

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, ALASKA REGION
AND
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, ALASKA REGION
AND
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, ALASKA REGION
AND
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, ALASKA REGION
AND
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, ALASKA REGION
AND
ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS
AND
COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS
AND
KAWERAK INCORPORATED
AND
KUSKOKWIM RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION
AND
NATIVE VILLAGE OF EAGLE
AND
NOME ESKIMO COMMUNITY
AND
TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE
AND
YUKON RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into to formalize the partnership between the United States Department of the Interior (“Department”) agencies, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Geological Survey (USGS), National Park Service (NPS); Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments (CATG), Kawerak Incorporated (Kawerak), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Native Village of Eagle, Nome Eskimo Community (NEC), Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), and Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (YRITFC); collectively referred to as the Parties.

ARTICLE I – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to formalize a partnership between federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes, tribally authorized consortia, and tribal organizations (collectively referred to in this MOU as “Tribes”) in the Northern Bering Sea region, the Yukon and Kuskokwim River watersheds of Alaska and federal agencies within the Department.

Gravel to Gravel is an initiative through which federal agencies and Tribes will work together to build a strong foundation for co-stewardship and co-management, where both Indigenous and Traditional Knowledges, and western science, are brought together to support habitat restoration, resilient salmon ecosystems, and communities in the region.

ARTICLE II - BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Since time immemorial, the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Northern Bering Sea regions have sustained Alaska Native people, fish, birds, and other wildlife, supporting strong and resilient communities and traditional Ways of Life. Traditional Indigenous foods derived from the flora and fauna of these unique regions remain vital to food security and the vibrant cultures of the more than one-hundred Alaska Native Tribes who have stewarded and lived for thousands of years in reciprocity with the land, waters, and animals of the region.

The Native communities, and the ecosystems they depend upon, have suffered because of climate change and the degradation and commodification of natural resources. One stark example of these impacts is the decline of Pacific salmon populations, a keystone species at the center of the ecosystem. The absence of Pacific salmon has led to the decline of the cultural and spiritual health and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples who have relied on salmon for more than 10,000 years. The collapse of Pacific salmon populations has resulted in compounding detrimental effects throughout the ecosystem leading to food insecurity for people, other animals, and plants.

Department leaders heard directly from Alaska Native Tribes and tribal citizens about the profound ecosystem collapses, the impacts on communities and cultures, and the need for immediate and lasting “gravel to gravel” action by the federal government. Gravel to Gravel refers to the whole lifecycle of Pacific salmon species.

First, Alaska’s Senate delegation hosted the “Salmon Summit/Roundtable” in December of 2021. That event brought added attention to the salmon crisis in Alaska. Later, in 2022, the Departments of Interior and Commerce were invited to Tribal consultation in Bethel and Fairbanks, Alaska to hear concerns from Tribal leaders about the salmon crisis. Tribes requested that federal agencies work together to focus on the entire life cycle of salmon, including freshwater and ocean habitats. Finally, recommendations brought to the agencies at the salmon crisis consultations were included in a proposed keystone initiative in November of 2022.

On March 2, 2023 Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland formally announced the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative at an event with leadership from the Alaska Federation of Natives in Washington, DC. This watershed-level resiliency and restoration effort for the people, salmon, and land of the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Northern Bering Sea regions is one of just 9 keystone initiatives (KI) across the nation that the Secretary committed the Department’s attention and investments toward. The focus of resources is designed to turn the tide on climate change related, landscape-scale conservation challenges.

In response to the Tribes’ urgent call to action, the Department is partnering with Alaska Native Tribes, tribally authorized consortia and organizations, Indigenous leaders, other agencies and community partners, to launch the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative. Gravel to Gravel will make immediate investments in the foundational science and projects needed to respond to the salmon crisis and invest in projects to heal the broader ecosystem. (Department of the Interior. Gravel to Gravel Factsheet. 2022)

OBJECTIVES

1. Collaborate across jurisdictional and geographic boundaries through co-stewardship and co-management to restore the health of, and relationships between, salmon, people, and place.
2. Build and maintain trust and communication, and strengthen relationships between Tribes and federal agencies, to increase capacity and knowledge sharing around the care for salmon.
3. Honor tribal sovereignty and self-governance by advocating for tribal stewardship and tribal recommendations regarding decision-making and regulatory authority in wildlife ecosystems and fisheries management.
4. The Parties will work in partnership on ecosystem restoration and resilience, salmon conservation, and other projects that are within and adjacent to the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative and include expertise from Indigenous and Traditional Knowledges.

