

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.

First Creek Fisheries

Ekuk Beach, AK

House Special Committee on Fisheries

Alaska State Legislature

State Capitol Building

Juneau, AK

Subject: Letter of Support for HB 117 with Recommended Amendments

Dear Members of the House Special Committee on Fisheries,

First Creek Fisheries and the undersigned Ekuk set netters support **HB 117**, introducing cooperative setnetting opportunities to increase efficiency and flexibility for Alaska's commercial set gillnet fishermen. This bill acknowledges the challenges of operating in an unpredictable fishery and provides a pathway for small-scale fishermen to pool resources, improve safety, and streamline operations.

We believe HB 117 is a step in the right direction, and we recommend the following amendments to ensure sustainable access, adherence to the owner-operator intent of limited entry, and transparent financial accountability:

Recommended Amendments**1. Reduce Co-op Permit Cap from 10 to 3-5**

- A 10-permit co-op risks excessive consolidation, which could reduce access for independent fishermen and accelerate the loss of locally-held permits.
- A 3-5 permit co-op size ensures flexibility for family-based and small-scale operations while discouraging excessive consolidation.

2. Clarify Catch Accounting & Per-Permit Payment in Regulation

- Regulations should require clear tracking of fish landed per permit to maintain transparency and catch accounting.
- Payment should be attributed to individual permit holders unless otherwise specified in writing by the permit holder.

HB 117 must balance flexibility with safeguards against unintended consequences, including permit hoarding and reduced local access. By incorporating these amendments, the bill can align regulation with the practical needs of set-net operations while ensuring fairness, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

We appreciate your attention to this issue and encourage the committee to advance HB 117 with these key improvements.

Sincerely,

Christine O'Connor

John O'Connor

Jamie O'Connor

Margot Stroop

Dayle Ferry

Grayson Sanborn

Robert Sanborn

Sonja Rootvik Ewing

Avi Friedman

Norris Friedman

Celia Friedman

Warren Libby

John Bouker Sr. and Family (7 permits)

March 4, 2025

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



Subject: House Bill 117

Dear Representative Stutes and Members of the Fisheries Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on House Bill 117.

I am writing to express my support for an amended version of this legislation.

I am a 3rd generation setnetter, and lifelong Alaskan. My partner and I were both raised in multi-generational commercial fishing operations, and now own a 2-permit site on the south end of Kodiak Island. I have participated in limited entry fisheries in Cook Inlet, Bristol Bay, Kodiak and Prince William Sound, and we bought our Kodiak operation in 2022. We are strong advocates for family fishing businesses and ways of life, and for well-managed fisheries access programs across Alaska.

My request for amendments is focused on addressing the need for setnet delivery clarification, while upholding the fundamental owner-operator principle of limited entry fisheries.

Adaptations to major management systems have the potential for unintended consequences – such as increased consolidation, increased disparity in stakeholder success, and impeded access for next-generation fishermen. I commend my fishing neighbors for seeking a solution to the immediate challenge of setnet delivery requirements, in a way that preserves the standard longtime practice of cooperative fishing and delivery. I believe we can fully address that challenge, while mitigating any unintended consequences, with these simple edits:

1. **Reduce the allowable number of permits-per-cooperative to 3-5 permits**, to reduce incentive for over-consolidation of access rights. Co-mingling fish for delivery in small-scale family operations is an important and traditional part of the fishery. The ability to co-op a few permits for delivery purposes will cover that practice. A co-op of 10 permits, however, would be a fishing company of substantial scale. There are no 10-permit setnet camps that operate and deliver from a single vessel, or are short able-bodied participants to the degree that they would require a single cooperative. While a few families statewide have evolved substantial camps and are important fishery stakeholders, they are not a baseline for Alaska's small-scale fisheries access and regulation. A reasonable limit of co-op participants reduces the incentive for further access consolidation.

2. **Establish a minimum percentage of deliveries required per permit during the season, with that permit holder present** — rather than allowing some co-op permit holders to land zero deliveries. While non-fishing family members are often integral parts of an operation, the nature of our limited entry permits is fundamentally grounded in owner-operator principles. Some flexibility is warranted and reflective of the traditional fishery and the diversity of our family participants. However, expansive flexibility could result in the majority of permit owners *not* participating in the fishing, and is beyond the intent of limited entry's foundational owner-operator principles.

Access challenges associated with the outmigration of permits from rural communities and from Alaska writ-large are well studied and reported. As we have seen in limited entry and quota share programs in state and federal fisheries, provisions that encourage fisheries access *ownership* beyond the point of fisheries *participation* are often primary drivers of the greying of the fleet. We should be diligent when designing any action that could incentivize increased consolidation, slow advancement of young and new entrants into real ownership roles, or reduce active fisheries participation. That said, there is a real and present need to address reasonable delivery flexibility in our family set net operations.

With these few guardrails, I believe we can meet that due diligence while addressing the important challenge at hand.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hannah Heimbuch". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Hannah Heimbuch
Twin Peaks Fisheries
Alaska



ALASKA SALMON ALLIANCE

110 N. Willow St. #108

PO Box 586 Kenai, AK 99611

www.aksalmonalliance.org

Email: info@aksalmonalliance.org

March 5, 2025

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

Subject: Support for House Bill 117

Dear Representative Stutes and Members of the Fisheries Committee,

The Alaska Salmon Alliance is a nonprofit organization comprised of commercial seafood processors, allied businesses, and fishermen. We focus on public education and promoting the value of scientifically based salmon management to preserve habitats and create predictable harvests for all salmon. Our goal is to create long-term economic opportunities and benefits for Alaska's coastal communities for future generations.

We would like to comment on HB 117. Although setnetting varies across the state, one common aspect is that family operations work together as cooperatives. It is unfortunate that there is a need to legislate a practice based on common sense and one that has been in place for decades.

One reason for this cooperative structure is to enable extended family units to work together, share expenses, and reduce financial risk. It also provides the next generation with a more economical way into the fishery, teaches a strong work ethic, and strengthens family dynamics. Often, these cooperatives start small and expand as the family grows, allowing younger generations to take on more active roles and continue fishing alongside parents and sometimes even grandparents if desired.

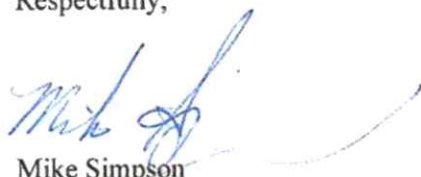
The ability to commingle fish from multiple permit holders provides both safety and efficiency. Whether delivering fish by skiff in rough water or bringing fish to the beach to be transported in totes via truck, it is impractical to deliver multiple small boat loads or partially filled totes. Ultimately, the fish are counted and weighed with those numbers being given by statistical area to the Department of Fish and Game.

Each setnet area already has effective controls in place, including restrictions on the number of permits an individual may hold, limits on gear quantity, required spacing between nets, and designated fishing areas. While ten-permit operations do exist, they are rare and typically involve extended family units. Introducing an arbitrary cap of ten permits per cooperative is unnecessary and would impose unwarranted micromanagement on operations that are already well-regulated under existing rules.

It is important to recognize the operational differences among setnetters, as running a successful operation involves extensive responsibilities beyond harvesting fish. Tasks such as net and mechanical maintenance, transportation logistics, and crew support—including providing food and housing—are integral to daily operations. The requirement that a permit holder be "present at all times and actively engaged in the operation" must therefore be clearly defined. In practice, permit holders remain consistently onsite or at the upland base of operations whenever their nets are active. While most are actively harvesting fish, there are inevitably situations—such as equipment failures or logistical issues—where being onshore is essential to maintaining overall operational efficiency. Permit holders always have specific responsibilities and actively contribute to the broader success of the fishing operation, even when not directly picking fish.

