

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 15, 2019

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The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Received & Inspected
JAN 23 2019
FCC Mailroom

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to echo the concerns of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) regarding the Federal Communication Commission's Enforcement Advisory (No. 2018-04) regarding the use of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) to identify and track fishing gear. We urge you to find an expedient solution to this issue that will allow commercial fishermen in Alaska and across the country to utilize this important technology for their safety and efficiency at sea.

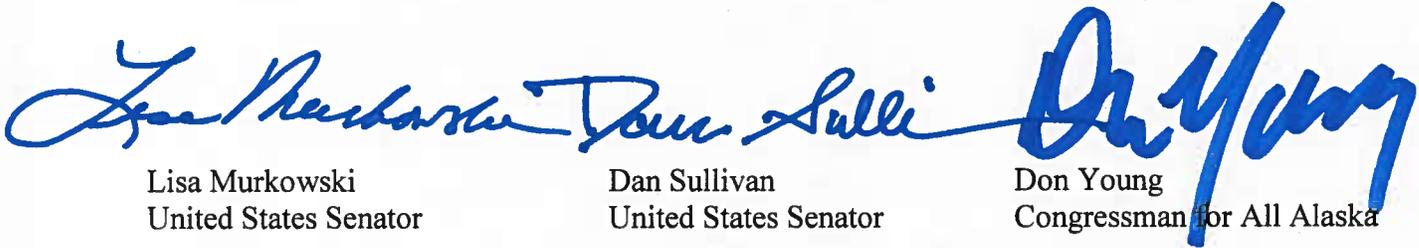
Alaska's fisheries provide the nation and the world with a reliable source of sustainably-harvested, nutritious seafood. Commercial fishing in our state supports more than 27,000 jobs and harvests fish and shellfish worth an estimated \$1.6 billion in ex-vessel value (2017). Fishermen prioritize safety and efficiency at sea, as mandated by the National Standards set forth in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and Alaskans have long been pioneers in utilizing cutting edge technology to improve safety, reduce bycatch, and facilitate comprehensive monitoring and reporting of catch. To that end, fishermen in Alaska have begun using AIS technology to mark their gear with the aim of preventing accidental entanglements while also mitigating gear loss.

We understand that the International Telecommunications Union plans to consider the use of autonomous AIS beacons, including those deployed on fishing gear, at the World Radiocommunication Conference in October of 2019. Unfortunately, waiting for resolution of this issue at the international level is not an acceptable solution to us nor to our fisheries-dependent constituents. Fishermen in Alaska are now facing incredibly steep fines for utilizing an effective technology that supports safety at sea, improves tracking and retention of deployed gear, and prevents gear loss that might unintentionally place unsustainable fishing pressure on our valued stocks.

We strongly support the Council's request that the Federal Communications Commission immediately commence a process to authorize the use of AIS markers on fishing gear, either through its Private Aids to Navigation regulations or another regulatory mechanism. Further, we request that the FCC immediately reconsider its enforcement advisory regarding the use of AIS beacons. We share the view of the Council that the use of AIS markers on fishing gear presents a valuable opportunity to improve safety, efficiency, and gear retention in our fisheries. Fishermen should not be penalized with thousands of dollars in fines for taking this opportunity.

We look forward to working with you to identify a solution that supports the safety, security, and livelihoods of Alaska's fishermen. Please contact our respective offices with your questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska

CC: Admiral Karl Schultz, United States Coast Guard Commandant
RADM Timothy Gallaudet, Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
Mr. Chris Oliver, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries