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GUEST COMMENTARY: Solution needed for Cook Inlet salmon dilemma

ARNI THOMSON, ALASKA SALMON ALLIANCE

The Anchorage/MatSu region is the major population center in Alaska and the fastest growing area in Alaska. Cook Inlet, an integral part of the region, separates two of Alaska's major river systems, the Kenai River watershed, on the Kenai Peninsula and the Susitna River watershed, adjacent to Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley.

This area is also unique in that it is centrally located on the only major paved highway system in Alaska, and Alaskans treasure their right to get out and fish for "their salmon" in the summer months.

Presently, 54 percent of the State's total population of 722,000 people is located in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough. The Mat-Su Borough has been experiencing phenomenal growth, with the population having increased 50 percent in the past 10 years, from 60,000 to 91,000 people, and it is projected to double again in the next decade. A major portion of all statewide sport anglers and personal-use fishermen reportedly fish for salmon in upper Cook Inlet.

The salmon of Cook Inlet also support a traditional commercial fishery that has been sustainably operating for over 130 years. A stable number of commercial fishing permit holders (most of whom are year-round residents), the companies that process the fish, and all of the supporting businesses combine to contribute a critical portion of the economy of the Kenai Peninsula and Southcentral Alaska.

Some representatives of the sport angling community have spent years framing a "war" between the commercial fishery and the guide/charter businesses and recreational users. It is in everyone's best interest to resolve the conflict with long-term solutions.

Last year, Kenai River Late Run King salmon returns were late and some Kenai in-river sport and charter fishermen were closed down to preserve king salmon for spawning escapement, along with the Eastside Set Net fishermen, or ESSN, who fish along the beaches on the Eastside of the Inlet.

Post-season analysis showed that the 2012 closures on the Kenai were unnecessary and were the result of previously misunderstood counting and run timing issues. In addition, Mat-Su drainage sport and charter fishermen also suffered from closures.

As a result, the Alaska Board of Fisheries sanctioned a King salmon task force this winter involving major stakeholders, although a meaningful dialogue is in progress, few consensus recommendations have surfaced.

In search of solutions the following concepts need to be considered:

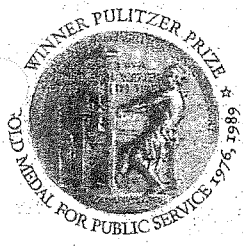
- There is a wealth of new information in the form of genetic studies analyzing the makeup of the ESSN king salmon catch. Genetic stock analysis indicates the commercial fishermen are not the problem they were long thought to be, and that they harvest only 13 percent of the catch, a significant new development in the time-worn debate. Additional genetic studies focused on Cook Inlet silvers need to be initiated.
- A new Kenai River Late Run King salmon study report documents that these stocks do not show a long-term pattern of decline. This new data shows no sign that Kenai Kings are overexploited, with an exploitation rate for all user groups of just under 40 percent. The conclusion from last year's fisheries, is that there was not a problem in terms of king salmon abundance, and uniform agreement that ADFG needs to develop a state of the art integrated sonar and weir system for

counting fish and to devise a daily reporting system for Kings coming into the Kenai River. Kenai River Late Run Chinook have met their escapement goal for the past 26 years.

- There are serious management conflicts between Sockeye and Chinook salmon management. Both plans direct ADFG to meet escapement goals for sustained yield management. These conflicts should be reviewed.
- Sockeye salmon provide for the needs of a much larger number of users than Chinook salmon. Cook Inlet Sockeye is the fish that drives the Kenai Peninsula economy and benefits most Alaskans. For the benefit of all user groups, ADFG needs to manage the sockeye runs for the maximum sustained yield. The commercial sector needs regulatory stability to conduct and plan business for the future. Regulatory changes and management decisions have far-reaching impacts and must be designed using the best available science. This is essential for the long-term health of the resource and the economies that are built around harvesting that resource.
- In addition, there are valid concerns about the sustainability of certain salmon stocks in northern Cook Inlet. A growing number of scientists agree the spread of Northern Pike and their predation on juvenile salmon is a huge threat to most salmon stocks in the Mat-Su drainage. ADFG needs to get more proactive in dealing with that problem and needs to help with funds for seasonal "notching" of beaver dams that are impeding salmon passage.

These are the facts that all the residents in the Cook Inlet basin will have to deal with if we want to preserve our "salmon culture." Working together will greatly increase our ability to succeed.

Ami Thomson is the Executive Director of the Alaska Salmon Alliance.



Anchorage Daily News

Saturday, July 27, 2013 **A-11**

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OPINION

COMPASS: *Points of view from the community*

Salmon policies needed that all can share

By **PAUL DALE**

Alaska's wild salmon runs are part of what makes our state and community distinctive. They differentiate us from almost all other coastal regions in the world. Fishing — whether sport, commercial, subsistence or personal use — is part of our heritage.

