



March 24, 2009

Representative Bryce Edgmon
House Special Committee on Fisheries, Chair
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Chair Edgmon,

It has been said that Alaska's fishing industries employ more people than oil, gas, forestry, tourism, and mining combined and is one of the largest private sector employers in the state. The industry accounts for more than 50 per cent of basic private-sector employment in many of the state's coastal communities.¹

Southwest Alaska's fisheries employ more people as harvesters and processors than any other industry in the region where there are more than 50 coastal communities who directly and indirectly rely on Southwest Alaska's fisheries for their livelihood.

There are many issues facing Southwest Alaska's fisheries including oil & gas development, mineral exploration, the high cost of energy, climate change, economic stress, and other regional issues. These issues must have input from regional affected stakeholders who need fair and equitable access to those who are in control of the management decisions that directly impact them and their communities.

Many of the region's affected residents and business owners are facing very trying economic times and the additional burden of expensive travel costs will deter many from participating in Board of Fish meetings that impact their region but are regularly held in Anchorage. Meetings held in Anchorage disenfranchise Southwest Alaska's residents and business owners, while giving unfair advantage to outside interests who can afford to attend these meetings.

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference requests that the House Special Committee on Fisheries recommend a do pass on HB117 and require the Alaska Board of Fish to schedule their meetings in the region whose issues they are addressing.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Catsi".

Michael Catsi
Executive Director

¹ Governor Palin: *Trends*, November 2008