

FROM: Albert Howard, Mayor
City of Angoon,

DRAFT

XX December 2015

and

_____, President

Angoon Tribal Government, as Angoon Community Association

Angoon, Alaska 99820

TO: Valerie Davidson, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
State of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Commissioner Valerie Davidson:

Thank you for your sincere dedication to improving Alaskans' health and valuing traditional foods as key to our indigenous cultural fitness. We concur that maintaining access to quality wild foods is critical to our food security, cultural identity as well as practice and perpetuation of our healthy traditions. These beliefs are at the core of our purpose for conveying this letter.

The Community of Angoon has an extensive track record of engagement on issues pertaining to the Admiralty National Monument and the Greens Creek Mine. Our elders and community leaders advocated strongly for establishing the Admiralty National Monument as a means to conserve the ecological riches and our traditional home of Admiralty Island. They were assured that our subsistence rights would be protected. Today, we still hear assurances from the permitting agencies that after 26 years after the mine started operating that our access to and the quality of our traditional foods remains unimpaired. We have strong evidence that these assurances are inaccurate.

In May 2015, one of our seal hunters harvested a seal from a well known seal haul-out at Hawk Point, just outside the entrance to Hawk Inlet, where some 50 seals were congregated. The hunter contributed tissues from his kill for bio-sampling to Friends of Admiralty (FOA), who were at the time doing a study in the inlet. The seal was brought back to Angoon, butchered and as our culture is practiced, shared not only with our residents, but also shipped to relatives elsewhere in the state. Some weeks later the laboratory results were received and showed that the seal liver contained very high concentrations of mercury (second highest ever measured in the State, m at >200 ppm THG wet weight), and other metals. FOA recently shared data with us on the concentration of metals in Hawk Inlet black seaweed, cockles, crab, shrimp, clams and mussels. These data indicate that all species tested are also higher, and in some cases substantially higher in heavy metals than the same seafood tested from around Alaska.

We have observed in Hawk Inlet this year heavy concentrations of commercial crab and shrimp pots and people boating and flying in digging clams and setting personal use crab and shrimp pots.

We are deeply concerned that we and others are at a significant health risk by collecting and eating our traditional foods from Hawk Inlet. Until there is a definitive determination that these foods are safe to

consume we have warned our tribal members and Angoon citizens not collect foods on west Admiralty north of Parker point.

We are asking for your help to interpret levels of trace metals reported by both the FOA study and by Hecla Greens Creek Mine to ADEC annually (cockles, mussels, etc.) to determine whether they are safe for human consumption? Specifically, we wish to answer these question:

1. Do the levels of metals reported in subsistence species in Hawk Inlet warrant any concern for human health?
2. Should we or other citizens have any concern over harvesting or purchasing, consuming and sharing these traditional food items from Hawk Inlet?
3. If these foods are found to be unsafe to consume what steps will the state take to protect consumers as well as mitigate the hazard?

Thank you for any assistance you and your staff may provide. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time regarding our concerns about environmental and fisheries health in Hawk Inlet.

Sincerely,

Angoon Tribe/city

EFH

cc. Lt. Governor Byron Mallott
Barbara Blake, Special Assistance
Larry Hartig, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Sam Cotton, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Attachments: Legacy Cove Note 2: Heavy Metals in Hawk Point Harbor Seal
Legacy Cove Note 3: Metals in Edible Marine Species from Hawk Inlet