

# Petersburg Vessel Owners Association

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March 10, 2010

The Honorable Lesil McGuire & Bill Wielechowski  
Co-Chairs, Senate Resources Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
Via email: [Senator\\_Lesil\\_McGuire@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Senator_Lesil_McGuire@legis.state.ak.us)  
[Senator\\_Bill\\_Wielechowski@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Senator_Bill_Wielechowski@legis.state.ak.us)

## **RE: SUPPORT SB 255, FINALIZE SOUTHEAST ALASKA SEINE BUYBACK**

Dear Senators McGuire and Wielechowski,

The Petersburg Vessel Owners Association (PVOA) is a diverse group of 100 commercial fishermen and businesses operating primarily in Southeast Alaska. Our members provide millions of meals to the public annually by participating in a variety of fisheries statewide. Most PVOA members are salmon harvesters, and are also active sport, personal use, and subsistence fishermen who depend on sustainable and conservative management of Alaska's fishing resources to ensure healthy fisheries for the future.

PVOA supports the work of Southeast Alaska Seiners (SEAS) and both HB 365 and SB 255 which will provide the necessary vehicle to specify the route and parameters of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) loan that fishermen will repay with a 3% assessment. Passage of HB 365 will allow a vote to support that commitment to the assessment as well as support of the program.

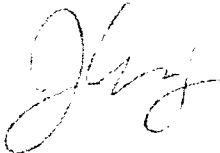
Petersburg is one of the top ports in Alaska and the Nation for both pounds landed (#6 in Alaska, #26 in the Nation) and dollar value of landings (#7 in Alaska, #26 in the Nation) due in large part to salmon landings. The Southeast Alaska Seine fleet is a vital component of Petersburg's socio-economic well being.

In 2009, there were approximately 70 southeast seine permits actively fished out of Petersburg (Petersburg listed as the mailing address). Each permit and vessel employs four crewmembers who contribute to the local economy and rely on income provided by salmon fishing. Fishing vessels, support businesses, and fishing families are sustained by salmon revenues that are essential to coastal economies. While Petersburg is the most

active commercial fishing port in Southeast Alaska, not one of active permits will be extinguished in a mandatory manner as a result of SB 255.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. If we can provide further information or answer any questions as you finalize the Southeast Alaska seine buyback, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Julianne', written in black ink.

**Julianne Curry**  
**Director**



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 4, 2010

Senator Lesil McGuire, Co-Chair  
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Co-Chair  
Senate Resources Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

**Re: Support for SB255**

Dear Senators,

The United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) supports passage of SB255/HB365.

The bill, while extremely timely and important to certain of our members, is nothing but a "housekeeping" bill that is needed as the last piece of work to finish off the SE fleet consolidation program for SEAS but will also set up a precedence and framework for any similar effort in the state of Alaska conducted at a later date. This legislation allows NMFS to confirm fish ticket/processor data to confirm that the assessment collected to pay back the federal government for the loan is correctly determined and allow for enforcement of those that don't pay the assessment. NMFS only has access to data for a specific fishery that has a federal loan program and not access to all salmon harvest data.

When UFA embraced the Legislative Salmon Task Force in 2001, we recognized that different regions require different solutions. Some groups wanted status quo. Other groups wanted market-oriented solutions. Others wanted to restructure their fishery, or basically re-limit limited entry. We want to acknowledge that many, probably most, of our state waters groups do not support a fleet consolidation program for their own region.

But when the Legislature embarked upon the Legislative Salmon Task Force, this was one of the major solutions that came out for each region to choose from. HB286, authored in 2002 by Drew Scalzi, was one of the resulting pieces of legislation. One of our groups, the Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS) chose to follow up on this and has already "permanently retired" around 20% of their consolidation target in 2008 with \$3 million in NMFS grants that were authorized by the Alaska State Legislature.

Another piece of the pie here is HB484, passed in 2006 by the Alaska State Legislature that mandates a solution in the event of an "optimum number determination" in a court of law that causes retired permits to become reissued. HB484 allows that the Legislature "may" send the resulting funds back to the fleet consolidators, hence relieving fishermen of the uncertainty resulting from the "optimum number" issue.

In the case of SE seine fishery, the active fleet size has not exceeded the buydown goal of the buyback program since 2002. So this fleet consolidation is very unlikely to cost a single job or boat. The 3% assessment that these guys are paying is just an insurance policy for the fishermen (and processors) that there won't be a new "group" or company that will bring in some of the currently unused and dormant 140 permits. In fact there will be at least several dozen permits remaining on poor years and likely a dozen or so remaining even on good years.

UFA supports swift passage of this legislation, which is the wrap-up of the Legislative task force bill HB286 from 2002. It is now 2010 and it seems fitting that the Alaska State Legislature would be willing and able to support a "housekeeping" bill that brings to fruition a bill (nearly unanimous in passage in both the House and Senate) that was brought forth as a result of the Alaska State Legislative Task Force.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation for one of our group members.

Sincerely



Mark Vinsel  
Executive Director

Cc:  
Senator Donald Olson  
Senator Dennis Egan



March 17, 2010

The Honorable Lesil McGuire & Bill Wielechowski  
Co-Chairs, Senate Resources Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**RE: SUPPORT SB 255, FINALIZE SOUTHEAST ALASKA SEINE BUYBACK**

Dear Representatives McGuire and Wielechowski,

I am writing on behalf of Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU), a member organization representing over 300 commercial fishermen in Prince William Sound, including 60 seine fishermen, to request your support of SB255.

CDFU is in alliance with the Southeast Alaska Seiners (SEAS) on this bill, and believes the passage of both HB 365 and SB 255 will provide a relatively simple solution in specifying the route and parameters of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) loan that fishermen will repay with a 3% assessment.

