

**Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development****Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Bering Sea Fishermen's Association****Federal Tax ID: 92-0074000****Project Title:****Project Type: Planning and Research**

# Bering Sea Fishermen's Association - Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative

**State Funding Requested: \$3,200,000****House District: 38 / S**

One-Time Need

**Brief Project Description:**

Develop a Chinook Salmon Action Plan for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim area of Alaska by identifying key drivers of decline in freshwater and marine habitats and developing a concentrated Chinook salmon focused research program in response to these drivers.

**Funding Plan:**

Total Project Cost:	\$3,200,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2013 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$3,200,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

**Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

Salmon runs of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) region have been critical to the survival of the people and wildlife for thousands of years. Over eighty rural communities in the region depend heavily on the harvest of salmon, which forms the foundation of their subsistence diet. However, dramatic declines in salmon runs across the AYK region over the past decade have led to restrictions on subsistence fishing and closure of many commercial fisheries. Since 1997, the unexpected and dramatic declines of AYK salmon runs prompted 16 disaster declarations in different watersheds within the region by the State of Alaska and federal agencies. As a result, harvest restrictions, including those during the 2010 season, have created tremendous hardships for the communities in a region with the highest subsistence dependence on salmon in the state, coupled with some of the lowest incomes in the state. In response to these declines, regional Native organizations joined with state and federal agencies to create the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI), a proactive science-based program working cooperatively to identify and address the critical salmon research needs facing this region.

The first step for the AYK SSI was to collaboratively develop and implement a comprehensive research plan to address the AYK SSI's core goal: To understand the trends and causes of variation in salmon abundance and fisheries through the assembly of existing information, gaining new information, and improving management and restoration techniques through a collaborative and inclusive process. (AYK SSI 2006)

Over the past twenty-five years, there has been considerable variability in Yukon Chinook population dynamics. Available harvest data show a thirty-six year period of sustained abundance early on, with significant declines during the past fifteen years. From 1961 to 1997, the Yukon Chinook salmon populations sustained an average combined subsistence and commercial harvest level of approximately 155,000 fish per year. Trends in returns per spawner, available for the period

1984-2004 , show periods of above-average abundance (1980-1997), mixed with years of very low productivity (1994-96 brood years and 2002-04 brood years). The problem currently facing Yukon River Chinook stocks is that most stock-specific and aggregate measures of productivity, analyses of sibling/Ricker relationships and the current observed runs sizes and escapement levels indicate that the Chinook salmon of the Yukon River watershed are in the 5th year of a multi-year period of low productivity. The resulting low abundance of Chinook salmon is insufficient to meet mandated escapement levels/ treaty obligations and provide subsistence users with a reasonable opportunity to harvest "amounts necessary for subsistence" as established by the Alaska Board of Fish. The current trend of weak runs which began in 2007 and has extended into the 2011 run have resulted from low recruit per spawner ratios from the 2002 -- 2004 brood years. Productivity from the 2002 -- 2004 brood years hovers near the minimum replacement level of one recruit per spawner necessary to sustain the population in the absence of any harvest. This multi-year decline has critical implications for the 40 rural communities in the watershed that have a high reliance on subsistence-caught Chinook salmon and among the lowest household incomes in the state.

Over the past thirty-five years, there has been considerable variability in Kuskokwim Chinook population dynamics. Productivity trends have been marked by periods of above-average survival and productivity (1983-1991 and the 2001 brood years), mixed with a majority of the years (20 out of 30 years below a 2:1 recruits per spawner ratio) showing low productivity. The problem currently facing Kuskokwim River Chinook stocks is that, based on analyses of recruits per spawner (productivity), observed runs sizes, and escapements, the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon stocks appear to be in a multi-year period of low productivity and abundance, insufficient to meet necessary escapement levels, and to provide subsistence users with the opportunity to harvest "amounts necessary for subsistence" as established by the Alaska Board of Fish. This period of low abundance, which began in 2008, has extended into the 2011 run and has resulted from the remarkably low recruit per spawner ratios of the 2004- 2006 brood years. These ratios fell below the minimum replacement level of one recruit per spawner required to sustain the population in the absence of any harvest. The current multi-year decline in the Kuskokwim River has critical implications for the rural communities within the watershed that have a high reliance on subsistence-caught Chinook salmon and have among the lowest household incomes in the state.

