

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission

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**Comments by
Lianna Jack, Executive Director**

**on SJR 13
Submitted March 12, 2018**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on SJR 13. The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission is a non-profit tribal consortium Alaska Native Organization (ANO) as described under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, with over 50 tribes and tribal organizations as members from around Alaska where sea otters and Steller sea lions can be found.

The Alaska Sea Otter Commission formed in December 1988 to promote Alaska Native involvement in policy decisions regarding northern sea otters. In 1998, at the request of member tribes, the Alaska Sea Otter Commission added the advocacy of Alaska Natives and Steller sea lions, and formally expanded to the Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission.

Our objectives include promoting the role of Alaska Natives in sea otter and Steller sea lion conservation and management efforts, assessing sea otter and Steller sea lion populations in Alaska through cultural science (TEK) and local biological research, working with regulatory agencies toward the common goal of conservation and management of healthy sea otter and sea lion populations, and educating and informing our youth and the public about the traditional and contemporary relationship between Alaska Natives, sea otters, and Steller sea lions.

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission Board met March 7, 2018 and SJR 13 was included on the agenda. The Board voted unanimously to strongly oppose SJR 13 and to approve TASSC Resolution 18-01, which has already been submitted to the Resources Committee for the record in this hearing.

We appreciate the sentiment behind SJR 13 and agree that the sea otter population in Southeast Alaska has grown to a level where it is negatively affecting shellfish populations. However, we do not believe that the measures outlined in SJR 13 are the appropriate course to address the issue. We strongly oppose having the Alaska Department of Fish and Game included in any management measures for marine mammals, nor do we support having the Alaska Department of Fish and Game granted any management authority. We not believe the ADFG should be involved in developing a population management plan nor implementing such plan. We strongly

oppose ADFG being granted a permit to take marine mammals to project subsistence fishery resources.

We believe that the measures outlined in SJR 13 have the potential to cause disruption and confusion as sea otter subsistence and handicraft occur in other parts of Alaska. We fully support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working with tribally authorized ANOs and tribes to develop management plans and measures for sea otters.

We do not support SJR 13 and urge the Senate Resources Committee not to approve SJR 13.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.