While not directly related to present seine activity in Prince William Sound, the adoption of SB255 will provide a solid framework for any group within the State looking into practical solutions to stabilize their fishery.

We trust that you will see the merits in supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

Rochelle van den Broek  
Executive Director



The Honorable Lesil McGuire and Bill Wielechowski  
Co-Chairs, Senate Resources Committee  
Butrovich 205  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

2 March 2010

Dear Senators McGuire and Wielechowski:

**The Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS) fully supports SB 255 and would appreciate the opportunity to express such support before your Committee.**

SEAS is a trade association of 127 member skippers (of 5 crew), who purse seine for salmon in Southeast Alaska, predominantly with 58 foot vessels. SEAS also has nearly 60 business members who support the fleet, consisting primarily of processors, fuel docks, grocery stores and marine suppliers, contractors, electronic suppliers, mechanics, shipyards and outfitters.

#### **SB 255 Background**

**SEAS worked with the Congressional delegation to secure a \$3 million grant that was spent in 2008, after being authorized to do so by the Alaska State Legislature, to retire 35 permits, or approximately 22% of our target permit reduction.** The first part of our fleet consolidation was done under the supervision of the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), the program was run by Elgee, Rehfeld, CPAs and we advertised throughout Southeast Alaska for a reverse auction. **These are the first ever Alaska state limited entry salmon permits retired under such a program.**

After the further repurchase of around 120-125 permits we expect to get to the 255-260 range of permits remaining available to fish. This time the fishermen are paying and the financing source is a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) loan that fishermen will repay with a 3% assessment. A couple weeks into the 2010 legislative session the main NMFS Financial Services Division personnel came to Juneau to meet with the CFEC leadership as well as the state of Alaska in

order to prepare a bill that would work as the basic "closing document" on our loan.

**SB 255 is exactly phrased and intently written with at least a dozen basic drafts prior to introduction. There is no fiscal note** and should there be any concern to processors about extra paperwork, the processor can apply for compensation from the assessment. We do not believe at this time that the financial burden of adding a box to the fish ticket will cause any undue financial concern as this is already done in many Boroughs (such as Bristol Bay) and by enhancement taxation as well in the same section of the fish ticket.

**This bill is the vehicle that specifies the route and parameters of this assessment and is necessary because this is not only Alaska's first, but it is likely that this is the first state water's fishery that has ever received a NMFS restructuring loan for fleet consolidation. According to NMFS, this bill cannot be changed in any fashion whatsoever - or our \$20 million loan for Alaskan fishermen will fail.**

When Southeast Alaska was rolled into the state's limited entry program in 1974, there was a **larger than average number of non-resident licenses due to the close proximity to Puget Sound and the Boldt Decision**, while not made until that very year, as well as the first shot at limited entry in 1969, made for a larger fleet than existed in the decade(s) prior to limited entry.

One other compelling reason seiners have sought out fleet consolidation is due to the amount of historical and traditional fishing area currently not available to access by the seine fleet. The Icy Strait corridor of about 100 miles of fishing shoreline was closed nearly simultaneously to the initiation of limited entry. Then in 1985, the 75 mile shoreline of Noyes Island and Dall Island outside of Prince of Wales Island was closed for most of the July fishery and has remained mostly closed by Treaty since then during the month of July. The fleet was bottled up in long line-ups (boats idling their engines while waiting for hours for the opportunity to set the net and catch fish) for much of the season save for the peak of some of our better runs. Certainly fuel savings and energy implications were there, but this was not our impetus.

Consequent to the major price crash in 1991 (12 cents per pound for pinks) after the introduction of Russian pink salmon into the Western world, another major price crash in 1996 (7-8 cents) and then again in 2002 (7-8 cents), SEAS decided to get rolling on a major fleet consolidation program. By 2003 and 2004 the fleet had been cut to around 225 boats from 360-375 during the prior decade. Most of these boats and crews no longer fishing were non-residents. **The fleet is a stable 225 average now with as little as 205 permits operated on poorer seasons while 240 is our high in recent years.**

**With over 80% of the permits bought back in the first round having been owned by non-residents, the fleet has become even more 'Alaskan'. This trend is expected to continue in the next round, thereby resulting in strong and financially viable fishing families within Alaska.**

**SB 255 is an important bill because it is the final hurdle to clear in order to facilitate the NMFS Federal loan program so that it will work with Alaskan limited entry fisheries. While it is not a big bill, it is a huge bill for our members and is a necessary step towards stabilizing, modernizing, and maintaining our fishery here in Southeast Alaska.**

Sincerely

Dan Castle  
SEAS President



## Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance

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March 8, 2010

Senate Resources

Senator Lesil McGuire, Chair

Alaska State Legislature; State Capitol, Room 205  
Juneau, AK 99801

Senator McGuire, Chair and Committee Members

RE: Support SB 255

Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance (SEAFa) supports HB 365/SB 255. This is legislation that simply allows NMFS to confirm that all the assessment collected from the fishermen by the Processors for a buyback program using federal loan programs has been collected and paid to the federal government and allows for enforcement against those who have not paid.

This legislation would not allow NMFS to collect information for programs that don't have a federal buy-back assessment. This legislation would allow this tool to be used in the future if another buyback with federal funds occurs. The other thing we would point out is that any buyback program has been created occurred by a vote of the fleet.

We support the legislation as a housekeeping measure to correct an oversight to the legislation previously passed to set up associations to conduct buy-back programs.

Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance is a multi-gear/multi-species non-profit membership organization representing our members involved in the salmon, crab, shrimp and longline fisheries of Southeast Alaska. We represent salmon gillnet, seine and troll fishermen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy Hansen", followed by a long horizontal line.

Kathy Hansen, Executive Director