ARTICLE III - AUTHORITY

The following authorities reinforce the MOU:

- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII (16 U.S.C. §§ 3111 – 3126)
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. §§ 1601 et seq.)

- Federal Subsistence Board regulations (36 C.F.R. Part 242 and 50 C.F.R. Part 100)
- The USGS authority to enter into this MOU is pursuant to Public Law 99-591 that bestows permanent authority on the USGS to “prosecute projects in cooperation with other agencies, Federal, state, and private” (43 U.S.C. § 36c)
- Executive Order 13175 "Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments" (November 2000)
- Executive Order 13754 "Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience" (December 2016)
- Executive Order 13990 “Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science To Tackle the Climate Crisis” (January 2021)
- Secretarial Order 3317, Department of the Interior Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes (December 2011)
- Secretarial Order 3335 "Reaffirmation of the Federal Trust Responsibility to Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Individual Indian Beneficiaries" (August 2014)
- Secretarial Order 3342 “Identifying Opportunities for Cooperative and Collaborative Partnerships with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in the management of Federal Land and Resources” (October 2016)
- Joint Secretarial Order 3403 “Joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters” (November 2021)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Native American Policy (January 2016)

The Department has a government-to-government relationship with and trust responsibility to the federally recognized Tribes in the Gravel to Gravel Initiative. Nothing in this MOU negates the federal government’s trust responsibility to any federally recognized Tribe in Alaska. The Department is committed to implementing programs and grant initiatives that further tribal sovereignty and self-governance. The federally recognized Tribes within the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative are the governing bodies for tribal citizens, and stewards of the homelands, and waters of the region.

ARTICLE IV – VISION STATEMENT

Together, with Tribes centered, we unite to care for salmon, from gravel to gravel.

ARTICLE V – STATEMENT OF WORK

THE PARTIES MUTUALLY AGREE TO:

- Provide a point of contact and, as feasible, regularly attend Gravel to Gravel meetings and functions, which will include both virtual and in-person options.
- Support expansion of tribal and agency capacity-building as a key goal within the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative, including, but not limited to positions to implement

projects, technical support, outreach, education, and sustainable funding for meaningful engagement with Tribes.

- Engage in regular and meaningful year-round consultation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing regarding the restoration of Pacific salmon, cultural and ecosystem resilience, and food security within the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative.
- Endeavor to coordinate public statements and other outreach regarding this MOU and the Gravel to Gravel projects.

ARTICLE VI - TERMS OF AGREEMENT

- This MOU shall become effective upon the signature of BIA, BLM, USFWS, USGS, NPS, AVCP, CATG, Kawerak, KRITFC, Native Village of Eagle, NEC, TCC, and YRITFC, listed under Article VIII.
- This MOU shall continue until terminated by BIA, BLM, USFWS, USGS, NPS, AVCP, CATG, Kawerak, KRITFC, Native Village of Eagle, Nome Eskimo Community, TCC, and YRITFC.
- A Party may leave this MOU by providing 30 days advance written notice to the other Parties. Upon notice of intent to leave, the Parties will meet promptly to discuss the reasons for the notice and to try to resolve differences.
- Amendments to this MOU may be proposed by any Party and shall become effective upon the signature of all the Parties.
- This MOU shall be reevaluated by the Parties every two (2) years from the date of execution.
- Additional parties may join this MOU by Additional Party Amendment as provided in Appendix C and this Amendment will become effective when signed by USFWS and BLM Directors and the party's legal representative. All current signatories will be notified when new parties are added to this MOU.
- Nothing in this MOU may be construed to obligate any current or future expenditures; obligate or transfer funds, personnel, supplies, equipment, or services between the Parties; or create actual or implied intention to enter into a contract or financial assistance agreement.
- Any endeavor involving reimbursement or contribution of funds between the parties will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures. Such endeavors will be addressed in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by authorized representatives of both parties under appropriate statutory authority.
- Nothing in this MOU may imply that the Department endorses any product, service or policy of a non-federal entity and a non-federal entity will not take action that suggests or implies such an endorsement.

