



KAWERAK, INC.

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mis:

Sitaisaq

Council

Diomede

Iᅅaliq

Elim

Niviarcaurluq

Gambell

Sivuqaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Qawiaraq

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuak Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktoolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Qikiqtaq

Solomon

Aᅅuutaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tala

Unalakleet

Uᅅalaqᅅiq

Wales

Kiᅅigin

White Mountain

Iᅅaᅅuik /

Nutᅅirviq

August 4, 2020

U.S. COAST GUARD SECTOR ANCHORAGE
BLDG. 49000, Guard Road
JBER, AK 99505

via e-mail sector.anchorage@uscg.mil

RE: Foreign Debris in the Northern Bering Sea August 2020

Kawerak is very concerned that foreign debris is littering the normally pristine coasts of the northern Bering Sea. From at least 4 reports (Unalakleet, Gambell, Savoonga, and Nome) we have received and which Kawerak staff have responded to and cleaned up Kawerak and local and regional partners have documented an alarming increase and presence of foreign debris on our ancestral shores.



Figure 1, debris from clean up west of Nome, August 1, 2020, courtesy Austin Ahmasuk

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.



Figure 2, debris from clean up west of Nome, August 1, 2020, courtesy Austin Ahmasuk

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.





Figure 3, debris from clean up west of Nome, August 1, 2020, courtesy Austin Ahmasuk

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.





Figure 4, debris from clean up west of Nome, August 1, 2020, courtesy Austin Ahmasuk

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.





Figure 5, debris from clean up west of Nome, August 1, 2020, courtesy Austin Ahmasuk

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.



Gay Sheffield of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Northwest Campus and Alaska Seagrant Program assisted local residents Erika Apitiki of Gambell and Jeff Erickson of Unalakleet with write ups of debris from near Gambell and Unalakleet (attached) which heightens our concern because of the large scale of the debris event we are now experiencing. Residents in our communities have taken it upon themselves to become first responders and despite efforts to reach out to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's, Marine Debris program and the U.S. Coast Guard it seems as though responding to this event has not been adequate to meet our concern and we are having to bear the cost of cleaning our shores ourselves.

Kawerak urges the U.S. Coast Guard to fully investigate and mitigate this event with the necessary action to enforce the rules of the sea to not dump plastics into the ocean¹. As shipping has been increasing we are seeing more negative impacts piled on top of others with dire consequences for our people and the environment. Our people depend on the sea for life and have stewarded the oceans only to find them being polluted and changed as shipping increases and the climate warms.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,

Melanie Bahnke
Melanie Bahnke, PRESIDENT
Kawerak, Inc.

CC: Congressman Don Young
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/sea-litter-ships-bottles-1.5318390>

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.

