



Bering Sea Women's Group

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Harvest of Bering Sea crab helps keep Bering Sea Women's Group afloat *Partnership with Siu Alaska Corp. and crabbing vessel nets distribution of \$37,000*

NOME—While at work in some of the most challenging conditions on earth, make no mistake that the Bering Sea crabbers aboard the *Aleutian No. 1* are laboring away all those long hours in search of a healthy payoff. But all that effort pulling pots is also benefitting some of the most vulnerable residents of the Norton Sound region, all of whom will most likely never set foot aboard the crabbing vessel, nor even see it.

A unique partnership between Siu Alaska Corporation, the *Aleutian No. 1* and the Bering Sea Women's Group (BSWG) means that a successful crabbing season in the Bering Sea will help support the organization that combats domestic violence and aids abuse victims in the Norton Sound region. That partnership has paid off for the women's group this April in the form of a distribution of more than \$37,000. "The crew of the *Aleutian No. 1* is very proud to be working on behalf of the Bering Sea Women's Group," said Siu Alaska President and Chief Executive Officer John Eckels. Siu is a wholly owned subsidiary of Norton Sound Economic Development Corp.

The recent payout marks the second distribution received by the Bering Sea Women's Group since it was gifted 25 percent ownership in the vessel in 2009. The regional organization has now received more than \$47,000 in distributions as a result of its ownership stake.

For the Bering Sea Women's Group, the distribution could not come at a more needed time. With federal support and grants drying up, the organization has lost key funding sources over the past few years. "It's really going to be a blessing for us," said BSWG Executive Director Samaria Ross. A weakened economy has made private donations harder to come by while also likely driving more people to seek the Bering Sea Women's Group's services as families undergo more stress.

During its last fiscal year, the group transported 50 abuse victims from their home community to the BSWG shelter in Nome. After only six months in its current fiscal year, the Bering Sea Women's Group is on track to nearly double that number by having already transported 43 regional residents. "We've received way more people than we initially thought," Ross said.

The majority of the distribution from the *Aleutian No. 1* will go toward paying those transportation costs. Ross said the funds would also be used for staff training and covering utility costs.

Bering Sea Women's Group Board President Sadie Reddaway added that while the organization receives strong community support, it just is not enough to sustain their efforts. "It's a small community to draw fundraising from," she said. "There are so many different fundraisers for all the activities in town, and they're in the same boat we are."

Reddaway and Ross noted that in these lean economic times, innovative partnerships like that between the



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Bering Sea Women's Group and Siu can serve as a model for both companies and nonprofits. "I think the whole country needs to be thinking this way," Ross said.

The arrangement has also been beneficial for Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation. Dividing the ownership of the *Aleutian No. 1* has substantial tax benefits while also helping NSEDCC fulfill its mission to support the communities and residents of the Norton Sound region. To split the ownership, a quarter of the interest in the boat was sold to its two captains. Instead of selling the remaining 25 percent, the NSEDCC and Siu Board of Directors sought to gift the remaining ownership to a local non-profit organization, settling on the Bering Sea Women's Group as the recipient.

For the fishermen on the *Aleutian No. 1*, teaming with the Bering Sea Women's Group has also meant for a treat onboard the vessel they may find even more delicious than crab. "The *Aleutian No. 1* is reminded of the relationship with the Bering Sea Women's Group each time they receive a batch of homemade cookies," Siu's Eckels said. "When we talk to the crew and captains, they always bring up the cookies!"

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About NSEDCC: Norton Sound Economic Development Corp. is a private 501(c)4 non-profit corporation representing 15 member communities and more than 8,490 people in the Bering Strait Region of Northwestern Alaska. NSEDCC is one of six Community Development Quota organizations in Alaska. For more information, see www.nsedcc.com.

About Siu Alaska: Siu (See-u) Alaska Corporation is a wholly owned for-profit subsidiary of the Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDCC). Siu's functions include the management of current and future for-profit investments. Distributions from these investments will go to NSEDCC so that they can continue to provide programs and benefits within the Norton Sound region. For more information, see www.siu-alaska.com.

About Bering Sea Women's Group: The Bering Sea Women's Group provides shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in the Norton Sound region. The nonprofit organization also provides a crisis line at (800) 570-5444; community education about domestic violence and sexual assault; village outreach and education; and supervision of safe homes in villages. To reach the Bering Sea Women's Group, call (907) 443-5491.