

HB 117 – Public Testimony 3.2.25

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 117. My Name is Anitra Winkler, I am 30 years old and a lifelong Alaskan. I grew up in Cantwell went to college in Juneau and I have also been in the westside Kodiak salmon setnet fishery since 2010 and a site owner since 2017.

While I currently only have a single permit, when I was crew for 7 years prior to buying my site I had a permit in my name for many of them and we effectively fished the two permits as a joint venture. I also did this 2 seasons ago with a crew member of my own who wants to get into the fishery.

There's lots of issues this complicates (safety, efficiency, participation ect)but the logistics alone of keeping the fish separate would be extremely difficult on even 2 permits and I would assume near impossible with any more. It is rare that 2 sets perform the same, one usually is better so you put more energy into that one and storage space in holding skiffs is limited. Doubling the number of brailer bags every delivery (to split the 2 permits fish up) is cumbersome, potentially dangerous in rough weather and as well as you need a lot of fish hold space to accommodate.

We are not asking for anything new, this is how the setnet fishery has worked since long before I was involved. Kodiak set netting like many other fisheries is struggling and certainly doesn't need any unnecessary added hindrances.

Thank you for your time and assistance in helping us solve this issue.

Anitra Winkler

To whom it concerns;

I wish to cast my full support for HB-117.

I am a lifelong gillnetter in the Yakutat area for 50 years, and this bill is long overdue. Here in Yakutat we often fish as partners in small open skiffs for reasons of safety, efficiency, and economics. Given that our vessels are just simple open skiffs, with no individual holds, asking us to keep the fish separated to be sold as such is basically impossible, and creates undo hardship on us for no valid reason. Simplifying this for us would be a huge asset to our fishery and ease the long standing burden on us. Thank you very much for considering my concern,

Casey Mapes

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

My name is Galen Berns and I am a commercial set net fisherman in Viekoda Bay, on Uganik Island and I am writing in support of HB 117.

I have set net my entire life and over last 7 years have ran my family's set netting operation as a permit holder alongside my aging mother. This fishery is my family's sole means of income, but more importantly it has defined my family's life for multiple generations. HB 117 upholds this way of life and staves off unnecessary, impractical changes that will harm it. How is my aged mother expected to be able to don rain gear and pfd, march down the beach, get into our skiff and go out to meet the tender just to sign her name everyday? Some days multiple times! My entire purpose as a son is to make my mother's life easier and that's what I've been doing these last 7 years, but without HB 117 this won't be possible.

Setnetting is about cooperation and family and HB 117 upholds those values that have worked perfectly fine for decades. If helping family's to keep fishing is one of your priorities then you will also support HB 117.

Thank you

Galen Berns

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I am a commercial set gillnet fisherman in the Alitak district in Olga Bay on the South side of Kodiak island. I am writing to you in support of HB 117.

My family has been set gillnet fishing in this area for over 60 years, since 1964. We have always fished cooperatively as we are a family run business with multiple permits and gillnet fishing sites. We have multiple skiffs and crew that pick the fish from 3- 6 nets, and then each skiff takes their fish to a holding skiff, where all the fish are commingled from each skiff into totes by species, to be iced and stored while waiting for delivery to the tender. We have traditionally sold our fish under multiple family fishing permits, using one family permit card each delivery.

Reps Gruening and Stutes,

I understand there is a bill before the house tomorrow that would put into law a practice that has been utilized by fishing families to consolidate their legal harvest and transport it to the buyers in a more efficient manner.

It sounds like a rather ambitious Attorney General put a plan in action to hold fishermen to the letter of the law, and this bill is a good attempt to codify common sense for the fishery.

Our family income has been cultivated from the Bristol Bay set net fishery since the late 1940's on both my family's side (homesteaded Iliamna), and my wife's (Native Alaskan). Currently, we own and operate tenders, set net ourselves, and direct market our catch. We began direct marketing 20 years ago and have grown our operation to include five other families who also set net near us.

Our fishery works differently than in Cook Inlet, which is where I gather that this legislation originated from, but nonetheless it would be a practical codification of policy to protect us in case an ambitious Trooper decided to scrutinize every aspect of our operation. Typically, we do NOT consolidate fish because we also own our own tenders and they park about 1,000 feet from our nets. However, I could see the benefits of this arrangement for many other families, and also just neighborly fishermen who might appreciate 'donating' their meager pre and post season catches on lackluster tides to their neighbor rather than make a multi-mile commute to deliver those 10 or 15 fish themselves.

My only concern is that as people age out of the fishery (like they can no longer do the physical labor required) it does create opportunity for younger fishermen to pick up the trade as owners rather than just operators. I could see situations where elderly people stay in the cabins for decades after they picked their last fish in order to collect revenues from the operation of their gear. However, in 20 years I could just as likely be arguing that such a scenario is totally reasonable because someone in that position could be filling crucial roles by monitoring weather and VHF radio activity, running meals down in the pickup truck, or just imparting their decades of wisdom to the fishing crew at meal time – and all of these things are just as 'important' as the activity of picking fish and driving them to market.

Thank you for considering my opinions. I also shared them with Rep Kopp over the phone.

Reid Ten Kley, Fisherman | CPA retired
Iliamna Fish Co. LLC

Hello,

My name is Edin Berns and I am writing you to voice my support for HB 117 and my support for the setnetting community of Kodiak Alaska.

I am currently serving as a United States Marine in California. I grew up set net fishing until I was 19 and my family continues to set net to this day.

This new interpretation of the regulation that states all fish per permit holders must be able to sign at every delivery is not only an inconvenience but upends the fishery. My mother who is over 70 years old is the permit holder for her operation but she hires younger people to be out in the water. Frankly, making her go out on the water when we have to deliver in Gale force winds would be incredibly impractical and unsafe.

I do hope you reconsider the regulation

Sincerely Edin Berns

We do not have the capacity to keep each permit holder's fish separate, nor the manpower, or the holding capacity for our fish to make this realistic. Including the amount of time and how inefficient and time wasting this would be for our type of family fishing operation.

With the recent changes to the way we have traditionally fished, the safety of our fishing would be in jeopardy, increasing the workload on the water during fishing. While adding an additional financial burden, requiring us to employ more help, having additional holding capacity and ice to keep our quality of fish up to standard. We are not asking for any changes but to keep the same way of fishing that we have employed in the past, we are trying to preserve the status quo. This could potentially eliminate us from being able to continue to commercial fish.

Thank you for working to help solve this problem within our fishery.

Sincerely,

Ila Mae Amos

Stockholm Point

March 3, 2025

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

Writing in Support of HB 117:

My name is Virginia Adams. I write representing my families set net site "Valley Pt" in Viekoda Bay on the West side of Kodiak. We have fished at Valley Pt for 45 years, beginning as a 1 permit site and now a 3-permit site.

I fished Valley Pt with my husband for 8 years before having our son. I fished up to 8 months pregnant and all during our son's infancy. Having to go to the tender and deliver our catch was a wonderful thing not to have to do after working so hard. For 45 years we have co-mingled our permits catch for delivery. Anything else is unmanageable with 1 skiff that harvests all nets on a "pick".

The safety ramifications stand out for me here as well. Set netting is challenging at best. This Alaskan family fishery has many sites with Grandmother to Great Grandchild in the same site. Some of the elders still hold their permits. Requiring all permit holders to be present at tender delivery has never been done before and should not begin now. It is unreasonable to change a long standing practice that adds unnecessary burden to Alaska's traditional set net fishery.

Thank you so much for taking this into consideration.

Sincerely,

Virginia Adams

Kodiak, AK 99615

Dear Jane Pierson,

My name is Doreece Mutch, and our family owns a setnet site on the West side of Kodiak Island. I am writing in strong support of HB 117.

Our family has owned and operated this fish site since 2018, utilizing four permits and involving three generations of family members. We operate as a team, with some members managing the shore operations and others going out in the skiffs to harvest salmon. The previous owners operated in the same manner for over 40 years.

The recent interpretation of the regulation requiring that all fish permits must be kept separate, with every permit holder needing to sign at each delivery, has created significant challenges for our operation. This requirement is not only inconvenient but also disrupts the traditional way we've operated.

We are not asking for any drastic changes—just for the ability to continue operating as we always have. We want to avoid the uncertainty of potentially violating new regulations and enforcement. HB 117 offers a straightforward solution to clarify the confusion surrounding these interpretations, ensuring that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) receives the necessary information while allowing the fishery to continue in the way it always has.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for your efforts to address this challenge.

Sincerely,
Doreece Mutch

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

My name is Peter Danelski, Sr. My wife, Janet, and I began setnetting for salmon at a site we purchased in 1972. Our fishing site is located on the west side of Kodiak Island in Uyak Bay. We have three children who spent every summer fishing with us until they each graduated from college. We expanded our setnet fishery operation throughout their youth. We purchased a limited entry permit for each of our children as soon as they became of age to own a limited entry permit. After fifty years of set netting my wife and I retired in 2022. Our son, Peter Jr. now owns our setnet fishing business known as Uyak Bay Fisheries, Inc. Our son is married and has three children. Like our family did in the past, each member of Peter Jr.'s family now owns a limited entry and actively participates in the Kodiak Island's salmon setnet fishery. For the past fifty two years we have always picked our nets as a family team. We combine our efforts whereby more than one of our three picking skiffs often pick the same net together. When that happens the salmon from each net are combined with salmon from other nets that are assigned to different permit holders. Due to weather conditions and safety concerns some of the nets at different locations require more than one skiff to safely pick the salmon from the nets. Some nets catch more salmon than other nets and therefore in order to keep picking efficiently and safely the salmon are often transferred from a full skiff to one skiff that has fewer salmon in it. That guarantees that the separate skiffs are not overloaded and that the salmon can safely be carried to the tender at the end of each daily picking session. It would be very difficult when delivering our salmon to the tender to accurately record which salmon were caught in which net belonging to which individual permit holder. In family setnet operations, which have been prevalent in the Kodiak salmon set net fishery since its inception, there is a long history of pooling the salmon caught before they are delivered and recorded at the tender on an individual's permit card. Changing that long standing past practice would severely handicap the efficiency and safety of Kodiak's family set net operations. Thank you for recognizing the difficulties that would be imposed upon on Kodiak's setnetters if they are no longer allowed to continue the long standing practice of delivering salmon caught at different registered fishing locations on one limited entry permit holder's card. Therefore I am writing in support of HB 117.

And I want to thank you for helping the Kodiak salmon setnetters solve the recent problem that has arisen regarding whose fish can be delivered on an individuals's limited entry permit card.

Sincerely yours, Peter Danelski Sr.