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REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON HOUSE DISTRICT 30

Sponsor Statement

HB 110

Recently, many runs of Chinook salmon have experienced poor returns. Fishery Disaster Declarations have been made for the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Cook Inlet regions. People who depend on these king salmon for their economic, recreational, and cultural livelihood are experiencing great hardship due to this low abundance.

Sustainability is critically important and measures should be adopted that help protect Chinook salmon and similar vulnerable species while still maintaining fishing opportunities. One of the best ways to do this is to utilize fishing gear that reduces the mortality to species of concern while still allowing the utilization of healthy stocks.

The use of barbless hooks is proven to reduce the mortality of released fish. Studies by the Pacific Salmon Commission Technical Committee concluded that barbless hook usage reduced mortality by 3.5% in mature fish. A barbless hook is faster to remove and results in less trauma to the fish. This reduces handling and increases the chance a fish will survive to reproduce.

Some fly fishermen currently file the barbs off their hooks to allow a less damaging release of fish. Additionally, Washington and Oregon prohibit the use of barbed hooks while Chinook fishing because wild stock fish must be released while hatchery fish can be retained.

HB 110 would prohibit the use of barbed hooks for freshwater stocks of fish where retention is prohibited, that is in a catch and release fishery.

HB 110 would also prohibit the use of barbed hooks when there is a significant probability that there will be bycatch of stocks whose retention is prohibited.

This would allow mixed runs to continue to be fished recreationally while helping maintain the continued sustainability of stocks. The use of barbless hooks will help protect our fisheries resources in times of low abundance while avoiding complete fishery closures.