

# Coastal Alaska Premier Seafoods, LLC



Coastal Villages Pollock, LLC

Coastal Villages Longline, LLC

Coastal Villages Crab, LLC

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January 31, 2025

David Witherell  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
1007 West Third, Suite 400  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Re: Comment Letter Regarding Agenda Item C2

Dear Mr. Witherell and Council,

My name is Nick Souza and I am the Director of Sales & Marketing for Coastal Villages Region Fund. I am writing today as an individual, to forward to the Council the views of my colleagues who work incredibly hard, long day at sea for months at a time, to support their families and the economic development work we do in our 20 communities in Western Alaska.

I was disappointed to see this council meeting scheduled at a time when so many people who could be affected by this action cannot be present in person to testify before you on such an important topic.

Oftentimes, when I speak to my friends outside the fishing industry, it is evident that they think of our Catcher Processor vessel, the Northern Hawk, as a large piece of steel. They do not see that the Northern Hawk is a self-contained community of over 130 people. This “community” or “family” is larger than many of the smallest villages in the CDQ program.

Because of their inability to express their views on this important topic in person, they took time to record their comments so that the council could see that the Northern Hawk is not just a fishing vessel, but a “community” of individuals who are proud to work on behalf of our twenty CDQ communities. They understand how clean the pollock fishery is, how it feeds the world with much lower environmental impact than other protein alternatives such as beef, pork, chicken, and even plant-based meat.

Please take the time to watch these videos so that you can better understand that this action has the potential to harm our “family” when the science clearly shows that even the most drastic actions on the pollock fleet have very little impact on the return of salmon into the Western Alaska Rivers.

I want to thank the Council for their long history of prioritizing decisions based on science versus emotions. A review of the initial DEIS gives me hope that science will find a landing spot for the council that can both ensure the livelihood of all our “family” and the benefits it generates for our 20 communities in Western Alaska, all while reducing bycatch to the extent practicable per the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Please see their testimony and associated video links below,

Sincerely,

Nick Souza  
Director of Sales and Marketing

### **Ben Heys, Captain, Northern Jaeger**

- Video Link [Ben Heys – 01:42](#)

Hi, my name is Ben Heys and I'm the captain on the Northern Jaeger. Been working at sea for 21 years now. Fishing in this industry is a big part of not only my life, but I run a boat with 130 people at the minimum. And this is a way we can support ourselves through sustainable fishing. Being part of this fishery means that I am able to bring home a paycheck, which will support my family and make sure that we live comfortably. As the captain of the Northern Jaeger, I have 130 people at the minimum that are counting on this fishery to support their families, and we can only do that together. Running a boat of this magnitude, taking on hundreds of tons of fish a day, catching minimal bycatch--this is one of the most highly regulated fisheries in the entire world, and we have a group of 15 boats that are all on the grounds. We communicate, make sure that we can sustain this fishery. Not today, not, not tomorrow, but years. Our children will be running these boats one day. The pollock fishery is not only one that will sustain the world with sustainable fish, it keeps the oceans regulated. We're stewards of the sea. We do our job so that, you know, other fisheries can do theirs and we enjoy being a part of that.

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### **Francisco Diaz, Chief Mate, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Francisco Diaz – 01:50](#)

My name is Francisco Diaz. I'm the chief mate on the Northern Hawk. I've been in the pollock fishing industry for 33 years now. On this boat for 14 years. One of my roles besides navigating and moving the fishing equipment is reporting to Coast Guard, State of Alaska, Washington, everybody that we need to report, we comply with regulations. It's part of my job. And safety is very important for our crew because everybody here is supporting themselves, their families. And we want to do our best. And we're very happy and proud that the whole industry has been improving year to year, and we've got very strong, sustainable fisheries. Every year we get quotas and we get to move from area to area and do different things to make it a clean fishery. Our families depend on it and besides our family, I'm very happy to work for a nonprofit that is helping communities. It's a very good feeling. It's great.

