

PUBLIC TESTIMONY SIGN-UP SHEET

Agenda Item: D-1 (c) Hagemeister WAIRUS

	NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF:
1	Jason Anderson	AKSC
2	LORI SWANSON	GFF
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NOTE to persons providing oral or written testimony to the Council: Section 307(1)(I) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act prohibits any person "to knowingly and willfully submit to a Council, the Secretary, or the Governor of a State false information (including, but not limited to, false information regarding the capacity and extent to which a United State fish processor, on an annual basis, will process a portion of the optimum yield of a fishery that will be harvested by fishing vessels of the United States) regarding any matter that the Council, Secretary, or Governor is considering in the course of carrying out this Act.

Qayassiq Walrus Commission
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December 10, 2010

To: North Pacific Fishery Management Council

From: 
Helen M. Chythlook, Executive Director, Qayassiq Walrus Commission
BBNA Marine Mammal Coordinator/Executive Director, Bristol Bay
Marine Mammal Council

RE: Qayassiq Walrus Commission/Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council Issues of
Concerns –NPFMC Ground Fish Issues: Bristol Bay Trawl Fishery and Proposed
Hagemeister Island Closures/Walrus and Marine Mammal Protection Boundary

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) in their efforts in supporting the Qayassiq Walrus Commission, the Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council and the Bristol Bay Native Association tribal marine mammal coastal traditional marine mammal hunting communities.

I would like to reiterate to the NPFMC Council, the agencies, that the Qayassiq Walrus Commission has not signed or have never signed any written agreement with the Best Use Cooperative (BUC) trawl fishery cooperative. A handful of Dillingham seasonal halibut fishermen were at the December 2009, NPFMC meetings when the NPFMC Ground Fishery Issue-Bristol Bay trawl fishery issue came up and they might have verbally agreed, but not the Qayassiq Walrus Commission. To date, the Qayassiq Walrus Commission and the Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council does not support the seasonal Northern Bristol Bay Trawl Yellowfin Sole Fishery as the trawl boats are still disturbing, diverting spring and fall migrations, and migration/feeding of the walrus, ice seals (bearded, ring, spotted seals), as well as the King eider ducks (seabirds) are going elsewhere.

Since I have been involved with QWC Commission, ten years ago, the nine (9) QWC Commissioners, QWC Hunt Captains have voiced their concerns at the QWC Pre-Hunt and QWC Post Hunt Meetings. Since the seasonal Northern Bristol Bay trawl fishery started in 1995, there has been a steady decline, for example, walrus, seal migration being diverted or rerouted, animals moving to other haulouts, King eider ducks becoming scarce due to trawl fishery disturbance, or their marine food habitat resources have been swept away from the trawl sweepers along the shorelines of the Togiak Bay, Walrus Islands, Kulukak Bay, Metervik Bay, along Cape Constantine and into the Nushagak Bay area. These concerns are serious, as the Bristol Bay tribal hunters still participate in the annual spring and fall seal, walrus, seabirds, salmon, herring, and

herring on roe, bearded seals, harbor seals, spotted seals, ringed seals, halibut fish, Murre egg gathering harvests in these areas. This is the 'grocery store' of the primarily Togiak Bay area residents of Togiak, and Twin Hills.

In December 2009, the Qayassiq Walrus Commission submitted to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council a QWC recommendation map alternative to be included in the previous NPFMC Walrus Disturbance and Trawl Fishery Issue white discussion paper to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and this is our preferred current recommendation. In the December 10, 2009 QWC letter to the NPFMC Council, the Qayassiq Walrus Commission's recommendation was to add a proposed QWC Figure 10 Map showing alternative walrus protection areas (solid pink shaded areas). The recommended QWC proposed Hagemeister Island and walrus protection habitat area is from the shorelines to the outer tips of the Walrus Islands including Hagemeister Island 25 nautical miles maximum. In the December 10, 2009 correspondence to NPFMC, QWC recommended to include additional comments below their recommended QWC map alternative: "Since the seasonal Northern Bristol Bay Trawl Fishery Area began, beginning in the early 1990's, the Qayassiq Walrus Commission hunters have observed the walrus haulout and migration patterns have been rerouted from the eastern side of Togiak Bay and Walrus Island walrus haulout and feeding sites. The traditional prime walrus hunting site, Qayassiq or Round Island eastern side is a prime walrus feeding habitat where the walrus migrated and hauled out in past years. Presently, Togiak hunters have observed walrus hauling out at Hagemeister Island and the Cape Peirce walrus haulout sites. (Personal conversation with Peter Lockuk, Sr., Lead Qayassiq Walrus Commission Hunt Captain of Togiak, Alaska since 1995). The current walrus habitat, feeding area patterns have been sighted west of the Cape possibly feeding on clams. It is local Alaska Native traditional knowledge that animals migrate where their marine food resources is available." (December 10, 2009 QWC correspondence to NPFMC Council).

The reasoning behind the recommended QWC Marine Protection Boundaries include: walrus, including ice seals (bearded seals, ring, spotted), harbor seals feeding, spring and fall migration patterns are being diverted by the seasonal Northern Bristol Bay Yellowfin Sole Fishery. For example, in the 2010 trawl fishery season, there were up to 12 huge barge size BUC trawl fishery boats fishing in the Walrus Island and Cape Constantine area.