ARTICLE VII - KEY OFFICIALS

Key officials are essential to ensure maximum coordination and communication between the Parties and the work being performed. Should a key official leave their position or place of employment, the Party they represent will make a replacement and provide notice to all Parties. They are:

- BIA – Subsistence Program Manager (Glenn Chen)
- BLM – Gravel to Gravel Coordinator (Rebecca Shaftel)
- NPS – Science Advisor, Alaska Region (Jeff Rasic)
- USFWS – Gravel to Gravel Coordinator (Boyd Blihovde)
- USGS – Alaska Science Center Director (Christian Zimmerman)
- AVCP – Natural Resources Manager (Jennifer Hooper)
- CATG – Natural Resources Director (Bruce Thomas)
- Kawerak – Social Science Program Director (Julie Raymond-Yakoubian)
- KRITFC – Executive Director (Kevin Whitworth)
- Native Village of Eagle – Administrative Assistant and Indian General Assistance Program Coordinator (Kanisha Quincy)
- NEC – Tribal Council Member (Loretta Bullard)
- TCC – Executive Director, Tribal Government and Client Services (Amber Vaska)
- YRITFC – Science and Policy Consultant (Eva Burk)

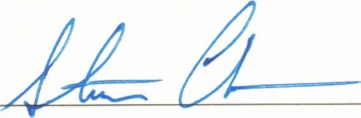
ARTICLE VIII - SIGNATURES



Sara Boario, Regional Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region

10/16/24

Dated:



Steve Cohn, State Director
Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office

10/16/24

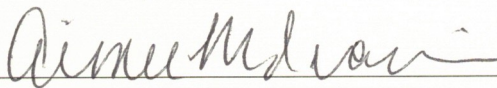
Dated:



Sarah Creachbaum, Regional Director
National Park Service, Alaska Region

10/16/24

Dated:



Aimee Devaris, Regional Director
US Geological Survey, Alaska Region

16 Oct 2024

Dated:



Jolene John, Regional Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Region

Oct 16, 2024

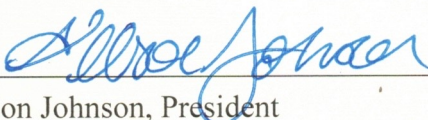
Dated:



Melanie Bahnke, President
Kawerak, Inc.

10/16/2024

Dated:



Allison Johnson, President
Nome Eskimo Community

16 Oct 24

Dated:




Vivian Korthuis, Chief Executive Officer
Association of Village Council Presidents

Oct. 16, 2024

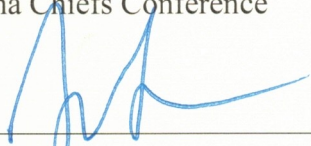
Dated:


Rhonda Pitka, Chairperson
Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments

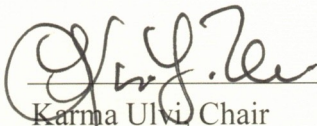
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Dated:


Brian Ridley, President
Tanana Chiefs Conference

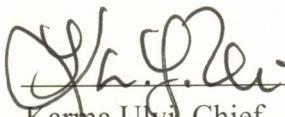
10/16/24
Dated:


Jonathan Samuelson, Chair
Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

10/16/24
Dated:


Karma Ulvi, Chair
Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

10/16/24
Dated:


Karma Ulvi, Chief
Village of Eagle

10/16/24
Dated:

3 Appendices

- Appendix A – Definitions (2pp)
- Appendix B – Map (1p)
- Appendix C – Additional Party Amendment to MOU (1p)

Appendix A - Definitions

Co-stewardship - The term “co-stewardship” broadly refers to collaborative or cooperative arrangements between Department bureaus and offices and Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations related to shared interests in managing, conserving, and preserving Federal lands and waters. (Department of the Interior. www.doi.gov)