The Unalakleet River Chinook salmon stock abundance has declined and is no longer sufficient to support a commercial fishery, nor customary subsistence levels that it supported for many years. Some evidence of coherency in run abundance among the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River, and Unalakleet River Chinook salmon exists with low runs occurring in 2000 and 2010. Unfortunately, the data set for the Unalakleet River Chinook salmon does not contain enough years of escapement data to support more extensive analyses, including variation in recruit per spawner ratios (productivity). The limited data for this population make it difficult to effectively evaluate hypotheses about the causes for the apparent recent decline of this stock.

### Project Timeline:

This phase of work will be focused on creating a Chinook Salmon Action Plan for the AYK. The development of detailed research actions is the priority through the following activities:

1. Assess survival of juvenile Chinook salmon in the AYK near-shore marine habitat.
2. Assess growth of juvenile Chinook salmon in the AYK estuarine.
3. Expanded analysis of patterns of ocean growth (based on scale growth).

### Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Name:	Karen Gillis
Title:	Director
Address:	1130 W 6th Avenue, Suite 110 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone Number:	(907)279-6519
Email:	karen.gillis@bsfaak.org

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No



ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS  
P.O. BOX 219  
BETHEL, ALASKA 99559

---

ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS  
EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**RESOLUTION 10-02-01**

**REQUESTING THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE TO FUND ESSENTIAL  
RESEARCH ADDRESSING DISASTROUS AYK REGION SALMON DECLINES  
THROUGH THE AYK SUSTAINABLE SALMON INITIATIVE**

**February 17, 2010**

**WHEREAS**, Alaskan salmon are critically important to the survival, subsistence economy and essential way of life for the people of the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Norton Sound regions: and

**WHEREAS**, the Yukon River has experienced disastrous declines of Chinook and fall chum salmon. In addition, Norton Sound has suffered the failures of Chinook salmon most dramatically in the Unalakleet River along with other species around the area for nearly a generation. These circumstances led to widespread restrictions and closures of subsistence and small scale commercial fisheries and caused nutritional, economic and cultural hardship for the thousands of tribal members who live in the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions and depend upon the return of these salmon stocks for their health, well-being and way of life; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 15, 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke declared a fisheries disaster for Yukon River Chinook salmon in response to extremely low salmon returns in 2008 and 2009; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association of Village Council Presidents is a founding member and signatory to the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI) which serves as the ONLY collaborative multi-stakeholder effort addressing the pressing salmon research needs in the AYK region: and

**WHEREAS**, with the leadership and collaboration of the AYK SSI member organizations-- Association of Village Council Presidents, Tanana Chiefs Conference and Kawerak, Inc., the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association-- the AYK Sustainable Salmon Initiative has emerged as one of the largest and most successful working models of cooperative fisheries research in North America.

**WHEREAS**, the AYK SSI has worked with the National Research Council and its expert panel of salmon scientists to identify key knowledge gaps and established core research priorities through its Salmon Research and Restoration Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the AYK SSI has begun the difficult work of understanding the causes of the declines of salmon in the region by collaboratively funding a number of salmon research projects in the region. Many critical salmon research needs remain unfunded at this time; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association has served as the administrative entity for the AYK SSI since 2002. BSFA provides essential staffing, contracting services, planning and administrative support for the AYK SSI.

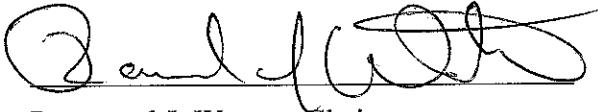
**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we request the Alaska State Legislature to appropriate urgently needed funding to address the salmon research and restoration needs throughout the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions of Alaska: and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we request that the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association serve as the recipient and fiscal agent of this and future funding directed to the AYK SSI salmon research program on behalf of the AYK SSI, with oversight by its Steering Committee as defined in the AYK SSI's 2002 Memorandum of Understanding.

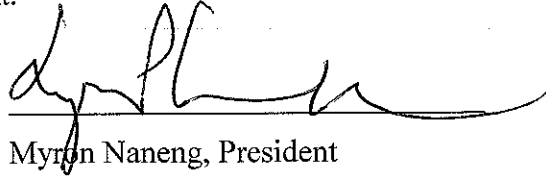
---

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted at Bethel, AK by the Association of Village Council Presidents on February 17, 2010 with a quorum present.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raymond J. Watson', written over a horizontal line.

Raymond J. Watson, Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Myron Naneng', written over a horizontal line.

