



Corina Watt, Owner Manager
Fox Island Seafoods

PO BOX 5071, Akhiok, AK 99615
GEO Address: 05VMD3615116930, Deadman's Bay,
Kodiak Island, AK 99615
corinawatt@foxislandseafoods.com
March 3, 2025

Representative Louise Stutes
Chair, House Fisheries Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Support for HB 117 – Maintaining Historical Set Gillnet Salmon Fishery Catch Harvest and Delivery Requirements

Dear Representative Stutes and Members of the House Fisheries Committee,

We, Corina and Jason Watt, owners and operators of Fox Island Seafoods, are writing in full support of HB 117. Our family operates a four-permit setnet site at the mouth of Deadman's Bay in the Alitak District on Kodiak Island. With a combined 52 years of experience in set netting, we are deeply invested in the sustainability and viability of this fishery. Our three sons, ages 19, 15, and 12, have been raised in this tradition. In 2022, we purchased the Fox Island setnet site and formed an LLC, continuing our commitment to responsible and efficient fishing practices.

Our operation involves using open skiffs with rollers. We harvest using according to historical harvest and delivery methods in the set gillnet fishery for safety, economic viability, and minimal environmental impact. Each boat is crewed by two permit holders who harvest two nets (permits), bleed, and slush ice the fish into insulated totes during open fishing periods. For efficiency and safety, both boats deliver fish simultaneously to the tender, which makes rounds across the fishing grounds, weighs the catch, and provides a bill of sale to Fox Island Seafoods. Historically, the catch from four permits has been commingled (two permits within a harvest skiff) operated by two permit holders because we operate as a "unit of gear," ensuring both safety and economic feasibility.

The Problem

A new interpretation by the Assistant Attorney General, unfamiliar with Alaska's set gillnet fishery, fundamentally altered the traditional harvest delivery methods during the 2024 season. This shift mandates that each permit holder must keep their catch separate and personally sign every delivery. This drastic change has resulted in significant safety concerns and economic hardships for set gillnet fishermen across Alaska. Consequently, Alaska Wildlife State Troopers issued citations to permit holders on Kodiak, despite our long-standing cooperative harvest practices.

The requirement to separate catch per permit and have each permit holder sign every delivery is not only impractical but also unsafe. Our vessels have limited capacity, fuel costs are already burdensome, and fishing alone—rather than in pairs—is hazardous. Additionally, this new interpretation hinders the ability of experienced permit holders to mentor younger family members who are permit holders, threatening the long-term sustainability of our industry.

Our Request

We urge the Legislature to support HB 117, which would restore and maintain the historical set gillnet salmon fishery harvest and delivery methods. Allowing set gillnet permit holders to continue working cooperatively as a "unit of gear", commingling our harvest upon delivery to fish tenders for sale is essential to ensuring the safety, economic viability, and sustainability of our fishery.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of Representative Stutes and the House Fisheries Committee in supporting HB 117. Your leadership and commitment to Alaska's commercial fishing families are invaluable. We respectfully request your continued support to uphold the traditions and livelihoods of set gillnet fishermen throughout the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Corina Watt" followed by a large, stylized flourish.

Corina and Jason Watt
Permit Holders and Co-Owners
Fox Island Seafoods

