



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

February 27, 2012

State Capitol, Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Support for House Bill 332

Dear Representative Herron:

The Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA) appreciates the opportunity to support House Bill 332 establishing the Alaska Chinook research and restoration endowment fund. YRDFA is an association of commercial and subsistence fishermen and women on the Yukon River in Alaska with a mission of promoting healthy, wild fisheries and cultures on the Yukon River. The region we represent is home to some of the world's most magnificent salmon resources, and the world's furthest migrating salmon runs on the Yukon River. These salmon provide a primary source of food and are essential to the continued viability of the subsistence way of life in Western Alaska. For many residents the commercial salmon harvest also provides the only means of income for those who live in the remote villages of the Yukon River. Salmon represents an essential part of the culture, diet and economy in our region.

The Chinook salmon which are such a critical foundation for cultures, communities and economies along the Yukon River have declined dramatically in recent years. Yukon River Chinook salmon runs declined to disaster levels from 1998 to 2002. After a brief improvement from 2003 to 2006, runs have declined since, with escapement goals to Canada not met in 2007, 2008, or 2010, and subsistence harvests restricted. Overall, "mean run size of Canadian-origin Chinook for the period 1998-2010 declined 45% compared to the period 1982-1997."¹

Subsistence harvest opportunities have been severely reduced in recent years, and in 2008, 2009, and 2010 (2011 data not yet available) harvests were below the BOF-determined Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS). To protect king salmon, directed commercial fishing for king salmon was eliminated, commercial chum salmon fishing was restricted, and sale of king salmon caught in the chum salmon fishery was at times prohibited. Even when escapement goals have been met, subsequent returns from these escapements have been poor. While the direct cause is unknown, poor runs have low recruits-per-spawner.

Declines in Chinook salmon runs have had dramatic effects on Yukon River communities. Subsistence fisheries have been greatly reduced, disrupting the culturally important practices of going to fish camp in

¹ Spaeder, J. and M. Catalano, Compilation of Evidence for Long-term Decline and Periodic Low Returns of AYK Region Chinook Populations, Report to Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative Chinook Expert Panel, Oct. 15, 2011.

the summer. The commercial Chinook salmon fishery—one of the only sources of cash income in many of these communities—has been virtually eliminated.

While we know that all of these reductions in harvest have been necessary to meet escapements and protect the Yukon River Chinook salmon stock, very little information is available to indicate the reason for these huge declines in run sizes. Theories on causation abound, but much additional research is needed to determine the cause and either reverse the decline or plan for future run sizes.

To investigate the causes of these declines it is critical that there is a dedicated and consistent source of funding for Chinook salmon research. This type of research needs to be well-coordinated and funded over an extended time-period. To study and understand the impacts and effects of population biology and dynamics, freshwater and marine ecology, physical habitat and the many other factors impacting Chinook salmon populations it is essential that long-term funding is dedicated to these purposes.

We are well aware that there have been recent efforts to work toward understanding the trends in variability and we are grateful for the federal funds that were made available to achieve that goal. However, there are extensive gaps in Alaska, and while these recent efforts contributed very valuable information, much more research is needed to understand and reverse these trends. In addition, recent efforts have been focused on only a portion of the state, and a statewide approach to this issue is important. A statewide effort, such as HB332, would be an important step towards providing Alaska's residents with a better understanding of our Chinook salmon stocks and the security of knowing that the State of Alaska is thoroughly engaged in investigating the current declines. It is critical that we take this kind of proactive approach to addressing our stock declines now.

There is no fish more iconic to Alaskans than the Chinook salmon. On the Yukon River this fish is not merely an icon, but a critical component of physical and cultural survival. It is vital and essential that the State of Alaska invest in understanding and recovering our Chinook salmon runs by establishing a dedicated research and restoration endowment fund via House Bill 332.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions or would like additional information please feel free to contact me.