To be clear, we support HB 117 in clarifying a process that has been used for decades. Our recommendation is to keep it simple—avoid unnecessary complications that lead to interpretation issues and potential problems. Allow cooperatives to operate as they have traditionally done.

Respectfully,



Mike Simpson
President
Alaska Salmon Alliance



Norm Darch
Executive Director
Alaska Salmon alliance



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 stylized flourish.

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





Adelia Myrick
President
907-654-9094
northwestsetnetter@gmail.com
northwestsetnetters.org

RE: SUPPORT for HB 117

To Chair Stutes and Members of the House Fisheries Committee:

The Northwest Setnetters Association represents setnet permit holders fishing in the NW Kodiak District. More than 70% of our sites operate cooperatively, with two or more permit holders, mostly family members, working together. Since before statehood, Kodiak setnetters have built their businesses around a way of fishing where we use one or two skiffs to pick fish from multiple permits, and a single permit holder then signs the fish ticket for those fish that were delivered. Every year we are checked by State Troopers and have never had any problems fishing this way or even been given any indication that there was a concern with it until 2024, when someone was cited for fishing in this manner. Easily any of our multiple-permit operations could have been cited because this is the common way of operating, but they had no knowledge or warning that the only way of fishing they had ever known would be suddenly deemed at odds with regulations.

We firmly support this bill to preserve the status quo and allow our fishing families to continue to be able to operate without fear of citations. We appreciate that HB 117:

- Provides a legal mechanism for operations to register as co-ops with ADF&G so that accurate data can be shared by all
- Maintains multi-generational family participation by allowing elderly or those with young children, for example, to participate from the beach rather than everyone having to sign each fish ticket
- Allows fish from multiple permits to be mingled together, so that setnetters do not have to purchase additional skiffs to keep fish separate
- Ensures all permit holders are on site
- Keeps permits in our small communities rather than forcing operations to sell out because some of their holders might be elderly or unable to get in the skiff
- Supports safety by allowing two skiffs to work together to harvest fish from multiple permits, a critical buddy system that has prevented tragedy in rough, open water operations

For further reference, attached to this letter is a more detailed description of the historical nature of the fishery and the impacts of this new interpretation of the regulations on our fishing families.

Thank you for your work to help support some of the smallest-scale operators in Alaska's struggling commercial fishing industry.

Sincerely,

Adelia Myrick, NWSA President

N.W. Setnetters Association

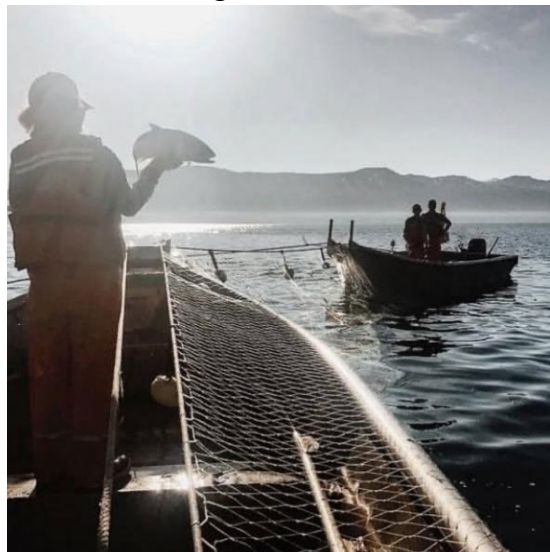
Support for HB 117

Goal of Legislation:

Maintain Historical set gillnet salmon fishery catch delivery requirements.

Statement of the Problem:

Recently, an Assistant Attorney General, unfamiliar with the nature of Alaska's set gillnet fishery issued a letter stating that it is not acceptable for one permit holder to deliver fish from multiple permit holders on a single fish ticket. Alaska Wildlife Troopers issued tickets during the 2024 season. This new interpretation fundamentally alters the traditional cooperative practices of Alaska's salmon set gillnet fishery and introduces significant operational, safety, and economic challenges.



Description of the Cooperative Nature of the Setnet Fishery:

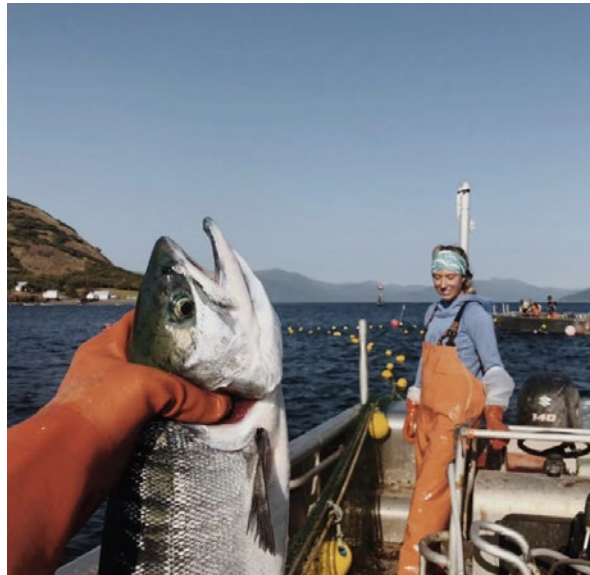
For more than a century, Alaska's set gillnet fishery has operated as a cooperative, family-oriented endeavor. Since the inception of set gillnet fisheries in Alaska, license holders and later Limited Entry Permit Holders have worked together, often in family units, to fish multiple set gillnet sites cooperatively. Fish were taken, often by more than one skiff, from several nets (fished under several licenses or permit numbers), comingled together in one skiff, and transported for delivery either to a holding skiff or directly to a tender.

Traditionally, one CFEC card was used per delivery by a single permit holder as the operator of the "unit of gear." Often the permit holder using the CFEC card for the "unit of gear" would change from delivery to delivery since all set gillnet permit holders were working cooperatively, actively fishing the "unit of gear." All fish caught by co-operative set gillnet operations are accounted for and reported to fisheries managers for management purposes.

For set gillnet fishermen and families fishing cooperatively, it has been understood that the

“unit of gear” prescribed in **5AAC 39.130** encompasses all the gear being fished co-operatively as a “unit” since this has been common practice for more than a century, long before limited entry was introduced.

The DA, by “clarifying” the statute is actually re-defining the common understanding of “unit of gear” for set gillnet fishermen working cooperatively to mean the gear attached to a single permit. The DA seems to be expecting all fish taken from the single permit’s gear to be kept separate and delivered separately. This is virtually impossible for many of the reasons described below. This shift imposes unworkable burdens on fishermen and threatens the future of cooperative set gillnetting.



Effects on the Fishery

This reinterpretation of regulations represents a dramatic departure from Alaska’s historical salmon set gillnet fishery. It creates serious challenges for the survival of Alaska’s salmon set gillnet fishery.

1. **Safety Risks:** Set gillnet skiffs often work together on the same net, especially in rough weather and exposed locations, to be near each other if a problem occurs. They then move from net to net (permit to permit) co-mingling the fish. Multiple skiffs working a net in adverse weather is necessary safety precaution. Requiring individual deliveries removes this safety net, increasing risks.
2. **Capacity Barriers:** Many set gillnet fishermen working co-operatively offload all of the skiff taken from all of the nets into holding skiffs. Holding skiffs are used to store fish between tender visits. Holding skiffs do not have the capacity to keep separate totes for fish picked from each separate permit in the co-operative fishing operation. Expecting this separation is simply impractical. Small skiffs and holding vessels lack the capacity to segregate fish by permit, especially with totes and ice onboard. Enforcing fish segregation would require additional holding skiffs and substantially

disrupts efficiency as well as fish quality.

