

**From:** Ricky Gease [Ricky@kenairiversportfishing.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 09, 2010 6:34 PM  
**To:** Rep. Bryce Edgmon  
**Cc:** Rep. Wes Keller; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Bob Buch; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. Bill Stoltze; Rep. Mark Neuman; Rep. Anna Fairclough; Rep. Carl Gatto  
**Subject:** HB 266 - House Fisheries Committee Testimony

Dear Representative Edgmon:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony on HB 266 during the House Fisheries Committee meeting today.

As stated in my testimony, Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA) supports HB 266, which provides for a priority for a fishery that is restricted to residents when fishing restrictions are implemented to achieve an escapement goal.

Please include these additional written comments to my oral testimony for KRSA.

**Comparable to existing state subsistence fisheries policy.** As noted in oral testimony, the state of Alaska already provides for a priority for a fishery that is restricted to residents when fishing restrictions are implemented for conservation measures, that being the state subsistence fisheries, applicable in state designated subsistence areas.

The state subsistence fisheries are consumptive fisheries that provide important food resources to state residents.

HB 266 extends this existing practice to include the state personal use fisheries, which, like the state subsistence fisheries, are restricted to residents only and are consumptive in nature. Both subsistence and personal use fisheries provide Alaskans with important food resources, and both provide a primary means to put Alaska fisheries resources on the table as food in Alaskan households.

Personal use fisheries occur in both subsistence and non-subsistence areas of the state, and are only open to residents. All personal use fisheries have reporting requirements, usually by permit, in place to track harvest, which aids in data collection and law enforcement. Harvest (usually household) limits and season limits also apply.

Thus both the state subsistence and personal use fisheries are resident only fisheries, consumptive in nature, and provide a means for Alaskans to put food on their plates. As such, we feel HB 266 falls in line with existing state policy that provides for a priority during times of conservation concern for resident only, consumptive fisheries.

**Conservation:** As not all conservation goals are monitored with escapement goals, we recommend that the language of "escapement goal" be changed to read "conservation goal."

Other observations include the fact that often times through harvest, season and area restrictions, conservation measures are already built into the management of personal use fisheries.

For instance, the personal use sockeye fisheries on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers have numerous conservation restrictions built into their management plans, as does the Fish Creek in the northern Cook Inlet district (which

was closed for seven of the past ten years for conservation measures while other sockeye sport and commercial fisheries in Cook Inlet remained open).

The two personal use sockeye fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula have a shortened season compared to either the sport or commercial fisheries. On the Kenai River, the personal use sockeye fishery ends on July 31, whereas the commercial fishery can extend to August 15 and the sport sockeye fishery does not have a season end date. The earlier closure date for the Kenai personal use fishery is reflective of changes in run timing of a mixed stock fishery and incorporates conservation concerns for Chinook and coho harvests in August.

Whereas the sport and commercial fisheries do not have annual limits, personal use fisheries do in many instances. Currently the household limit for the personal use sockeye fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula are 25 for head of household, plus ten per additional family member. Harvest data indicates that the mean number of individuals per permit is three, the mean harvest per household is 15, and the mean harvest per individual is five.

The harvest numbers indicate that on average the mean personal use harvest of sockeyes on the Kenai Peninsula is equal to one daily bag limit in the sport fishery (six sockeye per person) when the return is forecast to be over two million sockeye (majority of years) and two daily bag limits of three fish per day (no annual limit) on years when the forecast is less than two million returning sockeye.

So for harvest of sockeye salmon in the personal use fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula, the personal use fisheries have a conservative annual limit already built in when compared to the sport or commercial fisheries.

That same conservative approach is taken also with Chinook salmon: on the Kasilof River, whereas both the commercial and sport fisheries are allowed to harvest Chinook salmon, the personal use fishery does not allow for such harvest. On the Kenai River, whereas the annual limit of Chinook in the sport fishery is two fish, it is one fish in the personal use fishery. Again, conservative measures are built into the personal use fishery.

**ADFG management.** Placing a priority for personal use fisheries during times of need for conservation measures does not hamper the ability of ADFG to manage for important conservation measures such as escapement goals. In fact, such practice falls in line with action taken this year on the Kenai River by the local area commercial fisheries manager to place restrictions on the commercial fishery (closure of one regular 12 hour opener and a delay 24 hour in the next regular opener) in order to make the sockeye escapement goal on the Kenai River while leaving open the personal use fishery for sockeye – such management action was successful in that the sockeye escapement goal was met.

**Law enforcement.** A comment was made in today's public testimony that there is a rampant, uncontrollable problem with the ability of the state to enforce the resident only restrictions on the personal use fisheries, specifically on the Kenai Peninsula. Such perception is not shared by the local State Troopers, who in 2009 provided 467 hours of law enforcement for the personal use fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula (the personal use fisheries were open for 374 hours during 2009.)

This year the Troopers recorded a total of 1,200 contacts, which resulted in 130 citations, for issues including no permit, not clipping tails, 2-stroke motor use, fishing early or late, and not logging fish prior to leaving the fishing area. Non-resident participation was not listed as a major factor in writing citations by the Troopers, nor was taking too many fish over the household limit (another "perceived" problem by some in the local community). Overall, it looks like the Troopers had contact with about 5% of the total number of people who participated in the Kenai Peninsula personal use sockeye fisheries, and wrote up 130 citations out of an estimated 37,500 days fished in these personal use sockeye fisheries (less than one half of one percent or .0035%).

The perception of non-residents taking home sockeye salmon may be accurate, as the daily bag limit for sockeyes on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers is often six fish per day. In a week, a non-resident may harvest over 40 sockeye salmon – enough to fill a few coolers. However, the perception that non-resident participation in the state personal use fisheries, particularly on the Kenai Peninsula, is just not supported by data supplied by the Alaska State Troopers. As a side note, I personally have fished in either the Chitna, Kasilof or Kenai personal use sockeye fisheries every year since becoming a state resident in 1993, and I have yet to come across a non-resident participating in any of these resident only personal use fisheries.

**Important to Alaskan households.** The state personal use fisheries provide Alaska residents with an efficient method of gathering meaningful numbers of fish for consumptive uses. Fish caught in these fisheries feed families throughout the year. Like the state subsistence fisheries, all residents qualify for the state personal use fisheries. As more and more families that once resided in areas of the state with access to the state and federal subsistence fisheries are now living in the non-subsistence (state designated) and / or non-rural (federal designated) areas of Alaska, access to the personal use fisheries is becoming all the more important over time.

Data indicates that the personal use fisheries are popular with state residents. Including just the personal use sockeye salmon fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet and Chitna, close to 15% of all state residents (95,000 people) eat fish during the year from these personal use fisheries.

However, it is important to remember that the annual harvest of personal use sockeye salmon in the Upper Cook Inlet and Chitna represent **less than 1%** of the total harvest of sockeye salmon in the state by commercial, sport, personal use and subsistence fisheries.

**Close to 15% of Alaska's residents eat sockeye salmon caught in a state personal use fishery, while the overall harvest of these fish represents less than 1% of the overall harvest of sockeye salmon in the state.**

HB 266 is a small measure to enact to ensure that subsistence and personal use fisheries will be provided a priority for a fishery that is restricted to residents when fishing restrictions are implemented to achieve a conservation goal.

We encourage you to support HB 266. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Ricky Gease, Executive Director  
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