

December 29, 2017

The Honorable Governor of Alaska Bill Walker
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Re: Disastrous 2018 Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod Fishery

Dear Governor Walker,

The 2018 Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod Federal catch limits and State guideline harvest levels are set at 20% of the 2017 levels. Local fishermen, processors and communities of the Aleutians East Borough, particularly Sand Point, King Cove and False Pass are highly dependent on use of the GOA Pacific cod resource. The 80% cut to the 2018 GOA Pacific cod allocations are likely to be devastating for families and businesses in the dependent AEB communities. The Aleutians East Borough, local Federally Recognized Tribal Governments and the Cities of King Cove, Sand Point and False Pass urge you to direct staff to examine this emerging crisis as soon as possible, and to request the Secretary of Commerce declare the 2018 GOA Pacific cod fishery a federal fisheries disaster as is appropriate under MSA Section 312(a). These actions would be the first steps to provide relief and mitigate some of the impacts of this fishery failure.

In December 2017, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council took the drastic necessary measures to reduce GOA Pacific cod catch limits by 80% as a way to protect future stocks based on recent surveys. The sudden reduction in the GOA Pacific cod biomass was likely caused by recent record warm ocean temperatures in the Gulf of Alaska. The sudden reduction in biomass was unexpected and beyond the ability of fishery managers to control through management measures. The Aleutians East Borough concludes that under these conditions the 2018 GOA Pacific cod fishery will qualify under MSA Section 312(a) as a fishery resource disaster that will result in a commercial fishery failure. We believe the 80% cut in Pacific cod catch limits will lead to a serious disruption of future cod production and associated revenues for municipalities, fishermen, local shore-based processors and other businesses.

The local fishing fleet in the Aleutians East Borough is largely comprised of 58 feet and under length overall vessels that fish in multiple fisheries during the year. In recent years most of these local boats have participated in salmon fishing during the summer and cod fishing in winter. The 2018 Pacific cod Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is split between areas and 60% of the TAC is available in the A season (January 1 to June 10), while 40% is available in the B season (September 1 to November 1). These time and area

divisions of the TAC are further apportioned by gear types: trawl, hook and line, jig and pot gear. The necessary conservative management of the fishery under these low catch limits will further restrict the ability of fishermen to participate in the fishery.

Please consider this plea to take a closer look at this impending commercial fishery failure and to request the Secretary of Commerce declare a Fishery Disaster for the 2018 GOA Pacific cod fishery. The AEB Natural Resources office is available to answer any questions you may have. Please call 907-274-7557.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.



George Gundersen, President
Pauloff Harbor Tribe



David Osterback, President
Qagan Tayagungin Tribe of Sand Point



Etta Kuzakin, President
Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove



James Kenezuroff, President
Belkofski Tribe



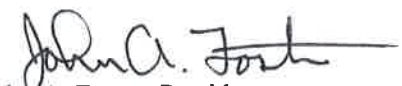
Carleen Hoblet, President
False Pass Tribal Council



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907-383-2699



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John A. Foster, President
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Mayor Henry Mack
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Mayor Nikki Hoblet
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Cc:
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan
Congressman Don Young
Lt Governor Byron Mallot
Commissioner Sam Cotten, ADFG