



Sponsor Statement

House Joint Resolution 7 Oppose Aleutian National Marine Sanctuary

CSHJR 7 declares the Legislature's opposition to a nomination made by the Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) for the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

In June of 2014 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) re-established the process by which communities may submit applications to have NOAA consider nominations of areas of the marine and Great Lakes environments as national marine sanctuaries. The following December, a collection of predominantly non-Alaskan organizations, led by PEER, submitted a nomination to designate an area of approximately 554,000 square nautical miles—nearly equal to the entire landmass of the state of Alaska—as a national marine sanctuary.

Although on January 23rd, 2015, NOAA informed PEER that its nomination was not sufficient to warrant further consideration, the agency also invited the group to revise and resubmit a nomination.

Under the PEER proposal, all current restrictions on fishing and other commerce in the vast region would be made permanent, and new restrictions that would likely prove burdensome to present and future economic activity would be added.

In its information on the nomination process, NOAA states that “every nomination starts at the community level” and calls for “community-based support for the nomination.” However, it appears that the groups led by PEER never consulted the dozens of local communities that would bear the brunt of the creation of a sanctuary.

Currently, CSHJR 7's sponsor is unaware of any support for the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary from local communities, local tribes, or other local groups. In fact, recently the Aleutians East Borough Assembly, the federally recognized Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove, the Akutan Traditional Council, the City of Sand Point, and the City of Adak have published official declarations of their strong opposition.

Through HJR 7, the Legislature joins local residents of the Aleutians in voicing its profound disapproval of the Washington D.C. based PEER's nomination, and any similar nomination, to create an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.