

**AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN THE  
ALEUT COMMUNITY OF ST. PAUL ISLAND  
AND THE  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**

**I. PARTIES AND SCOPE**

This document constitutes an agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and The Aleut (Unangan) Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska, otherwise referred to as the Parties.

- A.** This Agreement covers the species *Callorhinus ursinus* and *Eumetopias jubatus*, referred to as the laaqun (Unangan) or northern fur seal, and the qawan (Unangan) or Steller sea lion, hereafter referred to as fur seal and sea lion, respectively. It encompasses St. Paul Island, Alaska and associated interaction areas (Walrus, Otter Islands and Sea Lion Rock). However, specific actions taken or recommendations made pursuant to this Agreement may be limited to certain regions or sub-areas, as deemed appropriate.
- B.** NMFS is the congressionally mandated federal agency responsible for the protection, conservation and management of fur seals and sea lions within jurisdiction of the United States of America.
- C.** The Tribal Government of St. Paul (TGSNP) represents the conservation and co-management interests of fur seal and sea lion hunters and customary/traditional practices of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska.

**II. AUTHORITIES**

The Parties recognize and acknowledge that;

- A.** NMFS has the authority to enter into this Agreement with the TGSNP under Section 119 (16 U.S.C. 1388) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA), and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).
- B.** TGSNP has the authority to enter into this Agreement according to its constitution and bylaws for the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island.

### **III. PURPOSE**

TGSNP, representing the interests of the Unangan (Aleuts) of St. Paul Island and NMFS, representing the interests of the citizens of the United States of America, desire to work in partnership for the purpose of:

- A.** Promoting the conservation and preservation of fur seals and sea lions;
- B.** Utilizing traditional knowledge, wisdom and values, and conventional science in research, observation, and monitoring to establish the best possible management actions for the protection and conservation of fur seals and sea lions;
- C.** Establishing a process of shared local responsibilities regarding the management and research of fur seals and sea lions on behalf of the citizens of the United States.
- D.** Identifying and resolving through a consultative process any management conflicts that may arise in association with fur seals and sea lions; and
- E.** Providing information to hunters and the affected community, as a means of increasing the understanding of the sustainable use, management, and conservation of fur seals and sea lions.

To achieve these purposes, this Agreement provides for:

1. Cooperation between members of the TGSNP and NMFS in the conservation and management of fur seals and sea lions for the year 2000 and thereafter; and
2. The establishment of a St. Paul Island Co-Management Council under this Agreement.

### **IV. BACKGROUND**

In April 1994, the MMPA was amended to include Section 119 "Marine Mammal Cooperative Agreements in Alaska." Section 119 formalizes the rights of Alaska Native Organizations to participate in conservation-related co-management of subsistence resources and their use. Section 119 also authorized the appropriation of funds to be transferred by NMFS to Alaska Native Organizations to accomplish these activities.

## **V. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- A.** The best way to conserve and provide for stewardship of fur seals and sea lions critical to the traditional practices and Unangan way of life is through a partnership between the TGSNP and NMFS that provides for full participation by the Unangan of St. Paul Island, through the TGSNP, in decisions affecting the management of marine mammals used for subsistence purposes.
- B.** As the primary customary/traditional users of the fur seals and sea lions in the Bering Sea Region, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island is committed to long term sustainable use of these animals for cultural continuity, food, clothing, arts, and crafts. The rich Unangan tradition and ancestral interaction with fur seals and sea lions provides a unique understanding and knowledge of these animals.
- C.** Under the MMPA as amended, NMFS is mandated to employ the best conventional science and natural resource management practices available to maintain marine mammal stocks and populations at levels necessary to sustain customary/traditional uses by indigenous peoples of Alaska, including the Unangan of St. Paul.
- D.** A key to the success of this partnership is to incorporate the spirit and intent of co-management by building trust and by establishing close cooperation and communication between the two Parties. Shared decision making shall be through consensus, based on mutual respect and understanding the cultural perspective of each party.

## **VI. CO-MANAGEMENT OF FUR SEALS AND SEA LIONS ON ST. PAUL ISLAND, ALASKA**

Understanding that the structure, process and responsibilities associated with the successful implementation of this Agreement and effective co-management of fur seals and sea lions on St. Paul Island must be clearly defined, the Parties agree that;

### **A. Operational Structure**

1. Regarding the need for a cooperative effort to conserve fur seal and sea lion populations and to maintain a sustainable harvest for traditional uses, the Parties agree to establish a St. Paul Island Co-Management Council (hereafter referred to as Council).
2. Upon the effectness of this Agreement, the TGSNP and NMFS shall each appoint three (3) members to the Council. The members of the Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Party by which they were appointed. The Council shall select co-chairs by consensus. One (1) co-chair shall be a representative of the TGSNP

and one (1) a representative of NMFS.

