



*Brevig Mission Diomede Elim Gambell Golovin Koyuk Nome Saint Michael Savoonga Shaktoolik Stebbins Teller Unalakleet Wales White Mountain*

February 29, 2012

Honorable Steve Thompson, Chair  
House Fisheries Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Honorable Bob Herron  
House Fisheries Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Honorable Neal Foster  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB332

Dear Representatives Thompson, Herron and Foster,

The Chinook salmon is unrivaled in its importance as a commercial, subsistence and cultural mainstay in Western Alaska. For the health of this prized resource and that of our 15 member communities, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation supports the creation of an Alaska Chinook Salmon Research and Restoration Endowment Fund. We are particularly interested in the research of the Bering Sea Chinook stocks and their common life history and associated causes of decline.

As the Community Development Quota entity representing the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region, NSEDC strives to provide opportunity for residents of its member communities. This includes working to ensure ample opportunity for both commercial and subsistence fishing. Through our Norton Sound Fisheries Research and Development division, NSEDC has invested millions of dollars into research, monitoring and salmon enhancement efforts in regional watersheds.

While NSEDC believes its scientific work in fisheries aligns with our mission to develop and promote sustainable economies in our region, the financial support of research and restoration efforts needs to be both augmented and derived from additional sources. We believe the creation of an endowment fund would provide the mechanism for stable and significant contributions to such work. Beyond financial support, an endowment should also provide a peer-reviewed process that directs a unified investigation, reducing duplicative efforts.

The need for restoration and research efforts to understand and counter the decline of Chinook salmon is indisputable. The effects of fewer Chinooks returning to many of the state's rivers have reverberated

*"NSEDC will participate in the Bering Sea fisheries to provide economic development through education, employment, training and financial assistance to our member communities."*

across Alaska. In the Norton Sound region, the implications have ranged from lost wages to suspended subsistence practices. As the operator of the only commercial seafood plants in the region, NSEDC has witnessed the costly toll of lost commercial fishing opportunity for Chinook salmon. A once-vibrant commercial fishery and significant source of income has vanished in eastern Norton Sound.

The effects of reduced Chinook stocks on commercial fishing have not been solely limited to kings. For several years now, fishermen in the eastern Norton Sound region have had to stand by and miss out on chum salmon harvest opportunities due to Chinook salmon conservation measures. These communities not only suffer the sting of lost commercial and subsistence opportunities for Chinooks, they feel the added pain of lost wages from a salmon stock that still allows a viable commercial harvest. Commercial fishing is one of the few consistent employment opportunities for many in the Norton Sound region.

NSEDC recognizes the creation of a Chinook Salmon Research and Restoration Endowment Fund as a significant and positive step in addressing shortages in the numbers returning Chinook, as well as the information as to why this is occurring. Considering salmon spend their lifecycle in both federal- and state-managed waters, it is our hope that such a fund would encourage cooperative research and restoration efforts involving both levels of government.

We at NSEDC are encouraged to see this proposal before the Legislature and urge its passage. Further delay in working to understand and reverse the decline of Chinook salmon populations hurts our traditions, economies, communities and, ultimately, the state of Alaska as a whole.

Respectfully,



Jahis Ivanoff  
President & CEO

cc: Dan Harrelson, NSEDC Chairman