

**United States Senate**

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2013

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chairwoman  
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 Chairwoman Cantwell and Vice Chairman Barrasso:

I write this letter to request an oversight field hearing in rural Alaska on the topics of food security and subsistence rights of Alaska Native peoples. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs has been called upon by the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) to reassert the federal oversight role in subsistence management. I believe it is time to address the federal government's role in the management of subsistence, as has been requested from each region of Alaska.

Subsistence hunting and fishing in Alaska is a tradition sustaining Alaska Natives for thousands of years. The continuation of this way of life throughout villages in Alaska ensures that indigenous cultural values and traditions are passed on from one generation to another. As they have for centuries, subsistence foods represent a major and often primary source of nutrition for the vast majority of Alaska Natives. Alaska Native populations suffer under some of the highest prices for food and energy in the nation and access to subsistence hunting and fishing allows some relief from this.

Traditional hunting, fishing and whaling are important for the survival of Alaska Natives' overall health and wellbeing, for their subsistence economy, and their way of life. Understanding the causes and effects of the declining salmon is crucial to the state and the country as a whole. With over sixty percent of the United States fisheries in Alaska there is much at stake for those who rely on a healthy, reliable, and robust fishery. In other regions, disruptions to the traditional hunting territories are impacting moose and caribou migration patterns. In the Arctic, a growing number of marine mammals are being listed on the endangered species lists and impacting coastal community members' abilities to harvest these animals for nourishment. All of which cause a great deal of uncertainty for the people who depend on these as primary food sources.

Chairwoman Cantwell and Vice Chairman Barrasso

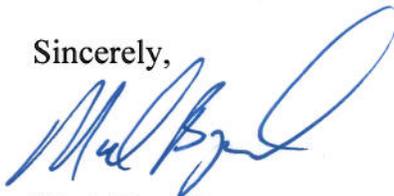
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I support AFN's desire for the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to hold a field hearing in rural Alaska, focused on food security and subsistence rights preferably during the week of May 27, 2013. If that date does not work for the committee, I will continue to coordinate with both of you to secure a date later this year. A hearing such as this has not occurred in over a decade. This hearing would provide an avenue for subsistence users to build the record on ways to improve and strengthen the current co-management structures involving Alaska tribes, the State of Alaska, and the federal government and 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