

HB 52

Testimony Packet

House Resources Committee

Hi, my name is Chris Perry. I have lived in Homer and fished in lower and upper Cook Inlet for the last 39 years. I'm asking you to approve House Bill 52 to help protect Tutka Bay Hatchery(TBH) and the state park as it was established to provide enjoyment and opportunity to all. TBH is a benefit to all Alaskan residents and visitors. The hatchery's contributions to personal use, sport, and commercial fisheries in Kachemak Bay are substantial. There are no annual catch limits or reporting requirements for harvest from these fisheries. In China Poot Bay, a resident can harvest six sockeye per day with a dipnet, and also snag 6 sockeye per day in salt water (12 total per day), with only a daily limit. With closure of TBA, these fisheries will close, and the majority of the present user groups are unaware of this possible closure. TBH closure will also close all seining in Kachemak Bay, as there are no other sockeye, and limited pink salmon returns in the area. TBH is a very small hatchery relative to all other pink salmon hatcheries around the state. Many of the negative biological impacts people promote are not scientifically proven, and are still under intense research. There are very productive shellfish and finfish fisheries in close proximity to large hatcheries in PWS and SE Alaska that have been in production for many years. There are 84 salmon purse seine permits and 20 set net permits registered for use in Lower Cook Inlet (LCI). Throughout the 1980s, between 52 and 83 seine permits were fished, 1990s, there were between 23 and 73 permits fished, and in the 2000s, 15 to 36 fished. The lower numbers in the 2000s were due mainly to a TBH temporary closure. With the help of TBH and other Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) enhancement projects, many of these permits will be fished again. The majority of the unfished LCI seine permits are owned by salmon fishermen who fish other Alaska areas with hopes and

intentions of returning to LCI if fish stocks rebound.

There are 573 drift gill net permits, and 746 set net permits in Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) that contribute their fish taxes to CIAA. Many of these permit holders have the misconception that all their fish tax is to support TBH. There's much more money from LCI that contributes to CIAA capitol assets, and that money self supports many LCI projects. With the changes in the federal water closures in UCI, the fish taxes from UCI fisheries may be substantially reduced for CIAA's income.

Cost recovery(CR) from Tutka, China Poot, Hazel Lake, Port Graham, Kirschner Lake, and Resurrection Bay all contribute a substantial portion of CIAA's income for operating expenses and loan repayment to support projects in all of the Cook Inlet region. There is no one or several of these CR projects that can support all of the others on an annual basis, as the guarantees of annual fish productions fluctuates, as we all know and expect. There are no cost recovery projects in UCI except proceeds from test fisheries that don't support themselves.

Trail Lake Hatchery (TLH) does NOT have any return of salmon to the hatchery itself. It is stocked and supported by other fisheries in LCI and permit fish taxes. If TBH fails, there is a good chance TLH will be closed. Some of the fisheries directly affected by the potential closure of TLH are:

- Resurrection Bay/Bear Lake sockeye and coho enhancement. In June and July there are many days with 200-400 people snagging their daily limit of sockeye on Resurrection Bay shoreline. Not to mention the substantial silver salmon sport fisheries in and around Res. Bay. All the Res. Bay sockeye and a large portion of the coho are reared at TLH.
- All the LCI sockeye and coho enhancement, China Poot, Hazel Lake,

Tutka Lagoon and Kirschner Lake are reared at TLH.

Some of the other CIAA projects that may be affected include:

- Invasive species eradication in UCI drainages.
- Fish return escapement counting projects in UCI and LCI.
- Fertilization and limnology studies in UCI and LCI.
- Coho stocking projects in LCI, UCI, Mat-Su and Anchorage bowl areas.

As many Alaskans and scientists know, each year's salmon returns can be substantially different. This is the strength of the species. One year can be the worst, and the very next year can be the best return ever. English Bay Lakes sockeye returns have rebounded the last several years, and no long term damage was done by CIAA sockeye relocation projects, as some have claimed. The set net fishery has been opened in recent years with almost no fishing effort, and fears of over escapement may do lasting damage.