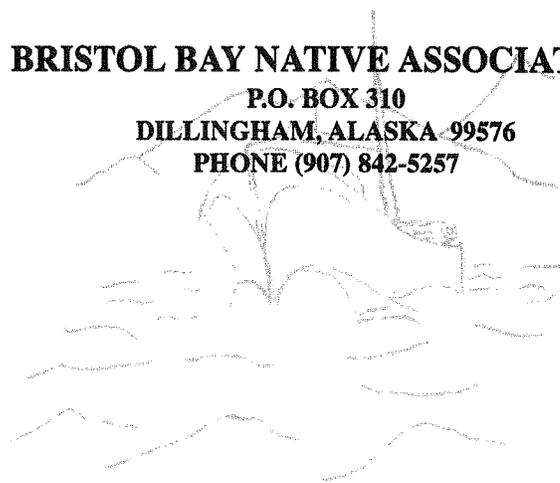
Sincerely,



Jill Klein
Executive Director

BRISTOL BAY NATIVE ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 310
DILLINGHAM, ALASKA 99576
PHONE (907) 842-5257



Tribal Councils
Served by BBNA:

Aleknagik

Chignik Bay

Chignik Lagoon February 29, 2012

Chignik Lake

Clarks Point

Dillingham

Egegik

Ekuk

Ekwook

Igiugik

Iliamna

Ivanof Bay

King Salmon

Kokhanok

Koliganek

Lewelock

Manokotak

Naknek

New Stuyahok

Newhalen

Nondalton

Pedro Bay

Perryville

Pilot Point

Port Heiden

Portage Creek

South Naknek

Togiak

Twin Hills

Ugashik

RE: Letter of Support for the bill that creates the ALASKA CHINOOK SALMON RESEARCH AND RESTORATION ENDOWMENT FUND

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA), it is with great pleasure I provide a letter of support for the ALASKA CHINOOK SALMON RESEARCH AND RESTORATION ENDOWMENT FUND. BBNA is a Tribal consortium of 31 Bristol Bay Tribes. BBNA has much in common with its neighbors to the north and partners and supports its counterparts in the Arctic, Yukon, and Kuskokwim regions.

Chinook salmon is an important staple food for the Alaska Native people and others in the Western Alaska. They are also an economically important species for a number of commercial fisheries and a prized sport fishing resource. Chinook salmon stocks are highly valued and essential to the basic way of life in Western Alaska.

Chinook salmon populations have suffered significant fluctuations in abundance during the past 40 years, yet little is known about the factors influencing their populations. Eight of the 14 currently listed "stocks of concern" are Chinook salmon stocks.

A decline in Chinook salmon causes severe hardship and anxiety for the salmon-dependent people in Western Alaska. Limited commercial fishing on Chinook salmon has occurred in recent years and earnings have declined significantly. Poor Chinook salmon returns produce tension and conflict between fishery user groups competing for the same fishery resource.

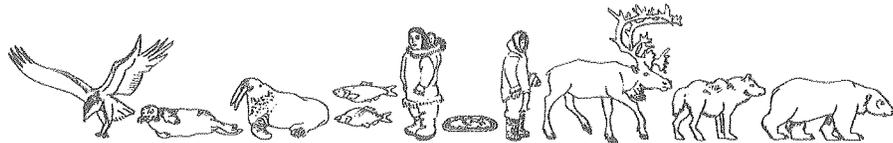
The bill creates a stable, long-term source of funding for high quality interdisciplinary research such as the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (AYK SSI). AYK SSI Research results and information is being utilized in a wide variety of ways to support sustainable salmon management. It analyses escapement goals and helps to gain better an understanding of marine ecosystems. It helps to provide fisheries managers with better forecasts and improved responses to changing environmental conditions.

BBNA fully endorses the Alaska Chinook Salmon Research and Restoration Endowment Fund. I respectfully request your support of the bill when it comes before your legislative body.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ralph Anderson
President & Chief Executive Officer
Bristol Bay Native Association



KAWERAK , INC. • P.O. Box 948 • Nome, AK 99762



TEL: (907) 443-5231 • FAX: (907) 443-4452



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- STEBBINS
- ST. MICHAEL
- TELLER
- UNALAKLEET
- WALES
- WHITE MOUNTAIN

February 6, 2012

Senator Donny Olson
 Representative Neal Foster
 Representative Reggie Joule

Dear Senator Olson, Representatives Foster and Joule:

On behalf of Kawerak Incorporated, I am writing to express our support for Senator Hoffman, Olson and Representative Herron's bill which would create the **ALASKA CHINOOK SALMON RESEARCH AND RESTORATION ENDOWMENT FUND (ACSRRF)**.