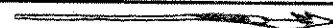
Myron Naneng, President



**KAWERAK, INC. • P.O. Box 948 • Nome, AK 99762**



TEL: (907) 443-5231 • FAX: (907) 443-4452



SERVING THE  
VILLAGES OF:  
BREVIG MISSION  
COUNCIL  
DIOMEDE  
ELIM  
SAMBELL  
SOLOVIN  
KING ISLAND  
KOYUK  
MARY'S IGLOO  
NOME  
SAVOONGA  
HAKTOOLIK  
HISHMAREF  
OLOMON  
TEBBINS  
T. MICHAEL  
ELLER  
NALAKLEET  
ALES  
WHITE MOUNTAIN

## **KAWERAK, INC.**

### **Resolution 2010-02**

#### **REQUESTING THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE TO FUND ESSENTIAL RESEARCH ADDRESSING DISASTROUS AYK REGION SALMON DECLINES THROUGH THE AYK SUSTAINABLE SALMON INITIATIVE**

**WHEREAS**, Alaskan salmon are critically important to the survival, subsistence economy and essential way of life for the people of the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Norton Sound regions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Yukon River has experienced disastrous declines of Chinook and fall chum salmon. In addition, Norton Sound has suffered the failures of Chinook salmon most dramatically in the Unalakleet River along with other species around the area for nearly a generation. These circumstances led to widespread restrictions and closures of subsistence and small scale commercial fisheries and caused nutritional, economic and cultural hardship for the thousands of tribal members who live in the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions and depend upon the return of these salmon stocks for their health, well-being and way of life; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 15, 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke declared a fisheries disaster for Yukon River Chinook salmon in response to extremely low salmon returns in 2008 and 2009; and

**WHEREAS**, Kawerak, Inc. is a founding member and signatory to the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI) which serves as the ONLY collaborative multi-stakeholder effort addressing the pressing salmon research needs in the AYK region; and

**WHEREAS**, with the leadership and collaboration of the AYK SSI member organizations-- Kawerak, Inc, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Association of Village Council Presidents, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association-- the AYK Sustainable Salmon Initiative has emerged as one of the largest and most successful working models of cooperative fisheries research in North America.


**WHEREAS**, the AYK SSI has worked with the National Research Council and its expert panel of salmon scientists to identify key knowledge gaps and established core research priorities through its Salmon Research and Restoration Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the AYK SSI has begun the difficult work of understanding the causes of the declines of salmon in the region by collaboratively funding a number of salmon research projects in the region. Many critical salmon research needs remain unfunded at this time; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association has served as the administrative entity for the AYK SSI since 2002. BSFA provides essential staffing, contracting services, planning and administrative support for the AYK SSI.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we request the Alaska State Legislature to appropriate urgently needed funding to address the salmon research and restoration needs throughout the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions of Alaska: and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we request that the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association serve as the recipient and fiscal agent of this and future funding directed to the AYK SSI salmon research program on behalf of the AYK SSI, with oversight by its Steering Committee as defined in the AYK SSI's 2002 Memorandum of Understanding.

By:   
Chairman

**CERTIFICATION**

I, the undersigned Secretary of the Kawerak, Inc. Board of Directors, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Kawerak Executive Committee on this 16<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2010 by a vote of 7 for and 0 against the adoption of this resolution.

By:   
Kawerak Board Secretary

## **TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE**

**Resolution # 2010-02**

### **REQUESTING THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE TO FUND ESSENTIAL RESEARCH ADDRESSING DISASTROUS AYK REGION SALMON DECLINES THROUGH THE AYK SUSTAINABLE SALMON INITIATIVE**

**February 26, 2010**

**WHEREAS**, Alaskan salmon are critically important to the survival, subsistence economy and essential way of life for the people of the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Norton Sound regions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Yukon River has experienced disastrous declines of Chinook and fall chum salmon. In addition, Norton Sound has suffered the failures of Chinook salmon most dramatically in the Unalakleet River along with other species around the area for nearly a generation. These circumstances led to widespread restrictions and closures of subsistence and small scale commercial fisheries and caused nutritional, economic and cultural hardship for the thousands of tribal members who live in the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions and depend upon the return of these salmon stocks for their health, well-being and way of life; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 15, 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke declared a fisheries disaster for Yukon River Chinook salmon in response to extremely low salmon returns in 2008 and 2009; and

**WHEREAS**, the Tanana Chiefs Conference is a founding member and signatory to the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI) which serves as the **ONLY** collaborative multi-stakeholder effort addressing the pressing salmon research needs in the AYK region; and

**WHEREAS**, with the leadership and collaboration of the AYK SSI member organizations-- Tanana Chiefs Conference, Association of Village Council Presidents, Kawerak, Inc., the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association-- the AYK Sustainable Salmon Initiative has emerged as one of the largest and most successful working models of cooperative fisheries research in North America.

