

Aleutians East Borough Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, Sand Point

AEB Assembly Passes Resolution Opposing Nomination for Aleutian Islands Marine Sanctuary



Sand
Point,
AK –
Jan. 9,
2015 –

Yesterday, the Aleutians East Borough (AEB) Assembly unanimously passed a [resolution](#) in favor of opposing the nomination of the Aleutian Islands as a national marine sanctuary.

“The [NOAA national sanctuary nomination process](#) clearly states that ‘Every nomination starts at the community level’, however the Aleutians East Borough is not currently aware of ANY local support from local regional communities, tribes or local groups for this nomination,” the AEB Assembly resolution stated.

The AEB resolution further stated that the potential designation would make all current restrictions to fishing and other commerce permanent and would authorize further onerous permanent restrictions. The Borough and other tribes in the area are concerned this could cause economic harm to communities

within this area, which are mostly dependent on commercial fishing.

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and several environmental organizations submitted the [nomination](#). The proposed sanctuary would encompass all federal waters along the entire Aleutian Islands archipelago to the Alaska mainland, including federal waters off the Pribilof Islands and Bristol Bay, an area of approximately 554,000 square nautical miles, greater than the size of the State of Alaska.

PEER claims that Aleutian waters face serious threats from overfishing, oil and gas development and increasing shipping with little protection. President Obama recently extended the withdrawal of the Bristol Bay region from offshore oil leasing. Environmental groups are concerned that Congress or a future administration could reopen the area. PEER states that a marine sanctuary designation would permanently put a stop to any such action.

The Borough resolution states that protections from overfishing, increased shipping and risks associated with oil and gas development are unnecessary because those safeguards are already in place from federal and state agencies. Stocks in this region are at record levels due to good stewardship by management agencies such as the North Pacific Management Council, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and local residents. The Optimal Response System recently recommended by the Aleutian Island Risk Assessment project addresses risks associated with increasing shipping. Furthermore, the resolution adds that much of the Aleutian Islands (277,100 square nautical miles) is already designated as a habitat conservation, and further protections are not warranted.

Other tribes and local governments in the area are considering similar resolutions.

NOAA is now required to conduct a 30-day preliminary review to determine whether the Aleutians are eligible to become a sanctuary. Extensive studies, public hearings and public comment would then follow. A final designation could take months.

The Aleutians East Borough is the municipal government encompassing the southwestern portion of the Alaska Peninsula and a number of the easternmost Aleutian Islands. It extends 300 miles along the eastern side of the Alaska Peninsula and includes the communities of Sand Point, Cold Bay, King Cove, False Pass, Akutan and Nelson Lagoon. The communities are dependent on subsistence and commercial fishing.

Lack of Local Support Squashes Proposed Marine Sanctuary Around Alaska's Aleutian Islands

SEAFOODNEWS.COM [KUCB] By Lauren Rosenthal - January 27, 2015

The federal government has turned down a request to create a vast marine reserve around the Aleutian Islands.

On Friday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that the Aleutians won't advance in the process to become a national marine sanctuary -- mostly due to a lack of local support.

Adak, King Cove, Akutan, and the Aleutians East Borough all came out against the nomination. Environmentalists and research groups had been seeking permanent limits on oil and gas leasing and commercial fishing in federal waters around the Chain.

At more than 730,000 square miles, it would have been the largest marine sanctuary in the country.

In a letter, a NOAA representative suggested that a smaller swath of the Bering Sea could be eligible -- areas that "encompass the specific resources you believe to be of the highest value." But the agency would still need to see proof that other interest groups are on board.

There are 13 national marine sanctuaries around the United States -- each with its own local management panel. Those groups can advise NOAA on new regulations for commercial inside the reserve...