

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 14, 2011

The Honorable Daniel Akaka
Chairman
Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Vice Chairman
Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Akaka and Vice Chairman Barrasso:

Subsistence hunting and fishing in Alaska is a tradition sustaining Alaska Natives for 10,000 years. These activities feed the families throughout remote villages in our state and ensure the cultural values, traditions, and lifestyles continue to pass from one generation to another. As it has been for centuries, subsistence resources represent a major and often primary source of nutrition for the vast majority of Alaska Natives.

Since 1989, the federal government has held full management authority for subsistence hunting and fishing on federal public lands in Alaska. This federal takeover is the result of the State of Alaska Legislature's failure to pass a constitutional amendment guaranteeing a rural subsistence preference. What was intended to be temporary oversight has been in place for over two decades and has resulted in a failing management system.

During the 2009 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Interior Secretary Salazar announced a review of federal subsistence management in Alaska. While this is a step in the right direction, there is much more work to be done.

I respectfully request the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to hold an oversight hearing on subsistence during the 112th Congress. This hearing would provide an avenue for stakeholders in the subsistence issue to explore new, innovative ways of ensuring sustainability of such an important way of life.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator