

Members of the House Fisheries and Resources Committees:

I am writing to recommend Marit Carlson-Van Dort for reappointment to the Alaska Board of Fisheries and to set the record straight on incorrect information that has been fabricated and sloppily published by United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) about my family.

Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is eminently qualified to be reappointed as a member of the Board of Fisheries. Since her initial appointment to the Board in 2019, Marit Carlson-Van Dort has repeatedly demonstrated her understanding of the heavy responsibility that comes with serving on the Board of Fish. Her ability to weigh all sides of the many complex issues that come before the Board and make well-reasoned yet difficult decisions is a valuable asset for the State of Alaska. Her background in resources management and commercial fishing combined with her academic training in conservation biology and fisheries science equips her with a wealth of knowledge and expertise and the ability to think critically and weigh important information that is essential to a successful and diligent Board.

Ms. Carlson-Van Dort seeks to understand the impacts of proposals upon all stakeholders, including subsistence, sport, and commercial fishers – as a good Board Member should do. She understands and reviews the science behind all proposals and believes in sustained yield management principles, which is crucial to the health and well-being of Alaska's fishing industry.

UFA is threatened by Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's independence, intelligence and ability to cut through political nonsense that so frequently distracts the Board and makes for bad decisions. UFA's unfounded personal attacks on her and my immediate family are led by a bitter faction of UFA Kodiak leadership and are nothing more than sour grapes over the 2020 Kodiak Board of Fisheries meeting in which long overdue changes were made to the entire Kodiak Mainland interception fishery management plans. UFA cannot handle the fact that a Board was actually willing to take an honest and open look at the Kodiak Mainland interception fisheries and make changes to those outdated and seriously flawed management plans – and all while meeting in Kodiak no less!

Please do not be fooled into thinking UFA represents all Alaskan fishermen or that they even have the best interest of all Alaskan fisheries in mind. UFA has

openly and actively worked to hurt the viability of the Chignik sockeye fishery for many years. This current smear campaign against the only Board Member in the history of the Board of Fisheries with any ties to the Chignik Region is just the latest example.

With respect to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's ties to Chignik, I also wish to address the classless accusations made by UFA against my family. I am the "first cousin" UFA refers to in its attack. I have submitted proposals to the Board of Fisheries for over 20 years. The proposals I submitted in 2019 for the Kodiak meeting that was held in 2020 were done so with zero knowledge that my cousin would be appointed to the Board of Fisheries.

UFA's claim that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort "encouraged her Uncle" (my Father, Aloys Kopun) to "transfer his Chignik salmon permit" so she would not have a conflict of interest at the Kodiak meeting is false. My Father is 75 years old, has not actively fished salmon since 2001, and he hasn't owned a boat since 2012. My Father had promised to give his permit (a very common practice in true fishing families) to his oldest grandson (my oldest son) after he turned 16 and showed continued commitment to getting good grades and a willingness to attend college. My son turned 16 in June of 2019 and worked to keep his grades up that fall, and so my Father gave him his permit. My son just got accepted into Western Washington University and will be attending this fall, thus keeping up his side of the bargain. Despite what UFA would like you to believe, these plans were in motion long before Ms. Carlson-Van Dort was appointed to the Board of Fish.

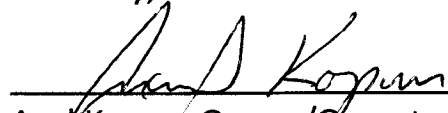
Another claim made against Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is that some Chignik fishermen are shareholders of Far West, Inc. This is true. What does that matter? There are also shareholders of Far West, Inc. that live and fish in Kodiak. This is a lazy argument – and an irrelevant one, too, because Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is no longer President of Far West, Inc. On multiple occasions – at the urging of members of your committee and UFA, no less, the Alaska Department of Law reviewed Marit Carlson-Van Dort's ethics disclosures and continually determined she was fully compliant with the Executive Branch Ethics Act and did not have an impermissible conflict of interest with any of the regulatory proposals that she participated in reviewing and adopting during her time on the Board. Should you question that outcome, I suggest you speak directly with the Department of Law.

Any life-long Native Alaskan resident has relatives all over the State. Is UFA saying life-long, Native Alaskan residents shouldn't be allowed to serve on the Board of Fish? Or is it that only the Board Members that will do their bidding should be allowed on the Board?

I have been attending Board of Fish meetings since 1998. I have seen every kind of Board Member over that span. Many took their duties seriously. Some did not. My whole livelihood and the very existence of my hometown depends on fishing. In many aspects then, my livelihood and the health of my community is dependent on the Board of Fish Members that you appoint. All I can ask for is a Board made up of intelligent people who understand the impact their decisions have on the various stakeholders, who understand the responsibility that comes with their position on the Board, who are willing to look at the proposals that come before them with an open mind, and who can think for themselves and want to take care of the fish – because if you take care of the fish, everything else will fall in line. Marit Carlson-Van Dort is one of those people.

In my opinion, developed over 23 years of observation and often intense interaction with a multitude of Board of Fish members, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is an asset to the Board of Fish. You should confirm her reappointment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Axel Kopun, Owner/Operator F/V Mylia Lynn

STATE OF ALASKA)
) ss.
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

1. I have been a commercial fisherman my entire working life. My experience covers the area from the Barren Islands north of Kodiak to Sand Point. I have been the holder of a Chignik Salmon permit since the inception of Limited Entry in 1973.

3. I am 75 years old, retired and have not actively fished salmon since 2001. I have not owned a boat since 2012. In 2019, I transferred my Chignik Salmon permit to my grandson who intends to start fishing commercially.

4. I did not discuss the transfer of my permit with Marit prior to doing so and, as far as I know, she had no knowledge of the transfer before it occurred. Marit never asked me to transfer or do anything else with my permit.

Aloys Kopun

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 9th day of April, 2021.

Maria Edmunds

Notary Public for Alaska

My Commission Expires: 01 / 01 / 22

