of harvest opportunity commonly referred to as potential biological removal. The use of Alaska Department of Fish and Game fishing Districts may be well suited to define area boundaries.

3. The process of tanning sea otter pelts results in a product that is certainly "significantly altered." That concept should be clearly described in regulation by amending Section 18.3 "Definitions" in the code of Federal regulations to include tanned hides as significantly altered.

4. Requiring the use of registered agents inhibits the potential utilization of sea otters. Section 18.23 (b) 1 (i) (ii) and 2 (i) (ii) "Native exemptions" should be amended to remove the requirement to utilize registered agents and allow the direct sale and transportation of sea otters by qualified users. Current language in these paragraphs is exceedingly confusing and unnecessarily restrictive.

5. There is no need for tags to remain affixed to the skin through the tanning process. Section 18.23 (f) 9 (iii) (E) should be deleted in its entirety.

Please address any questions regarding this request either directly to me or through Mr. Robert Larson, Council Coordinator, U. S. Forest Service, Box 1328, Petersburg, AK 99833, 1-907-772-5930, robertlarson@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

Bertrand Adams Sr., Chair

cc: Peter J. Probasco, Office of Subsistence Management
Beth Pendleton, Forest Service Regional Forester
Ralph E. Lohse, Chair Southcentral Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Speridon M. Simeonoff Sr., Chair Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Molly Chythlook, Chair, Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Lawrence Widmark, Chairman Sitka Tribe of Alaska
William E. Martin, President Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes

Rebecca Rooney

From: WEATHERS [northerngirl@starband.net]
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2009 8:16 PM
To: Sen. Albert Kookesh; Rep. Bill Thomas
Cc: Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Beth Kerttula; Rep. Kyle Johansen; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Sen. Bert Stedman
Subject: RE: South East Dungeness Fishing v's Sea Otters

Dear Senator Kookesh & Representative Thomas,

I live in Prince William Sound near Cordova but I now fish out of Petersburg, Alaska which is in Representative Peggy Wilson's district #2. My fishing area is located within the Southeastern Alaska Area A which includes all waters between Cape Fairweather & Dixon Entrance which are located in Senate District A, B & C. That is why I have carbon copied this email to all area legislators.

I have been a crab fisherman for over 40 years. I started fishing Crab in the 60's with my father in Prince William Sound. In 1979 or 1980 the Dungeness fishery in Orca inlet (a half a million pound fishery) was wiped out in three months after a heard of sea otter moved in from the Western & Southern portion of Prince William Sound after having devastated the western portion of the sound. Once Orca inlet was closed I started Fishing Dungeness crab in the Copper River district of Area E. Do to over fishing of illegal gear & Sea Otter predation the Copper River District was closed in 1992. With no Dungeness crab fisheries open in Area E I & my son's moved south to Area D (Yakutat district) to fish Dungeness crab. Due to low abundance the Board of Fisheries closed the fishery (against the recommendations of the Fish & Game) in 1999. Leaving it open to Sea Otter predation. Where I use to be able to dig up to a 11, 5 gallon buckets of clams per tide I now cannot find a clam since the Sea Otter have moved through the area. In my 40 years of fishing I have been watching the Sea Otters slowly move South devastating ALL shellfish (i.e. crabs, clams, abalone, sea cucumbers, Sea Urchins, mussels & even barnacles off the piling) as they travel. After the Dungeness crab was closed in Area D I fished King crab in the Bering Sea but at 53 years old I was displaced by the Crab Rationalization program.

So in 2006 I bought a Southeast Dungeness crab permit & started fishing. I immediately noticed the Sea Otter predation. After doing some checking with ADF&G I found that the Sea Otters had been introduced to the area in the 1960's. The State & or federal government trapped live Sea Otters in Prince William Sound & transported them to the Southeast. There is even a report by the ADF&G that states that the Sea Otter would destroy the shellfish in Southeast & the fishermen may need to be compensated over the loss. If we continue to allow the Sea Otter to propagate we will have a total loss of the shellfish eco system for generations to come. In Prince William Sound the Sea Otters have been seen eating halibut, red snapper, salmon, star fish & even a seagull.

