



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

March 7, 2008

Dear Tribal Representative:

Please find enclosed the proposed rule for the Bering Sea habitat conservation measures for the groundfish fisheries. The National Marine Fisheries Service is proposing to close certain waters of the Bering Sea to protect bottom habitat from the potential effects of nonpelagic trawl gear. The closed areas include waters surrounding St. Lawrence, St. Matthew, and Nunivak Islands, Etolin Strait, and Kuskokwim Bay. The fishing industry and North Pacific Fishery Management Council worked with the Association of Village Council Presidents to identify the boundaries of these closures to ensure protection of subsistence resources that may depend on bottom habitat.

NMFS has special obligations to consult and coordinate with tribal governments and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations on a government-to-government basis pursuant to Executive Order 13175 and the Executive Memorandum of April 29, 1994, on "Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments." As a result of your tribal or ANCSA corporation status, you have the opportunity to comment to NMFS at any time; however, only comments submitted during the proposed rule comment period would be considered in the development of the final rule for this action. I encourage you to submit written comments by mail or email. The enclosed proposed rule provides instructions for submitting comments and additional information on this action.

Additionally, you have the opportunity to consult with and provide comments to NMFS in person. To request a meeting with NMFS, please contact Melanie Brown at 907-586-7006. I look forward to working with you on this action. For more information on the proposed rule, please visit our website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

Enclosure

