



COOK INLETKEEPER®

PROTECTING ALASKA'S COOK INLET WATERSHED AND THE LIFE IT SUSTAINS

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2007-01

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN ENDANGERED LISTING FOR THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE, AND CALLING ON LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS, AND COOK INLET INDUSTRIES TO IMMEDIATELY COMMENCE RESEARCH ON POSSIBLE ANTHROPOGENIC EFFECTS ON BELUGA WHALE SURVIVERSHIP.

WHEREAS, the Cook Inlet beluga whale is a small, isolated and discrete population that is separate and distinct from the four other stocks of beluga whales found in Alaskan waters;

WHEREAS, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) estimates as many as 1300 whales inhabited Cook Inlet as recently as the 1980's;

WHEREAS, NMFS has identified unregulated subsistence hunting in the 1990's as a primary factor in the whales population decline;

WHEREAS, after NMFS and subsistence hunters installed tight harvest controls in 1999, NMFS predicted the Cook Inlet beluga whale population would rebound at a rate of 2-6% per year;

WHEREAS, NMFS's aerial surveys estimated 302 remaining whales for 2006, representing an annual average decline of 5.6% between 1994-2006;

WHEREAS, aside from limited sampling and analysis through the Alaska Marine Mammal Tissue Archival Project, little or no scientific research has occurred to understand the effects of pollution discharges, habitat disturbance and noise on Cook Inlet whales;

WHEREAS, as the beluga's population has contracted, it increasingly inhabits the more-industrialized regions of Upper Cook Inlet, and various projects and proposed projects, including the Asplund Sewage Treatment Plant, the Fort Richardson Firing Range, oil and gas industry drilling, waste discharge and seismic activities, the proposed Chuitna coal mine, the proposed Knik Arm Bridge, the Department of Homeland Security's proposed anti-swimmer system for the Port of Anchorage, and the Port of Anchorage expansion project, among others, may adversely affect the beluga whale and its habitat;

WHEREAS, Trustees for Alaska, on behalf of Inletkeeper and other groups, filed in 2006 a petition to list the Cook Inlet beluga whale under the federal Endangered Species Act, and such listing will lead to the designation and protection of habitat critical to the whale's survival;

WHEREAS, the Kenai Borough, the Mat Su Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage and the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority are financially supporting legal efforts to stymie the ESA listing effort; and

WHEREAS, changing climate conditions create additional stresses to the Cook Inlet beluga whale, and the whale's continued survival is important for the economic, social, and cultural well-being of Cook Inlet residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF COOK INLETKEEPER DOES HEREBY RESOLVE:

1. Inletkeeper urges NMFS to list the Cook Inlet beluga whale immediately under the federal ESA to ensure the whale's continued survival, and to ensure the integrity of the ecosystem that supports countless species, including humans, throughout the Cook Inlet watershed;
2. Inletkeeper urges the Kenai Borough, the Mat Su Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Knik Arm Bridge & Toll Authority, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the State of Alaska, and Alaska's congressional delegation to immediately fund scientific research projects identified by NMFS to understand possible anthropogenic impacts to the Cook Inlet beluga whale.

HAVING BEEN DULY CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PURSUANT TO COOK INLETKEEPER'S BY-LAWS, THIS RESOLUTION IS HEREBY ADOPTED THIS 1ST DAY OF JUNE 2007.



Bob Shavelson, Executive Director

June 1, 2007

Date