



Est.1958

Southeast Conference



612 W. Willoughby., Suite B • P.O. Box 21989 Juneau, AK 99802 • 907-523-4350 • Fax 907-463-5670 • info@seconference.org

Senator Stedman
Capitol Building Room 31
Juneau, AK 99811

RE: Support for SB 60 – an act relating to sea otter population management

Dear Senator Stedman,

I am writing on behalf of the Southeast Conference. Southeast Conference is a regional, nonprofit corporation that advances the collective interests of the people, communities and businesses in Southeast Alaska. Members include municipalities, Native corporations and village councils, regional and local businesses, civic organizations and individuals from throughout the region.

I would like to express the support of Southeast Conference for SB 60 – an act related to sea otter population management – as a mechanism to spark a productive and urgent conversation about solutions to conserve our shellfish species in Southeast Alaska (SEA).

Recent research by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has documented the following facts about the sea otter population in SEA. The sea otter population is approximately 25,000 and growing at 12-14% per year. These marine mammals consume shellfish at a rate of approximately 25% of their body weight (average of 65 lbs) each day, equating to an average annual shellfish harvest of 148 million pounds. By comparison, the annual commercial shellfish harvest in SEA was less than 5 million pounds in 2012. Projecting this growth out to the year 2018, the sea otter population will be approximately 50,000 and the annual shellfish harvest by otters will be approximately 300 million pounds.

The sea otter is decimating the shellfish populations in SEA. This fact has been documented by commercial divers, fishermen, subsistence users and biologists at the Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game. If the growth of the sea otter population is not reduced, not only will all commercial shellfish harvests in SEA be closed, but also sport, personal use and subsistence harvests will end.

SB 60 will encourage the legal harvest of sea otters by Alaska Natives in order to save shellfish species in SEA. SB 60 will also elevate the discussion and the seriousness of the problem. We hope further productive discussions regarding proactive sea otter management will lead to innovative ideas which will provide a win-win solution for all who depend upon the shellfish resources in the region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Shelly Wright
Executive Director, Southeast Conference

