

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 worked and delivered in this manner; however, based on the plain wording of statute and regulations, recent enforcement efforts would require setnet operations across the state 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.

These requirements would not only be logistically impractical and burdensome in fisheries operated by families in small, open skiffs, but would also create safety concerns for folks struggling to make ends meet; simply put, it would bring into question the viability and longevity of cooperative setnet operations across the state.

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 their 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.