3. The Council shall hold at least two (2) meetings a year and may hold other meetings, as necessary, at the request of either Party. Council meetings shall be held and conducted on St. Paul Island Alaska, unless mutually agreed otherwise. The Co-Chairs shall circulate a draft agenda for comment two (2) weeks prior to each meeting. A quorum of four (4) members is required to conduct a meeting. Decisions of the Council shall be through consensus, based on mutual respect. Meetings of the Council shall be open to the public.
4. The Council shall perform the following actions:
  - a. Develop annual management plans, monitoring programs, and research programs for St. Paul Island;
  - b. Review annually the contents, performance, and responsibilities in this Agreement;
  - c. Review and assess progress towards implementation of this Agreement;
  - d. Identify challenges to achieving the purpose of this Agreement;
  - e. Recommend solutions to any identified challenges;
  - f. Identify future courses of action; and
  - g. Review annually laws and regulations governing the subsistence take and use of fur seals and sea lions.

## **B. Cooperative Responsibilities**

Guided by the Council and process, the TGSNP and NMFS will share the following responsibilities in each of the subject areas identified:

1. Management Plans: Develop local management plans for fur seals, sea lions, and their associated haul-out and rookery areas. The management plans will be reviewed annually. The management plans will include the topics and items deemed appropriate and necessary by the Council such as:
  - a. Monitoring and Research Programs; Harvest and Rookery Management; Local Regulations and Enforcement Plans for the protection of fur seals, sea lions and their haulouts or rookeries;
  - b. Education and Information; Training; Funding; Summary of recent progress

- and new information;
- c. Outline of future goals and activities; Identify information and conservation needs; and
  - d. Other items as deemed necessary.
2. Monitoring Programs: To establish consistent year-round rookery and shoreline observations to document and respond to activities on the rookeries that might include, but not be limited to, wildlife behavior, disturbance, oil spills, and other activities as appropriate. The Parties agree to:
- a. Develop and implement long term monitoring programs for local fur seal and sea lion populations, associated rookeries and haul out areas to document and respond to any observed changes;
  - b. Conduct seasonal debris clean-ups and surveys at rookeries and beaches identified by the Council; and
  - c. Identify the appropriate equipment, facilities, and technical assistance to conduct rookery and beach clean up programs and surveys as necessary.
3. Research Programs: As advised and monitored by the Council, the Parties agree to promote and continue the following specific research efforts:
- a. Assessment of population abundance and trends by stock and, as possible, by sub-areas within those stocks using conventional science methods;
  - b. Assessment of habitat use and seasonal movements (including information on preferred haulout sites, foraging areas, and prey composition);
  - c. Assessment of sources of mortality and the extent, timing, and location of such mortality; and
  - d. Assessment of population status (including age structure, vital rates, and indices of physical condition).
4. Disentanglement Program: To reduce the level of entanglement and effect the release of fur seals and sea lions from marine debris, the Parties agree to promote and continue the following efforts and activities:
- a. Collection of information regarding date, location, sex, age, age class, debris type, capture attempts, disentanglements, degree of wound, re-sightings, animals sheared, animals with shear marks, scarred animals, and tagged animals and

numbers;

- b. Calculation of entanglement rates incorporating data from the annual subsistence fur seal harvest including debris type, width, mesh diameter, twine size and other information as appropriate; and
- c. Maintenance of existing research and identification of the appropriate equipment, facilities, and technical assistance to conduct the disentanglement program.

5. Local Opportunities for Scientific Research Projects: Recognizing the need for and value of community awareness and involvement regarding the protection and conservation of fur seals and sea lions, the Parties agree to undertake a collaborative effort to accomplish the following:

- a. Establish mentoring opportunities for local youth regarding environmental science and natural resource management;
- b. Work with the local school district regarding support of and participation in science fairs and special projects regarding environmental education and natural resource management; and
- c. Coordinate with local entities and programs to establish employment opportunities regarding environmental science and natural resource management.

6. Maintenance of Fur Seal Rookeries: To improve the condition and ensure continued use of the fur seal rookery and haulout areas, the Parties agree to:

- a. Design, construct, and maintain permanent signs for each rookery;
- b. Put up road barricades at Reef, Ketovi, and Northeast Point Rookeries as specified by the governing regulations;
- c. Identify the appropriate equipment, and materials to maintain the rookery catwalks, tripods, signs, and barricades; and
- d. Repair and maintain annually, all catwalks and tripods identified by the Council.

