

**YUKON RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION
RESOLUTION 2017-4**

Support for Updating Alaska Habitat Laws to Adequately Protect Salmon Spawning and Rearing Areas

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission is committed to act with a unified voice for the conservation and restoration of Yukon River salmon fisheries to protect our traditional way of life and well-being, and establish a comprehensive management plan and program based upon indigenous knowledge systems and scientific principles; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Tribes have demonstrated commitment and sacrifice for the conservation and restoration of Yukon River salmon, to provide for healthy and sustainable populations; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Tribes depend on salmon to sustain their cultural, traditional, spiritual, and economic well-being and way of life; and

WHEREAS, salmon are a critical and irreplaceable food source for Yukon River Tribes where traditionally harvested foods account for up to 33% of their caloric intake and up to 60% of the protein consumed in rural Alaska is salmon; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Tribes have come together in the past four years, 2014 – 2017, to make informed decisions to conserve and protect Yukon River king salmon, supporting conservative management measures and voluntary harvest reductions. Because of these tribal efforts to conserve king salmon, the escapement goal at the Canadian border was met three years in a row for the first time since 2007 and nearly all escapement goals in Alaska were met each of the three years; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission unanimously supported resolution 2016-2: "Protection of Critical Salmon Spawning & Rearing Habitat" at the annual meeting in Fairbanks in 2016, which opposed all mining and dam development projects within the entire Yukon River Watershed; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission seeks to reaffirm its support for habitat protections that would ensure the sustainability of the Yukon River king salmon and other salmon species to provide for healthy populations for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, Yukon River Tribes have considerable and valuable local and traditional knowledge on salmon spawning and rearing areas; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission recognizes that economic and community development are needed in rural Alaska for Yukon River Tribes to thrive, but believe development must be balanced with adequate protections that would reduce or mitigate negative and harmful impacts salmon resources; and

WHEREAS, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission believes that current habitat laws, as written in Title 16, are too vague and open to different interpretation with changing

administrations, creating uncertainty in the permit process and do not adequately and consistently safeguard against harmful impacts to salmon; do not currently allow for a public input process, leading to a lack of transparency; and place the burden of proving salmon use the waterways proposed for development, which can be expensive and often falls to local communities, Tribes, and non-profits; and

WHEREAS, Yukon River Tribes have already experienced tremendous hardship from declines in salmon populations due to unknown factors, but are undoubtedly impacted by changes in climate in both the freshwater and marine environments; and

WHEREAS, development projects that do not adequately protect salmon spawning and rearing areas could exacerbate these population declines, impacts from climate change, and/or impede the recovery efforts made possible through the years of sacrifices from Yukon River Tribes.

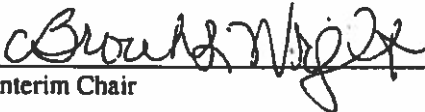
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission unanimously supports the Stand for Salmon ballot initiative, which amends the State of Alaska Title 16 habitat laws; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission preferentially supports the ballot initiative over the current house bill (HB 199), as the house bill could change significantly through the legislative committee process before being passed in to law and be influenced by industry lobbyists, while the ballot initiative would give the voters of Alaska a voice; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, in particular, supports the ballot initiative because it would clearly define "the proper protection of fish and game" and clarify important habitat characteristics to support salmon runs, such as water quality, flow levels, and fish passage; would include a public process for commenting on permits so that Yukon River Tribes can bring local and traditional knowledge to the table; and would assume all waterways are capable of supporting salmon and would place the burden of proving that a waterway does not get used by salmon on the developer, who, generally, has the monetary resources to conduct such studies.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that all Commissioners present unanimously passed this resolution, October 23, 2017, Fairbanks, Alaska.


Interim Chair