

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



House Fisheries Committee

House Bill 117: Sponsor Statement

Version N

"An Act relating to commercial set gillnet fishing; and providing for an effective date."

House Bill 117 seeks to preserve the traditional model for salmon set-gillnet operations in Alaska by continuing to allow small groups, often family units in rural Alaska, to work cooperatively, co-mingle their fish, and have one permit holder deliver on behalf of the group.

Since the inception of the fishery, setnetters have traditionally been allowed to work and deliver in this manner; however, due to a newly applied interpretation of statute and regulations by law enforcement, cooperatives across the state are now being asked to account for and hold the salmon from each permit separately, as well as have each permit holder deliver and sign for their own fish.

The new delivery and accounting requirements would not only be logistically impractical and burdensome in fisheries operated by families in small, open skiffs, but it would also create safety concerns for folks simply struggling to make ends meet. Simply put, the application of the new requirements would upend salmon setnet fisheries across the state, bringing into question their viability and longevity.

To be clear, House Bill 117 does not create a new exception for salmon set-gillnet fisheries, but only allows the existing, traditional model to continue unfettered. The legislation also defers to the Board of Fisheries to establish in regulation how fish from cooperatives are accounted for, which provides flexibility and maximum input from stakeholders and enforcement.

Continuing to allow small salmon set-gillnet operations to work together, co-mingle fish, and have one permit holder deliver on behalf of the group will preserve the status quo of the fishery, as well as the livelihoods of many Alaskans.

If you have any questions, please contact Fisheries Committee staff, Matt Gruening, at 465-3271 or matt.gruening@akleg.gov.