During the 2009 Board of Fishery meeting in Petersburg the fishermen brought up the issue of the Sea Otter predation but no proposals were made because the Sea Otters are a federal issue. After talking with Congressman Don Young today he said that we need to ask the State of Alaska to petition the Department of Commerce to transfer control & management of the Sea Otter to the State of Alaska. Could you please tell me how do we proceed from here & how to get the State of Alaska to petition the federal government? Please contact me with any questions. Thank you for your help & time. Your Constituent, ERIC J WEATHERS, c/o P.O. Box 1791, Cordova, Alaska, 907-424-3745 or northerngirl@starband.net

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA

RESOLUTION NO. 02-11-1217

A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, REQUESTING THAT STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES BECOME MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MANAGING THE SEA OTTER POPULATION AND FIND WAYS TO REVIVE LOST ECONOMIES DUE TO THE RELOCATION AND RE-COLONIZATION OF SEA OTTERS IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

WHEREAS, the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska is a small island fishing community located in Southeast Alaska with a population of approximately 2,000 citizens; and

WHEREAS, residents of the Wrangell community are dependent on abundant, sustainable resources from the coastal waters of Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, in the last 1960's the Alaska Department of Fish and Game reintroduced approximately 400 sea otters in six different locations to near shore waters of Southeast Alaska with no management plan; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has jurisdiction under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and has to active management plan protecting the ecosystems affected by sea otters; and

WHEREAS, without proper management, the sea otter population in southern Southeast Alaska is growing at an alarming rate (5,000 observed in 2003 and a 2010 aerial survey by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service revealed an estimate of over 10,000 otters); and

WHEREAS, this drastic increase in sea otters is threatening the population of many shellfish species, such as crab, abalone, urchins, sea cucumbers, geoducks and others, to a point that subsistence, sport and commercial fishing has been stopped in many areas due to the low abundance; and

WHEREAS, a degradation in the ecological balance of a diversity of species has taken place in many areas; and

WHEREAS, residents of Wrangell and many other communities throughout Southeast Alaska rely on shellfish not only for their livelihood, but for survival in a subsistence way of life; and

WHEREAS, the loss of commercial harvests have resulted in negative economic impacts to the seafood industry. Fisherman, processors and seafood dependent communities have experienced a loss in employment wages and associated economic activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, requests that State and Federal agencies work with tribal leaders in Southeast Alaska to become more actively involved in management of the sea otter population and look to remedy the problems already created.

LET IT BE RESOLVED FURTHER, the State and Federal government managing authorities are requested to find ways to revive the lost economies from the Southeast Alaska region due to the relocation and re-colonization of sea otters in southern Southeast Alaska.

ADOPTED: February 8, 2011.

A copy of this Resolution is to be sent to our Federal Legislators; the Southeast Alaska State Senators and Representatives; State and Federal Wild Life Agencies; and the Coastal Communities of Southeast.

Jeremy Maxand, Mayor

ATTEST:
Christie L. Jamieson, Borough Clerk

City & Borough of Wrangell
Incorporated Borough May 30, 2008
Incorporated City June 15, 1903
Alaska

CITY OF PETERSBURG, ALASKA

RESOLUTION # 1958

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THAT STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES BECOME MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MANAGING THE SEA OTTER POPULATION AND FIND WAYS TO REVIVE LOST ECONOMIES DUE TO THE RELOCATION AND RE-COLONIZATION OF SEA OTTERS IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

WHEREAS, the City of Petersburg, Alaska is a small island fishing community located in Southeast Alaska with a population of approximately 3,000 citizens; and

