



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 15, 2013

Senator Cathy Geissel, Chair
Senate Resources Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Email: Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov

RE: Support for SB 60 / HB 145 regarding Re-introduced Sea Otters

Dear Senator Geissel, and members of the Senate Resources Committee;

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the largest statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 36 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 decreasing hurdles to Alaska Natives in their utilization of this resource, and requesting the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game to become more actively involved with USFWS in the management of sea otters and documenting their effects, among other concepts to address the sea otter situation.

In December of 2011, 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 populations since 1995. This represents a significant number of jobs lost in communities that already face very challenging circumstances.

UFA commends the SB 60 / HB 145 sponsors for drawing attention to this issue. We appreciate the intention to reduce the monetary hurdle incurred by Alaska natives that are legally authorized to harvest sea otter for use in handicrafts, and note that the bounty that would be authorized for legal harvest of sea otters would help alleviate the high costs of the necessary tanning and processing of hides, and materials needed to convert them to salable handicrafts. The involvement of ADF&G in providing the bounty and confirming the

legality of the take would also increase the level of coordinated activity with U.S. Fish and Wildlife in addressing the sea otter overpopulation.

Thank you for your attention to this issue, and your support of SB 60.

Sincerely,



Julianne Curry
Executive Director

CC:

Senator Bert Stedman

Representative Charisse Millett

Attachment

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers • Alaska Independent Fishermen's Marketing Association
Alaska Independent Tendersmen's Association • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association • Alaska Trollers Association
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association • Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association • Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association
Bristol Bay Reserve • Cape Barnabas Inc. • Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United
Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Freezer Longline Coalition • Golden King Crab Coalition • Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association
Seafood Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Herring Conservation Alliance • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance
Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association
United Catcher Boats • United Cook Inlet Drift Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters • Valdez Fisheries Development Association



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Resolution 2009-1

SEA OTTER RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) represent commercial fishermen organizations and individual fishermen involved in fisheries throughout Alaska in both state and federal waters; and

WHEREAS, sea otters are abundantly healthy and impacting important commercial, subsistence and personal use fishery resource such as crab, abalone, sea cucumbers, sea urchins and geoduck clams in some areas of the State; and

WHEREAS, sea otters are depressed in other areas of the State and critical habitat designation may affect fishery infrastructure and coastal development; and

WHEREAS, sea otters are protected by the federal government under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA); and

WHEREAS, the only allowable use of sea otters under the MMPA is by coastal Alaska Natives for subsistence or for the making of handicrafts by Alaskan Natives; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, UFA supports appropriate local collaborative research projects and grant funding for sea otters whether the population is increasing or declining; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, UFA supports management strategies which will decrease hurdles to Alaska Natives in their utilization of this resource; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, UFA request that the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game become more actively involved with USFWS in the management of sea otters and documenting their effect within a region on fishery resources; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, UFA requests 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.

By UFA Board of Directors, November 18, 2009:

Joe Childers, UFA President

Attest: Mark D. Vinsel, UFA Executive Director