I am enclosing a spread sheet which shows the return of Chinook and other salmon to the Seward Peninsula. Two years ago, we sought to have a Chinook and Chum disaster declared by the Department of Commerce for the stocks in the Norton Sound. We were not successful because while the Chinook return was way down, commercial fishermen in southern Norton Sound were able to offset their losses by fishing other stocks, therefore no economic loss occurred. Here in Northern Norton Sound, our commercial fisheries have been closed for so long; an economic disaster declaration is not possible, since a disaster is determined by the decline over the previous 5 years average fishing income.

This is not an "income" issue. Our stocks are so depressed that we wonder if the stocks themselves will survive. Yet there does not seem to be a sense of urgency on the part of the department to turn this situation around.

We fully support the funding and creation of the ACSRRF as a means to help ensure sustainable uses of wild salmon for future generations.

Sincerely,

KAWERAK INCORPORATED

Loretta Bullard
 President

Fish numbers of surrounding rivers



Escapement Goal	Snake	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	As of 8/23/11	As of 10/6/11
1,600-2,500	Chums	2,201	2,146	2,967	4,106	8,147	1,244	891	6,973	4,323	4,323
	Pinks	2,856	126,917	13,813	74,028	4,634	145,761	769	51,099	6,997	7,011
	Silvers	489	474	2,948	4,776	1,781	5,206	50	2,243	83	343
	Kings	50	17	31	32	61	13	6	43*	1	1
	Sockeye	84	22	275	302	1,354	143	2	124*	7	14
	Nome	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011
2,900-4,300	Chums	1,957	3,903	5,584	5,677	7,034	2,607	1,565	5,906	3,442	3,582
3150?	Pinks	11,402	1,051,146	285,759	578,555	24,395	1,186,554	16,490	165,931	14,312	14,403
	Silvers	548	2,283	5,848	8,308	2,437	4,605	1,370	4,114	453	1,833
	Kings	12	51	69	43	13	28	30	9*	8	12
	Eldorado	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011
6,000-9,200	Chums	3,591	3,277	10,369	42,105	21,312	6,746	4,943	21,211	16,227	16,227
	Pinks	173	60,866	12,356	222,348	833	244,641	1,119	48,136	489	489
	Silvers	115	1,151	689	55	2	38	2	2*	1	1
	Kings	29	25	32	41	14	36	31	23*	3	3
	Niukuik	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011
>23,000	Chums	20,018	10,770	25,598	29,199	50,994	12,078	15,879	45,561	23,496	23,607
10,500	Pinks	75,855	975,895	270,424	1,371,919	43,617	669,234	24,204	434,205	15,338	15,425
2,400-7,200	Silvers	1,282	2,064	2,727	11,169	3,498	13,779	6,861	9,042	1,616	2,405
	Kings	179	141	41	39	30	33	204	15*	18	18
	Pilgrim	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011
No Goal	Chums	15,200	10,239	9,685	45,361	35,334	24,550	5,427	25,379	38,963	41,740
	Pinks	14,100	50,760	13,218	17,701	3,616	92,471	483	29,239	3,337	3,364
	Silvers	677	1,102	304	973	605	260	18	272*	39	269
	Kings	1,016	925	216	275	501	137	52	44*	40	44
	Sockeye	42,729	85,417	55,951	52,323	43,342	20,452	953	1,654*	8,404	8,449
	North River	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011
No Goal	Chums	9,859	10,036	11,984	5,385	8,046	9,502	9,798	16,131	18,140	19,898
25,000	Pinks	280,212	1,162,978	1,670,934	2,169,890	583,320	241,798	190,291	150,807	123,334	150,807
550-1,100	Silvers	5,837	11,187	19,189	9,835	19,944	15,648	22,276	7,608	1,662	3,624
1,200-2,600	Kings	1,452	1,125	1,015	906	1,948	903	2,355	1,256	864	864
	Kwiniuk	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011
11,500-23,000	Chums	12,123	10,362	12,083	39,519	27,756	9,483	8,739	71,403	31,595	31,604
8,400	Pinks	22,329	3,054,684	341,048	1,347,090	54,255	1,444,213	42,962	634,169	29,936	30,023
650-1,300	Silvers	5,490	11,240	12,950	22,341	9,429	10,462	8,677	8,058	2,178	3,288
	Kings	744	663	342	195	258	237	444	138	57	57

