



The  
Alaska  
Sea Otter and  
Steller Sea Lion  
Commission

*1988-2004: Sixteen years preserving the balance for Alaska Native peoples & marine mammals.*

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**FY2005 STRATEGIC PLAN**

**NOVEMBER 15 & 16, 2004**

**APPROVED DECEMBER 7, 2004**

**REVISED MARCH 31, 2005**

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**THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION**

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## **THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION BACKGROUND**

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The Alaska Sea Otter Commission, a tribal consortium, was established in 1988 to promote Alaska Native involvement in policy decisions pertaining to sea otters. In 1998, at the request of member tribes, The Alaska Sea Otter Commission added Steller Sea Lions to its mission and goals, formally expanding to The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission (TASSC).

Throughout the past sixteen years, TASSC has worked with coastal Alaska Native peoples, Alaska Tribal governments and communities to protect Alaska Native rights, further involve local people in marine mammals research and management, and to fulfill conservation and management measures in the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act and the Fur Seal Act.

## **THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION VISION**

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The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission's vision is to become an internationally recognized resource in the conservation and co-management of sea otter and Steller sea lion with Alaska Natives' that protects subsistence rights and promotes artistic development.

## **THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION MISSION**

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The mission of The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission is to ensure and further Alaska Natives' role in sea otter and Steller sea lion conservation, management, research, education and artistic development.

## **THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION BUSINESS VALUES, CULTURE AND CLIMATE**

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The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission's Board of Commissioners and staff recognize that TASSC's overriding values, culture and climate influence the way business is accomplished.

These fundamental values will guide all activities of the Board of Commissioners, management and staff of The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission.

- ❖ We advocate for all Alaska Native peoples' subsistence and traditional customary rights.
- ❖ We will support and/or collaborate with member tribes for research and monitoring projects.
- ❖ We have deep understanding and respect for all Alaska Native culture.

These services to our members will demonstrate The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission's commitment to providing excellent service to all of our member Alaska Native tribes and tribal organizations.

- ❖ We will co-manage sea otter and Steller sea lion populations with member Alaska Native tribes and tribal organizations.
- ❖ We will promote the training and hiring of members when conducting local community research.
- ❖ We will stay knowledgeable and familiar with federal and state legislation that affects the Commission's role in advocating for Alaska Native peoples subsistence and traditional customary rights.

## THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION STRENGTHS, AND WEAKNESSES

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*The current strengths of The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission are:*

- ❖ TASSC is over 15 years old – established in 1988
- ❖ Established programs such as the Small Boat Survey, Sea Otter Winter Mortality Survey, etc.
- ❖ Recognized statewide, nationally, and internationally for the research and work of TASSC
- ❖ Accessibility of Commissioners and staff
- ❖ Open door policy of TASSC's office
- ❖ Leadership of the Commissioners and executive director
- ❖ Experience in the things that Commissioners and staff deal with - whether running a program or advocating on behalf of TASSC
- ❖ Continuity of TASSC's staff
- ❖ Dedicated and knowledgeable Commissioners
- ❖ The living Alaska Native history and knowledge of the Commissioners
- ❖ TASSC's excellent staff
- ❖ Commissioners and staff are versatile and have a lot of capabilities
- ❖ Commissioners and staff are knowledgeable of marine mammal habitat and uses
- ❖ Commissioners and staff are familiar with nuances of various agencies and organizations
- ❖ Commissioners and staff possess Alaska Native local and traditional knowledge
- ❖ Commissioners and staff are knowledgeable and familiar with federal and state legislation that affects the Commission's role, programs, activities and opportunities
- ❖ Ability to joke with each other among Commissioners and staff
- ❖ Great team work among Commissioners and staff
- ❖ Co-management capabilities with tribal members
- ❖ Respect for tribal governments
- ❖ Programs and activities are designed to be culturally sensitive
- ❖ A lot of great partnerships with individuals, agencies and organizations
- ❖ A strong network with agencies, organizations and governments
- ❖ Established office structure and administration systems in place
- ❖ Youthful staff who are willing to work long hours
- ❖ Good fringe benefits provided for staff
- ❖ Access to technology, such as, computers, Internet, website, etc.
- ❖ Good coffee at TASSC's office and Commissioner meetings!

