



SERVING THE
VILLAGES OF:
BREVIG MISSION
COUNCIL
DIOMEDE
ELIM
GAMBELL
GOLOVIN
KING ISLAND
KOYUK
MARY'S IGLOO
NOME
SAVOONGA
SHAKTOOLIK
SHISHMAREF
SOLOMON
STEBBINS
ST. MICHAEL
TELLER
UNALAKLEET
WALES
WHITE MOUNTAIN

January 05, 2018

Honorable Congressman Don Young, US Congress
Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski, US Congress
Honorable Senator Dan Sullivan, US Congress
Honorable Governor Bill Walker, State of Alaska
Honorable Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallot, State of Alaska

RE: Kawerak, Inc. opposes offshore oil / gas leases in the waters of the Bering Strait Region and seeks your assistance

Dear Governor Walker, Lieutenant Governor Mallot, Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Representative Young:

On behalf of the 20 federally recognized tribes we represent, Kawerak, Inc., writes to express our stance regarding the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program (DPP) released by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management as it relates to our region. We have worked toward better management of the Northern Bering Sea and have gone on record opposing oil and gas lease sales in our region, which encompasses the Hope, St. Mathew Hall, Navarin, and Norton Basin Planning Areas. Nonetheless, the DPP includes one sale in each of those regions.

For millennia, the health of the Northern Bering Sea has been of paramount importance to our communities. Since the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972 and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, tribes in our region have fought to ensure that our lands and waters will be managed to continue to provide for our people. We are already experiencing the effects of a changing climate, and the threats from oil and gas activities would further compound those impacts.

I am looking to your offices to provide a balanced perspective during this public comment period. On the Atlantic side, many members of Congress, (including republicans) are publicly opposing offshore leases in their regions. It appears as though our entire Congressional delegation and State Administration are expressing broad and general support for this proposal, which you are aware is contrary to the needs and wishes of the tribes in the Bering Strait region. We enlist your support in carrying our message to the Administration that tribes in the Bering Strait region are opposed to opening the Hope, St. Mathew Hall, Navarin and Norton Basin Planning areas to oil and gas leases.

Currently, BOEM has scheduled only one public meeting in Alaska. Three hours is all the public is allotted to convey our views, present our case, and describe the impacts to our communities. It seems clear that our perspective is not being considered in the broader debate. Therefore, I request that your office conduct outreach to our communities in order to hear our concerns, and we hope that, in turn, you will represent our interests to BOEM. Tribal consultation is necessary on matters that affect the well-being and survival of our tribal communities. Those of us who live in and rely on the resources in the Bering Strait region deserve a more meaningful process to provide input. We are not simply another special interest group or "stakeholder" like the groups representing environmental conservation or economic development. Our relationship to our waters is not just a matter of promoting a cause or making a dollar; our waters are literally our lifeline. Please urge the Administration to conduct tribal consultation in the Bering Strait region on the matter of lease sales that would impact our region.

Our world and our ocean are changing dramatically around us. We have sought meaningful consultation and comprehensive management for our region and our people. We remain committed to that goal and hope you are as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melanie Bahnke".

Melanie Bahnke, President / CEO
Kawerak, Inc.