The key to sustaining a natural resource like salmon is regulatory stability in terms of business planning and long-term investment. The absence of that is a significant problem in Cook Inlet, particularly in the Kenai River, because of salmon allocation issues that have been loudly debated for the past several years. With the past few seasons of poor king salmon returns, the intensity of the debate has grown. Last year, Kenai River sport fishermen, along with east-side setnet fishermen, were closed down to preserve king salmon for spawning.

Without doubt, we are in a period of low abundance of king salmon in several Alaska rivers. However, the Kenai River king fishery is not at the risk or in the crisis that high-profile sport fishers would like us to believe. Though king numbers are low, late-run, post-season analysis by the Department of Fish and Game showed that the 2012 closures on the Kenai River were unnecessary and were the result of previously misunderstood salmon counting and run-timing issues. In fact, late-run Kenai River king salmon escapement goals have been met in each of the last 25 years, and exceeded in nine of the last 10 years.

Are the king salmon smaller? Yes, but for a variety of reasons, including an overcapitalized, in-river, guided, professional sport fish industry that systematically targets large king salmon. The absence of trophy kings may not correlate directly with a smaller run.



However, the Kenai River king fishery is not at the risk or in the crisis that high-profile sport fishers would like us to believe.



Daily News archive 2009

To create long-term solutions to the allocation dispute, the Alaska Salmon Alliance is talking with the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Kenai River Sportfishing Association. We are reaching out to personal-use fishing organizations. The salmon alliance was created in 2011 and is committed to pushing for scientifically based fishery management, geared toward preserving — for all users — Alaska's unique salmon culture.

We are not a part of the lawsuit filed by the Cook Inlet Fisherman's Fund. We want compromise not contention. The salmon alliance is hoping for meaningful dialogue throughout the fall and winter. We'd like to build a consensus on some of the king management issues and then share that with Alaska's Fish Board and state resource development managers, as well as the Alaska Legislature. All user groups benefit from a consistent, coherent policy that protects salmon stocks for today and tomorrow.

In hopes of providing more information on the value of the commercial fishing industry, the alliance funded a northern economics study to identify the

financial effect of the commercial Cook Inlet salmon fishery. We weren't sure what we would find, but the report tells a positive economic story:

The accumulated harvest value between 1980 and 2011 was \$2.15 billion (in 2012 dollars). In 2011, the Cook Inlet salmon fishery was larger than all salmon fisheries

in the Lower 48 combined, created more than 5,000 Alaska jobs and added \$102 million in direct value to the Alaska economy.

The full report is available on our Web site at www.aksalmonalliance.org/article.

The value of this regional industry goes well beyond dollars and cents. It grows our communities. The Cook Inlet salmon fishery creates an opportunity for Alaskans to learn a trade that is handed down from generation to generation, family to family.

Salmon and Alaska are inextricably linked. Whether you wet a line with a fly, bait or spinner, put a net in the river, or set or drift a net in saltwater, we need policies that allow this unique resource to be shared by all and sustained for coming centuries. That's the goal we're working toward.

Paul Dale has been a commercial fisherman all his adult life. He is president of the Alaska Salmon Alliance. He and his wife Brenda own Snug Harbor Seafoods. He has served on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly and is a former Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute export board member.

Fish Facts:

SHARED HARVEST GROWS MULTI-USE COOK INLET SALMON FISHERY

7/26/13
Effective mixed stock management of king and sockeye salmon in Cook Inlet requires simultaneous harvests. This provides **positive economic and social benefits** for thousands of Alaska commercial and personal use fishing families.

We are in a period of low abundance of king salmon. Though the numbers are down, late run Kenai River king salmon escapement goals have been met in each of the last twenty-five years, and exceeded escapement goals in 17 of those years.*

Last year, sport and commercial fishers were devastated when king salmon conservation concerns forced the closure of the Kenai River. Post-season analysis showed that those closures were unnecessary, and by a wide margin. They were the result of previously misunderstood counting and run timing issues.

Mixed stock management, if done properly, can **improve the shared harvest of salmon** in Cook Inlet, particularly if the concept of "fishing on abundance" is employed on a routine basis.

"Fishing on abundance" works like this: as massive schools of sockeye move toward the rivers, kings are pushed away from the beaches. Therefore, large harvests of sockeye can occur with minimal impact on kings.

If commercial and sport users cooperate and let the principle of "fishing on abundance" do its work, **harvests can be more abundant for all users.**

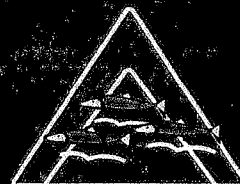
Monday, July 15 was an example of the success of "fishing on abundance." Commercial drift and set-netters in Cook Inlet harvested 775,000 sockeye and 377 kings. Of those 377 kings, not all were bound for the Kenai river, and only 132 would likely have been 29 inches or larger, as counted by DIDSON sonar, and valued by Kenai River sportfishers.*



We want to thank the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for executing a good example of mixed stock management and "fishing on abundance" on July 15th, and we are looking forward to more of it. It helps create jobs and a better economy for our state.