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### **Jim Egaas, Captain, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Jim Egaas – 02:38](#)

I'm Jim Egaas. I'm currently the captain of the factory trawler Northern Hawk. We're 341-foot factory trawler. We catch and produce pollock. I've been in the fishing industry for 44 years. The Northern Hawk is owned by Coastal Villages and Coastal Villages is a Community Development Group which is made up of 20 different villages in Alaska. Now, I've been in the industry since CDQ started, obviously. I saw firsthand through the years what the money has brought to these villages up there. We've always been under a lot of scrutiny for bycatch, being a trawler and being a big large factory trawler through the years. My time on the boats, it's always been, "Oh, the large factory trawlers are scooping up the whole ocean," which isn't really true. The pollock fishery and the factory trawlers, these boats are some of the most efficient vessels in the whole wide world. I mean, pollock fishery is one of the most well-managed fisheries in the world, and their bycatch is one of the lowest of all fisheries in the world. When it comes to salmon bycatch too, now, through the years, we've learned a lot of the hot areas now from experience the times a year where it's going be bad for salmon. So, there's areas that we do naturally avoid. We also have an avoidance program set in place, so when bycatch hits a certain point, there's notice that goes out to all the boats and we have voluntary closers so we get closed out of areas. A lot of times by the time we get those notices, we've already communicated between the vessels. We're always on the radio with the other vessels, so if we start seeing a lot of salmon, we communicate that with the other boats, and a lot of times, boats will just pull up the gear and change area right away when you hear that. Nobody wants to catch salmon. If this pollock fishery gets shut down, it's probably going to end up being just

caught by the Russians more and then they'll just keep fishing until it's depleted completely. So, I appreciate and I'd like to thank the members of the Council for listening to my testimony today and believing in science and believing in what we're doing out here, that we are trying to fish clean and reduce the bycatch as much as possible and do what we can to keep this fishery going for a long time.

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### **Tom Hinderman, Chief Engineer, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Tom Hinderman – 02:40](#)

Hi, I'm Tom Hinderman. I'm chief engineer on board the Northern Hawk here. Started in 2000. I moved to the state of Alaska in 1986 and started in the pollock industry in 1988 when these boats were originally built and came over from Norway. So, kind of the beginning of the pollock industry. For the last 10 years while living in Alaska, I live on a Salmon Creek up in South Central Alaska, I've been to several meetings on the Susitna Dam and all its controversies. I followed the salmon controversies in the trawl fleet from many, many years ago when it was talked about up on the Yukon. It's a big concern. But in all these, I've always felt there's so many different variables that can cause the decline in salmon. I've seen it, on my own property and everything that we do out on these vessels, we're trying to not catch salmon or any other bycatch. It only slows down our production. All we want to do is catch clean tows, and that maximizes our efficiency out here. And I think as everyone knows, this is the most efficient fishery in the world. There's no other way that we can catch and process at sea, and you compare that to the carbon footprint of doing it on land, and it's just so much more efficient out here. I take great pride in what this industry does, not just our company, but, we are very efficient at what we do. I've started when it was Olympic Fishery, and now since we have individual fishing quotas that have been created over the years, it's even so much better. It's letting us do the most with the product that comes on board. The recovery rates have doubled since the Olympic days. I often say there's not much left for the seagulls to eat. We're utilizing everything that comes on board--fishmeal, fish oil, and every scrap and piece.

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### **Terje Gjerde, Factory Manager, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Terje Gjerde – 02:53](#)

My name is Terje Gjerde. I'm the factory manager on the Northern Hawk. I've been working here since 2012. Just in the factory there's a hundred people working there and it's every one of those people that depend on, this is their job, this is what they do for a living. It's just like going to work anywhere. You know, it's like if you lose that job, you know that all their families are going suffer, right? So, I think that people really like that, you know, the money is going to help other people. We also have a few other people from the village working on the boat, and we, you know, we, we want them to come and work on the boat. We have, we have a few that are working here now and it would be great if we could get more, but it's really nice to be able to help people with, you know, everything they need. We, you know, we heard them talk about the villages and all that, how they don't have running water, they don't have sewer, some of them probably don't have electricity, or they just run off generators and stuff. You know, and we're helping them to live, you know, basically, and get food, you know, same as our crew members, we're helping them live and we give them jobs and what we do affects a lot of people. And it's not just the people on the boat. This is the cleanest fishery in the world. And I mean, there's hardly any bycatch at all. The salmon, we keep it to the little bit of salmon, we do catch, we keep it, then we give it to food banks and so we try to take care of every fish we catch. There really is nothing going overboard. And I think our fishery probably has the lowest bycatch rate in the world. I always get questions from people when, you know, ask what you do, you know and they, people ask me, "Oh is the fishery sustainable?" It's like, well, it's probably the most well-managed fishery in the world. So that's what I tell them. They go, "Oh, I had no idea." You know, they think we're just kind of out there going crazy. But it's a really, really well-managed fishery. And everything we, every fish goes across the scale and we have government observers on board that, that monitors everything we do 24 hours a day. And we are on camera the whole time when it's going across the scale and they can see what we do with it.