Co-management - Two or more entities, each having legally established management responsibilities, working collaboratively to achieve mutually agreed upon, compatible objectives to protect, conserve, use, enhance, or restore natural and cultural resources. (USFWS Alaska Region Native Relations Policy)

Ecosystem restoration - Ecosystem restoration means assisting in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed, as well as conserving the ecosystems that are still intact. (United Nations. www.decadeonrestoration.org)

Indigenous Knowledge - Indigenous Knowledge is a body of observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, technologies, practices, and beliefs developed by Indigenous Peoples through interaction and experience with the environment. It is applied to phenomena across biological, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual systems. IK can be developed over millennia, continues to develop, and includes understanding based on evidence acquired through direct contact with the environment and long-term experiences, as well as extensive observations, lessons, and skills passed from generation to generation. IK is developed, held, and stewarded by Indigenous Peoples and is often intrinsic within Indigenous legal traditions, including customary law or traditional governance structures and decision-making processes. (Department of the Interior Departmental Manual 301 DM 7 Departmental Responsibilities for Consideration and Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in Departmental Actions and Scientific Research, 12/05/2023, <https://www.doi.gov/document-library/departamental-manual/301-dm-7-departamental-responsibilities-consideration-and>)

Another definition for Indigenous Knowledge that has been developed by Kawerak is included here as well: Indigenous Knowledge can be described as a body or system of knowledge that any indigenous person has. This is in contrast to Traditional Knowledge which is specialized knowledge, with a strong connection to heritage, on a topic or topics. Indigenous Knowledge is a broader term, which encompasses Traditional Knowledge as well as other forms of knowledge. All indigenous people have Indigenous Knowledge, but only some of them have Traditional Knowledge. We do not presume that there is a similarity/commonality between the bodies and systems of knowledge held by all indigenous groups. (Kawerak Knowledge and Subsistence-Related Terms, Internal White Paper, May 2017, kawerak.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Kawerak-Knowledge-and-Subsistence-Related-Terms.pdf)

