

## ALASKA INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL

### Resolution #2006-05

**ENTITLED:** Ecosystem Base Management of the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea.

**WHEREAS,** The Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and the Bering Sea are currently being exploited by commercial bottom trawl and pelagic trawl fishers at a rate that is degrading the overall health of these waters; and

**WHEREAS,** Localized depletion in the vicinity of Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska islands is contributing to the decline of fur seals, sea lions, and sea birds and forcing fishing dependent communities to travel far offshore in search of fish that were once readily available on our coasts; and

**WHEREAS,** The Pew Oceans Commission in a report to the President of the United States and to Congress (2003) stated: *“Our activities...are altering and threatening the structure and functioning of marine ecosystems from which all marine life springs and upon which all living things, including humans, depend”*; and

**WHEREAS,** The Pew Oceans Commission further states: *“We have reached a crossroads where the cumulative effect of what we take from, and put into, the ocean substantially reduces the ability of marine ecosystems to produce the economic and ecological goods and services that we desire and need. What we once considered inexhaustible and resilient is, in fact, finite and fragile”*; and

**WHEREAS,** The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, in its Final Report to the President and Congress (2004) stated: *“U.S. ocean and coastal resources should be managed to reflect the relationships among all ecosystem components, including humans and nonhuman species and the environments in which they live”*; and

**WHEREAS,** The industrialization of fishing has been responsible for sweeping changes in ocean ecosystems, causing the collapse of many fish populations and the fishing communities that depend on them; and

**WHEREAS,** The impacts of overfishing are compounded by many other serious threats to our oceans, including climate change, toxic pollution and the destruction of coastal habitats; and

**WHEREAS,** The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, in its U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card of February 2006, issued our nation’s administration, governors and legislature a ‘D+’ for ocean policy; and

**WHEREAS,** The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative highlighted the urgent need for a shift to ecosystem-based management (EBM) and the establishment of a network of fully protected marine reserves; and

**WHEREAS,** Congress, in 1996, adopted amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) which, among other things, tasked National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) with convening a panel to develop recommendations “to expand the application of ecosystem principles in fishery conservation and management activities”; and

**WHEREAS,** The report to Congress of the Ecosystem Principals Advisory Panel recommended an ecosystem-based management approach for fisheries and identified a broad fishery conservation and management goal of maintaining the health and sustainability of exploited ecosystems; and

**WHEREAS,** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has yet to fully implement these measures; and

**WHEREAS,** The United States Congress is preparing, for the first time in 10 years, to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries and Conservation Act (MSA), the law that governs federal fisheries, and consider what changes in the national law are needed for the future; and

**WHEREAS,** This reauthorization follows many clarion calls for major reforms of fisheries management, national ocean policy, and governance in recent national panel reports, all of which have called a more holistic, ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management; and

**WHEREAS,** The U.S. territorial seas and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Alaska’s 33,000-mile coastline encompasses an area twice the size of the combined East and West Coast EEZs and include some of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world; and

**WHEREAS,** These ecosystems have historically supported some of the largest assemblages of marine mammals and sea birds on Earth, and – since the 1960’s – an enormous fishery for bottom-tending “groundfish,” dominated by Alaska Pollock; and

**WHEREAS,** The biggest source of this bounty is the extensive continental shelf in the eastern Bering Sea, accounting for roughly half the marine fish and shell fish caught in the entire United States annually; and

**WHEREAS,** There are over 64 villages on the Bering Sea Coast alone, and many more on the coast of the Gulf of Alaska, that are totally dependent on the health of these waters for subsistence and commercial small boat fisheries, marine birds and mammals for foods, and local economic, spiritual and cultural needs; and

**WHEREAS,** Many of our coastal villages are suffering great hardships due to over-fishing in near shore waters near our homes, further compounding the devastating effects of global climate change.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** that AI-TC does hereby...by the delegates to the December, 2006 meeting of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council that we call upon the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to take the following actions:

1. Protect the rights and livelihoods of fishing-dependent communities and fish-eating predators by prioritizing efforts to reverse localized depletion; and
2. Utilize time and area closures and more precautionary catch limits to ensure that fishery removals do not jeopardize fishing-dependent communities or recovery of marine populations; and
3. Immediately adopt NMFS recommendations to establish experimental closures to improve our understanding of the changes taking place in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska; and
4. Expand protections to sensitive habitats and communities by establishing Alaska Native Marine Cultural Heritage Zones, which would prevent trawling within twenty miles of Alaskan islands and coasts; and
5. Commit to implementing the draft fishery ecosystem plan for the Aleutian Islands and being development of a similar plan to be implemented for the Bering Sea ecosystem.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** that this resolution shall be the policy of AI-TC until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

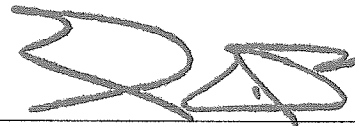
#### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2006 Annual Convention of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, held at the Millennium Alaskan Hotel, in Anchorage, Alaska on December 19, 2006 with a quorum present.

ATTEST:

Olga M. Malutin

Sponsored by: Curyung Tribe



Ian Erlich, Chair