3. **Family Participation Limitations:** With this change in statutory interpretation, mothers with small children, older set gillnet permit holders and permit holders working as “shore support” as well as permit holders that may be picking fish from nets miles away from the tender are all expected at the tender vessel, multiple times a day, and to travel to where tender deliveries may be taking place. Set gillnetting is and was envisioned as an opportunity for families, often several generations, to work together. Expecting land-based permit holders, including elders and children, to be present for every tender delivery creates undue hardship. For example, a young mother with a nursing infant or an aging grandparent would be forced to quit fishing. ADF&G will attest that individual permit holder accounting is not needed for management purposes so long as the number of permits fished is known. The State’s language change discourages family participation and threatens the multigenerational sustainability of Alaska’s salmon set gillnet fishery.



4. **Labor Efficiency:** Not all set gillnets fish evenly. Frequently, one net will have a ‘hit’ requiring the efforts of more than one skiff to pick the fish. Without the flexibility to move skiffs between nets, clearing fish from set gillnets would take additional hours, reducing fishing efficiencies and fish quality. The cooperative nature of set gillnet operations allows for flexible labor distribution. Moreover, the new interpretation will require substantially more time at the tender filling out fish tickets instead of focusing on fishing. Fish tickets generally take about 10 minutes to complete. For example, 5 co-operative family fishing operations with 4 permits each has historically used a single permit 3 times a day to deliver their fish (5 fish tickets x 3 deliveries = 15 fish tickets x 10 min. = 150 minutes) The new interpretation would require 4 fish tickets for each of 5 operations three times a day (20 fish tickets x 3 deliveries = 60 fish tickets x 10 min = 600 minutes or 10 hours of filling out fish tickets) WHY?

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

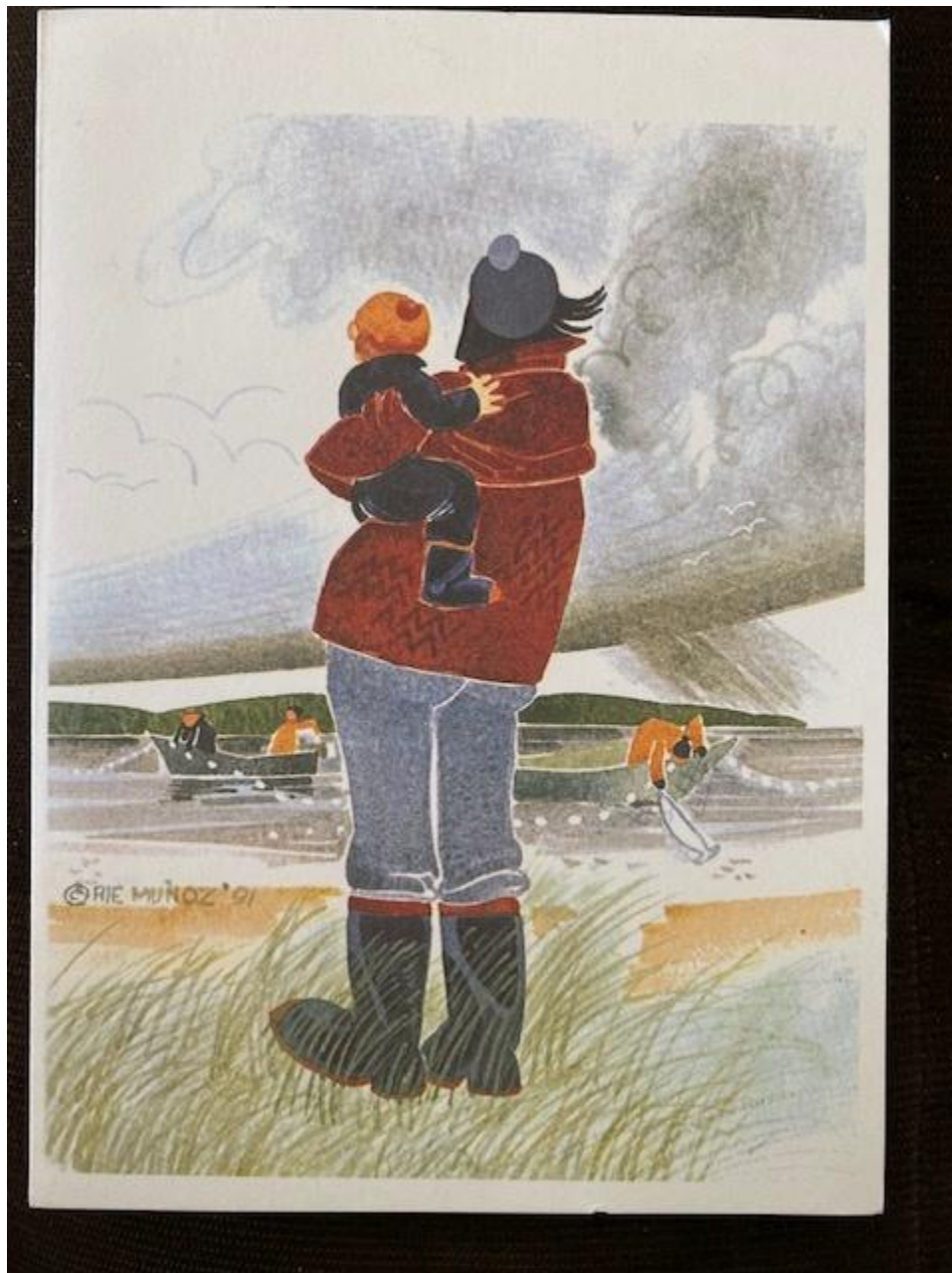
Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

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.

Historical precedence of set gillnetting as a shore and water based operation with multiple skiffs as depicted by Alaskan artist Rie Munoz:



Provided by Lauren Haughey

To representatives Stutes and members of the house fisheries committee.

From Eric Graves.

Hello I am a setnetter in Olga bay Alitak district of Kodiak island. I am writing in support of hb 117 Graves camp is a small operation. My dad Stan Graves started fishing in Olga bay in 1952. I have spent summers commercial fishing in Olga my whole life.

In 1990 we bought our neighbors two shore line leases and permit. We fish four nets. Two original sets and the two we bought from neighbor.

I have a permit in my name and my son Brandon Graves has the other. We work together picking the four nets. For quality the fish go from the water into slush ice totes, separated by spices. If hb 117 fails we won't have the space in our skiff for the extra totes it will take. Fish will have to be pitched to another skiff to separate and quality will suffer.

My other concern is the time it will take to tender. It takes time to crane the bag of fish. Weigh the fish weigh the empty bag fill out fish ticket get new ice. Our two permits will now take twice as long. Tenders have a lot of area to cover. If each delivery takes longer more camps will be delivering in the dark. That is a safety issue and more time between deliveries means we have to hold fish longer and quality will again suffer.

Thank you all for working on this issue for us and reading this letter Eric Graves Sent from my iPhone

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

My name is Eric Dieters and my family has been salmon Setnet fishing on Kodiak for 52 years.

I'm writing in support of HB 117.

Please dont make the delivering of our fish any more difficult by forcing the "stamp of every permit card fishing" every time we deliver to a Tender!

My Family has had up to 5 permits fishing at our camp over the years, we are currently fishing 2 permits. We have always commingled fish at the Tender for our deliveries. This is the most efficient process to offload, record the weights, and allow the tender vessel to move on to the next camp for speedy deliveries. Every permit holder has always been on the fishing grounds if their gear is in the water, hard stop, it's the law of the land, no exceptions.

In the salmon industry, time is money! Waiting around for the tender can cost our business a lot of money! Our boats need to be efficiently offloaded so that we can get back to the nets with empty boats and continue to catch new fish.

Waiting for the tender to come around while we have full boats and full nets is economic gridlock for us! We depend on a speedy tender service to keep our business running!

By forcing the tender vessel to process every "permit card" for every delivery would be an absolute disaster for our industry!

