

Chairman, members of the House Fisheries committee,

My name is Monte Roberts, I am a resident of Soldotna, and a member of the Kenai/Soldotna fish and game advisory committee, Hb125 seems to be well intentioned but unfortunately, it will cause more problems than solutions.

Our Kenai/Soldotna AC is a unique one of the 81 fish and game advisory committees across the state in that it is the only one that has designated seats. As a long-term, active member of the advisory committee I have insight on how this bill would actually be put into practice. Our ac has 15 voting members, 3 of which can have a commercial fishing interest, 3 sportfishing guide seats, a hunting seat, a trapping seat, a subsistence seat, a personal use seat, and 5 at large seats. We also have alternates 1 for com fish, 1 for sport fish guides, and 2 at large members alternates.

The difficulties that we run into are that, in order to ensure that designated seats are put into practice we have required that the com fish seat holders must have an active commercial fishing permit. The sport fishing guides have to have active sportfishing guide permits and the designated seats for hunting, trapping, personal use and subsistence have to have permits and or licenses and actively take part in those activities... no commercial fisherman or sport fishing guide may sit in any other seat because those interest groups could dominate the committee by holding another seat. I for instance, hunt, fish, trap, and participate in personal use and subsistence fisheries but I also am a sportfishing guide. It would not be appropriate for me to sit in another interest group seat and let another guide have my sport fishing guide seat because we could shift the balance of power and defeat the intent of balanced representation. We often have unfilled seats due to the narrowed qualifications for holding a seat on the committee.

I might add that our AC often receives comments from the Board of Fish that they value our input because we are a balanced board that gives them a lot of insight into how the various groups feel on a topic because we not only include the votes on a specific proposal but we also include discussion notes as well as dissenting comments.

The AC's are the appropriate level of this kind of representation. There are 81 of them all with up to 15 voting members that are able to meet across the state and represent their geographical regions and their specific use needs. However, that being said they don't all have a diverse group of members. Most areas of the state are not as contentious as the Kenai/Soldotna area, so they have not gone to the effort to develop designated seats for their AC's. Maybe that is where the author of this bill should focus.

Now let's talk about the Board of Fisheries, and their makeup and process, The voting members are only a part of the panel there are also the Board support member, the Commissioner ADFG, the Director of sportfish for ADFG, Director of comfish for ADFG, federal subsistence, Legal, and

others that are ex-officio members of the board. They provide information to the board members and are able to contribute to deliberations but can not vote. The Department of fish and game is the “science” that the author referred to when they proposed that NOAA would be a voting member. Advice and errors and or omissions is where they weigh in on each proposal, but the seven voting members are the ones charged with the allocative decisions. The scientists are neutral on the allocative aspects of a proposal as they should be, because they are supposed to be there to represent the fish not who gets to kill them. I also want to explain the Deliberation requirements that have been set forth to the board as they discuss the proposal on the table, they are required to reference any AC comments and or positions, and public testimony on the proposal as well as cost analysis. So, this is where the AC’s have a stronger position on influencing board decisions. This is why I support a “balanced approach” at the AC level but not necessarily at the board level. If we require the Governor to appoint based on use patterns, I believe the statute will have to have so many teeth that he would not be able to find people who are willing to serve or it will be so vague as to be meaningless.

There is another point to consider, if you require appointments based on use you run the risk of developing constituencies, and if we go that route, the members we have on the board run into conflict concerns. There is one reason my contributions to the Board of fish will always be limited to the AC level, that is an elected position, where constituency is warranted, but I would never serve on the Board of fish even though I have vast expertise in not only the process but the fisheries themselves, I would be conflicted out of every fishery that is near and dear to me and rightly so, we don’t want people like me splitting the pie, I have a natural bias to my interests, and if you all sitting on the house fisheries committee take a look at your record so do you. We need to have Board members who are familiar but not attached to the resource in such an intimate way as to make it too difficult to separate their interests from their job. The Board is not responsible for the declining returns, you the legislature are.

You or your predecessors came up with the Maximum sustained yield policy, all though it sounds good on paper it set the department and the board on a mission to attempt to quantify and then split up the resource to the Max. Reckless optimism, the notion that we can expect to put less fish on the gravel and always get a high return has put us in peril in the greatest fishery in the world. The overescapement myth was sold to the legislature by some well intentioned but not correct scientists. They went to your body and professed that if you only let x amount of fish into the steams than you will always get more back. That works half of the time, the unfortunate part of that story that they didn’t tell you is that the other half of the time you get less back. When you put the minimum escapement up the rivers and then you put huge

numbers of hatchery fish in the ocean to compete with the wild fish and then ocean conditions shift to less productive temperatures you get what we have now, poor returns. The good news is the oceans will recover if we let it and so will the salmon. But setting up a board to fight for their interest group is not the way to go about helping the fish.