*The current weaknesses of The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission are:*

- ❖ Reliance on federal agencies for funding
- ❖ Funding is uncertain and not sustainable
- ❖ Long-term funding sources are needed, too much of existing funding is soft funding
- ❖ Need more funding and resources for marketing, research and sewing skills
- ❖ Agency relationships can be antagonistic
- ❖ Outreach shortfalls at all levels
- ❖ Lack of visibility of Alaska Native hunting rights
- ❖ Reactive instead of proactive response to most situations
- ❖ Uneven participation by Commissioners in some member regions
- ❖ Uneven participation by member regions in programs offered by TASSC
- ❖ Staff need bigger office space to implement existing programs and expand new programs
- ❖ Staff have little time left to apply for available funding opportunities
- ❖ Under staffed and too busy
- ❖ Diversity of programs and activities often stretches limited resources
- ❖ Out-dated network technology and no server in TASSC's office

## THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

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*The current opportunities available to The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission include:*

- ❖ Recognized statewide and internationally
- ❖ Seat at the table with the Indigenous Peoples Council on Marine Mammals (IPCoMM)
- ❖ Compact with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- ❖ Statewide Commission
- ❖ Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)
- ❖ Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- ❖ Existing key relationships with congressional representatives (Stevens, Murkowski, and Young)
- ❖ Working with other agencies and sources, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency, University of Alaska, and the State of Alaska
- ❖ More potential partnerships to develop
- ❖ Local research that is published in scientific journal
- ❖ Regional outreach
- ❖ Active and participatory role at conferences
- ❖ Research sharing by TASSC with tribes through publications and website
- ❖ Showcase TASSC's projects, artists and conservation efforts of hunters
- ❖ Big organizations lobby indirectly for TASSC
- ❖ Peer review publications
- ❖ Access to research grants
- ❖ Unlimited and already existing resources and services, such as bio-samplers
- ❖ Lots of tribal input
- ❖ Native unity
- ❖ Cultural understanding and richness
- ❖ Historical knowledge
- ❖ Education of Alaska Native youth in the areas of science, biology and research
- ❖ Further staff training and development

*The current threats facing The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission include:*

- ❖ Anti- subsistence, fur, traditional & customary
- ❖ Blocks to prevent reauthorization of Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)
- ❖ Big organizations that lobby directly or indirectly against TASSC
- ❖ Uncertainty of funding
- ❖ Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- ❖ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)
- ❖ Misinformed and uninformed public and coastal Alaska Natives
- ❖ Negative publicity
- ❖ Lack of Native unity
- ❖ Blood quantum - definition of who is Alaska Native under Code of Federal Regulations
- ❖ Customary & traditional art - questioning definition of what is Alaska Native art
- ❖ Significantly altered - questioning definition of what is Alaska Native art
- ❖ Regionalization
- ❖ Misunderstanding or conflicts with member or other tribes or organizations.

## THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION CONSTRAINTS AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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*Constraints impacting The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission include:*

- ❖ Limited resources including but not limited to labor, funding technology, office space. We are a small Commission that serves statewide regions.
- ❖ Uncertain grant funding with constraints on existing funding.
- ❖ Inconsistent participation and representation by some coastal regions in the state.

*The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission has several areas of competitive advantage including:*

- ❖ The only statewide Commission that focuses on sea otter and Steller sea lion populations.
- ❖ A 20 year history and depth of knowledge as a Commission.
- ❖ Local, statewide and international recognition and respect for the research projects and use of traditional Alaska Native research.

## THE ALASKA SEA OTTER AND STELLER SEA LION COMMISSION KEY GOAL AREAS

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Key goal areas identified by The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission Board of Commissioners and staff include:

**Goal Area A:** Promote Alaska Native participation in sea otter and Steller sea lion conservation and management efforts.

**Goal Area B:** Assess sea otter/Steller sea lion populations in Alaska through cultural science (TEK) and local biological research.

**Goal Area C:** Work with regulatory agencies toward the common goal of conservation and management of healthy sea otter and Steller sea lion populations in Alaska.

**Goal Area D:** Educate and inform our youth and the public on the traditional and contemporary relationship between the sea otters and Steller sea lions and Alaska Natives.

**GOAL AREA A: PROMOTE ALASKA NATIVE PARTICIPATION**

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission’s Board of Commissioners and management will promote Alaska Native participation in sea otter and Steller sea lion conservation and management efforts.

*Objective 1: Continue to fund and operate current TASSC programs with local tribal participation and education.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Small Boat Survey	Carl		May 31, 2005
RFP to local tribes to fund management & conservation project for 1 year	Dan & Commissioners		January 2006
Sea Otter Winter Mortality Survey	Carl		May 31, 2005
Real Time Community Monitoring Project	Lianna		May 31, 2005
Sea Otter TEK	Dan		Sept. 30, 2005
Steller Sea Lion TEK Survey & Photographic Monitoring	Donna		July 31, 2005

*Objective 2: Professionally publish research completed by the TASSC in scientific journals and websites.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Publish Gull Egg Research	Dolly, Lianna & Dan		Dec. 2006
Publish Small Boat Survey results	Carl & Lianna		Dec. 31, 2006
Publish Pinniped numbers from SBS results	Donna		Dec. 31, 2005