I would dare to compare this inefficiency to a scenario where EVERY PERSON riding in a car would have to type in your credit card number, pin, ex date, address, billing address, at a toll both on a busy highway while everyone is trying to get to their place of work! And then same thing trying to get home!

We have amazing technology these days to make business and personal life incredibly efficient, please dont disrupt our industry with bogged down backward inefficiencies!

If this is such a problem that needs to be addressed then fix it with a creative technology solution that makes it easier for the fishermen to deliver, not harder! I'm sure there are plenty of good ideas on how to approach this topic, but stamping every permit card every time is not one!

Even the system that we have now is fairly inefficient and could be streamlined to keep the tender moving to offload the next camp.

We need to get our fish delivered for quality purposes as well, more waiting around equates to lower quality fish.

We are not asking for anything to change. We are trying to preserve the status quo to keep our deliveries quick and efficient.

Thank you for trying to solve this issue for us!

Sincerely,

Eric Dieters

Chair Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I am Erik Obrien, a participant in Kodiak's Setnet fishery; I am writing in support of HB117. The bold text below expresses my request for your consideration, with background provided here.

I am part of a multigenerational fishing family. My parents first traveled to work in Bristol Bay's processing plants and later returned to live in Kodiak. They purchased their first setnet permit in 1977. I was born in 1980, followed by two brothers. In 1988 my parent separated, and our family purchased our second permit. My brothers and extended siblings were always part of the fishing operation. I began crewing full time in 1992, about that same time, my younger brothers became paid members of the family operation, helping around the camp. In 2002, as my parents became empty nesters and older fishermen, they transferred the two permits to my brothers and I to run as a family unit. Two permits did not provide sufficient revenue to split between my brothers, parents and reinvestment in the fishery. We purchased additional permits in 2006, 2009, 2011, and 2020, totaling 7 permits for three now grown "brothers" and three elder parents. During this time every one of us, several spouses, cousins and our own children have held our permits, and never once was there any question we were one family operation. More than that, we could not operate without everyone's support, direct and indirect.

Setnet fishing is a physically hard and long season, which does not always fit with life's schedule. Kids have school and sports, parents have kids and obligations, grandparent have time and aging bodies. Everyone only has a short window between our late teens and 50s when we all have the physical abilities to operate a long setnet season, but it takes every one of us to make the operation work for 50 years as our family has done.

My kids are too young, and my parents are too old to fully execute the setnet fishery today, but I would not do this if both were not there to help and support me. It is not feasible to consider each permit holder an individual and separate business, that is just not true, and not how we have ever operated.

HB117 corrects a misinterpretation that a setnet permit is a single business venture, and treats it as it has always been, a cooperative venture, primarily executed along family units. Breaking that assumption creates a regulatory burden that is unfair and impractical to implement. **Following the reinterpretation issued in 2024 is not workable and will only result in making rulebreakers of my family, and most other Kodiak setnet operations, where the single permit operation is now almost entirely defunct due to economic realities.** Please consider passing this bill so we can get back to managing our fishing business how things have always operated.

I close with a heartfelt thank you to Chair Stutes and all member of the Housing Fisheries Committee working for common sense regulations that help Alaskan families and businesses.

Erik Obrien
907-317-0428
Obrien82@gmail.com

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

My name is Jane Petrich and I am writing in support of HB 117.

I have been set netting on the west side of Kodiak Island since 1977. I started out fishing a single permit with my husband but as our family grew to include three sons we started purchasing additional permits. My family now owns and operates 7 permits in a very cooperative operation. I was 30 when I bought my first permit and now I am 75. The physical demands of setnetting mean that I do not go out on the nets for every pick and delivery like I did 45 years ago but I do have 45 years of experience to share with my sons, daughter in laws and grandchildren. I am the main net mender of our operation, I cook and feed the crew, I mentor the grandchildren and teach them how to safely operate skiffs and maintain outboards. I know the regs and make sure we are in compliance with all regulations. I have spent every summer since 1977 in Larsen Bay participating in the setnet fishery.

Last summer (2024) a State Attorney determined that the way my family has been fishing is not legal. That to prove to the State that I am a legitimate permit owner and participant in the fishery I must get in the skiff and be present at the tender when deliveries are made. Additionally the Attorney determined that each of our 7 permits are to be fished as a single isolated unit. Basically the interpretation by this attorney will put my family out of business after 45 years.

We are holding on to our fishing operation by our fingernails in this very chaotic and uncertain times for the fisheries. We are very much committed to continuing our family operation for the next generation but unless this situation is resolved we will not survive.

This legislation is a straightforward way to clear up inconsistencies between regulation and practice and get ADF&G the information they need, while still allowing the positives for the fishery.

Thank you for working to help solve this problem that has arisen. The fishing families of Alaska needs your help.

Sincerely,
Jane Petrich, Kodiak Island

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

Letter of support for HB 117

No fiscal note is attached to this bill!

My name is Kevin Fisher, my parents and I own a family setnet camp on the south end of Kodiak Island in Moser Bay. I started fishing as a crewmember in the Alitak District in 1989. In 1992 my parents and I were offered the opportunity to purchase our own camp.

Without HB 117 passage, we will be forced to change how we have fished for more than thirty years. That change would include safety hazards above and beyond what we already face, financial hardship, higher environmental impacts, less efficiency, reduced effort, market impacts, and the further dismantling of small family businesses. This affects every setnet camp in the Alitak district, and likely almost every setnet fisherman in Alaska.

Setnet fishing is unlike any other fishery in the state, we use small open skiffs, we are shore based, we are small, family operations usually owning multiple permits, that when combined can hopefully catch enough to continue fishing. Our elderly parents and young children are with us, it is not uncommon to have 3 and 4 generations contributing as best they can to the operation. We share the work load, not everyone does everything all the time. While picking the nets can take a great deal of physical effort, delivering only requires one permit holder. This makes it possible for someone to deliver while the others do necessary tasks, such as mending nets, maintenance of boats and motors, cooking the meals, tending the garden, repairing the cabins, and do not forget many camps have small children that cannot be left alone. Sharing the work load is essential in Setnet fishing, a great deal of effort is used to work the nets and shore support, one person simply cannot be in two places at once. While it is necessary for all permit holders to be onsite in order to fish, requiring every permit holder in a co-op to be at the tender for every delivery, increases the level of difficulty and will result in reduced effort and safety. As well as increased risk to fishers, higher cost of doing business, require further investment in equipment and even less take-home revenue.

My parents are aging, at 76 and 80 years old they still actively work the nets, as well as work shore support. Some families have small children that can not be left alone. It would be insane to force these valuable contributors into the skiff, in rough weather to deliver every single time. The risk of injury is too high, medical attention is too far away. It would be next to impossible to separate each permits fish, and physically deliver each permits fish separately, on every delivery, by each permit holder. Not only is it wildly inefficient but it would also cause new unnecessary safety hazards and added cost. It is essential to operate as efficiently as possible because we are already running a thin line to stay in business. Less fish, lower value, and higher expenses has pushed all but a few single permit operations out of business. It simply does not pencil out to go fishing if you cannot at least cover your expenses.

All operations are unique in some way, and all net locations are not equal. Meaning some nets in a co-op catch the majority of the fish in our operations. We have set up our operations to accommodate all the fish we catch together, not per permit bases. We rely on combining all our fish together on any given day to have enough to justify stopping the tender to deliver. Some camps have two permit holders in one skiff and pick both permits worth of gear with one boat. That means the fish are comingled, after picking the gear we will head back to camp to do the next task, when the tender comes by, only one of the two permit holders needs to go out to deliver while the other can continue to do shore support. Sometimes we get most of our fish in one permit and only a few in the others. For example, one net might get 50 fish and the next only 3. As common sense would dictate you simply put your 3 fish into the same slush ice bin with the 50 and go to the next net. Imagine the equipment, effort, and time it would take to have three people go out to the tender to deliver 3 fish each. This would include weighting 3 fish separately, lifting each bag individually, writing three separate fish tickets, so that each permit holder has his own ticket every time. I would also like you to consider how that would affect our fish quality. This would cause the tender operator to take 3 times as long to take a delivery and move on to the next camp. Tenders can come any time day or late into the night. This extra time and effort would cause unnecessary burden on our tender operators and would impact their ability to move efficiently through the district.