Association of Village Council Presidents

Office of Administration
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Quinhagak
Red Devil
Russian Mission
Scammon Bay
Sleetmute
St. Mary's
Stony River
Tuluksak
Tuntuliak
Tununak
Umkumiut

February 29, 2012

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Sent via e-mail

Dear Senator Lyman Hoffman, Senator Donny Olson, Representative Bryce Edgmon, and Representative Bob Herron:

On behalf of the Association of Village Council President, a tribal consortium consisting of 56 federally-recognized Indian Tribes in the Lower Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 332: Alaska Chinook Salmon Research and Restoration Endowment Fund (ACSRRF).

In our region, we have seen a precipitous decline in the abundance of Chinook salmon in both the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. In the Lower Yukon River state salmon fisheries management districts of Y-1, Y-2, and Y-3, an economically vibrant commercial fishery existed until 1998 when salmon populations dropped to near non-existence. This Chinook salmon-directed fishery supported up to seven salmon processors and employed hundreds of local residents paying out the necessary dollars to provide the much needed income to pay bills and feed their families. Today, only one processor operates on the entire Lower Yukon River. This once-economically vibrant fishery is near complete extinction.

Within the last several years, fishermen have not been allowed to sell incidentally-harvested Chinook salmon in the legitimate commercial fisheries in Y1,2 & 3. We have seen a decline in the commercial fishermen participation to near fifty-percent of historical averages. This is compounded by high gasoline and transportation costs. More importantly, subsistence fisheries are near non-existence. Recent publications by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game indicate that subsistence fishermen, in more recent times, have not achieved their statutory *Amounts Necessary for Subsistence* for Chinook salmon on the Yukon River. Moreover, the early symptoms of the Yukon River are starting to appear on the Kuskokwim River.

Since the crash of 1998, the runs on the Kuskokwim River have been sporadic. In some years, we have seen evidence of *Ichthyophonus Hoferi*, a fish disease more common to herring populations in our Chinook salmon runs. In more recent years, several Chinook salmon spawning streams are failing to meet their regulatory established escapement goals, and we are seeing a decline in sizes.

The bottom line is we do not know nor understand what is happening to our precious resource. Further, this phenomenon is not only limited to our region. Chinook salmon populations around Alaska have undergone shifts in abundance during the past 40 years, yet little is known about the factors influencing these shifts. Eight of the 14 currently listed "stocks of concern" are Chinook salmon stocks, as defined by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in 5AAC 39.222.

While we know that reductions in harvest have been necessary to meet escapements and protect the Chinook salmon stocks, very little information is available to indicate the reason for these changes in run sizes. Theories on causation abound, but additional research is needed to determine the cause and either reverse the decline or plan for future run sizes.

To investigate the causes of these declines, it is critical that there is a dedicated and consistent source of funding for Chinook salmon research. This will allow a thorough study of the impacts and effects of population biology and dynamics, freshwater and marine ecology, physical habitat and the many other factors impacting Chinook salmon populations.

There is no fish more iconic to Alaskans than the Chinook salmon. This fish is not merely an icon, but a critical component of physical and cultural survival of Alaskans. It is vital and essential that the State of Alaska invest in understanding and recovering our Chinook salmon runs.

We fully support the funding and creation of ACSRRF as a means to help ensure sustainable uses of wild salmon for future generations.

Sincerely,

Raymond Watson, Chairman
Association of Village Council Presidents

Myron P. Naneng Sr., President

CC: Mr. Rob Earl, Mr. Tim Grussendorf, Mr. David Scott, Mr. Mike Nizich