This ad is paid for by the Alaska Salmon Alliance.

*Run Reconstruction, Spawner Recruitment Analysis and Escapement Goal Recommendations for the Late Run Chinook Salmon in the Kenai River. ADFG, Fisheries Management Series, 13-02, ADFG Divisions of Commercial and Sport Fisheries, Fleischman and McKinley, March 2013.



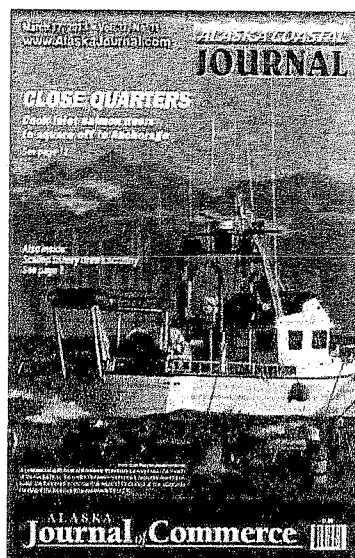
Alaska Salmon Alliance

Working for Alaska's salmon future today.

Events Calendar

"Make it Monday" forum - Solutions for Cook Inlet Salmon Management

Date: October 28, 2013 Time: 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM



Courtesy of Alaska Journal of Commerce



Event Description

Hannah Harrison, environmental and development consultant, will moderate a panel discussion focusing on solutions for future Cook Inlet salmon returns and fisheries management.

Panel: **Ricky Gease**, Kenai Sports Fishing Association; **Rod Arno**, executive director of the Alaska Outdoor Council; **Paul Dale** with the Alaska Salmon Alliance; and **Dwight Kramer**, Cook Inlet Task Force public stakeholder representative

Deadline to RSVP is 5 p.m. Friday.

Members: \$23 (\$26 at door)

Member Table: \$184 (table for 8, in advance only)

Non-Members: \$31

Students: \$25

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Dena'ina Center, 2nd floor

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To Current Calendar

You are invited to attend

Alaska Salmon Alliance Open House Forum

Monday, October 28th from 6-8:30pm

at the BP Energy Center

900 E. Benson Blvd, Anchorage

Driving directions: from New Seward Hwy, turn right in BP's SW entrance. Turn right at first stop sign into parking lot. Follow footpath to entrance.

Eastbound on Benson Blvd: Turn right into BP's main entrance. Turn right and follow access road to 4-way stop. Continue through intersection into parking lot. Follow footpath to entrance.

Tuesday, October 29th from 6-8:30pm

at the Palmer Train Depot

610 S. Valley Way, Palmer

Join us for a facilitated discussion about Cook Inlet salmon fisheries.

We will be looking to hear from all user groups and gear types and identify ways we can collectively make our fisheries more sustainable for future generations.

These events are free and open to the public.

Light refreshments will be served.



ALLY Congress will get right to those critically important issues — after they return on a month-long vacation, which ir elected representatives need simply to vitalize themselves after being in session for a brutal 18 days after their July 4th vacation.

The Senate especially will need the battery recharging time so that it can roll up its sleeves for toil before taking the rest of the year off starting Nov. 8. How these people bear up under the unrelenting burden of showing up for work every now and then is anybody's guess.

It seems that even when the Senate and House do punch their time clocks, less gets accomplished than Laticille Ball confronted by a chocolate candy assembly line.

As the Washington monthly pointed out a few months ago, if the preceding 112th Congress was regarded as the least productive legislative session in the history of the republic, with only 13 laws passed over a two-year period, the 113th Congress is on pace to offer a thinner summe than that of Otis, Mayberry's town 'nuk.

As of the end of end of July, Congress had passed 15 bills that actually made it into law, including approving a chief financial officer for the District of Columbia, an anti-generic drug act, the Hurricane Sandy relief bill after great Category 5 puffery, and measure allowing boating access around farms in Kentucky. The Continental Congress this was not.

There was one other bill that made its way through Congress to President Obama's desk for signing — a measure setting an interest cap on federally subsidized student loans. The initiative could have been addressed in early July instead of causing distracted anxiety for millions of students

COMPASS: Other points of view

Kenai fishing groups must work together

By KARL KIRCHER

Dan Coffey's recent compass piece, "Act now or we will lose the Kenai River kings (July 24)," once again illustrates this former Alaska Board of Fisheries chairman's bias toward the commercialized sport fisheries on the Kenai River, as well as his willingness to twist/omit facts in pursuit of marginalizing the historic setnet fishery on the Kenai Peninsula to maximize in-river participation. Coffey lists ocean survival, high-seas trawlers, setnetters, marginal productivity, and "there may be others" as reasons for the decline of Kenai River kings.