7. Co-Managing the Harvest: To improve and advance the viability and sustainability of the subsistence take of fur seals the Parties agree:

- a. To support and continue the annual Humane Observer contract for the fur seal harvest to ensure that the subsistence harvest continues to be conducted in a humane manner;
- b. To negotiate and establish the beginning date of each annual fur seal harvest, in accordance with current regulations;
- c. The Tribal Ecosystem Conservation Office (ECO) Co-Directors, in consultation with the Harvest Foreman and NMFS Representative in accordance with current regulations, will determine which fur seal rookery to harvest on a daily basis;
- d. That the ECO Co-Directors and Harvest Foreman will accept responsibility for ensuring an absolute minimum of heat stressed animals as is possible. Jointly with the Humane Observer and NMFS Representative, they will have the authority to shut down the harvest for that day due to temperature or other factors contributing to heat stress;
- e. The ECO Co-Directors and Harvest Foreman will accept responsibility for keeping the number of females taken to the following levels:
  - (i). When five (5) females have been killed the harvest will stop for a period of two (2) days so that the harvest workers can discuss the reasons why females were harvested and correct problems contributing to the take of females, and
  - (ii). When eight (8) females have been killed, the harvest may be stopped for that season.
- f. The ECO Co-Directors and Harvest Foreman will insure the entire harvest operation is done in an efficient manner to avoid or minimize unnecessary injury and mortality, and also that the harvest fields are left litter free;
- g. The ECO Co-Directors will work with NMFS to promote and establish "full utilization" by making every attempt within the law to use all parts of the animals taken at the harvest. All parts mean the pelts, teeth, guts, baccula ("seal sticks"), carcasses and other inedible by-products of the subsistence harvest the Tribe can use within existing laws and regulations to cover harvest and processing costs;
- h. The ECO will conduct local surveys of the subsistence take of fur seals and sea lions. The surveys will include:
  - (i) Number harvested;

- (ii) Number struck and/or lost;
- (iii) Total take (harvest plus struck and loss);
- (iv) Sex of harvested or recovered animals;
- (v) Categories harvested or recovered (number of pups, subadults, or adults);
- (vi) Designated fur seal haul outs and sea lion hunting sites as determined annually by the Council; and
- (vii) The collection of biological samples if deemed necessary by the Council.

8. Providing Education and Information: Recognizing the value of an informed public regarding the protection, conservation and management of fur seals and sea lions, the Parties agree to;

- a. Educate and inform subsistence harvest workers in the most appropriate methods for harvesting and processing fur seals;
- b. Educate and inform the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island about the health and status of northern fur seals and sea lion populations on St. Paul Island including factors contributing to the sea lion's decline or increase;
- c. Educate and inform St. Paul sea lion hunters in the proper methods for hunting sea lions;
- d. Develop a training and internship program to directly involve local people in harvest monitoring, bio-sampling, and research programs;
- e. Involve hunters and customary/traditional users in the development of regulatory and management decisions affecting the subsistence use of fur seals and sea lions through representation on the Council; and
- f. Designate the TGSNP as the primary local contact for exchange of information regarding fur seals and sea lions.

### **C. Training**

To establish a fair and equitable co-management relationship and a level of practical experience and technical expertise, the Parties agree to:

- 1. Work in partnership to develop and provide cross cultural information, including understanding of Unangan ways of life, traditional ways of knowing, local concerns and issues regarding fur seal and sea lion use by Aleut Community of St. Paul Island (e.g. food, medicinal, handicraft, arts, and spiritual uses), as well as agency policies, legal and administrative constraints, and scientific approaches for managers,

researchers and others coming to the island;

2. Obtain appropriate training for local Conservation Officers in Tribal and federal regulations;
3. Provide mentors and research opportunities for local individuals whenever possible; and
4. Share TGSNP/NMFS planning, research, and data collection procedures and to provide appropriate training in those procedures.

## **VII. CONSULTATION**

To facilitate the implementation of this Agreement and ensure an equitable working relationship, the Parties agree that:

- A.** The TGSNP and NMFS shall consult on a routine basis as set forth in this Agreement. In addition, the TGSNP President and NMFS Representative for St. Paul Island shall communicate on an as needed basis concerning matters related to northern fur seals and sea lions; and
- B.** Should disagreements arise on interpretation of the provisions of this Agreement (or amendments and/or revisions thereto) that cannot be resolved at the operating level, the Parties shall submit written statements regarding the disagreements to the Council. Within thirty (30) days from receipt of the written statements, the Council shall provide copies to each Party and convene a meeting of the Council for the purpose of resolving the disagreement. If disagreement remains unresolved after the thirty day period and absent a mutual agreement by the Parties to extend the time period, the Council shall refer the matter to higher levels of the respective Parties for appropriate action.

