



Rep. Geran Tarr
State Capitol, Rm. 114
Juneau, AK 99801

March 7, 2013

Dear Representative Tarr:

On behalf of the members and Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO) which represents charter fishing operators, lodge owners and guided sport anglers throughout Southeast Alaska, I am offering this letter of support for your resolution CSHJR 5(FSH) "Oppose Genetically Engineered Salmon". This is consistent with our earlier position supporting Sen. Murkowski's amendment introduced in 2012 (S.AMDT.2108) to S.3187 – Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act.

SEAGO has no position on genetically engineered fish, generally. We acknowledge that there may be merit to the use of this technology as a means to help alleviate current and future global food shortages. However, we are concerned about how these fish may ultimately impact Alaska's wild fish stocks.

I'm sure you are aware of how important commercial, charter/recreational and subsistence fishing is to our state. Not only do hundreds of thousands of Alaskans feed their families on our abundant fish resources but thousands more Alaskans depend on our fisheries for their livelihoods and dozens of coastal communities rely heavily on the economic contributions these industries make.

For the last ten years or more, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute has spent thousands of hours and millions of dollars promoting Alaska's seafood products. As their promotional materials correctly assert, "Wild-caught Alaska salmon, whitefish varieties and shellfish mature at a natural pace, and swim freely in the pristine waters off Alaska's rugged 34,000-mile coastline." They go on further point out perhaps the single most important factor that distinguishes Alaska's seafood from that of any other throughout the world, "The superior flavor and texture of Alaska seafood is prized around the world."

Clearly, that natural process and the north Pacific marine environment is what makes Alaska seafood so highly sought after, globally. Furthermore, recreational anglers come from all areas of the world for the experience of the incredible fight associated with reeling in a wild Alaska Chinook.

News stories from the week of May 14th, 2012, throughout the Pacific Northwest are a testament to ASMI's assertions. The Seattle Times and the Anchorage Daily News, among others, heralded the arrival of the first shipments of Copper River King Salmon to restaurants in both cities.

Alaska seafood is a national treasure and one that significantly contributes to Alaska's economy.

To that end, SEAGO strongly supports your resolution

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We remain concerned that despite best efforts to guarantee the sterility of these fish or separation of from wild fish through bioconfinement, that any escapement could jeopardize the health of the wild fish population either through competition or genetic compromise due to interbreeding.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts to provide adequate protections for Alaska's fisheries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "H. Hilyard", is positioned above the typed name.

Heath E. Hilyard, Executive Director
Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO)