



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 4, 2010

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Chairman
House Special Committee on Fisheries
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for HB 365

Dear Representative Edgmon,

The United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) supports passage of HB 365 / SB 255.

The bill, while extremely timely and important to certain of our members, is nothing but a “housekeeping” bill that is needed as the last piece of work to finish off the SE fleet consolidation program for SEAS but will also set up a precedence and framework for any similar effort in the state of Alaska conducted at a later date. This legislation allows NMFS to confirm fish ticket/processor data to confirm that the assessment collected to pay back the federal government for the loan is correctly determined and allow for enforcement of those that don't pay the assessment. NMFS only has access to data for a specific fishery that has a federal loan program and not access to all salmon harvest data.

When UFA embraced the Legislative Salmon Task Force in 2001, we recognized that different regions require different solutions. Some groups wanted status quo. Other groups wanted market-oriented solutions. Others wanted to restructure their fishery, or basically re-limit limited entry. We want to acknowledge that many, probably most, of our state waters groups do not support a fleet consolidation program for their own region.

But when the Legislature embarked upon the Legislative Salmon Task Force, this was one of the major solutions that came out for each region to choose from. HB286, authored in 2002 by Drew Scalzi, was one of the resulting pieces of legislation. One of our groups, the Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS) chose to follow up on this and has already “permanently retired” around 20% of their consolidation target in 2008 with \$3 million in NMFS grants that were authorized by the Alaska State Legislature.

Another piece of the pie here is HB484, passed in 2006 by the Alaska State Legislature that mandates a solution in the event of an “optimum number determination” in a court of law that

causes retired permits to become reissued. HB484 allows that the Legislature “may” send the resulting funds back to the fleet consolidators, hence relieving fishermen of the uncertainty resulting from the “optimum number” issue.

In the case of SE seine fishery, the active fleet size has not exceeded the buydown goal of the buyback program since 2002. So this fleet consolidation is very unlikely to cost a single job or boat. The 3% assessment that these guys are paying is just an insurance policy for the fishermen (and processors) that there won’t be a new “group” or company that will bring in some of the currently unused and dormant 140 permits. In fact there will be at least several dozen permits remaining on poor years and likely a dozen or so remaining even on good years.

UFA supports swift passage of this legislation, which is the wrap-up of the Legislative task force bill HB286 from 2002. It is now 2010 and it seems fitting that the Alaska State Legislature would be willing and able to support a “housekeeping” bill that brings to fruition a bill (nearly unanimous in passage in both the House and Senate) that was brought forth as a result of the Alaska State Legislative Task Force.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation for one of our group members.

Sincerely,



Mark Vinsel
Executive Director

Cc:

Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Cathy Muñoz