We already separate out specific species Red, Pink, Dog, Silver. Creating another separate bin to put fish in for each permit makes no sense, there simply is not room in our skiffs. Often, we use two boats on the same net, or go back and forth between nets to more efficiently keep the nets clean of fish or floating debris. We have some skiffs that are better suited for picking the Trap/Pot end of the net and others that are best for picking the lead. That means that one boat will pick one section of each of the nets comingling the fish from multiple permits. This increases efficiency and quality by speeding up the processes and ease of picking all the nets.

It has never been a problem to have all the fish caught by a group of setnet fishermen delivered by one permit holder. Why now, suddenly is this a problem? And is that perceived problem worth potentially destroying this family fishery that is unique to Alaska and the nation?

We would like to be able to continue to fish like we always have, without fear of being cited under some new interpretation of the rules, and dealing with all that entails.

Thank you,
Kevin Fisher
Trap Point, Moser Bay
Kodiak, Alaska 99697

I am writing in support of HB 117. Anyone that has participated in Alaska commercial fishing knows there is one universal truth about fishing operations, there are no two operations alike. This makes it hard to write policies and laws that are all inclusive. HB 117 addresses the specific situation that occurs in set gillnetting in coop fishing. When I talked to a trooper this spring in Juneau, his comment was that he had not seen this type of operation before in Southeast. I was surprised, as our family begins our 60th year of operation next summer. Our first two permits were signed up for, not purchased. Our next two were purchased in the seventies. Since then, our family has fished four permits cooperatively which have since been transferred to children and grandchildren. Members of our family are at the fish site for the entire fishing season.

As a stay at home mom, on the shore, please don't insult me and generations of others by insinuating that I don't participate in the fishery because I am not in the skiff every pick. Those are fighting words to moms around the globe, not just at fish sites. Set netting is a shore based operation and my position as shore manager/cook/tender liaison/HR director/safety officer/paramedic/mechanic/the list could go on, is a necessary position. Not only does it make operations run smoothly, it is a safety issue to have someone on the beach to find the tender or guide skiffs safely to shore in bad weather. When it's dark and rough, I am the one on the beach with a light guiding the skiffs to shore. More than once, I have been the one on the radio able to communicate when the skiffs on the water needed assistance and could not reach anyone else because of location or bad weather, not just for our operation but others. It is **impractical and dangerous** and not beneficial to the fishery. So, unless you want to insult your mom, don't go there.

Obviously we have had our permits a while. The practice of combining fish caught on multiple permits onto one permit for delivery is not setting a new precedence. When we started, tenders came around at all hours to your holding skiff where you pitched your fish onto the tender by spearing them with a pugh then tossing them onto the tender, and definitely not separating them by permit. **This is our history and our precedence.** We have operated for a long, long time (And also, reported by my father-in-law, this was before they could afford rain gear, they wore aprons from the butcher.) To separate the fish by permit would again be **impractical and sometimes dangerous**, either causing skiffs to list because of imbalances or placing fishermen in peril in big waves having skiffs bang together to sort fish accordingly, or increasing fatigue because of increased work and time. As members of the fishing community, you understand the value of safety and also the value of rest, and definitely that time=money.

The fish caught are reported correctly by location to ADF&G. The permit holders are present at the fish site. Sometimes we're just not in the skiff. Typically, every year I end up in the skiff picking fish for some reason, someone leaves for school, is hurt, needs to do something on shore. Here comes the third string. As a result, I do get a few deliveries on my permit. I've tried retiring from picking fish at least 20 times.

Please support HB 117. It is the safest and most practical, has legal precedence as evidenced by historical operation, has the least impact to carbon footprint and is the best practice for the fishery.

Lauren Haughey

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I Richard Blanc support your passage of HB 117. I am a set net fisherman in Alitak Bay Kodiak, Alaska for 53 years. My wife and I have owned our set net site and four S04K permits for 52 years. Our children have grown up fishing with us and now our grandkids are entering the fishery.

We have fished our 4 permits in common, selling fish on each permit during the season. All permit holders have different responsibilities and jobs to do to ensure a safe, efficient harvest. It is not possible, logical or being safe to have all permit holders at the point of sale (tender), nor keep the various permit's fish separate in our small skiffs.

Historically we have followed the rules allowed by ADF&G with no issues. It is punitive for the state to change course and start writing tickets for trying to make a living the way we always have.

If HB117 does not pass our family operation of 52 years will cease to exist. We are not supporting a change instead urging that government (for the people) will make and enforce reasonable regulations .

This legislation is a straightforward way to clear up inconsistencies between regulation and practice and get ADF&G the information they need, while still allowing the fishery to continue as it always has, a win-win for everyone. For a fishery already in dire straits (evidence of the many set net sites boarded up), without HB 117 we are not sustainable.

Thank the representatives for working to help solve this problem that has arisen.

Sincerely,

Richard Blanc

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Bob Murphy, and I live in Kodiak and am representing myself. I am a set gillnet fisherman where I fish in Port Moller located on the Bering Sea side of Alaska Peninsula. I am in support of HB 117. This bill will allow set gillnet permit holders that fish as family groups, which many set gillnet operators are, to continue doing what they have been doing since statehood or even prior. Adoption of this bill into law will have no change to long-standing practices.

As you know the commercial fishing industry has been through some difficult times in the last few years. Long-time seafood processors going out of business or large-scale consolidation is occurring. Commercial seafood processors and fishermen are struggling with high costs to run their businesses, and the volume of fish and inflation are not helping matters. I have concern that if this bill is not adopted and under the current interpretation of how set gillnet salmon fisheries are to be conducted with multiple permit holders in a family setting, that it may negatively disrupt the way these operations have occurred for decades. If the current regulations are not changed, it very well may break up or eliminate some of these family fishing groups which may force some to no longer find it financially worthwhile to fish which will impact local communities through lost income to individuals and lost tax revenue to local municipalities as well as the state. I think we could all agree that this is not in anyone's best interest for this to occur.

Without HB 117, there are issues such as safety by trying to keep fish separate in small skiffs by adding additional fish totes which may have ice or slush ice and the added weight of the totes if space is even available which it isn't on many skiffs is a concern, and significant additional time spent completing fish tickets often in difficult sea conditions while tied alongside a large tender vessel can be dangerous. There is no biological concern to the resource the way fisheries have been managed in the past and the state will still manage fisheries the same way. These are just a few reasons that support the passage of HB 117.

There are some family groups in the area which fish around where I fish in the Village of Nelson Lagoon. Set gillnet fishing is prominent in Nelson Lagoon and extremely important to the community as salmon fishing is the main source of income for the community and HB117 would help them practice the way they have fished for many years.

For 35 years I have been involved in the commercial fisheries in this area and most of that was as a biologist working for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game until I retired. I am truly thankful for how this process has worked so far. Where a group of stakeholders were told what they were doing for a very long time is no longer legal, the stakeholders then working with the Departments of Fish and Game and Public Safety to help write the language that would fix the issue, and then the State Legislature seeking to correct the

issue. This is a great example of how the government works for the people and I sincerely thank all those involved with this issue to this point and in the near future to get it corrected prior to the 2025 commercial salmon fishing season.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and hope you will support HB 117. Thank you all for your service, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Bob Murphy
Kodiak, AK 99615

Support for HB 117

My name is Thom Wischer and my family has been set netting on the west side of Kodiak Island since 1976. We currently have three permit holders in the family, myself and my two adult children. We fish three to five nets in any given season.

