



International Bering Sea Forum

A Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Network of Marine Protected Areas in the Bering Sea, based upon the best available science and local traditional knowledge

In light of the fact that:

- The Bering Sea – one of the most productive seas in the world, which includes globally important habitats for many biological resources – is undergoing far-reaching environmental changes, including those caused by climate change, pollution and impacts from the prosecution of fisheries;
- The United States of America and the Russian Federation derive significant economic benefit from the Bering Sea, which produces more than 2 million tons of fish annually for the United States and 1.2 million tons for Russia;
- Pacific salmon, which depend on marine, estuarine and freshwater habitats of the Bering Sea, are a vital component of the economy, ecology and life-ways of the region;
- The health, economic well-being, and ways of life of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the region are connected to the Bering Sea and its natural resources; in addition, the socioeconomic development of coastal villages along the Bering Sea, on both the Russian and United States shores, is dependent on maintaining ecologically sustainable conditions in the region, especially in the rational use of fisheries;
- Among vertebrate species across the Bering Sea, 12.6% are considered to be of conservation concern;
- Ecosystem-based management is the cornerstone of North Pacific fisheries management, and a network of marine protected areas is a key component of such ecosystem-based management;
- Existing marine protected areas in the Bering Sea, although providing benefits to the ecosystem, were not systematically selected to comprehensively protect the full diversity of habitats, species and ecological processes, and is thus not designed to ensure ecosystem integrity.

It is hereby resolved that:

- A network of marine protected areas is necessary to ensure the long-term health of the Bering Sea and the communities that depend upon it;



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- This network should be based upon the best available science and local traditional knowledge about the Bering Sea ecosystem;
- The marine protected network should be linked to the degree possible with a network of freshwater protected areas for salmon;
- Immediate steps should be undertaken to protect representative critical habitats as defined by bathymetry and oceanographic processes, and a diversity of species in the Bering Sea.