

Pribilof Islands Ecosystem Stakeholder Process Organizing Committee

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David Benton, Chairman, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
PO Box 20735
Juneau, Alaska 99802
Anchorage, AK

December 2, 2002

Dear Mr. Benton,

As you know, the Bering Sea faces a host of serious issues that affect its fish and wildlife, and the people and businesses that depend on them. Over the past several years, concerns about declines in the halibut and crab fisheries, northern fur seal and bird populations of the Pribilof Islands area have become increasingly acute. We are pleased to share with you here information about last week's Anchorage workshop on "*Fisheries, Fur Seals and the Future: The Pribilof Islands' Perspective*," which was organized by the Tribal Governments of St. George and St. Paul, World Wildlife Fund and The Nature Conservancy of Alaska to begin a dialogue about these concerns. We would also like to let you know about the broadly inclusive, stakeholder driven, collaborative process we are now undertaking to address ecological and economic sustainability in the Pribilof Island region.

As part of an on-going collaborative effort, the workshop sponsors sought to bring together a wide range of interested parties - fishing industry representatives, federal and state agency staff, local fishermen, community leaders, scientists and conservationists - to discuss the status and future of marine conservation and resource management around the Pribilofs. The workshop included discussions on the status and trends of the region's fisheries and wildlife, history and evaluation of the Pribilof Islands Habitat Conservation Area, availability of relevant socioeconomic information, and options for restoring depleted populations. We are especially grateful to Deputy Director David Witherell for joining the meetings and sharing information about the NPFMC.

As a result of the workshop, participants established the Organizing Committee for the Pribilof Islands Ecosystem Stakeholder Process, agreeing to enter into a collaborative planning process to develop a consensus-based approach to addressing fisheries, fur seal and other biological resource management concerns. Participants committed to including key decision makers in the stakeholder process, and to making the process broadly inclusive, balanced and fair. Evie Witten at World Wildlife Fund's Anchorage office will provide staff support for the committee.

Given the high degree of energy and participation at the workshop, the growing trust between stakeholders, and the identification of shared concerns, we are very optimistic about our ability to build a collaborative approach for improving sustainability in the Pribilof Islands ecosystem. We recognize the NPFMC as an essential partner in this initiative, and plan to provide you with regular updates as we progress; we also hope the stakeholder group can rely on the Council and its staff, as well as federal and state agencies for scientific and management information.

If you have any questions about the workshop or our next steps, we would like to hear from you. Thank you for your interest, and your commitment to creating a sustainable future for the Bering Sea.

Sincerely,

The Organizing Committee, Pribilof Islands Ecosystem Stakeholder Process:



Aquilina Lestenkof, Tribal Government of St. Paul, Ecosystem Conservation Office



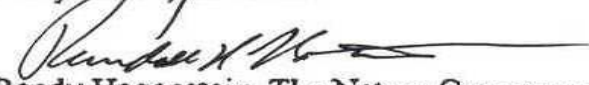
Greg McGlashan, Traditional Council of St. George



Joe Sullivan, Munde MacGregor



Larry Cotter, APICDA



Randy Hagenstein, The Nature Conservancy of Alaska



Evie Witten, World Wildlife Fund, Alaska Field Office

Cc: Chris Oliver, Executive Director, NPFMC
Diana Cote, Executive Director, Alaska Board of Fisheries