To not even include the in-river, commercialized king salmon sport fishery in a conversation regarding the protection of Kenai River king salmon stocks is disingenuous. This fishery takes place in the main stem of the Kenai River (mentioned as a spawning area by Mr. Coffey) and for decades has practiced hook-and-release fishing, taking the biggest kings out of the spawning population.

This fishery, along with setnetters, has borne the brunt of Alaska Department of Fish and Game conservation measures over the last two seasons designed to ensure adequate king salmon escapement. It's unlikely that either of these fisheries, setnetters or in-river users, is responsible for the dramatic decline in king salmon stocks as this is a phenomenon happening in river systems all across the state. This certainly seems to point to a problem in the ocean environment.

While these groups may not have caused the problem, the fact that they are significant harvesters of the resource means they both should be included in the dialogue regarding conservation efforts. Mr. Coffey's effort to advance his agenda by pitting one side against the other when we all should be working together is not productive.



Photo courtesy KARL KIRCHER
Karl Kircher, right, and his son Thomas work a Cook Inlet setnet site.

Mr. Coffey did write about conservative management of the in-river sport fishery but alluded that this is not the case with setnet fishermen because they received 12 additional hours of fishing time a week, "roughly, through emergency orders by Fish and Game."

In fact, at the time of his writing the east side of Cook Inlet setnet beaches had averaged only 6.2 hours a week of extra time (24 extra hours are allowed by regulation) in the five weeks the season had been opened. All told, setnetters had only fished 30.2 hours a week. All other emergency orders limited set-

Setnetters, guides, business owners and sport fishermen will have to genuinely contribute to the upcoming dialogue if we are to be successful in preserving this resource and our livelihoods.

net fishing to a 600-foot wide swath of beach in the mouth of the Kasiloof River.

In addition, setnetters had also already been denied extra fishing time when surplus sockeye salmon were plentiful on the beaches in order to conserve Kenai king salmon. They have now lost even regularly scheduled openings for king salmon conservation. There is no doubt setnetters have suffered significantly alongside in-river users.

Management of Kenai River king salmon will be up for review at this winter's Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings. All user groups are currently suffering from the decline of king salmon stocks. Those of us who live here and utilize this resource, including setnetters, guides, business owners and sport fishermen, will have to genuinely contribute to the upcoming dialogue if we are to be successful in preserving this resource and our livelihoods. We should also demand that we do not return to the tainted Board of Fisheries process that allowed a person with Mr. Coffey's obvious bias to become the chairman.

Karl Kircher has been a setnetter on the Kenai Peninsula for 33 years, is a former executive director of the Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association and currently operates a family setnet operation with his wife and three grown children.

AAV 8/5/13

KRK

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3/6/2013

Letters to the Editor

Facts and Cooperation Equal Cook Inlet Salmon for all User Groups

We all value the resource. Salmon fishing, one way or another, is how many of us have grown up in Alaska. It is a part of our history and our tie to our home.

As the debate over king salmon escapement, and how best to protect the fishery escalates, it is imperative to keep the focus on facts and strong future runs — in a cooperative fashion. The desire to allow the dialogue to devolve into emotion and anecdote is powerful. However, to assure that all users in the Cook Inlet salmon fishery continue to have access to these amazing resources, it is imperative we work to find common ground.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has said that while king salmon returns are low this year, they are not in jeopardy. In fact the most recent counts indicate that we are on track to making escapement. This historic, valuable, unique run is not going away. I want to underscore that late run Kenai River king salmon escapement goals have been met in each of the last twenty-five years and were over-escaped in nine of the last ten years. The recent closures were to assure the escapement goal would be met once again, nothing more.

It is hurtful and unfair when people accuse Cook Inlet commercial setnet and driftnet fishers of purposefully taking king salmon, or wanting to do away with the fishery. In fact, the opposite is true. The Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishers have every reason to want to see the king salmon sport fishery thrive.

The economic impact of both sport and commercial fishing in Cook Inlet is tremendously valuable. There should be no debate about choosing one over the other.

The commercial industry creates 5000 jobs and more than \$200 million in economic value to Cook Inlet communities. These are mostly Alaska jobs created by mostly Alaska owned permits that are handed down from generation to generation.

There is significant economic impact from king fishing guides and a rich history of Alaska sport fishing guides catching the mighty king salmon.

The Alaska Salmon Alliance is not supportive of the lawsuit filed by some Cook Inlet Commercial Fishers and is focused on finding common ground through science-based resource management. With cooperation, we know the king and red salmon, commercial and sport fisheries can provide a continuing bounty for all users.