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**Marcus Flanders, Surimi Tech, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Marcus Flanders – 01:23](#)

My name is Marcus Flanders. I'm a surimi tech on the Northern Hawk. I've been working here since 2000, so for 25 years. Started as a processor on board and worked up my way to surimi teching. I started out here as a young father and I was able to get on the job training-- from working as a processor and then through the QC department, and then I was able to train as a surimi tech, so having those opportunities on board to better my living situation and my family situation is very important to me and has been for years, and I appreciate that. I think one of the things that I've been most proud about since the Hawk became Coastal is that we can support a lot of the Alaskan communities and that a lot of the profit from the company goes straight to the communities there. I'm really impressed with the way the captain and everybody tries to minimize any bycatch that we have on board. Over the 25 years that I've been here just watching that and the concern that the captain and everybody has about that is really impressive.

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**Maria McKenzie, Surimi Tech, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Maria McKenzie – 01:44](#)

Hi, I'm Maria McKenzie. I'm a Surimi Tech on the Northern Hawk. I've been here working 13 years. I started as a surimi QC and got an opportunity to move up. I have a lot of mentors here who helped me out and I've been working as a tech for four years. Working here on the Hawk has been a great opportunity for me. I wanted to go to college like a lot of people and I really couldn't afford to go, so I thought I would come on the Hawk or in the fishing industry and save some money and go to college. But I fell in love with the industry and I ended up staying here and it's a great opportunity to learn on the job. And I have a career and I never expected really to be in the position that I have now, but I'm proud of myself and the crew here and the people here have helped me become who I am today. I'm very proud that we, as the Northern Hawk, our crew, we work hard but it's nice to know that a percentage of our funds are helping other communities, the Alaskan people. In this world, it's tough right now and people are hungry and people need, you know, working toilets and electricity and that's what we're doing here. And so it's great.

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**Maribel Fierro, Housekeeper, Northern Hawk**

- VIDEO LINK: [Maribel Fierro – 00:58](#)

My name is Maribel Fierro and I'm a housekeeper here on the Northern Hawk and I've been here for 14 years. Be around all the crew is like my second family. I know everybody, the crew's been the same almost the last 10 years, so I feel like I know them like my kids. I've been a single mom since 15 years ago and it helps me get my kids to school and supporting them with all the things they need. And it makes big difference working here because I know I left them behind, but when I'm with them we spend a lot of quality time and that makes like a big family. It's very important this job because I know we help a lot of the community and the villages up in Alaska, so it makes me happy.

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**Nino Jornadal, Factory Tech, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Nino Jornadal – 02:03](#)

Good morning everybody. By the way, I'm Nino Jornadal. I'm a factory tech in Northern Hawk and five years I've been working here in the company, and in other companies, is more than 15 years. That's my job, as a factory tech, it's a big help to my family. It's not about my job, it's to my family's responsibility. I feed my family because of my job. So, it's not sacrifice, it's a responsibility of family. And I love this job, this company, because I see the camaraderie, brotherhood, sisterhood here, especially my manager. I always say, my job is

thanks God, because even this hard job, but he give me a lot of responsibility of my family. Because anywhere in the country, for me, I know this boat is different kind of people, different kind of country to work here, different tradition, different food, but for me it's the same dignity. By the way, in Kodiak, about fishing is, yeah, they're supportive of fishing in Alaska, especially in Kodiak, it's a lot of cannery. Same thing, a lot of people working over there and a lot of visitors because of fishing, fishing game and help. It's good environmental in Kodiak and more people love fishing to support and love in sharing, because anywhere God gives to us in earth.

