



## **Resolution 18-01**

### **Resolution of Support Sea Otter Management**

**WHEREAS**, in the late 1960's, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game reintroduced approximately 400 sea otters in six different locations to near shore waters of Southeast Alaska in the absence of a long-term management plan; and

**WHEREAS**, without proper management, the sea otter population in southern Southeast Alaska has grown at an alarming rate (over 5,800 observed in 2003 and a 2010 aerial survey by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service revealed an estimate of over 11,000 otters, a growth rate of 13% per year); and

**WHEREAS** the federal government, which has jurisdiction under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), has established no effective management plan for protecting the ecosystems affected by sea otters and maintaining an ecological balance of shellfish resources; and

**WHEREAS** the unmanaged proliferation of reintroduced sea otters, which consume non-quantified yet substantial volumes of the crab, abalone, urchins, sea cucumbers, clams and other shellfish upon which the region's residents also heavily rely, appears to be contributing to a degradation in the ecological balance in many areas, and leading to diminished harvests of these important subsistence and commercial resources; and

**WHEREAS** the drastic increase and high density of reintroduced sea otter has, in some areas, so depleted shell fish stocks that subsistence, personal use, sport and commercial fishing is almost non-existent due to unsustainably low abundance; and

**WHEREAS** many residents of Alaska's coastal communities are either directly or indirectly dependent on the fishery resources of Alaska's coastal waters; and

**WHEREAS** monies derived from the harvest of Alaska's sustainably managed aquatic resources form a major component of the economies of Alaska's coastal communities and thereby make them particularly sensitive to situations negatively impacting yields from those resources; and

**WHEREAS** Southeast Alaska's indigenous inhabitants have hunted sea otters since time immemorial; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska Natives under the Marine Mammal Protection act are denied the customary and traditional ability to sell intact sea otter pelts.

**WHEREAS** Southeast Alaska's municipalities, towns and villages face substantial challenges in the development of broader economic opportunities for their residents; and

**WHEREAS** Section 101 of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act provides for exemptions for Alaska Natives for the harvest of a marine mammal as long as the taking is for subsistence purposes and not accomplished in a wasteful manner; and

**WHEREAS** Section 101 of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act further allows for the use of marine mammal pelts in the creation of authentic native articles of handicraft and clothing; and

**WHEREAS**, under the Act, such value added fur products, so created, are already allowable for sale in both intra and interstate commerce; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska is a model for the management of harvestable resources for sustained yield and sustainable use; and

**WHEREAS** implementation of a sustainable harvest management regime would serve the dual purposes of maintaining sea otter populations at a level suitable for continued ecological balance and expanded economic opportunity; and

**WHEREAS** Section 119 of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act allows the Secretary of the Department of Interior to enter into cooperative agreements with Alaska Native organizations for the conservation of marine mammals, the development of marine mammal co-management structures with Federal and State agencies and the creation of local management plans for the harvest of marine mammals for subsistence use and providing protection to important subsistence shellfish resources creating an ecological balance.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Southeast Conference urges the appropriate Federal agencies to work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Southeast Alaska's Native and non-Native leaders, to establish strategies and plans for an ecological balance between shellfish resources and the reintroduced sea otter population of Southeast Alaska; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Southeast Conference urges State and Federal government managing authorities, in developing those management plans, to actively consider means of expanding and enhancing small business and broader economic opportunities for residents of Southeast Alaska; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Southeast Conference, as a means of expanding and enhancing economic opportunities for residents of Southeast Alaska, urges Federal authorities to consider expanding the scope of allowable uses for sea otters taken for subsistence purposes; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Southeast Conference supports the efforts of the Shellfish Preservation Alliance (SPA) to further these actions.

**Adopted by the Southeast Conference on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.**

Witness by:



Jan Hill  
President

Attest:



Robert Venables  
Executive Director

**COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Alaska Congressional Delegation, Governor Walker, Lt. Governor Byron Mallott, and the Shellfish Preservation Alliance.