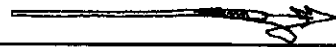




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February 21, 2013

RE: Letter of Support for **House Bill 49** that creates the ALASKA CHINOOK SALMON RESEARCH AND RESTORATION ENDOWMENT FUND

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Kawerak Inc., it is with great pleasure I provide a letter of support for the ALASKA CHINOOK SALMON RESEARCH AND RESTORATION ENDOWMENT FUND. Kawerak is the Tribal consortium in Bering Straits region in North Western Alaska where there are 20 federally recognized tribes.

Chinook salmon is an important staple food for Alaska Native people and others in Alaska. They are also an economically important species for a number of commercial fisheries and a prized sport fishing resource. Chinook salmon stocks are highly valued and essential to the basic way of life in Western Alaska.

Chinook salmon populations have suffered significant fluctuations in abundance during the past 40 years, yet little is known about the factors influencing their populations. Eight of the 14 currently listed "stocks of concern" are Chinook salmon stocks and there are no forecasts suggesting this trend is reversing anytime soon. A decline in Chinook salmon causes severe hardship for salmon-dependent people. Limited commercial fishing on Chinook salmon has occurred in recent years and earnings have declined significantly. Poor Chinook salmon returns produce tension and conflict between fishery user groups competing for the same fishery resource.

The bill creates a stable, long-term source of funding for high quality interdisciplinary research such as the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI). AYK SSI research results and information is being utilized in a wide variety of ways to support sustainable salmon management. It analyzes escapement goals and helps to gain better understanding of marine ecosystems. It helps to provide fisheries managers with better forecasts and improved responses to changing environmental conditions.

The State of Alaska assumed authority over fish; resources dedicated toward this effort, including research, are subject to the constantly shifting political climate. Establishing a dedicated fund is a prudent measure that will assure that some funding will be available regardless of politics. Kawerak fully endorses the Alaska Chinook Salmon Research and Restoration Endowment Fund. I respectfully request your support of the bill when it comes before your legislative body.

Sincerely,

KAWERAK, INC.

Melanie Bahnke, President