## **VIII. REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

To effectively implement this Agreement, the Parties agree that:

- A.** The TGSNP recognizes the Secretary of Commerce's authority to enforce the provisions of the MMPA, ESA and Fur Seal Act applicable to the subsistence harvest of fur seals and sea lions; and
- B.** NMFS recognizes the existing Tribal authority to govern and regulate their members and conduct regarding the traditional uses of fur seals and sea lions, and acknowledges tribal authority to conduct the following in cooperation with the NMFS:

1. Conduct rookery disturbance monitoring and local enforcement upon closing of the rookeries and to monitor of sea lion hunting activities;
2. Conduct access permitting for the fur seal viewing blinds and fur seal harvest;
3. Develop and implement Tribal ordinances governing the hunting of sea lions and harvesting of fur seal and provide NMFS with up to date Tribal ordinances;
4. Develop and implement effective local processes for informing the public regarding applicable Federal and Tribal laws and regulations;
5. Develop and implement cooperative enforcement plans between Federal, local and Tribal authorities; and
6. Review, recommend, and advise on revisions to federal regulations governing fur seals and sea lions.

## **IX. FUNDING**

- A.** Recognizing that certain costs may be associated with the implementation of this Agreement, both Parties agree that long term funding for sustained co-management and conservation programs is important for the health of fur seals and sea lions. No financial commitment on the part of any Party is required by this Agreement. Any requirement of this Agreement for the obligation or expenditure of funds by NMFS or TGSNP shall be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.
- B.** The TGSNP and NMFS will assist each other in seeking funding from a variety of sources to support research and management projects of mutual benefit regarding fur seals and sea lions.
- C.** TGSNP will submit a yearly budget to NMFS to fulfill specific responsibilities stated in this Agreement for each fiscal year the Agreement is in effect.
- D.** NMFS will review the annual budget and after consultation with the TGSNP, will assist with the obligation and provision of funding as deemed appropriate under the authorities specified in Section II(A) of this Agreement.

## **X. OTHER PROVISIONS**

- A.** Nothing in this Agreement is intended or shall be construed to authorize any expansion or change in the respective jurisdiction of Tribal, Federal, or State Governments over fish and wildlife resources, or alter in any respect the existing

political or legal status of Alaska Native entities.

- B.** Except as expressly provided herein, nothing in this Agreement shall restrict or limit any right or privilege of the TGSNP (Unangan Community of St. Paul Island) with respect to fisheries, customary/traditional uses, or other use of any species.
- C.** Nothing herein is intended to conflict with current National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or NMFS directives. If the terms of this Agreement are inconsistent with existing laws, regulations, or directives of either of the Parties entering into this Agreement, then those portions of this Agreement which are determined to be inconsistent shall be invalid, but the remaining terms and conditions not affected by the inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect. At the first opportunity for revision of this Agreement, all necessary changes will be accomplished by either an amendment to this Agreement or by entering into a new Agreement, whichever is deemed expedient to the interests of both Parties.
- D.** This Agreement will stand as an official management tool for fur seals and sea lions as identified in Section I (A) of this Agreement.
- E.** Both Parties shall strive to support a policy of “no surprises” concerning contact with the media on potentially sensitive issues pertaining to northern fur seals and Steller sea lions. Each Party shall endeavor to consult with the other prior to initiating contact with the media on topics contained within this Agreement. Under circumstances in which the media initiates contact with one Party, the contacted Party shall inform the other Party and provide details on the nature of the information communicated. In addition, when a Party is contacted by the media concerning issues relevant to this Agreement, that Party shall provide the other Party’s contact information to the media representative and request that the media representative to contact the other Party.
- F.** Whenever possible, all scientists who plan to conduct research on behalf of either Party on or around St. Paul (as defined in Section I of this agreement) are required to advise the Council established herein in a timely manner as to the purpose, goals, and time frame of the research, data gathering techniques, expected results and possible adverse impacts of the proposed research. The Council shall review this information and upon reaching a consensus, may provide comments and recommendations accordingly.

## **XI. ADOPTION, DURATION, AND MODIFICATION**

- A.** This Agreement shall take effect upon the latest date of signature of the respective Parties and shall remain in effect until terminated by either of the Parties in accordance with the termination provision of this Agreement.

- B.** Modification of this agreement may be proposed at any time by either Party and shall become effective upon approval by both Parties.
- C.** This Agreement may be terminated by either Party by providing forty-five (45) days prior written Notice of Termination to the other Party. Such Notice shall be addressed to the principal contact for the receiving Party.