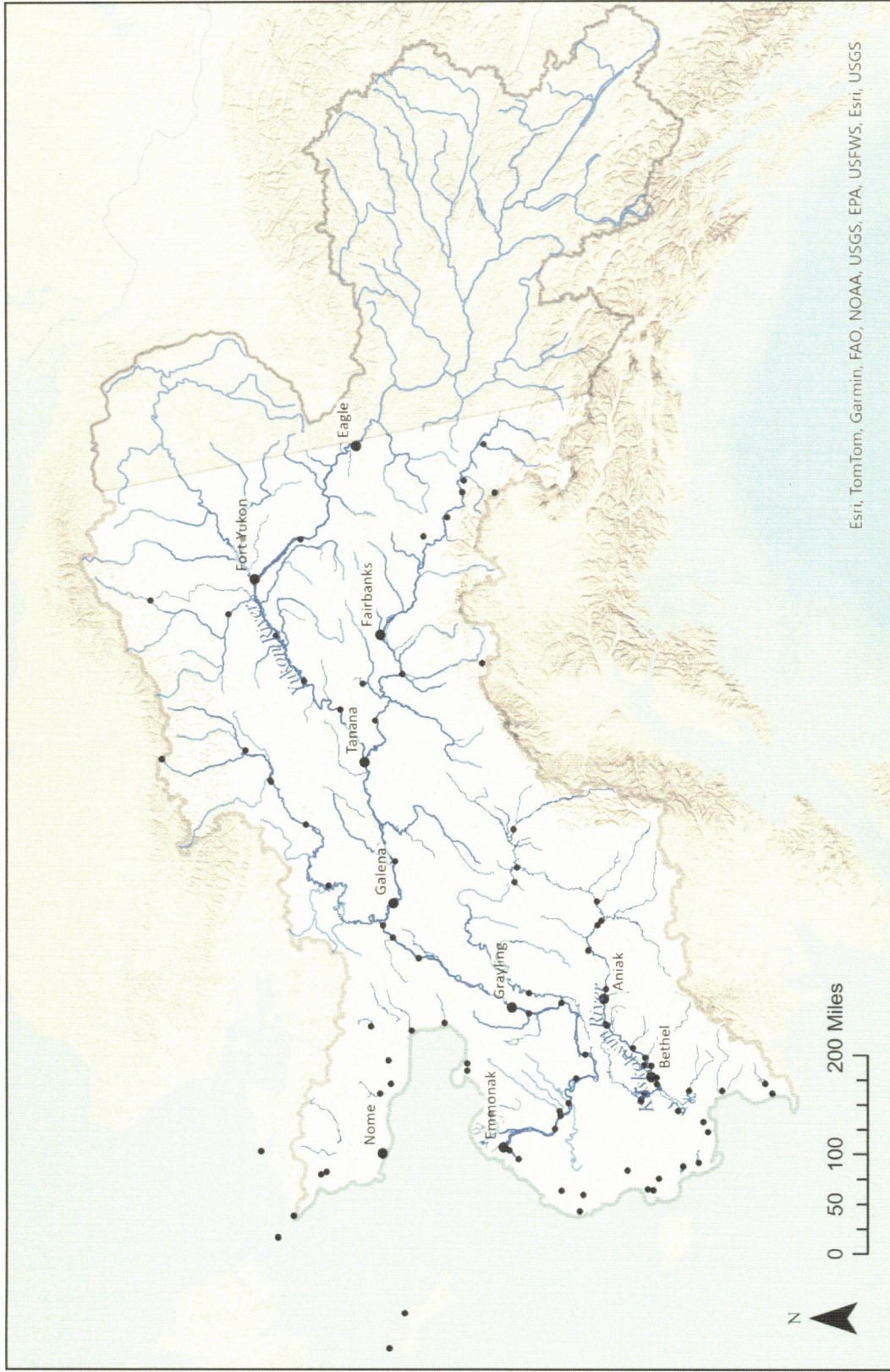
Traditional Knowledge - Traditional Knowledge (TK) is a living body of knowledge which pertains to explaining and understanding the universe and living and acting within it. It is acquired and utilized by indigenous communities and individuals in and through long-term sociocultural, spiritual and environmental engagement. TK is an integral part of the broader knowledge system of indigenous communities, is transmitted intergenerationally, is practically

and widely applicable, and integrates personal experience with oral traditions. It provides perspectives applicable to an array of human and nonhuman phenomena. It is deeply rooted in history, time, and place, while also being rich, adaptable, and dynamic, all of which keep it relevant and useful in contemporary life. This knowledge is part of, and used in, everyday life, and is inextricably intertwined with peoples' identity, cosmology, values, and way of life. Tradition – and TK – does not preclude change, nor does it equal only 'the past'; in fact, it inherently entails change.¹

To reiterate, all Traditional Knowledge holders are indigenous.

¹ Raymond-Yakoubian, Julie, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian and Catherine Moncrief. The incorporation of traditional knowledge into Alaska federal fisheries management. *Marine Policy* 78 (2017): 133

Appendix B - Map



Map of the Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative that includes the Northern Bering Sea region and the Yukon and Kuskokwim River Basins of Alaska. There are approximately 100 communities associated with federally recognized Tribes in the initiative area.

Appendix C. Additional Party Amendment to Memorandum of Understanding
Concerning: Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative in Alaska

The purpose of this amendment is to allow for additional agencies (state or federal) or Tribes to sign onto this MOU.

Additional signatories may include Tribes in the Northern Bering Sea, Yukon or Kuskokwim regions invited to join this MOU and shown on the map in Appendix B. Several communities in the Northern Bering Sea region were invited because they have their own relationships with salmon and relationships (related to salmon) with the Tribes that are within the physical boundary.

In accordance with Articles II, V, and VI and under the authorities outlined in Article III, this amendment serves to annex and include the (add new signatory name here) among the MOU Parties.

APPROVED:

Sara Boario, Regional Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service

Dated:

Steve Cohn, State Director
Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office

Dated:

(New signatory name and organization)

Dated: