



Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council
P.O. Box 927, Bethel, AK 99559
Phone (907)543-2608 Fax (907)543-2639

RESOLUTION #18-09-16

Support for Updating Alaska Habitat Laws to Adequately Protect Salmon Spawning and Rearing Areas

WHEREAS, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* is committed to act with a unified voice for the conservation and restoration of *Kuskokwim* River salmon fisheries to protect our traditional way of life and well-being, and establish a comprehensive management plan and program based upon indigenous knowledge systems and scientific principles; and

WHEREAS, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* have demonstrated commitment and sacrifice for the conservation and restoration of *Kuskokwim* River salmon, to provide for healthy and sustainable populations; and

WHEREAS, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* depend on salmon to sustain their cultural, traditional, spiritual, and economic well-being and way of life; and

WHEREAS, salmon are a critical and irreplaceable food source for *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* where traditionally harvested foods account for up to 33% of their caloric intake and up to 60% of the protein consumed in rural Alaska is salmon; and

WHEREAS, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* seeks to reaffirm its support for habitat protections that would ensure the sustainability of the *Kuskokwim* River *Chinook* salmon and other salmon species to provide for healthy populations for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* have considerable and valuable local and traditional knowledge on salmon spawning and rearing areas; and

WHEREAS, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* recognizes that economic and community development are needed in rural Alaska for *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* to thrive, but believe development must be balanced with adequate protections that would reduce or mitigate negative and harmful impacts salmon resources; and

WHEREAS, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* believes that current habitat laws, as written in Title 16, are too vague and open to different interpretation with changing



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administrations, creating uncertainty in the permit process and do not adequately and consistently safeguard against harmful impacts to salmon; do not currently allow for a public input process, leading to a lack of transparency; and place the burden of proving salmon use the waterways proposed for development, which can be expensive and often falls to local communities, Tribes, and non-profits; and

WHEREAS, *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* have already experienced tremendous hardship from declines in salmon populations due to unknown factors, but are undoubtedly impacted by changes in climate in both the freshwater and marine environments; and

WHEREAS, development projects that do not adequately protect salmon spawning and rearing areas could exacerbate these population declines, impacts from climate change, and/or impede the recovery efforts made possible through the years of sacrifices from *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* unanimously supports the Stand for Salmon ballot initiative, which amends the State of Alaska Title 16 habitat laws; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* referentially supports the ballot initiative over the current house bill (HB 199), as the house bill could change significantly through the legislative committee process before being passed in to law and be influenced by industry lobbyists, while the ballot initiative would give the voters of Alaska a voice; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, the *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council*, in particular, supports the ballot initiative because it would clearly define “the proper protection of fish and game” and clarify important habitat characteristics to support salmon runs, such as water quality, flow levels, and fish passage; would include a public process for commenting on permits so that *Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council* can bring local and traditional knowledge to the table; and would assume all waterways are capable of supporting salmon and would place the burden of proving that a waterway does not get used by salmon on the developer, who, generally, has the monetary resources to conduct such studies.

Certification:

PASSED THIS 1st DAY OF September, 2018

AT WHICH A QUORUM VOTED 0 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAIN and 2 ABSENT.



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Approved:



Walter Jim, President

Attest:



Robert Hoffman, Secretary