

To Legislators, RE: HB 266

Hello, my name is Bob Martinson; I've lived in Wasilla for over 20 years. I'm a Copper River commercial fisherman for 42 years.

I strongly oppose HB 266 and need to point out why.

I, like many others, depend on the commercial fishery for support of my family and my own "subsistence." HB 266 sounds like a pre-mature attempt to set a priority for dipnetters who have been deemed a "personal use fishery" by the Board of Fisheries. **No fishery should have a priority if there is concern for the sustainability of the resource. Then, rightfully, subsistence users would become the first users with priority to the resource—after it has recovered.** The BOF has been directed by a judge to clarify the difference in stating their position of finding the personal use designation.

This is why most dipnetters are trying to circumvent the process, by being classified as subsistence users. They are not the customary and traditional needs people that are exemplified by people such as the native people of the Copper River main tributary systems, who for centuries have used mostly fish wheels and fish traps to get their fish.

Dipnetting groups are constantly attempting to be re-classified as a subsistence user, but at this time, are not under that classification. They side with outdoor groups to try and increase their numbers, but handing down the keys to the motor home and freezer truck do not qualify as "passing on ways to future generations."

Their most common usage is that of a family activity that falls somewhat short of historical need, and furthermore; the cost to go dipnetting can be proven to cost much more for their food than if they had simply gone to the grocery store. Fairbanks or Wasilla and Palmer are several hundred miles from this customary and traditional fishery, yet they claim subsistence rights by "using" this fishery, far from their home. This is wrong for the native people of the area that the law is intended for and I have a problem with people who do not agree with that.

This brings me back to the bill. I have depended on my fishery on the Copper River for my entire life and will continue to be concerned. The State of Alaska depends on us spending our money in the local economies as well. I ask that you table HB 266

until it would be more appropriate to address a priority for personal use fisheries, when the BOF makes their clarification.

Only recently with further demands from upriver users, and increased allocations to them, have we began to see concerns over spawning escapement. We have commercially fished the Copper for about 130 years with until recently, a limited take on the upriver system. I believe most to blame, is the lack of funding and personnel in upriver enforcement. Historically the State of Alaska has managed the fishery well, but now the federal government has stepped in to take care of the real subsistence users. The resource was declared by the Board of Fisheries to be “fully allocated,” back in 1993. Then for a short time (in 1999), the BOF made a decision to qualify dipnetters as subsistence users, but rightfully changed it back to personal use. Dipnetters really shouldn't be considered to have any priority to the resource in times of run failure; there are too many users taking too many fish, with no money for enforcement taking place upriver. Please table HB 266.

Thank you,

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