**Arni Thomson, Executive Director
Alaska Salmon Alliance
Kenai, Alaska**

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The Peninsula Clarion welcomes letters and attempts to publish all those received, subject to a few guidelines:

- All letters must include the writer's name, phone number and address.
- Letters are limited to 500 words and may be edited to fit available space. Letters are run in the order they are received.
- Letters addressed specifically to another person will not be printed.

Doonesbury Flashback

By GARRY TRUDEAU



THE ORGANIZERS WANT US TO PUSH THE IDEA ON THE HILL. PERSONALLY, I THINK IT'D BE GREAT FOR THE COUNTRY.



THE BUSHES HAVE ALREADY SPREAD TO OTHER STATES. BUT THE PERRYS HAVEN'T! THIS COULD CONTAIN THEM!

Arni Thomson

From: UCIDA ~ Audrey <info@ucida.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2014 9:10 AM
To: UCIDA ~ Audrey
Subject: Voices of the Peninsula: All fisheries are important to community



Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2014

Voices of the Peninsula: All fisheries are important to community

By Amber Every, Fair Fishing 907

“Why do we have to fight so hard to be able to fish?” — a question we keep getting from our children, many of whom are 4th and 5th generation commercial fisherman and setnetters in Upper Cook Inlet. The Alaska Fisheries Conservation Alliance’s recent statewide initiative targeting Cook Inlet Setnetters is indeed a very difficult thing to try to understand, let alone explain to our children, friends, and neighbors.

There is the question that we keep coming back to: Why is feeding the world an abundant, natural and healthy stein — Wild Salmon — any less important than the recreational fishing that takes place in our rivers? It’s not. Both fisheries have a social and economic value, and a unique place in this wonderful State of Alaska. Both are vitally important to the economy and the culture of the coastal communities that host and depend on them.

We refuse to stoop to the level of greed that Bob Penney and his myriad of “Sportfishing Organizations” and “Conservation Alliances” are exhibiting. Our children, our community, our neighbors, and our families deserve better than this. So how do we fix these “fish wars” that have been waged for years? We rise above it! We stand up and say ALL fisheries are an important part of this state, and will exist for many generations to come. We come TOGETHER for solutions to protect our diverse fishery and the resource it depends on.

The Kenai Peninsula holds the most accessible river systems in the State of Alaska. We have a large and growing number of people coming to play in our rivers, a very sensitive and limited resource. Each user group needs sensible limits — responsible management cannot allow unbridled growth on a limited resource. We must limit the number of boats we allow over the spawning grounds, we must put some limits on the ever growing dipnet fishery, and we must have limits and guidelines as to the amount of commercial activity we allow — in both the salt and fresh waters.

ADF&G has set escapement goals that are predicted to produce the highest sustained yields for each species, which benefits ALL Alaskans and fish user groups. In the past 27 years this goal has been met and more often than not exceeded for late run Kenai chinook, the strongest of the Kenai’s two chinook runs and the only Kenai chinook run harvested by Cook Inlet Setnets.

Achieving these escapement goals has not been without difficulty and sacrifice. The last several seasons have been full of restrictions for all user groups in order to achieve escapement. The escapement itself has come into question, with user groups enduring restrictions only to see escapement numbers adjusted upwards post-season

by ADF&G after all the data was analyzed. Interestingly, the most historic, dependable, and accurate Kenai chinook data we have is that of the Cook Inlet Setnet fishery. It shows a low (13 percent) setnet harvest of this run. This rate has remained relatively constant throughout the decades despite changes in run strength, political pressure, and market value of this great fish.

The difficulty of enumerating a minority species in a river full of other fish cannot be understated. Multiple postseason adjustments, recent escapement goal changes, and evidence of density dependent impacts due to past errors in counting have many of us thinking maybe it's time for ADF&G to spend some of the \$30 million Governor Parnell issued for chinook research to fund an independent outside review of the counting systems for the Kenai River.

Alaskan chinook are experiencing a period of low productivity — that's certainly true here on the Kenai. We don't know exactly why, but we do know (due to commercial catch records) that it has happened before, and could be largely a natural, cyclical phenomenon. But maybe we should look at the habitat of these chinook salmon. How are they reproducing, what is the number and condition of the juvenile salmon, or smolt, coming from the Kenai River? How is freshwater survivability? What effects have years of increasing pressure had on the riparian habitat of these fish? These are all areas that are not being funded or studied on the most popular river in Alaska despite the millions of dollars Alaska is spending on chinook salmon research.

To all the Alaska Legislators and Board of Fish members — we ask that you take the approach that all fisheries are important to the people, communities, culture, and economy of this State and that you will fight for them all in an honorable way. Politics and money are ruining this wonderful, diverse fishery and with it many fisherman's lives. We are fathers, we are grandmothers, we are children, sons and daughters, and we are families. We are a community filled with generations of fishing families that will continue to fight for this way of life because we believe that feeding the world a natural and healthy protein — Wild Salmon — is worth it.

