



Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Resolution 2021-01: Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization and Reformation of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council

WHEREAS: The 33 Tribes of the Kuskokwim River watershed have been dependent on the Bering Sea marine ecosystem for generations;

WHEREAS: Our cultures, food security, and ways of life and are deeply intertwined with the ocean via the river that connects our communities from the bay to the headwaters;

WHEREAS: Chinook salmon runs on the Kuskokwim and throughout the state of Alaska have been on a dramatic decline for over a decade, with severe restrictions on subsistence harvests and an 80% reduction in food security (i.e., number of pounds of fish harvested per person per year throughout the watershed) on the Kuskokwim;

WHEREAS: Climate change is having dramatic impacts on our oceans, and warming waters and melting ice are directly impacting subsistence hunting and fishing in our communities;

WHEREAS: Climate change is a contributor to the Chinook salmon declines, as well as other species, and these impacts are likely to increase in future years;

WHEREAS: Bycatch is an issue of tremendous concern for us, and while our commercial fishery for Chinook salmon in-river has been eliminated entirely, and subsistence greatly restricted, the pollock fleet is allowed to continue to catch these very same fish as bycatch;

WHEREAS: The Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), as the primary law governing fisheries in federal waters, is of utmost importance to us, our food security, and the very future of our communities;

WHEREAS: MSA currently does not require that bycatch be prevented but only has to be “minimized” to “the extent practicable,” meaning that the economic needs of the pollock fleet are prioritized over the subsistence, commercial and traditional salmon fisheries because further bycatch reduction is deemed “not practicable”; and

WHEREAS: MSA currently contains no language to appoint Tribal representatives to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) despite the jurisdiction this management body has over bycatch of Kuskokwim Chinook salmon in the Bering Sea marine environment;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT we urge the Council to consider climate change and climate science, including Traditional Knowledge, throughout the management process.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT we support the strengthening of bycatch reduction requirements, including Representative Huffman's language to remove the phrase "to the extent practicable," as well as further revisions to the national standards to prioritize directed fisheries over bycatch.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission calls for a reform of the Council during the reauthorization of MSA to designate at least two (2) Tribal seats on the Council with language parallel to that provided for the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Adopted on June 4, 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Williams Sr.", is written over a horizontal line.

Mike Williams Sr., Chair