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2007 FEB 27 01 5:18

Robert D. Mecum, Acting Administrator
Alaska Region, NMFS, NOAA
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Re: Salmon Bycatch EIS

Dear Robert:

Our Tribal Members here at the Yupiit of Andreafski are commercial and Subsistence fisherman/women in St. Mary's on the Lower Yukon River in Western Alaska. We are writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on Salmon bycatch reduction measures in the Bering Sea management area. The high Chinook salmon bycatch numbers of recent years has adversely affected our Yukon salmon stocks and has put our village economies and livelihood in jeopardy. With reduced numbers of salmon in our rivers and with increased efforts to meet escapement goals for the Yukon in Alaska and Canada our ability to fish for subsistence has been greatly reduced and our King commercial fishing has been eliminated with no King gear openings summer of 2008. With the highest unemployment and poverty rates in Alaska our small lower Yukon fishery depends on its summer fish harvests for food and income. Salmon is a primary source of food for us, and the commercial salmon harvest provides the only means of income for many who live in the remote villages of the Yukon River. Salmon is an irreplaceable resource that must be protected equally at every point of its migration journey.

We recommend that the Council and NMFS set a hard cap of 29,700 Chinook bycatch in the Bering Sea immediately to protect Western Alaska Chinook salmon.

Sincerely,

Gail Alstrom-Beans
President, Yupiit of Andreafski Tribe