



Representative Edgmon
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

April 8, 2009

Dear Representative Edgmon

Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS) is a non-profit fishing association representing well over 1000 direct and several thousand indirect jobs in the Southeast Alaska region. **We support both the confirmations of Karl Johnstone as well as Brent Johnson.**

While we have conducted our business in Southeast since 1968, we are very concerned about the regional and geographic balance on regulatory bodies that we deal with, such as the Alaska State Board of Fisheries. We understand that the Governor's appointments would now leave us with 3 seats in the Cook Inlet basin out of a total of 7 seats, these being Big Lake, Anchorage and Clam Gulch. With the remaining seats from Juneau, Petersburg, Kodiak and Naknek, there is quite a bit of diversity and geographic representation on the Board of Fisheries.

There will be statements and concerns coming from several quarters as to the geographic representation as well as the "balance" of this board. We are convinced that the Governors appointees are the right people for the job and will enhance and provide this balance. While most of our members are avid sportsmen as well as personal, subsistence and recreational users of the resource, our organization, SEAS, represents the commercial side of the Board of Fish arena.

Approximately 75% of all Board of Fish proposals are regulation changes, improvements, and management implementations that concern only commercial fishing. Thus, while you will hear that 4 of the 7 seats will now be considered "commercial", this is the way things should be. And the definition of "commercial" varies from region to region. Not one of these 7 Board of Fish members fish on a vessel large enough to qualify as a Southeast seiner. One of the "commercial" seats is a former processor who hasn't fished commercially for 40 years and the other 3 "commercial" seats have small enough vessels to fit on the deck of one of our boats.

Furthermore, one of the “sport” seats has fished commercially, in the past, for about ten years. Another “sport” seat used to be a fisheries biologist, Mr. Howard Delo, and he is one of our favorite board members. We never thought that we would be so inclined to be supportive of a fellow from Big Lake, but we are. (And please keep that in mind next year when this time of year rolls around again). We want Howard back on that board regardless of the fact that his home is not in Fairbanks. Some of the best folks may not come from the best geographic locations (not that Big Lake isn’t a great place, it just isn’t Fairbanks), but we want to see the best seven members on the board, regardless of affiliation or region.

Often we find more common interests with the so called “sport” representation than we do “commercial”. And it helps that the “sport” seat can actually deliberate and vote on everything. **Interestingly enough, Brent Johnson will be not only conflicted out of voting on any Cook Inlet sport vs. commercial allocation issue but he will not be allowed to even deliberate. He must join the audience and is not allowed to speak on any conflicting issues.** We are bringing this to your attention so that you will know that some of the forces amassing against Mr. Johnson, while their points and concerns may be valid to their constituents, need to be reminded of this fact.

Brent Johnson will be unable to vote or deliberate on any contentious Cook Inlet issue because he is a Kenai setnetter.

I trust you will agree that the labels which are typically used for the Board of Fisheries members often do not work out to paint an accurate picture. What is most important is that potential board members have an open mind, a commitment to the fish resource, and an unbiased determination to do what is right to enable the state of Alaska to continue to have a sustainable resource to the benefit of all users. And when the member must choose in an allocation disagreement, that they use the highest ethical and moral means to guide them in these decisions.

Again, SEAS requests your ‘yes’ vote for the confirmation of both of Governor Palin’s Board of Fisheries appointees, Brent Johnson and Karl Johnstone.

Sincerely

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