As a family operation, all the fish from each net are placed in iced totes in one or two holding skiffs depending on the volume of the harvest. This has been the practice since set netting began on Kodiak. We have never attempted to determine the number of fish each permit holder has caught. All permit holders are present for the length of the season and when deliveries are made, whoever is in the skiff signs the fish ticket. It has always been done this way. HB 117 is not asking for anything new, just to be allowed to do what we always have. There has never been any issue with this practice from the Alaska State Troopers or with ADF&G.

If we are forced to separately hold fish caught by each permit holder's net and that permit holder must deliver only their fish each day creates an impossible situation for any family fishing operation. It would mean that each permit holder in a family cooperative fishery would need their own skiff to pick fish and their own holding skiff to deliver, which would be cost prohibitive.

Many permit holders in a family fishery have primary duties on shore to support the operation. These individuals can be young children, elderly, or even pregnant. Forcing them to get in a skiff multiple times a day to deliver and sign a fish ticket in Kodiak weather puts their safety at risk and increases the time required at a tender which will affect the quality of the fish.

I would like to thank all of you that have worked to find a solution to this problem and allow the family gill net fishery in Kodiak to remain viable as it has been for so many years.

Regards,

Thom Wischer

To the chair and members of the house fisheries committee,

My name is Tollef Monson and I'm a setnetter on Kodiak Island, for 24 yrs and coming up on 20 as an site owner and permit holder. I support HB 117 even though I'm a single permit holder and have no plans to expand into multiple permits.

Not being able to co-mingle fish in one small boat for one site with multiple permits is unreasonable for a number of reasons. Given the size of our fishery which are typically small family operations who have invested their entire lives to keeping their operation going, adding more holding boats is ridiculous. What I see now is many of these multiple permits families won't be able to make it if they have to break up the deliveries into each permit holders individual fish. Loss in efficiency with time and safety having frail but competent elders out in rough water unnecessarily. This is not a cheaters fishery, there is no over the line fishing or extra gear in the water just a few hardy and hard working folks trying to keep the status quo of how the fishery has always been prosecuted since statehood until some over eager State Trooper decided to write a ticket out of ignorance.

Let's get this bill passed so the added emotional and financial turmoil in the fishery and the state can be dialed down a couple notches. The greying of the fleet is well documented and allow their families to keep providing for themselves as is, without any changes.

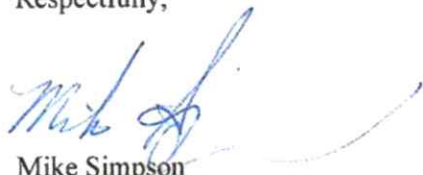
Thank you for all the hard work everyone does which is probably thankless and mostly unobserved sacrifice, like cleaning out the jellyfish from a net at 4am!

Tollef Monson

It is important to recognize the operational differences among setnetters, as running a successful operation involves extensive responsibilities beyond harvesting fish. Tasks such as net and mechanical maintenance, transportation logistics, and crew support—including providing food and housing—are integral to daily operations. The requirement that a permit holder be "present at all times and actively engaged in the operation" must therefore be clearly defined. In practice, permit holders remain consistently onsite or at the upland base of operations whenever their nets are active. While most are actively harvesting fish, there are inevitably situations—such as equipment failures or logistical issues—where being onshore is essential to maintaining overall operational efficiency. Permit holders always have specific responsibilities and actively contribute to the broader success of the fishing operation, even when not directly picking fish.

To be clear, we support HB 117 in clarifying a process that has been used for decades. Our recommendation is to keep it simple—avoid unnecessary complications that lead to interpretation issues and potential problems. Allow cooperatives to operate as they have traditionally done.

Respectfully,



Mike Simpson
President
Alaska Salmon Alliance



Norm Darch
Executive Director
Alaska Salmon alliance

March 10, 2025

To: Chair Stutes and Members of the House Fisheries Committee
From: Sue Jeffrey and Dan Ogg
Re: HB 117

Dear Chair Stutes and Members,

About us:

1. Both full-time Alaska residents
2. Kodiak residents for more than half a century
3. Fished salmon at our setnet site in Uganik Bay since 1987; 38 salmon seasons in all so far
4. Each holds a Limited Entry Kodiak salmon setnet permit
5. Run a family-friendly fishing operation. First season, siblings were crew. Then our children and their friends; our nephews and their friends; our family friends' children; and now grandchildren along with able-bodied adventure-seekers from around the country and the world

We support HB 117 for the following reasons:

-- HB 117 enshrines the status quo since there is no need to fix what is not broken. Alaska's salmon setnet fishery is operating the same way it has since statehood and long before: permit holders and crew in small skiffs working together pulling salmon one by one from nets and then transferring them into chilled water in one large holding skiff anchored offshore on the fishing grounds until the fish processing tender arrives to off-load the catches.

-- Comingling fish caught with two permits fishing does not skew the information vital to managing Alaska's salmon runs in the midst of the season. The information about each setnet site's fish catch that is vital to the State of Alaska Department of Fish & Game -- total weight of the salmon harvested and date, time, and location where the fish were caught -- is accounted for and recorded on one permit, depending on which permit holder makes the delivery.

-- Requiring Alaska's setnet operations with more than one permit to separate fish caught by each net would dramatically increase setnet

operation costs. It would require the purchase of more equipment to operate a separate holding system – another holding skiff with insulated holds, anchors, ice-making machine, etc. Moreover, requiring each permit holder and crew to make each delivery would increase safety risks because it would put more crew on the fishing grounds to deliver regardless of challenging weather conditions.

-- Regulations governing Alaska's setnet fishery are easily monitored and enforced regarding time, area and gear fished. That is, the setnet fishery is a stationery fishery; its operations are easily visible from air or water for State of Alaska salmon fishery managers and State Wildlife Troopers. Indeed, regulations require each Limited Entry setnet permit net location to be clearly identified with a permanent sign staked onshore with the permit holder's name and Salmon Limited Entry Permit and number visible.

-- In conclusion, HB 117 clarifies in statute a traditional salmon fishery that has existed long before statehood. Passing HB 117 will enshrine Alaska's set gillnet fishery, which will strengthen the State's fishing industry for all Alaskans.

Respectfully,

Sue Jeffrey and Dan Ogg

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

My name is Tom Rollman and I am writing on behalf of myself and my family to voice our support for HB 117. Our family has been setnetting in Alaska since 1970, starting in the Northern District of Cook Inlet, and then also fishing the Nushagak District of Bristol Bay starting in 1984. My wife and I bought our own operation in 1992 and have since expanded by purchasing additional permits and sites as our family has grown. Setnetting has always been about family for the Rollmans. Kids in our family (have had permits in their names as early as age 10 and started helping and contributing earlier. This recent interpretation of how salmon are to be sorted and delivered would and will make it impossible for us to operate our operations legally. Young kids, expecting Moms, and aging parents can't be expected to make deliveries at the tender in the middle of the night or put in crazy hours like we do in the Bay, it's not realistic or safe. My brother Trevor and his family now run our Cook Inlet operation, where he also direct markets some of his catch. It is common practice there to use several open skiffs, pick multiple nets with each, then bring them to the beach where fish are sorted, iced and loaded onto a truck for delivery. One person typically makes the 1-2 hour drive off the beach (tide dependent) to the processor and delivers all the fish on one permit. Under this new interpretation, all the fish would have to be separated according to which nets they were caught out of, and all four permit holders would have to travel to Kenai for every delivery. Both totally unrealistic and unnecessary. Due to strong runs and excellent management, our Nushagak setnet fishery in Bristol Bay has turned into a 24 hour a day affair, much different from when we started 40 years ago. In order to keep all our nets in the water around the clock and to be able to take good care of them, we need the ability to pick nets and deliver fish from each other's nets within our family co-op. HB 117 allows for up to 10 permits within a co-op. While I have seen testimony saying this is too many, I disagree. This allows flexibility for families to grow if needed and does not infringe on smaller operations.

