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AVCP

Association of Village Council Presidents
Administration
Pouch 219, Bethel, AK 99559



March 12, 2013

Representative Bryce Edgmon
State Capitol, Room 410
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Fax: 907.465.3445

Dear Representative Edgmon:

The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) is the recognized tribal organization and non-profit Alaska Native regional corporation for its fifty-six member indigenous villages within Western Alaska. Your district includes many of our member tribes in the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions as well as our coastal villages.

As you are well aware, Chinook salmon stocks on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers are essential to the cultural, nutritional and economic well-being and way of life of the tribal villages and peoples we both represent who live along these river drainages. Chinook salmon runs on both the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers have declined dramatically in recent years with federal fishery disasters declared for 2008-2012 on the Yukon and 2011-2012 for the Kuskokwim. Chinook salmon runs have declined to the point that commercial fisheries are closed, and subsistence fisheries are seriously restricted. In recent years subsistence fisheries have been restricted to the point where villages are not obtaining the amount of Chinook salmon necessary to meet their basic needs. Despite all these restrictions, on the Yukon River Canadian escapement goals have only been met in two out of the last five years, posing a threat to the future of the salmon runs as well.

At the same time, these very same Chinook salmon are caught and discarded as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The Bering Sea pollock fishery, managed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council) and National Marine Fisheries Service, is limited by an overall cap of 60,000 which they are allowed to hit in two out of any seven years without consequence, and by a 47,591 cap in other years. The best information currently available indicates that 50-73% of the Bering Sea pollock fishery's Chinook salmon bycatch is fish of Western Alaska origin. In 2010, an alarming 42% of the bycatch was from coastal Western Alaska (including Bristol Bay, the Kuskokwim and lower Yukon) and another 31% was from the middle and upper Yukon Rivers.

Given the current state of our Chinook salmon runs, and the impacts to our people in terms of food security and economic and cultural well-being, it is simply unacceptable that the pollock fishery has the opportunity to catch 60,000 Chinook salmon in a single year while our people are restricted from meeting their basic subsistence needs.


We understand that the Bush caucus, under your leadership, is considering a letter addressing the issue of salmon bycatch. Given the dire state of Chinook salmon in Western Alaska, it

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Atmautluak
Bethel
Bill Moore's Sl.
Cheformak
Chevak
Chuathbaluk
Chuloonawick
Crooked Creek
Eek
Emmonak
Georgetown
Goodnews Bay
Hamilton
Hooper Bay
Lower Kalskag
Upper Kalskag
Casigluk
Cipnuk
Congiganak
Cotlik
Cwethluk
Cwigillingok
Dine Village
Marshall
Mekoryuk
Mtn. Village
Nepaimiut
Nepakiak
Nepaskiak
Jewtok
Nighmute
Unakauyak
Unam Iqua
Unapitchuk
Uhogamiut
Uscarville
Uaimiut
Uilot Station
Uitka's Point
Ulatinum
Uuinagak
Ued Devil
Uussian Mission
Ucammon Bay
Uleetmute
U. Mary's
Utony River
Uluksak
Untutuliak
Uunuk
Umkumiut

would be unforgiveable to leave Bering Sea Chinook salmon bycatch out of this letter. We request that you include in the letter a request that the Council significantly reduce the Chinook salmon bycatch limit in the Bering Sea pollock fishery because of the current state of Western Alaska Chinook salmon stocks. We further request that the letter include a request that the pollock fishery be levied a significant fine for each Chinook taken as bycatch and that these funds be used for research into the decline of Western Alaska Chinook stocks.

If you have any questions about this matter please contact me at (907)543-7300. Thank you for your attention to this issue of supreme importance to the region you represent.

Sincerely,
Association of Village Council Presidents



Myron P. Naneng, Sr.
President, AVCP