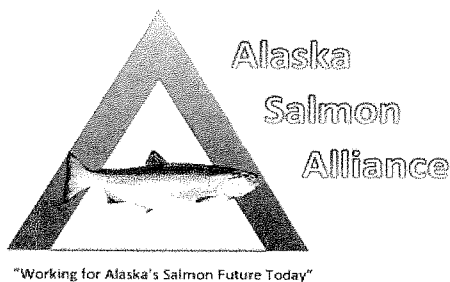
Submitted by Amber Every on behalf of Fair Fishing 907.

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Audrey Salmon
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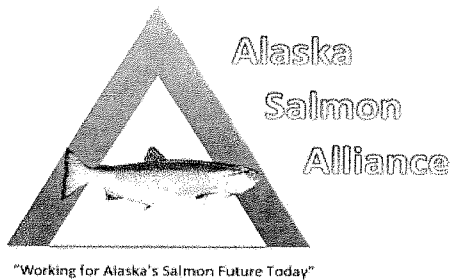
**Alaska Salmon Alliance Testimony to The Alaska Board of Fisheries
on Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Fisheries
Arni Thomson Executive Director
February 1, 2014**

Good day Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Fisheries, my name is Arni Thomson, I am Executive Director of the Alaska Salmon Alliance with offices in Kenai and Anchorage, Alaska. The Alaska Salmon Alliance (ASA) represents Snug Harbor Sfds., Pacific Star Seafoods, Icicle Seafoods, Great Pacific Seafoods, Inlet Processors and Fishhawk Seafoods, all registered Alaskan corporations with plants and operations throughout the Kenai Peninsula. ASA is also comprised of numerous fishermen supporters that reside on the Peninsula. Our companies and fishermen have for decades been economically dependent on the sockeye salmon production of drift net boats and shorebased set net independent family owned businesses on the Kenai Peninsula, as the main stay product that supports our operations. **The commercial sockeye salmon fishery is the core fishery that is responsible for us being able to maintain plant operations on the Peninsula, and to attract halibut, black cod, and Pacific cod from this region, and to also attract salmon species from other regions, including Bristol Bay, the Yukon River, Kotzebue and Prince William Sound.** We depend on regulatory stability and we have a pressing need for an orderly harvest spread out over an extended period of time to insure premium product quality and to maintain a stable labor force.

The ASA has submitted two on time public comments, PC 198 and 199, RC 79 and 87. PC 198 is a list of 239 persons and their contact information who responded to an ASA web site request for persons who wished their names to be counted as supporters of an ASA Save Our Kings request to the Board of Fisheries "to take decisive and immediate action to protect spawning king salmon and their freshwater spawning and rearing habitat within the Kenai River."

PC 199 is an anthology of 25 published articles about the Cook Inlet and Kenai River salmon fisheries conflict. The purpose of the submission is to assist Board of Fisheries members and the public in recalling the numerous newsworthy events involving the Cook Inlet salmon fisheries over the last twelve months. Included in the selection are numerous articles that have been authored by the commercial fishermen and representatives recommending mutual respect, sharing of the harvest, cooperation and dialogue to seek common ground in an open public process that will lead to an increase in abundance of Cook Inlet salmon resources.

Finally RC 79 is an economic summary of the significance of Kenai Peninsula salmon and other fisheries. This illustrates that Cook Inlet salmon fisheries are a huge economic driver for the region, with an economic footprint of \$350 million which includes an annual payroll over \$100 million for 5,000 persons directly employed in the industry.



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Significant economic facts from: Cook Inlet Drift and Set Net Salmon Fisheries report, Northern Economics, May 2013:

- 3,600 harvester jobs, 2011; overall AK residency 80%; Tables 16,17, pps. 24, 25, 26.
- 1,617 processing jobs, 2011, Tables 32, 33, 34, p. 41.
- Fourth largest Alaska salmon fishery in value in 2011 at \$54.2 million, exceeds all lower 48 salmon fisheries in ex-vessel value. Page ES-1.
- \$212 million first wholesale export value, Kenai, Seward, Whittier and Anchorage processing plants. All species, salmon, halibut, sablefish, cod, from Kenai Peninsula landings. Table 29, p. 39. All plants have unique access to an international logistical hub between Stevens airport and the road system to the lower 48. For the many processing companies located in this area, Cook Inlet sockeye salmon is the critical part of the processing mix that creates diversity and capacity that enables these plants to take fish from other regions.
- \$350 million—overall economic contribution to the Cook Inlet region. (Based on conservative, but realistic multipliers developed by Northern Economics in 2011 for the Marine Conservation Alliance, Marcus Hartley, Northern Economics)
- \$2.15 billion equals the accumulated harvest value of the Cook Inlet salmon fishery from 1980-2011, using inflation adjusted 2012 dollars. Page ES-2; and Pages 11 and 13; Tables 7 and 9.
- Sixth largest port in the US in landed value—the Kenai Peninsula --if total fishery landings of all species from Seward, Kenai, Homer and Anchorage are aggregated as one port. Page ES-1.
- Labor income (payroll) 2011, to fishermen, crew and permit holders at 60 percent of exvessel revenue