Like many have already testified, this family setnetting model has worked for generations in Alaska. We aren't asking for anything new, just to operate the way we always have, and HB117 makes this happen. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tom Rollman
Eagle River, AK

Dear Representative Stutes and Members of the House Fisheries Committee:

RE: Support of House Bill 117

My name is Georgene Shugak and I am writing in support of HB 117. My family has fished two permits at Fassett Point in the Alitak Bay District on Kodiak Island for over 40 years. Ours has been a family operation for 5 generations, and we continue to commit to our annual family fisheries and time together, and plan to hold fast for generations to come.

I depend on my adult sons and daughters to help me to keep our tradition strong and safe; we could not safely do this with the new interpretation by the Assistant Attorney General. Our open skiffs and the costs of operating are very combined in our yearly attempt to stay ahead of costs, while leaving our homes and “regular” jobs to do so.

Thank you for your work on this issue for all involved.

Sincerely,
Georgene Shugak

Duncan Fields
Fields & Sons
P.O. Box 25
Kodiak, Alaska 99615

March 3, 2026

Via: email <House.Fisheries@akleg.gov>

Chairman Stutes & Committee members
House Fisheries Committee
State Capital
Juneau, Ak 99801

Re: House Bill 117

Dear Chairman Stutes and Committee members:

My family has set gillnetted for salmon at the same location on Kodiak Island since 1961. My grandchildren, the 4th generation, are now participating in our fishing operation. For 65 years our family has worked together (cooperatively) to pick the fish from our nets and to deliver those fish to a tender vessel. Our fish have always been co-mingled from multiple nets as permit holders and crew picked (took) the fish out of our nets. Most often, a single permit holder stamped the ticket for each delivery. The permit holder and use of card would change from delivery to delivery. All permit holders with gear being fished were always either working the nets (on the water) or at our cabin location providing shore support. Since we have fished this way for 65 years, we understood the “unit of gear” delivery requirement in 5AAC 39.130 was the gear that our family was cooperatively fishing as a “unit”.

The recent interpretation/emphasis by AWT that “unit of gear” would require each set gillnet permit holder to keep separate all fish from that permit holder’s net(s) and that each permit holder must take those fish to the tender and each permit holders stamp a delivery ticket creates significant hardship for my family and threatens the family set gillnet cooperative fishing way of life throughout Alaska.

HB-117 would maintain the status-quo for salmon set gillnet fishermen working cooperatively. We would be able to co-mingle fish from several nets and then deliver with on one permit card.

Additional details would be worked out by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. **My family and I strongly support HB-117.**

The Committee may hear concerns that HB-117 somehow “expands” set gillnet cooperative fishing opportunities or “opens the door” for abuses. However, since most participants in the set gillnet fisheries in Alaska have understood for decades that set gillnet fish from cooperative fishing operations could be co-mingled and delivered on one permit card, implementing HB-117 would neither expand fishing opportunities nor change the status quo.

Set gillnet fishing is one of only a few land based commercial fisheries in Alaska. As such, it has many unique characteristics that should be reflected in our understanding of fishing regulations and the need for HB-117.

For example:

1. Safety: Set gillnet skiffs often work together on the same net, especially in rough weather and exposed locations to be near each other if a problem occurs and then move from net to net (permit to permit). Co-mingling fish is a necessary safety precaution. Safety is not an abstract concern. Over the years we've been set gillnetting on Kodiak Island. I can think of several deaths due, at least in part, to bad weather as well as many skiffs swamped and near deaths.
2. Capacity: Set gillnet skiffs are small and do not have the capacity, especially with totes and putting fish on ice, to keep fish obtained from each individual permit holder's net separate. This also goes for holding skiff capacity as well. Holding skiffs are used to keep fish for up to 24 hours between tender visits. Most holding skiffs do not have the room to keep separate iced fish totes for each permit holder. A requirement to keep fish separate is, simply stated, an impractical or impossible expectation.
3. Labor: Not all set gillnets fish evenly, frequently one net will have a "hit" that requires the efforts of more than one skiff to clean the net. Other skiffs come from their work on other nets (permits) to help out. Not having this flexibility to co-mingle fish by helping clean another permit holders net(s) would cause significant delays, inefficiencies, lower fish quality and loss of fishing opportunity.
4. Costs: Taking the time for each permit holder to sign each delivery ticket for cooperative fishing operations would cripple operational functioning and efficiency. It takes about 10 minutes to fill out a fish delivery ticket and deliveries are often made two or three times a day. If 5 permits are being fished cooperatively, the time needed to fill out fish tickets goes from 30 minutes to 150 minutes, that's 2 ½ hours just filling out paper work. When fishing, even an hour of lost time can mean no rest during an 18–20-hour day. With all fishing costs going up and the exvessel price for salmon static, set gillnet operations need to be as efficient as possible.
5. Exclusion of multi-generational permit holder participants: Set gillnet fishing, unlike boat salmon fisheries, allows older permit holders to contribute to the fishing operation by cooking, doing gear work and/or watching grand children while other permit holders are out on the water. Younger permit holders, as young as 6 years old, are also active in the fishery -- up to their abilities. Expecting land support permit holders, young and old or mothers that are pregnant or with young children to be on the water and present every time a tender delivery is made creates great hardship – especially in adverse weather or late at night. If HB-117 is not passed, fewer permit holders will be able to participate in the fishery, effectively eliminating many extended families from the fishery. Sustaining these types of multi-generational participation in the fishery is good for the fishery and for Alaska.

Very Truly Yours

Duncan Fields

From: [Mat Riendeau](#)
To: [Matt Gruening](#); [Jane Pierson](#); [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [House Fisheries](#)
Subject: Letter in Support of HB 117
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 4:00:48 AM

Dear Representative Stutes and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I am a longtime setnetter and owner of a site on the NW side of Kodiak Island, writing in support of HB 117. For generations, Kodiak families have worked together to harvest fish from multiple permits, pooling the catch and delivering it to a tender. HB 117 ensures this long-standing practice can continue, which is crucial for keeping permits within our small communities and supporting rural Alaska.

Many setnet operations in Kodiak have been passed down for 40 to 60 years, often structured around family leadership. This bill helps ensure that older fishermen can remain involved, while providing opportunities for younger generations to join the industry, which is essential for the future of our fishery.

If we lose the ability to cooperate as families, the system will collapse, forcing permits out of rural communities and reducing local involvement. Setnetting supports one of the highest percentages of Alaska-resident fishermen, making it vital to sustain these family-run operations for the state. HB 117 will help preserve local involvement and keep our industry viable.

In these tough economic times, setnetting operations face serious challenges. With many smaller canneries having closed, tendering to Kodiak is our only option. As processors consolidate, there is a risk that markets for setnet fish could disappear if multi-generational operations can't continue. These cooperative groups maintain enough volume to keep tenders running.

If HB 117 does not pass, the impact on our struggling fishery will be severe. The new requirement to keep fish separate from multiple permits will force small operators to buy additional skiffs and hire more crew—costs they cannot absorb. The time and expense would be overwhelming.

Safety is also a concern. Using two skiffs to harvest from multiple nets is a critical safety practice in this exposed fishery. The new interpretation of regulations would eliminate this, putting fishermen at greater risk.

In conclusion, I strongly support HB 117 to preserve our way of life, protect our communities, and ensure the survival of our fishery. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Mat Riendeau

From: [Don Dumm](#)
To: [House Fisheries](#); [Matt Gruening](#)
Cc: northwestsetnetter@gmail.com
Subject: Testimony HB 117
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 10:00:03 AM

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

My name is Susan Payne, together with my husband and children we have fished two set gillnet permits since 2002.