*Objective 3: Establish and build partnerships with significant federal agencies that affect Alaska Native participation in conservation and management.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Establish a co-management agreement for sea lions with National Marine Fish Services (NMFS)	Margaret & Lianna		June 2006
Continued involvement in Marine Mammal Protection Act Reauthorization	Commissioners & Lianna		Dec. 2005
Research and explore demonstration project for compacting programs through U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Margaret & Lianna		Dec. 2005
Explore possibilities of beneficial ESA amendments	Lianna		December 31, 2005
Explore and obtain information on Russian, Japanese, Canadian, West Coast and lower 48 tribes’ sea otter research	Dolly (Canadian), Peggy (Russian), TASSC staff (remaining)		December 31, 2005

## GOAL AREA B: ASSESS THE SEA OTTERS AND STELLER SEA LIONS POPULATIONS

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission's Board of Commissioners and management will assess sea otter and Steller sea lion populations in Alaska through cultural science (TEK) and local biological research.

*Objective 1: Continue to fund and operate current sea otters monitoring, assessment and data collection.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Sea Otter TEK	Dan		Sept. 30, 2005
Sea Otter Winter Mortality Survey	Carl		May 31, 2005
Sea Otter Bio-Sampling Program	Carl		May 31, 2005
Real Time Community-Based Sea Otter Monitoring	Lianna		May 31, 2005
Small Boat Survey	Carl		May 31, 2005

*Objective 2: Continue to fund and operate current Steller sea lions monitoring, assessment and data collection.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Steller Sea Lion TEK Survey & Photographic Monitoring	Donna		July 31, 2005
Steller Sea Lion Bio-Sampling Book for Alaska Native Hunters	Donna		June 2006

*Objective 3: Continue to fund and operate current TASSC programs with local tribal participation and education.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
S.O. Biosampling Project	Carl		May 31, 2005
RFP to local tribes to fund management & conservation project for 1 year	Dan & Commissioners		January 2006

**GOAL AREA C: WORK WITH REGULATORY AGENCIES**

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission’s Board of Commissioners and management will work with regulatory agencies toward the common goal of conservation and management of healthy sea otter and Steller sea lion populations in Alaska.

*Objective 1: Research and study the regulatory process for changing the federal definition of Alaska Native.*

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Date</b>
Explore process for regulatory change of definition of Alaska Native in CFR	Margaret & Dolly	IPCOMM AFN	Dec. 31, 2005

*Objective 2: Develop, design and pursue alternative sources of operating funds for TASSC to reduce the reliance on federal funding.*

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Date</b>
Revisit membership dues	Commissioners		June 2005
Explore and discuss fundraising opportunities	Commissioners & Staff		Dec. 2005
Explore ways to use the resource for fundraising	Commissioners & Staff		Dec. 2005

*Objective 3: Address issues and concerns about Endangered Species Act (ESA) with U.S. Fish & Wildlife*

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Date</b>
Initiate discussions for consultation with U.S. Fish & Wildlife on ESA, for example Potential 4(D) rule	Margaret & Lianna		On-going

**GOAL AREA D: EDUCATE AND INFORM THE PUBLIC**

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission’s Board of Commissioners and management will educate and inform the public on the traditional and contemporary relationship between the sea otters and Steller sea lions and Alaska Natives.

*Objective 1: Develop, design and implement activities or programs that increase Alaskan Native youth education and learning opportunities with TASSC.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Identify and participate at statewide cultural spirit camps	Commissioners		On-going
Research opportunities to develop youth internships	Commissioners & Staff		Dec. 2005

*Objective 2: Expand and develop marketing tools to inform and educate Alaskan Native member tribes and existing or potential business partners.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Update and maintain existing website	Dan		On-going
Publish and mail out TASSC newsletter	Donna		Quarterly
Facilitate opportunities to open communication with Alaska Native artisans	Commissioners & Staff		On-going

*Objective 3: Become involved in statewide and national conferences that provide TASSC strategic opportunities to market and promote TASSC name, programs and Alaska Native member tribe participation.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Present and showcase programs and art at TASSC Annual Conference	Commissioners & Staff	Member Tribes	Dec. 2005
Present and showcase programs and art at Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Providers’ Conference	Lianna		Nov./Dec. 2005
Present and showcase programs & art at Alaska Federation of Native (AFN) Annual Conference	Margaret		Oct. 2005
Present and showcase art at Alaska Native Heritage Center	Donna		June 2005

*Objective 4: Monitor strategic planning efforts by Commissioners and staff.*

Activities	Assigned to	Resources	Date
Project reports by assigned staff at staff meetings	Staff & Lianna		On-going
Project reports by assigned Commissioners and/or director at Commissioners’ meetings	Commissioners & Lianna		Quarterly
Update strategic plan	Commissioners & Staff		Annually