

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Panama City, Panama

The International Whaling Commission (IWC), at its 64th Annual Meeting in Panama City, Panama, today approved by a vote of 48 to 10 (with two abstentions) the joint request from the United States and the Russian Federation to set catch limits for aboriginal subsistence whaling on bowhead whales. The Commission adopted catch limits for 2013 through 2018 that allow Alaskan and Chukotka native whalers to land up to 336 whales to meet subsistence need over the next six years.

George Noongwook, the Chairman of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) and member of the US delegation to the IWC, had the following statement:

“This is a great day for our Alaska communities. The IWC’s action today means that we will be able to continue to put food on our tables and conduct our whaling using the same number of strikes as we have for the past 15 years. The whaling captains of the AEWC would like to thank the IWC and the US delegation with all our hearts. We also thank our fellow whaling captains and their families for their prayers and steadfast support for the AEWC.”

Charlotte Brower, the mayor of the North Slope Borough and also a member of the US delegation to the IWC, added:

“This has been a trying time for us, but now the international community has recognized the importance of our hunt to our culture and food security and agreed with our request. The North Slope Borough scientists have worked hard for over 30 years to demonstrate what our Elders already knew, which is that the bowhead stock is growing and our hunt to meet need is sustainable. This is indeed a great day for our communities. I also want to add our thanks to the Alaska Congressional delegation and the AEWC for their hard work on this issue.”

The catch limits adopted by the IWC also include an annual limit on the number of bowhead whales that may be struck each year and the limit adopted today is the same as the one that applied for the past 15 years. The United States and Russian Federation allocate the available strikes between Alaska Eskimos and Chukotka natives under a bilateral agreement. Under the agreement for 2012, 75 strikes were allocated to the eleven Alaskan villages represented by the AEWC and 7 strikes were allocated to the Chukotka natives. It is anticipated that the same allocations will be agreed for 2013.

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