



Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Celebrates Addition of Alaġum Kanuuġ to NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Inventory of Successful Nominations

PRIME Initiative Achieves Major Milestone in Advancing New Model for Tribal Co-Management and Indigenous-Led Research and Economic Development in the Pribilof Islands Marine Ecosystem

St. Paul, Alaska; June 8, 2022 – The [Aleut Community of St. Paul Island](#) (ACSPI), the federally recognized tribe for St. Paul Island, today welcomes [the acceptance](#) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of ACSPI’s nomination of Alaġum Kanuuġ (Heart of the Ocean), part of the Pribilof Islands Marine Ecosystem (PRIME) Initiative, for consideration as a national marine sanctuary. After extensive technical review and interagency consultation, Alaġum Kanuuġ has been placed in the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries’ (ONMS) Inventory of Successful Nominations.

Inclusion in the ONMS inventory is the final step in the national marine sanctuary nomination process prior to a potential designation. Next steps in the process include extensive public participation, including the gathering of input from residents, stakeholders, and others, as well as a full environmental review. Prior to designation consideration, ACSPI will enter into a co-management agreement with the federal government to establish co-equal governance and decision making, an historic first for ocean policy in the United States.

ACSPI nominated Alaġum Kanuuġ in December 2021, recognizing that a more comprehensive economic development strategy was needed because the Pribilof marine ecosystem is experiencing dramatic changes, including alarming declines of fur seals, sea lions, seabirds, fish, crab, and other invertebrates. These changes have resulted in severe consequences for local economies, culture, wildlife, and human and ecosystem health. Coupled with innovative approaches to ecosystem conservation, ACSPI is proposing a new model for tribal co-management and sustainable economic development, including Indigenous-led research, with national implications for Tribal self-determination, justice, and equity.

“Today’s announcement is an important step for our Tribe, and all Tribes in Alaska, seeking sovereignty and self-determination,” said Amos Philemonoff, president of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government. “Our ultimate vision is a designated, co-managed marine area that supports the growth of local and regional economies and advances conservation. As a lifelong commercial halibut fisherman, I’ve witnessed the changes occurring in our ecosystem and their impacts on our people. It’s time for proactive change for the better, and I’m proud that our Tribe is leading this movement.

“This is a key milestone in elevating local voices and ensuring that Unangan (Aleut), the original, enduring stewards of the region, have a meaningful, co-equal governance role in managing the ocean waters around our islands. In the spirit of partnership, collaboration, and shared prosperity, we will pursue inclusive management policies, including working through the established commercial fishery management system, and continue to work with fishing industry partners, our local communities, businesses, and state and federal agencies and representatives to advance our nomination.”

The PRIME Initiative has garnered broad and growing support, including from other federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations in Alaska and in the lower 48, other island organizations, business owners, conservation organizations, and commercial fishermen.

Visit aleut.com/prime/ and watch [here](#) to learn more about the PRIME Initiative and how you can support it.

About the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island

The Aleut Community of St. Paul Island (ACSPI) is the federally recognized tribe for St. Paul Island, giving voice to more than 1,800 enrolled tribal members. The Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government is the governmental venue through which the Unangan (or Aleut) of St. Paul Island can fulfill the intrinsic rights and responsibilities and support, recollect, practice, and pass on Unangan culture. The Tribal Government leads efforts to ensure and strengthen political sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency, continued cultural practices, tribal self-determination and self-governance, and the overall health, welfare, and safety of tribal members. To learn more about the ACSPI and the tribe's culture, services, and activities, visit aleut.com.

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