Set and drift net harvester salmon:	\$34 million, Pages 27, 28, 29.
Set and drift net harvesters in other fisheries:	\$30 million, Page 30, Fig 19.
Set and drift net harvesters from 2 nd jobs:	\$14.3 million, Page 32, Table 22.
Sub Total—harvester income:	\$78.0 million
Processing labor income:	\$30 million, Page 40, Tables 30-31 and footnote 11.

Total payroll in 2011 Kenai Peninsula fisheries: \$108, million

Arni Thomson
 Executive Director
 Alaska Salmon Alliance

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EDITORIAL: Scapegoating Webster is a setback for Cook Inlet

ANDREW JENSEN MANAGING EDITOR

On April 8, a joint session of the Alaska Legislature confirmed 87 of 88 appointments put forth by Gov. Sean Parnell and rejected a third term for Board of Fisheries member Vince Webster by a single vote.

Not that relations between commercial and sport stakeholders in Cook Inlet weren't frosty prior to the vote, but the campaign waged against Bristol Bay setnetter Webster by the Kenai River Sportfishing Association is yet another chill to any hope of thawing the perpetual conflict now exacerbated by low returns of Kenai River kings.

Never mind that the Board of Fisheries vote was 7-0 to adopt a new escapement goal range put forth by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for Kenai kings based on new sonar counters, or that the same full board unanimously refused to adopt any new management measures at its statewide meeting in late March.

In the days leading up to the vote on Parnell's nominations, KRSA put out action alerts urging its supporters to call legislators to oppose Webster, blaming him for the failure of the Upper Cook Inlet Task Force to reach consensus on new management measures and for the adoption of the escapement goal KRSA did not support.

Again, never mind that board member Tom Kluberton of Talkeetna co-chaired the task force along with Webster, or that Fairbanks sport guide Reed Morisky, who KRSA backed for the board earlier this year when Bill Brown of Juneau resigned before his term was up, also voted for the ADFG recommendation.

It really makes no sense to allege Webster — who as a commercial fisherman is in the minority on the board — is some kind of diabolical mastermind able to lead the other six members around by the nose all the while acting in bad faith and conspiring with some 16 or so ADFG scientists to come up with a questionable escapement goal.

KRSA directed no blame at any other members — Kluberton and Morisky were confirmed easily April 8 — or at board chairman Karl Johnstone, who is also strongly backed by the powerful sportfishing lobby group.

The thought here is that Parnell said it best in a statement: "It is disappointing, discouraging and disheartening when bad information or politics prevent a qualified Alaskan from serving our state."

It most certainly is, and the 30 legislators gullible or susceptible enough to fall for KRSA's talking points about Webster should take a hard look at the composition of the Board of Fisheries they just created with just one member from Southeast — commercial fisherman John Jensen from Petersburg (no relation to this writer) — and nobody from Alaska's best-known fishery in Bristol Bay.

The current composition of the board is now tremendously out of whack with four members bearing the KRSA stamp of approval and just two — Jensen and Sue Jeffery of Kodiak — with commercial fishing experience.

Despite all the clamor from legislators alleging an ADFG bias in favor of commercial fishing, Cook Inlet setnetters — who lost out on more than 90 percent of their typical harvest due to king salmon conservation closures in 2012 — have continually seen their fishing time and opportunity eroded by management decisions by the board to put additional kings as well as sockeyes into the rivers.

After the 2011 regular Cook Inlet board meeting, Johnstone said the allocative decisions pushed by KRSA made at that meeting, including the shift in harvest away from setnetters to the drift fleet and to in-river users, were worth, "millions of dollars" in some cases.

With that kind of money at stake, it is ridiculous to hold Webster accountable for the failure of a task force with no regulatory authority to broker a compromise between users with hardened positions, especially when the KRSA proposal was to restrict setnetters to just two, 12-hour fishing periods per week from July 1 to Aug. 10 when king salmon escapement is projected to be as high as 22,000 fish.

KRSA might as well hold Moses responsible for not working things out between the Egyptians and the Jews.

The East Side setnetters have fished the Inlet for a century, legally harvesting and selling king salmon all the while. That's what made an amendment offered up by Rep. Bill Stoltze, R-Chugiak, to a House resolution such a poison pill and illustrative of the sort of misinformation that makes difficult fisheries decisions nearly impossible.

