

Opposition to Board of Fish Member Marit Carlson-Van Dort Reappointment
House Resources & House Fisheries Committees; April 25, 2024

When one reads Member Van Dort's resume, you might think she would be sympathetic and supportive to traditional fishing methods in our State. Do not be fooled. She is not a friend to a 140+ year old setnet fishery in Upper Cook Inlet. During her time as member and chair, she has done everything she can to shut down our fishery. Instead of looking at things with a biological, logical, prudent, and fair lens, she instead has simply been a mouthpiece for the Kenai River Sportfishing Association and in-river guides.

I attended much of the triennial Board of Fisheries meeting held in Anchorage the end of February. I was quite disappointed by what I observed from Member Van Dort. Very experienced fishermen and local fisheries biologists made sound presentations and many good ideas were offered to keep our setnet fishery alive for another generation. Instead of listening and giving any of these ideas a chance, Member Van Dort misapplied data and just wanted to listen to herself talk and have everybody hear her ideas. She couldn't find an ounce of sympathy or reason to keep a traditional fishery alive. Instead, she was instrumental in shutting our sockeye setnet fishery down and essentially making sure we would never fish again. And just to dig the knife in deeper, she put her unnecessary polishing touches on the action plan as it was about to be voted on, just to make sure things hurt that much more.

Because of the decisions of the Board of Fish the last couple cycles, we barely fished as a family for several years through 2022, and we have not fished since. We were entirely shut down last year (2023), will be this summer (2024), and because of the actions of the Board of Fish this spring, likely will not fish for the next seven years, if ever again. As a fourth generation setnet fisherman (and my children 5th generation), this is devastating to my family. I was part of a group that brought very modest proposals to the table to keep our family fishery alive. These proposals gave up a lot. But for Member Van Dort, any fishing for setnetters was too much. I have lost all confidence in her judgement to fairly allow sockeye fishing in Cook Inlet. Because of these reasons, I urge you to oppose her re-appointment.

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