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### **Spencer Zoch, First Mate, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Spencer Zoch – 02:36](#)

I'm Spencer Zoch. I'm 28. I've been fishing since 2014. I started fresh out of high school, was definitely one of the youngest here when I started. I love it. It's definitely going to be a career mine all the way, I'm hoping, for sure. The sustainability of the fishing in that we do behind it to do it as clean as we possibly can is a lot of effort that we've put into and we have to sacrifice a lot of good fishing sometimes to change it up a little bit and be cleaner and to not damage our resource that we have and everything and be smart about it. The communication with other boats, you might think that because we're fishermen, we have a lot of secrets and hide from other things. We don't. We want it to be good and clean for everyone and that way we can continue to do this as much as possible. We'd get shut down if we were fishing dirty and stuff. It would be done a long time ago. We have observers on the boat that are checking our every single move. It just, it wouldn't work.

It would stop the boat completely if we had a bunch of bycatch on here, production-wise or just industry-wise, and jail time, I mean everything that would have come from it and stuff. So, it's virtually impossible for us to be dirty whatsoever and we want to do it as clean as possible to get in and get out. We don't want to take any more than what we need. Farming and commercial fishing go hand in hand a lot, definitely. This is a global food industry really. You know, farming has more of a family life tie into it where we are kind of a family within our own boat. But there's a lot of people still that's generations of fishing of course but it is a scale of more friends and everything here that become family and farming definitely has a livelihood to it and fishing does as well. And it's needed for both of them to have a perfect balance. And they're a necessity for the world to have the resources that we do of fish oil for all your medication and the fish that you need in your daily diet and all the omegas and everything that come from it. It's all necessity. It's not just a fishery in Alaska, this is pollock provides for everywhere globally as well. So that's always amazing to see. And see just how long that will go for it. I don't know, but I hope it goes a long, long time because I would love to make a career out of it and continue to do what I do.

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### **Stephen Batchelor, Processor, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Stephen Batchelor – 00:55](#)

My name is Stephen Bachelor and I'm a processor on the Northern Hawk. I took this job because, mainly for my family, for income and I've always wanted to be a fisherman. I've been trying to get out of the oil field and get somewhere where I felt more like God wanted me to be. So, mainly, my heart brings me here and I've seen that there's a lot of people that work here and they work hard to do the fishing. And a lot of people put their time and effort into it. And like I said it's a nonprofit business-- all the money that they make goes into families in Alaska that don't have anything so that's the main part right there for me. You know, I'm all about trying to help people, so that's the most main part of me wanting to be here.

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### **Francis Repunte, Factory Technician, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Francis Repunte – 00:44](#)

I'm Francis Repunte, a factory technician of Northern Hawk, and I've been in the industry for a little bit over 13 years now. This is my livelihood and, you know, there's a lot of people on board--over a hundred people. It's

really good to be a part of a larger scale in helping people, which is like 20 villages in Alaska that, you know, we're helping. This is basically a nonprofit company. I am grateful that, you know, I am a part of this big company that is actually full entirely helping people.

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**Leandro Arreola, Galley Assistant, Northern Hawk**

- Video Link [Leandro Arreola – 01:06](#)

My name is Leandro Arreola. I've been fishing and working in the Northern Hawk for four years. I'm a galley assistant--the chef assistant-- and I work in the galley and the kitchen. I really love my job because it supports me, supports my family. I'm the oldest of my siblings, so I support my parents, my siblings back home. And I love what I do. I love helping others, serving others. I work in the galley/kitchen, right, so I like cooking, I love serving other people and I love what I do. I've never imagined I'd be working in the fishing industry, but now that I do, I really love it and I hope I'll be doing it for many, many years. Besides helping me, my family, it helps the villages, other people, not only them, we feed the world. We're able to help those villages and it's a satisfaction, it's a pride to work for this company.