During the 2010 seasonal Northern Bristol Bay Yellowfin Sole Trawl fishery season, there were 12 trawl catcher/processors and 10,925 metric tons were caught. I am not sure of the halibut bycatch, or the Chinook salmon bycatch. I would appreciate updated information prior to the January 2011 Qayassiq Walrus Commissioner meeting.

Other developments. Per recent discussion with a Port Heiden marine mammal hunter, he mentioned more walrus are hauling out in the Port Heiden area between 100 to 500 walrus. Recently, this Fall 2010, a local Port Heiden hunter observed some dead walrus carcasses near the community. He observed a dead walrus with a broken jaw. The hunters are concerned and want more information why the walrus had a broken jaw, which could be either from sea ice or other reasons. Cape Seniavin is one of the Bristol Bay walrus haulouts in the Alaska Peninsula. Since the Bristol Bay Native Association's 2000 Seniavin walrus monitoring project with collaborator's the U.S. Fish

& Wildlife Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, there has been no on-site monitoring project. Although during the National Marine Mammal Laboratory's annual harbor seal aerial surveys, they opportunistically have conducted Cape Seniavin walrus population haulout counts. The Qayassiq Walrus Commission works closely with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, local Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, local Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation and the Eskimo Walrus Commission. The Cape Seniavin Walrus Monitoring Project needs to be reinstated by the representatives co-managing walrus in the Bristol Bay, Alaska area.

Other developments. Per recent discussion with some Togiak tribal marine mammal hunters, the bearded seals (*ugenaqs-Yup'ik Eskimo term*), which usually haulout in the Togiak Bay area (Crooked Island, Summit Island, and nearby Walrus Island haulouts) have migrated to the Cape Newenham/Cape Peirce and Goodnews Bay coastal shoreline areas. One main factor could be from noise disturbance of the seasonal trawl fishery boats disturbing the marine mammals in the Togiak Bay and Walrus Island area. Another factor is a decline of marine feeding habitat or nursery areas from the trawl boats sweeping the fragile Arctic marine ecosystem habitats.

For the present, the Qayassiq Walrus Commission will support Figure Figure 2-3-Map showing alternate walrus protection area as suggested by the USFWS (solid blue) along with the other green circled (12 nautical mile) protection recommendation closures. But, QWC would like to recommend the local gillnet seasonal halibut longline fishery be open as this is the seasonal livelihood of the Bristol Bay tribal members.

Attach is the Qayassiq Walrus Commission Resolution 09:04-A resolution urging the Department of the Interior Marine Mammal Management and Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and, Eskimo Walrus Commission undertake with the Qayassiq Walrus Commission a long-term research plan on the impacts of climate change and industry fishing pressure on walrus in Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea.

We hope the NPFMC Council will work closely with the Qayassiq Walrus Commission, the Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, state and federal agencies in the future in establishing a permanent marine mammal protection zone closed to trawl fishery in the Walrus Island, Togiak Bay, Cape Constantine, and the Nushagak Bay nearshore areas where marine mammals, and seabirds, herring, halibut, Chinook nurseries, and habitat areas are located.

Enclosure: QWC Resolution 09:04

cc: Qayassiq Walrus Commissioners/QWC Hunt Captains
Eskimo Walrus Commission
Eric Olson, Chairman, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Ed Weiss, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Ralph Andersen, President & Chief Executive Officer, BBNA
Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council
Paul Liedberg, Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
QWC Files

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Resolution 09-04

A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR MARINE MAMMALS MANAGEMENT AND TOGIAK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND, ESKIMO WALRUS COMMISSION UNDERTAKE WITH THE QAYASSIQ WALRUS COMMISSION A LONG-TERM RESEARCH PLAN ON THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDUSTRY FISHING PRESSURE ON WALRUS IN BRISTOL BAY AND THE BERING SEA.

WHEREAS: The Qayassiq Walrus Commission ("QWC") manages the annual Native walrus hunt on Round Island, within the Walrus Islands Game Sanctuary, and is composed of representatives of each of the Native villages participating in the hunt; and

WHEREAS: As an established Native marine mammal commission functioning continuously since 1995, the QWC is a principle advocacy body in Bristol Bay regarding marine mammal subsistence use and the preservation of marine mammal habitat; and

WHEREAS: The QWC is increasingly concerned about walrus and other marine ecosystem food habitat and resources harvested relocating elsewhere to forage due to the depletion of fragile foraging habitat and fish nurseries; and

WHEREAS: The QWC believes that these foraging habitat changes are due to fishing industry pressure and climate change; and

WHEREAS: The QWC believes that a research plan is necessary in order to mitigate against a potential collapse of walrus use of the Round Island haulout and other walrus haulouts in the Bristol Bay region and Bering Sea; and

WHEREAS: A research plan requires input from both Department of Interior (DOI) Marine Mammals Management and Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and other Native marine mammal organizations, such as the Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council, Eskimo Walrus Commission, and Native hunters.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Qayassiq Walrus Commission that it urges the:

1. Department of Interior Marine Mammal Management convene a meeting to develop a research plan for Pacific Walrus in the Bering Sea and Bristol Bay region, and

2. The development of a research plan includes participation and partnership of the Eskimo Walrus Commission, Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council, QWC, the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, and Native hunters.
3. The Department of Interior invites participation of the fishing industry, specifically those harvesting yellow-fin sole.



Frank Iogusak, Sr. Chair
Qayassiq Walrus Commission

Attest: By.



DR
Daniel R. Chythlook, Secretary