

**STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE**

2015

Source
CSHJR 7(FSH)

**Legislative
Resolve No.**
6



Opposing the proposed designation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS, in June of 2014, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reestablished the process by which communities may submit applications to have the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration consider nominations of areas of the marine and Great Lakes environments as national marine sanctuaries; and

WHEREAS the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has stated that "every nomination starts at the community level"; and

WHEREAS, while the Sanctuary Nomination Process Guide published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calls for "community-based support for the nomination," it also includes a definition of "communities" that is so broad it is essentially meaningless; and

WHEREAS, in December of 2014, a collection of predominantly non-Alaska organizations led by the Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility nominated an area of approximately 554,000 square nautical miles--nearly equal to the entire landmass of the state--to be designated as the Aleutian Islands National

Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS the designation of the proposed Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary would make permanent all current restrictions on fishing and other commerce and would potentially authorize additional permanent restrictions that would prove burdensome to present and future economic activity in the region; and

WHEREAS concerns noted in the nomination have been and are currently being vigorously addressed through a variety of institutions and measures; and

WHEREAS 277,100 square nautical miles of the Aleutian Islands are already designated as a habitat conservation area; and

WHEREAS fishing in the region has long been under the conscientious, effective stewardship of local residents, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Alaska Board of Fisheries, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; and

WHEREAS the Aleutian Islands are subject to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan, which provides for heightened scientific scrutiny to assess and enrich the health of the ecosystem, the sustainability of fisheries, and the well-being of communities in the region; and

WHEREAS risks associated with shipping are being addressed through the ongoing Aleutian Islands Risk Assessment, which includes the development of the Optimal Response System to increase towing, salvage, and spill response capabilities in the region; and

WHEREAS, in December 2014, President Obama withdrew the 32,500,000-acre North Aleutian Basin Planning Area from oil and gas leasing, and, in any case, oil and gas development in the region is not feasible in the foreseeable future; and

WHEREAS strong Environmental Protection Agency regulations are already in place to address potential issues involving invasive species; and

WHEREAS, at this time, the legislature is unaware of any support from local communities, local tribes, or other local groups for the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, in the wake of the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility nomination, the Aleutians East Borough Assembly, the City of Sand Point, the City of Adak, the federally recognized Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove, the Akutan Traditional Council, the

King Cove Corporation, and the Akutan Corporation published official declarations of their strong opposition to the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, on January 23, 2015, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration informed Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility that the nomination was not sufficient to warrant further consideration; however, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also invited Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility to revise and resubmit a nomination;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature is vehemently opposed to the nomination by the Washington, D.C., based Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, or any similar nomination, for the creation of an Aleutian Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Penny Pritzker, United States Secretary of Commerce; the Honorable Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D., Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.