

fact sheet

Tel: (202) 462-1177
Fax: (202) 483-8683

700 H Street, NW,
#300
Washington, D.C.
20001

**www.
greenpeaceusa.
org**

Since 1971, Greenpeace has been a leading voice of the environmental movement. We work throughout the world to protect oceans and ancient forests, and to fight toxic pollution, genetic engineering, global warming and nuclear threats. Without compromise, Greenpeace takes on powerful political and corporate opposition to protect the future of our planet.

THE BERING SEA: NATIVE CULTURES UNDER THREAT

The native cultures of Alaska's islands and coasts are inextricably linked to subsistence harvest. . These communities rely on fishing income and subsidies for their survival, and as fish populations decline, they have to travel farther and farther to find food, putting their lives at risk on the rough waters of the Bering Sea. When traditional foods are no longer available, traditions and cultures begin to die out. When people in villages are no longer able to provide for their families, the communities are bled dry, and inhabitants often move to Anchorage or Seattle.

In December 2006, Greenpeace launched the Marine Cultural Heritage Zone initiative with the passage of a resolution by the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council at its annual convention. The initiative calls for protection of marine areas used for customary and traditional food needs ("subsistence food web") of Alaska natives, through the creation of no-trawl zones around native communities. The initiative also puts pressure on the governmental agencies responsible for fisheries management and protection of the Bering Sea environment to implement a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach to the management of fisheries, protecting the rights and livelihoods of fishing-dependent native communities.

During the Esperanza's visit to the Bering Sea this summer, Greenpeace will return to some of the villages we visited last summer to broaden and strengthen the support for Marine Heritage Zones. The community outreach element to this expedition will take place in two parts. The first will begin in Homer, and include visits to Kodiak, Old Harbor, Chignik, Sand Point, King Cove, Dillingham, Kipnuk, Toksook Bay and Mekoryuk. From Mekoryuk, the Esperanza will venture to Dutch Harbor for a few weeks of scientific research, which will be followed by the second portion of our community outreach, which will re-launch in Unalaska. From there, the Esperanza and her crew will travel to the Pribilof Islands of St. Paul and St. George, and then on to the Aleutian communities of Nikolski, Atka and Adak, before ending in Amchitka.

The majority of these community visits will last less than two days, and will consist of meetings with their respective tribal governments, and time permitting, a larger community gathering. Greenpeace will also be documenting the communities, including natural resources, bird cliffs, seal rookeries, and other areas of importance.

The future of many Alaska native villages is tied to the future of the health of the Bering Sea. Alaska's fishing dependent communities are losing out while industrial fleets based far away mine billions of pounds of fish and crab from their waters. Greenpeace will be working with native communities to not just highlight the threats to the Bering, but also the solution: Marine Cultural Heritage Zones. Working with the federal, state, local and tribal governments, the Bering and the communities dependent on it can be guaranteed a future.

CONTACT: Steve Smith, (202) 465-5352 or steve.smith@wdc.greenpeace.org