



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PRESIDENT OBAMA ISSUES EXECUTIVE ORDER TO SAFEGUARD THE
BERING SEA, ESTABLISHES NORTHERN BERING SEA CLIMATE RESILIENCE
AREA**

Today is historic for the people of the Northern Bering Sea; President Obama heard our voices and announced an Executive Order (EO) that will safeguard our marine environment. We are grateful for the leadership and guidance of our Board of Directors, who directed Kawerak to engage and advocate for Tribal involvement in policies concerning the arctic. The EO formally mandates the federal government to include us in deliberations that impact the marine environment in an area that is home to federally recognized Tribes.

The Bering Strait Region is ground zero for climate change and is also the chokepoint for marine traffic, which is increasing dramatically as a result of the lessening of sea ice. This area is home to marine mammals, fish and seabirds, which are essentially the breadbasket and the garden for the people in the region. This rich marine ecosystem is critical to our culture and survival as a people as it provides subsistence resources that our Tribes and communities have relied on for thousands of years. Our way of life is truly dependent on the environment that we live in and the natural resources that provide for us.

Kawerak looks forward to facilitating involvement of the people most affected by decisions in the arctic - the people who actually live here - to guide management of the important ocean resources in our region. Kawerak is particularly appreciative that President Obama has

taken this step to promote traditional knowledge in monitoring, observation and research. We also appreciate that this EO will protect the vital subsistence economies that have lasted for millennia.

The Tribes in Alaska were the first natural resource managers, the first participants in arctic commerce, and the first environmentalists. Our people have relied on the land, air, and sea to sustain us physically, spiritually and culturally for thousands of years. For us, a healthy marine ecosystem is a matter of food security and it also allows us to maintain our unique cultural identity and rich heritage.

We also need to have a balance between economic opportunities and our cultural way of life, and we appreciate President Obama's recent deployment of an Economic Development Assessment Team to our region this past week. Kawerak participated in this three-day planning event, along with the regional entities who have an interest in economic development initiatives. There are increasing opportunities for our people to benefit from commerce activities that do not conflict with our cultural values of being good stewards of the land, air and sea. We look forward to partnering with the federal government and our local and regional economic development organizations to facilitate economic development initiatives that are sustainable.

Kawerak's mission is to advance the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region. Kawerak is a nonprofit tribal consortium that provides over 40 different programs to the Inupiaq, St. Lawrence Island Yupik and Yupik people who reside in 16 communities of western Alaska and represents the 20 federally recognized tribes in the Bering Strait Region. www.kawerak.org

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