**WHEREAS**, the AYK SSI has worked with the National Research Council and its expert panel of salmon scientists to identify key knowledge gaps and established core research priorities through its Salmon Research and Restoration Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the AYK SSI has begun the difficult work of understanding the causes of the declines of salmon in the region by collaboratively funding a number of salmon research projects in the region. Many critical salmon research needs remain unfunded at this time; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association has served as the administrative entity for the AYK SSI since 2002. BSFA provides essential staffing, contracting services, planning and administrative support for the AYK SSI.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we request the Alaska State Legislature to appropriate urgently needed funding to address the salmon research and restoration needs throughout the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions of Alaska; and



**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we request that the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association serve as the recipient and fiscal agent of this and future funding directed to the AYK SSI salmon research program on behalf of the AYK SSI, with oversight by its Steering Committee as defined in the AYK SSI's 2002 Memorandum of Understanding.

---

[Date / Signatures / Certification]



Jerry Lease  
\_\_\_\_\_, President

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES

2000 ANNUAL CONVENTION

RESOLUTION 09-10

- TITLE:** REQUESTING THE ALASKA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION, THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION, AND THE GOVERNOR OF ALASKA TO FULLY FUND ESSENTIAL RESEARCH TO ADDRESS DISASTEROUS SALMON DECLINES THROUGHOUT ALASKA, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE ARCTIC-YUKON-KUSKOKWIM (AYK) WITH FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS DIRECTED TO THE AYK SUSTAINABLE SALMON INITIATIVE
- WHEREAS:** The Yukon River has experienced disastrous declines of Chinook and fall chum salmon, in addition Norton Sound has suffered the failures of Chinook salmon most dramatically in the Unalakleet River along with other species around the area for nearly a generation, These circumstances led to widespread restrictions and closures of subsistence and small scale commercial fisheries and caused nutritional, economic and cultural hardship for the thousands of tribal members who live in the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions and depend upon the return of these salmon stocks for their health, well-being and way of life; and
- WHEREAS:** Salmon is important to all Alaska Native people for the survival, subsistence, economy and essential way of life; and
- WHEREAS:** The Secretary of Commerce is considering a Fisheries Disaster Declaration for the 2009 salmon fishing season which would be the sixteenth disaster declaration issued by state and federal agencies since 1997; and
- WHEREAS:** The Association of Village Council Presidents are founding members of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) Sustainable Salmon Initiative (SSI) which serves as the leading collaborative multi-stakeholder organization for addressing pressing salmon research needs in the AYK region; and
- WHEREAS:** With the leadership and collaboration of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Tanana Chiefs Conference and Kawerak, Inc., the AYK Sustainable Salmon Initiative has emerged as one of the largest and most successful working models of cooperative management of fisheries research in North America. The AYK SSI provides a strong co-management role for the AYK tribal organization; and
- WHEREAS:** Although the AYK Sustainable Salmon Initiative has begun the difficult of understanding the causes of the declines of salmon in the region by collaboratively funding over 50 salmon research projects in the region, many critical salmon research needs remain unfunded at this time; and
- WHEREAS:** Federal funding for salmon research through appropriations to the State of Alaska under the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) does not ensure that any research funding will reach the distressed subsistence fisheries in the AYK region; 1) over \$24 million was appropriated to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (AD&G) in FFY 2007 and 2008 for salmon research and a mere 5% of this funding was directed to salmon research in the AYK region; 2) an additional \$9 million was appropriated to ADF &G though the PCSRF in FFY 2009, and to date ADF&G has not awarded any funding to the AYK region despite the commercial fishing closure

and drastic restrictions in subsistence harvest resulting from salmon crashes on the Yukon River and Norton Sound watersheds'.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates to the 2009 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation request the United States Congress and the Alaska State Legislature to support and appropriate urgently needed funding, of no less than \$5,000,000 per year for a minimum of 8 years (the full life cycle of salmon) to address salmon research and restoration needs throughout the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim regions of Alaska; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such research funding be directed specifically to the AYK SSI as a tribal-federal-state co-management effort, and that such funding explicitly not be administered through the State of Alaska; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the delegates to the 2009 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation ask the Governor of the State of Alaska, a signatory of the AYK SSI Memorandum of Understanding, to guarantee the recommitment to working cooperatively with the regional Native organizations to support the goals of the initiative and openly and aggressively work to secure funding for the continuation of the AYK SSI to fund critical new research to address salmon declines.

SUBMITTED BY: ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

CONVENTION ACTION: AMENDED AND PASSED

