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Alakanuk Tribal Council

P.O. Box 149, Alakanuk, AK 99554

January 23, 2009

Robert D. Mecum, Acting Administrator
Alaska Region, NMFS, NOAA
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802

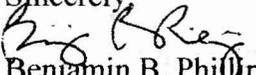
Re: Chinook Salmon Bycatch EIS

Dear Mr. Mecum:

I am writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on salmon bycatch reduction measures in the Bering Sea management area. The high salmon bycatch numbers of recent years in the Pollock fishery, threaten our salmon and our way of life. Salmon serves an important cultural and economic role in my community and throughout Western Alaska. Salmon provides a primary source of food for us, and the commercial salmon harvest provides the only means of income for many who live in the remote villages of the Yukon River. Salmon is an irreplaceable resource that must be protected by all means. Once again the lower Yukon River villages will be carrying the burden of conservation, even though the causes of salmon decline is not the result of subsistence users along the river. To our understanding, there may not be enough Chinook salmon for subsistence users this coming summer.

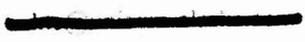
The model utilized in the DEIS drastically underestimates the impacts to Western Alaska Chinook salmon stocks, and to Chinook users. We have been dealing with rebuilding our salmon stocks since the mid-80's. To our understanding, we are still trying to rebuild the salmon stocks by reducing the amount of fishing time for subsistence. There were no commercial fishing for Chinook salmon in 2008. Our people are struggling to make ends meet with the added burden of high fuel costs to heat homes, high transportation costs, and high electricity costs.

We recommend that the Council and NMFS should set a hard cap of the lowest number of salmon bycatch immediately to protect Western Alaska Chinook salmon. We also recommend that the Council look at all means of reducing salmon bycatch, even to consider closing Pollock fishing to rebuild the Chinook salmon.

Sincerely,

Benjamin B. Phillip
President

Phone: (907) 238-3419 or 3459

Fax: (907) 238-3429

Email: 
Toney@avcp.org