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February 21, 2017

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for Alaska HB188 to establish Regional Fisheries Trusts

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins:

On behalf of the Afognak Native Corporation, I am writing to express our support for Alaska HB 188 that seeks to establish Regional Fisheries Trusts. Afognak Native Corporation is an ANCSA village corporation, headquartered in Kodiak with the majority of our Shareholders residing in Port Lions, Kodiak, and the Anchorage area. Fisheries and access to marine resources have been the core economy and cultural foundation for our Shareholders in our homeland for countless generations. Our people have relied on strong fisheries and resident fishermen for our community to thrive. Given the importance of fisheries to our peoples and culture, Afognak Native Corporation is in support of creating Regional Fisheries Trusts.

Access to commercial fisheries has decreased in many places over the last 40 years, including in the Kodiak archipelago. One of the major challenges we face is a dynamic dubbed, "the graying of the fleet" relating to challenges we have in supporting younger fishermen into the field. Community and individual access to capital creates significant barriers to entry, which have devastating impacts on our rural, Island economies. Consider this statistic from the 2017 Turning the Tide Report, "In the rural villages of the Kodiak Archipelago, for example, there's been over an 80% decrease in young salmon seine permit holders creating a crisis for community sustainability" (p. 12).

In addition to the graying of the fleet, our fishermen struggle with "diversification" or the need to sustain their incomes by accessing multiple fisheries with different types of fish. Though addressing diversification would need to involve stewards of federal as well as state fisheries, this legislation would be a step to acting on issues that undermine rural fisheries access, which is fundamental to the well-being of rural communities. For example, due in part to decreased access to commercial fisheries in our region, we face severe outmigration, which affects our ability to keep our schools and health clinics open, solicit outside investment in rural infrastructure, and sustain our communities.

Thank you for leading this effort and for the time invested to shape the legislation in a way that addresses some of the core issues facing our rural communities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alisha Drabek".

Alisha Drabek, Executive Vice President
Afognak Native Corporation