



Pacific Seabird Group

Dedicated to the Study and Conservation of Pacific Seabirds and their Environment

March 18, 2018

Dear Senator Lisa Murkowski,

The Pacific Seabird Group urges you to please support the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act. This critically needed legislation will greatly contribute to conservation of these magnificent, yet highly imperiled seabirds, that we highlight as our logo.

The Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) is an international, non-profit organization that was founded in 1972 to promote knowledge, study, and conservation of Pacific seabirds with a membership drawn from the entire Pacific basin, including Canada, Mexico, Japan, China, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. Among PSG's members are biologists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds, government officials who manage seabird refuges and populations, and individuals who are interested in marine conservation. Over 30 PSG members are residents of Alaska, who serve as scientific experts and conservation leaders within their local communities. Collectively, the Group's members have a great deal of knowledge and experience with respect to seabird and fisheries management in Alaska and throughout the Pacific Region.

An estimated 720,000 seabirds die every year after being accidentally hooked on fishing lines or entangled in gillnets. Over two-thirds of the world's 22 albatross species are currently considered threatened with extinction under international criteria. These species also face growing threats from invasive species on breeding islands, plastics dumped at sea, a warming ocean. Seabirds are international ambassadors to the ocean realm and they play a critical role in the health and productivity of our world's oceans. Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) seek to conserve these seabirds by coordinating international activity to reduce or mitigate interactions with fisheries by providing advice to fishers and fishery managers to create more sustainable fisheries. ACAP also seeks to develop new tools and technology to reduce seabird bycatch.

An international treaty is necessary because albatrosses and petrels spend much of their lives in international waters where there is no jurisdiction by any country. Since its inception in 2001, 13 nations have become parties to ACAP and have worked to put in place cost-effective conservation measures around the globe. For example, simple, inexpensive changes to fishing gear, required in Alaska and shown to reduce albatross mortality to nearly zero, have been put into place in fishing fleets of nations such as New Zealand and Argentina, which are party to ACAP.

The U.S. is a world leader in developing and testing bird-friendly mitigation practices to reduce accidental bycatch, and thereby creating more sustainable and certified fisheries. We are already using best practices to reduce seabird bycatch and we continue to collaborate with other nations to develop innovative mitigation tools. In addition, our participation in the Agreement may also help encourage other nations to join ACAP and to make similar progress in improving seabird conservation

The U.S. fishing industry has proven itself to be a leader in albatross and petrel conservation and has already achieved significant reductions in the bycatch of seabirds interacting with fisheries, consistent with the 2001 United States National Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries. By joining ACAP, the U.S. can enlist the cooperation of other signatory nations in conserving trust species in international waters.

We urge you to support the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act to put America on track to contribute significantly to global efforts to recovering these magnificent birds.

Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Rauzon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Rauzon" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Rauzon
Vice-Chair for Conservation
Pacific Seabird Group