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 117 to maintain the status quo for how we have been delivering and recording our catch for years. As you know, our fishery is in turmoil and a change at this time will be difficult to implement financially as we would need to add holding capacity. It is an unnecessary burden as long as every fish is counted and gear rules are followed.

Thank you for your work on this important bill.

*Sincerely,
Susan Payne
PO Box 1903
Kodiak, AK 99615
Sent from my iPhone*



March 18, 2025

State of Alaska House of Representatives
House Resources Committee

Re: Support for HB 117

Co-Chairs Burke and Dibert and Committee members:

The Pacific Seafood Processors Association (PSPA) supports HB 117 as a solution to maintain the traditional fishing practices of Alaska's set gillnet salmon fishery by continuing to allow a permit holder to deliver fish from multiple permit holders that they are fishing with on a single fish ticket. HB 117 is necessary to prevent significant operational, safety, and economic concerns associated with a new interpretation of the existing regulations.

PSPA represents seafood processors and their investment in coastal Alaska, and is dependent on viable, healthy fishing fleets and fishing communities. The seafood processing community covers all regions of Alaska, all vessel sizes and gear types, and PSPA membership participates in nearly every commercial salmon fishery across Alaska.

We became aware of this issue during the 2024 salmon season, when the Assistant District Attorney clarified a regulation establishing a 'unit of gear' in this fishery in a different way than it had been previously. Set gillnet fishermen work cooperatively together, in many cases as families, to fish multiple set gillnet sites. The fish are co-mingled on a skiff(s) and transported to holding skiffs or to the tender that will bring the fish to the processing plant. Historically, one CFEC card was used per the entire delivery by a single permit holder as the operator of the 'unit of gear.' This new interpretation means every permit holder must keep all fish physically separate and each permit holder must deliver them separately, negating all the benefits of working cooperatively and creating untenable and unnecessary costs and safety risks.

A couple of final points:

- Without a change, there will be no efficiencies gained by working together and more infrastructure (holding skiffs, etc) and cost will be needed to support the same landings.
- HB 117 ensures the fishery can operate as it has historically, with families working together and using one permit holder to account for the entire delivery.
- The number of permits fished will continue to be known, and all fish caught by each cooperative set gillnet operation will continue to be accounted for and reported to fishery management. There is no practical, management, or enforcement purpose to require individual permit holder accounting.
- Without HB 117, tender time filling out set gillnet cooperative fishing fish tickets will increase substantially, thereby unnecessarily increasing processor operating costs.

www.pspafish.net

ANCHORAGE

721 W. 1st Avenue
Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99501
907 223 1648

JUNEAU

222 Seward Street
Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801
907 586 6366

SEATTLE

1900 W. Emerson Place
Suite 205
Seattle, WA 98119
206 281 1667

WASHINGTON DC

1601 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20006
202 778 9000

Thank you for considering our comments in support of HB 117.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Julie Decker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Julie" being more prominent than the last name "Decker".

Julie Decker
President, PSPA

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2025 Legislative Session

Bill Version:	HB 117
Fiscal Note Number:	1
(H) Publish Date:	3/11/2025

Identifier: HB117-DFG-DCF-3-2-25
Title: COMMERCIAL FISHING; SET GILLNET COOP
Sponsor: FISHERIES
Requester: (H)Fisheries

Department: Department of Fish and Game
Appropriation: Commercial Fisheries
Allocation: Statewide Fisheries Management
OMB Component Number: 2171

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

(Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2026 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2026 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2026	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2025) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2026) cost: 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)

Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account? No
(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 07/01/26

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Not applicable; initial version.

Prepared By: Joseph Felkl, Legislative Liaison
Division: Office of the Commissioner
Approved By: Bonnie Jensen, Administrative Services Director
Agency: Department of Fish and Game

Phone: (907)465-6137
Date: 03/02/2025 09:00 AM
Date: 03/02/25

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**Analysis**

This legislation would allow for two or more salmon fishery set gillnet permit holders to enter into a multi-permit cooperative operation with a maximum of ten permit holders per cooperative. The salmon harvested by these cooperatives are exempted from individual delivery requirements and could be stored together, delivered under one fish ticket, and sold by one member of the cooperative or a transporter. These cooperatives would be required to register with the Department of Fish and Game under regulations adopted by the Board of Fisheries. The regulations must also specify how a permit holder is to report harvest when fishing cooperatively.

The department already registers set gillnet joint ventures in Kodiak and would be able to provide new cooperatives existing forms to register with the department. There will be some costs and staff time associated with developing regulations, but the department does not anticipate any significant program or fiscal impacts. Therefore, the department submits a zero fiscal note.

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2025 Legislative Session

Bill Version:	HB 117
Fiscal Note Number:	2
(H) Publish Date:	3/11/2025

Identifier: HB117-DPS-AWT-2-28-25
Title: COMMERCIAL FISHING; SET GILLNET COOP
Sponsor: FISHERIES
Requester: House Fisheries

Department: Department of Public Safety
Appropriation: Alaska State Troopers
Allocation: Alaska Wildlife Troopers
OMB Component Number: 2746

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

(Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2026 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2026 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2026	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2025) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2026) cost: 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)

Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account? No
(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? n/a

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

not applicable, initial version

Prepared By: Major Aaron Frenzel
Division: Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Approved By: Dianna L. Thornton, Administrative Services Director
Agency: Department of Public Safety

Phone: (907)334-2501
Date: 02/28/2025 03:12 PM
Date: 02/28/25

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Analysis

This bill authorizes commercial set gillnet permit holders to operate as cooperatives, allowing up to ten permit holders to fish collectively. The bill requires all participating permit holders to be present and actively engaged while fishing and permits fish harvested under the cooperative structure to be sold together under a single permit holder or designated transporter. The Board of Fisheries is tasked with adopting regulations to implement and oversee cooperative fishing operations.

The Department of Public Safety , through the Alaska Wildlife Troopers, is responsible for enforcing commercial fishing regulations. While this bill introduces a new cooperative structure, it does not impose additional enforcement requirements on the department beyond its existing duties. Compliance verification will be incorporated into routine patrols and inspections. Although enforcement may require adjustments in monitoring and verification procedures, these changes can be absorbed within current resources and do not necessitate additional funding.

Given that the bill does not create new enforcement responsibilities or require additional personnel or equipment, the department submits a zero fiscal note.

Calvin Zuelow

From: Matt Gruening
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 12:20 PM
To: Calvin Zuelow; Sarah Snowberger
Cc: House Resources
Subject: FW: HB 117

-----Original Message-----

From: Brent Johnson <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 11:09 AM
To: Matt Gruening <[REDACTED]>
Subject: HB 117

Representative Stutes,

I just learned about HB 117 and think it is a very good idea. My family fishes eleven permits (33 nets) and we commingle the harvest from those nets. It's very important that we be able to commingle the catch because we work in tides and winds and sticks and logs and jellyfish, all of which sometimes dictate which nets any given skiff will run. When we have a load of fish, or at the end of the day, we load these slush-iced fish in a F550 truck which has 2 seatbelts. We can haul 6,000 pounds and when we get to the buying station we use our Transporter's Permit to deliver the salmon on eleven gear cards. This requires eleven fish tickets and takes extra time for the buying station. While that is inconvenient, it is more practical than taking eleven fishers to the buying station! Often, a delivery is made while boats are still picking salmon.

HB 117 would streamline this a lot. And I know for a fact that our neighbors simply ignore the delivery requirements and put their daily harvest (or delivery harvest, when multiple deliveries are made on a day) on one ticket.

Thanks for HB 117! And good luck on this Legislative session!

Brent Johnson
Cook Inlet setnetter