

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, Sept. 23, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Upcoming U.S. Senate Hearings into Walmart's practice of freezing out Alaska salmon—even in Alaskan stores—should force the retailer and others like them to explain their controversial sustainability policies that may leave millions of Americans without access to the world's gold standard of sustainable seafood. A large group of Alaska fishermen and their families have led the charge for a Capitol Hill inquiry, taking place tomorrow, into practices that could result in Russian seafood on American plates.

The calls to the U.S. Senate from "Alaska Salmon Now", a grassroots collection of fishermen, consumers, and other representatives of the Alaska seafood industry, come a day before Walmart and Alaska state officials will testify at 10:30am EDT on Tuesday, September 24, in front of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard on third-party sustainability certification of U.S. seafood and its impact on the seafood options in grocery stores and restaurants.

"It is unacceptable for Walmart to continue to deny Americans the right to choose sustainable Alaska salmon," said John Renner, Vice President, Cordova District Fisherman United. "This affects real American workers and consumers, and we are taking this issue very seriously. If Walmart doesn't do what's right, we hope our representatives in Washington are willing to stand up and hold them accountable."

As a result of Walmart's policy, countless jobs in Alaska's \$16 billion seafood industry may be at risk, and millions of Americans may lose access to sustainable Alaska salmon.

Walmart, the largest grocery supplier in the U.S., shocked many earlier this year when it announced its policy to only sell salmon products with sustainable certification labeling from the MSC, an organization that receives much of its funding from Walmart and its affiliated foundations. Critics have decried the MSC as an organization engaged in profit-driven and monopolistic practices.

"Walmart's policies are unfairly hurting American jobs and consumers," said Greg Gabriel, Executive Director of the Northwest & Alaska Seiners Association. "The rest of the world recognizes that

Alaska

fisheries have been the gold standard for decades, and that is not about to change anytime soon. Walmart should be proud to provide sustainable

Alaska

salmon to its customers."

After voicing concerns over MSC's questionable certification and business practices, Alaska's seafood industry voluntarily opted out of MSC's high-priced eco-endorsements in favor of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)-based Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) certification. Now, MSC has convinced Walmart to deprive consumers of high quality, American products in favor of foreign-sourced salmon.

Worldwide, Alaska has consistently been recognized for its sustainable management success. Since its inception, MSC had consistently recognized the excellence and effectiveness of Alaska's

fisheries management system, ranking it above programs in

British Columbia

and

Russia

and saying as recently as 2012 that "the

Alaska

salmon fishery has been a long-standing model of sustainable fishery management."

The EDF Seafood Selector named Alaskan salmon "Eco-Friendly and Ocean Best." The National Marine Fisheries Service's most recent annual report to Congress on the status of U.S. fish stocks indicates the overwhelming majority of stocks are healthy, however only a handful are MSC certified. And the Pew Charitable Trust and Ocean Conservancy stated in a recent

report that "success in managing and rebuilding America's fisheries ranks among the leading achievements of marine resource management in the world."

About Alaska Salmon Now

"Alaska Salmon Now" is a diverse grassroots organization comprised of American consumers, hardworking fishing families from across Alaska, and other interested parties who are demanding Walmart reverse its controversial sustainability policy that has left millions of Americans without access to the world's gold standard of sustainable seafood,

Alaska

salmon, and instead is forcing foreign salmon from

Russia

and elsewhere onto our plates. For more information please visit

www.alaskasalmonnow.com

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