In conclusion:

- HB52 is a bill addressing land disposal issues in state parks. It should NOT be considered as a reason to close TBH, as some people are doing.
- HB52 does NOT allow increasing TBH production or expansion into other parts of the park.
- HB52 does NOT change any current public use of the lagoon or existing land that TBH is on.

If TBH closes there are far reaching negative impacts for all Alaska residents, sport, personal, commercial fishermen, and tourists, and many thousands of these people do NOT even realize the potential changes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

For any questions, please contact me at fishyarns@yahoo.com

Sincerely,

Chris Perry

To whom it may concern:

I understand that the public hearing for this issue was February 11; however, I hope my comment can still be taken into consideration.

It has been brought to my attention by the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society and the Friends of Kachemak State Parks that HB52 intends to remove the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH) property (a total of 123.45 acres) from Kachemak State Park to “save” the hatchery.

I oppose this bill, for the following reasons:

1. It goes against the Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan (developed under public process), which proposes to relocate the hatchery out of the Park, and to convert existing structures for use by the public.
2. “Saving” the hatchery by removing it from the Park would give privilege to a small special interest group – Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA), the current operator (leasee) of TBLH, not the public.
3. CIAA has been running the hatchery with a deficit, and has outstanding debts to the State of Alaska. Commercial fishermen help pay for the operation of TBLH via the salmon enhancement tax, however, few of the fish released there are caught by commercial fishermen.
4. There are options for stocking China Poot Lake with salmon for the dipnet fishery from other hatcheries, not TBLH.

Some or all of these reasons question HB52 meeting the requirements of the State of Alaska constitution that its natural resources be managed “for the maximum benefit of its people” (Article 8, Section 5), or the requirement for “efficient development of aquaculture in the State” (Article 8, Section 15).

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Yvonne Leutwyler

Homer resident

phone 907-354-6102

In my personal opinions, I am not a strong supporter of wilderness/ parks that exclude human economic activity.

However, from time to time, this particular hatchery makes headlines as being controversial; what in fact the crux of the issues are I cannot profess to understand. If in fact the hatchery is operating at

deficit and being subsidized - the questions of its detractors seem a bit more valuable and I would support the idea of full audits etc.

As a commercial fisherman in the Cook Inlet it is 100% true that none of the fish I target are produced at this hatchery. I cannot say that I feel the need to deny them my support- but given a list of options as to how my contributions toward fishery resources were to go in C.I. I'm certain I would choose monitoring/research of the wild stocks I harvest.

Nathan Hoff

Sent from my iPhone

Hello all

I would like to add my voice to those opposed to taking land from Kachemak Bay State Park to give to the Tutka Bay Hatchery.

Thank you,
David Schauble
Homer, AK

I oppose HB 52, please vote no. This bill is not in the best interest of Alaska nor Alaskans.

There is no reason to pull 123 acres out of Kachemak Bay State Park for use by a private entity, and that is failing.

Evidence provided in opposition to HB52 highlight the concerning facts around Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery and CIAA operations.

Please protect our park.

Jackie Morrison
Tutka Bay property owner

February 15, 2022

Rick Foster, PhD

Resource Ecology and Management

Homer, AK

Natural Resource Committee:

I am opposed to HB 52. Since Representative Vance brought it up with HB 52, perhaps we should address the elephant in the room: Look at the positive ecological effects of abandoning the hatchery should be addressed.

My family has lived in Little Tutka Bay for years—some working for the hatchery at that time. I also was an ADF&G Habitat Biologist and worked for the Kachemak Bay NERR from its start.

An interesting paper for the Committee to read, from early in the hatchery's history, is the 1975 Tutka Bay Plankton and Wild Fry Studies, by Kron & Yuen, FRED Division, ADF&G. I have attached an electronic copy of the abstract. The results are startling, know the amount of food in the bay for the hungry fry before releasing them. To my knowledge, this study has not been replicated nor has an assessment of zooplankton available in Tutka Bay Lagoon (estuary) in Tutka Bay, nor anywhere in Kachemak Bay.

