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To the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
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Mr. Chairman, It is an honor for me to address this committee on an issue that is heart and soul to Alaska Native Peoples, subsistence. Through the generations a subsistence life has taught us to be the stewards of the land and waters that support us. To take what we need and to return to the land what we don't need. We are taught not to waste and to share. With a respect for and thorough knowledge of the environment our ancestors were able to survive and even thrive in the harshest conditions because we managed our harvest. The principle of not wasting meant that we understood the principle of sustainable harvest.

The 1994 re-authorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act allowed the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce to enter into Cooperative Agreements with Alaska Native Organizations for the management of the subsistence harvest of marine mammals. Co-management began in Alaska in 1977 when the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) signed an agreement with NOAA to manage the harvest of bowhead whales. This co-management agreement was successful because:

- The vast knowledge the whaling captains held on the behavior and numbers of bowhead whales and their willingness to share this information with the management agency
- The AEWC development of self regulation and their resolve to abide by these regulations
- The willingness of NOAA to consider the traditional knowledge held by the whaling captains and augment that knowledge with new scientific techniques and equipment
- The willingness of NOAA to share management responsibility with AEWC and to support shared management

The Alaska Nanuuq Commission was organized in 1994 to represent the hunters and villages in North and Northwest Alaska in the negotiation of the U.S./Russia Polar Bear Treaty. Thanks to the Native American Policy developed by the late Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mollie Beattie, the Alaska Nanuuq Commission became a full partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the negotiation of the treaty. The treaty was signed on October 16, 2000 here in Washington, D.C. The treaty is unique in that it recognizes the traditional knowledge of the native people of both Alaska and Russia and provides for their full and equal participation in setting harvest limits and the management of the subsistence harvest of polar bear. When the Russian Ambassador to the U. S., Yurie Ushakov, signed the treaty he declared that it is the most democratic treaty that Russia had ever signed. Once the treaty is ratified, the Alaska Nanuuq Commission will have achieved a level of co-management that only AEWC has reached. The Alaska Nanuuq Commission is now developing a Native-to-Native Agreement to implement the treaty with the Association of Traditional Marine Mammal Hunters

of Chukotka, which represents the native people of Chukotka, Russia.

Other successful co-management agreements beside the Alaska Nanuuq Commission and the AEWG include:

1. Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission with NMFS on harbor seals
2. The Alaska Sea Otter and Stellar Sea Lion Commission with the USFWS and NMFS on sea otters and sea lions
3. The Alaska Beluga Committee with NOAA on beluga
4. The Eskimo Walrus Commission with USFWS on walrus
5. The Yukon/Kuskokwim Goose Management Plan between the Association of Village Council Presidents and USFWS

You will note that all of these agreements are between Alaska native groups and federal agencies. And with the exception of the goose management plan the agreements cover marine mammals, which have specific legislation, the MMPA. But the same principles can be applied to terrestrial species and to fish. We have a history of successfully working with the federal agencies that goes back for than 25 years. With the federal government now managing subsistence the opportunity is there to solve management issues by developing co-management agreements with Regional Non-profits and Alaska Native tribes.