WHEREAS, residents of the Petersburg community are dependent on abundant, sustainable resources from the coastal waters of Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1960's the Alaska Department of Fish and Game reintroduced approximately 400 sea otters in six different locations to near shore waters of Southeast Alaska with no management plan; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has jurisdiction under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and has no active management plan protecting the ecosystems affected by sea otters; and

WHEREAS, without proper management, the sea otter population in southern Southeast Alaska is growing at an alarming rate (5,000 observed in 2003 and a 2010 aerial survey by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service revealed an estimate of over 10,000 otters); and

WHEREAS, this drastic increase in sea otters is threatening the population of many shellfish species, such as crab, abalone, urchins, sea cucumbers, geoducks and others, to a point that subsistence, sport and commercial fishing has been stopped in many areas due to the low abundance; and

WHEREAS, a degradation in the ecological balance of a diversity of species has taken place in many areas; and

WHEREAS, residents of Petersburg and many other communities throughout Southeast Alaska rely on shellfish not only for their livelihood, but for survival in a subsistence way of life; and

WHEREAS, the loss of commercial harvests have resulted in negative economic impacts to the seafood industry. Fisherman, processors and seafood dependent communities have experienced a loss in employment wages and associated economic activities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Petersburg City Council requests that State and Federal agencies work with tribal leaders in Southeast Alaska to become more actively involved in management of the sea otter population and look to remedy the problems already created.

RESOLVED FURTHER, the State and Federal government managing authorities are requested to find ways to revive the lost economies from the Southeast Alaska region due to the relocation and re-colonization of sea otters in southern Southeast Alaska

PASSED and **APPROVED** by the City Council of the City of Petersburg, Alaska this 18th day of January, 2011.

A copy of this Resolution is to be sent to our Federal Legislators; the Southeast Alaska State Senators and Representatives; State and Federal Wild Life Agencies; and the Coastal Communities of Southeast.

Al Dwyer, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kathy O'Rear, City Clerk

resolved

Grand Camp
Alaska Native Brotherhood

RESOLUTION #29-09

Title: Sea Otter Management

WHEREAS, tribal residents of Southeast Alaska have hunted for sea otters since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, Section 119 of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) allows for tribally authorized local harvest management plans with US Fish and Wildlife Service; and

WHEREAS, tribal residents of Southeast, Alaska have reported diminished harvest of important traditional foods such abalone, crab, clams and other foods that are consumed by sea otters; and

WHEREAS, due to depressed rural economies, local tribal governments and tribal entities must continue to face the responsibility of developing economic opportunities such as value added fur products in a manner consistent with our uses of marine mammals since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, with education regarding the traditional hunting practices coupled with the entry into co-management with the Federal government a balance could be achieved between healthy sea otter populations and the availability of healthy traditional foods for residents of Southeast, Alaska; and

WHEREAS, recent Federal enforcement actions have highlighted a need for education and outreach to provide clear and consistent guidance to tribal hunters and artists regarding federal regulations governing the take and use of sea otter; and

WHEREAS, the Sitka Marine Mammal Commission spent many years planning for the establishment of a tannery in Sitka, Alaska which has now been in operation for five years, providing for full-utilization of marine mammals and other animals hunted for food so that artists would be able to use those skins to create handicrafts that could be sold to create additional economic opportunities in our community; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alaska Native Brotherhood's Grand Camp increased education, outreach regarding Federal regulations governing the take and use of sea otter and support in developing local harvest management plans and small business opportunities for tribal residents of Southeast Alaska.

NOW THEREOFRE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Alaska Native Brotherhood's Grand Camp respectfully requests a region-wide meeting with the US Fish and Wildlife, representation from Southeast tribal communities, USDA Rural Development, and the US Economic Development Administration address the concerns regarding sea otter management as outlined in this resolution.

ANB Grand President

ANS Grand President

ATTEST: I certify that this resolution was adopted by the ANB/ANS Grand Camp in convention at Juneau, Alaska, during the week of October 6-10, 2009.

ANB Grand Secretary