Spring Estuarine Productivity as an Indicator for Release Timing of Pink Salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) Fry

“Based on information obtained on three variable (food availability, predation and temperature) it was concluded that food availability was probably the most important factor controlling pink salmon fry survival in the estuary. It was recommended that pink salmon fry releases from an incubation facility located on the bay be based on the availability of adequate food in the estuary.” (Kron & Yuen, 1975, FRED Division, ADF&G)

With limited forage for young native aquatic species, the hatchery's invasion of hungry Pink Salmon is an annual ecological challenge if not complete disaster. I know Representative Vance witnessed the various species' crashes through her life growing-up in Homer. To stop this annual stress upon Kachemak Bay's aquatic system, brought by the hatchery, would measurably improve the diversity and health of Kachemak Bay.

Restoring Tutka Bay Lagoon and monitoring changes would not be difficult—finding statistically significant examples where restoring estuaries improve fisheries would not be difficult.

Once again, I am opposed to HB 52. In addition, consider removing the hatchery from Tutka Bay Lagoon. It would restore the wonderful, natural ecological nursery of the lagoon, and likely would help our entire fishery, not just Pink Salmon.

Rick Foster

Homer & Little Tutka Bay

Rick Foster, PhD

Affiliate Professor of Resources Ecology and Management, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Homer, Alaska

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To Whom it May Concern:

I support HB52. This bill is important to the Kenai Peninsula and people from all over the State and country that benefit from many of our local fisheries.

Sincerely,

Kate Van Saun

To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times, what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks, but a special heart that listens. ~ F. Scott Fitzgerald

I support HB52. Please vote accordingly. This swap for land to keep the Tutka fishery benefits all katchemak residents. Danny Presley

I support HB52. This is extremely important to the Kenai Peninsula and people of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Craig Glenn Sanders

Clam Gulch, AK

Sent from my iPhone

I would like to show my support for the HB 52. A fix to the land issue that would allow ADF&G's Hatchery to continue to support All of Cook Inlets Fishers to benefit from the hatcheries operation by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association. This Hatchery is an Important resource to continued fisheries management in Cook Inlet. I fully support the adjustment of state park lands to allow Continued Hatchery Operations.

Sent from my iPhone

I strongly support HB52 which cures a land disposal issue and saves the China Poot didn't fishery. Marvin Peters, Homer AK.

I strongly support HB 52. I also testified in favor of HB 52 to this committee last Friday.

One point not mentioned during public testimony is the fact that the 123 acres of land is approximately .00031 of the 400,000 acre park. This land is also on the west boundary of the park, not in the middle of the park, and no current park activities or navigation means will be changed.

The land exchange will add 144 acres to the park. Most of all, HB 52 is a simple solution that will fix a constitutional land disposal issue and not change a thing in citizen's park usage. HB 52 will actually

benefit the citizens by gaining access and parking to utilize the park on the East side of Kachemak Bay plus the continuation of the salmon produced by the Tutka hatchery that benefits thousands of people, businesses and municipalities.

Thank you,

David Martin

My name is Steve Vanek. I live in Ninilchik, Ak. P.O. Box 39103 Ninilchik. AK 99639, phone 907-567-3470.

I support HB 52.

I have been a commercial salmon drift fisherman in Cook Inlet since 1966. I have been on the board of Cook Inlet Aquaculture Assoc(CIAA). since 1980. I voted to close Tutka Bay Hatchery in the mid 2000 because of the low price for pinks. CIAA mothballed the hatchery because we knew that the price of pinks would come back. We paid all the costs associated with keeping it a viable hatchery.

With the price of pinks now, it is a source of income for CIAA operations.

Without going into detail, since that information is available in other testimony, I will state, as a board member, that without Tutka Hatchery, the China Poot dip net fishery can no longer be funded. There is not any other place to put that hatchery. Even if there were, the start up time before production would be on the order of a decade.

Tutka Bay Hatchery is a private business that supports many support industries in Homer. How is it that the Parks advisory board and the public can dictate whether a private business is viable or not. That is determined by the Board of Directors. Sure we have loans to pay off but we have never defaulted on any payments. The notion that only a few commercial fishermen benefit from the hatchery is absurd. Since I have been on the Board, the goal of CIAA has always been to produce and enhance salmon for everyone. I am proud to report that we have always achieved that goal.

Steve Vanek Feb.14, 2022 Give everyone a valentine. vote yes