In his amendment to a resolution intended for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council requesting reductions in Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska king salmon bycatch, Stoltze singled out the Cook Inlet setnetters as having king salmon "bycatch" in their fishery.

To be clear: When a Cook Inlet setnetter catches a king, that is a legal harvest. When a pollock trawler catches a king, that is a prohibited species catch, a.k.a. bycatch.

Calling king salmon harvest by setnetters bycatch is not only technically wrong, it is, frankly, offensive to fishermen who've been setting their nets at the same sites for generations without a negative impact on Cook Inlet kings.

Parnell will have to make another appointment to the board to fill Webster's seat, and based on standard practice he will have to nominate someone from the commercial sector.

At this point, finding a good candidate to fill the seat may be difficult when they could be subjected to the same sort of unfair and personal attacks leveled against Webster for the privilege of sitting on a board where they are in a minority to KRSA-backed members who are held to a different level of accountability.

Maybe that's what the Kenai River Sportfishing Association is really after.

Andrew Jensen can be reached at andrew.jensen@alaskajournal.com.

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Sport group sinks Gov's Board of Fisheries nomination

BOB TKACZ FOR THE JOURNAL

JUNEAU — Following an intense lobbying campaign by the Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Anchorage and upper Railbelt Republicans led the legislature's rejection of the reappointment of two-term Board of Fisheries member Claude "Vince" Webster on April 8.

KRSA announced its opposition to Webster at his April 1 Senate Resources Committee meeting. KRSA Executive Director Ricky Gease and constant companion Reuben Hanke, a Kenai River fishing guide, were seen through the rest of the week visiting lawmakers' offices.

Neither is a registered lobbyist and Rep. Peggy Wilson, a Wrangell Republican and Webster supporter, said after the joint confirmation session she was considering filing a complaint against them for lobbying beyond the 10-hour limit on unregistered lobbyists.

[Clarification: Reuben Hanke is not listed in the 2013 registered lobbyist directory. Hanke is classified as a "representational lobbyist" by Kenai River Sportfishing Association and is not required to file as a "registered lobbyist." The difference between a representational lobbyist and a registered lobbyist is that representational lobbyists may only be compensated for travel expenses. Representational lobbyists are also not subject to the 10-hour limit on lobbying for unregistered lobbyists. KRSA Executive Director Ricky Gease may not exceed the 10-hour limit. In a statement to the Journal after publication, Gease said he had not exceeded the 10-hour limit. Gease and KRSA Board Chairman Eldon Mulder declined to be interviewed by Tkacz in the preparation of this article.]

Several lawmakers said before the 29-30 vote, that they were sending a message to ADFG Commissioner Cora Campbell and her biologists.

"In many cases it was a vote against the Department of Fish and Game and some of the governor's appointees. Not just Board of Fish appointees but department staff and Commissioner Campbell," said Chugiak Republican Rep. Bill Stoltze, who led the attack against Webster during the annual joint House floor session.

In a hearing last week Stoltze said it was a "no-brainer" that ADFG is biased in favor of the seafood industry.

"The constituency I represent are highly frustrated by the lack of fish and the quality of fishing. They're essentially saying, 'lets deliver a message to people that are involved in the whole fishery process, to include nomination, that we want the fish to come first,'" said Senate President Charlie Huggins of Wasilla.

Webster was the only one of 88 board and commission appointees who was not confirmed. He is also the only one of three board appointees who is a commercial fisherman. Reappointees Tom Kluberton, a Talkeetna lodge owner, and Reed Morisky, a new appointee and Fairbanks fishing guide, were confirmed without objection.

Webster, a Bristol Bay set and gillnet fisherman, completes his term on the board June 30.

Objections were voiced during the session to the confirmations of Game Board reappointees Peter Probasco and Nathan Turner, former Anchorage police chief Mark Mew to the Alaska Police Standards Council and Gloria O'Neill to the University of Alaska Anchorage board of regents. After lawmakers discussed their concerns they withdrew their objections and none cast opposition votes.

In Webster's case, 19 of the 21 opposing House votes and six of nine in the Senate came from Anchorage, Mat-Su and Fairbanks area Republicans.

"It is disappointing, discouraging and disheartening when bad information or politics prevent a qualified Alaskan from serving our state," Parnell said in a prepared statement.

Neither the governor's office nor commercial fishing organizations backing Webster appeared to realize the extent of the opposition, and effort, against Webster. Heather Brakes, the governor's legislative liaison and Jason Hooley, director of boards and commissions, began talking to lawmakers on April 4, the date KRSA sent the first of two "IMMEDIATE CALL TO ACTION" emails were sent to supporters urging them to contact their representatives and senators.

Mike Nizich, the governor's chief of staff, sent every legislator an email and some said he contacted them personally.

Nizich's letter listed three allegations against Webster, calling them "misleading, incomplete and in some cases inaccurate statements about Webster's work on the board.

"His confirmation should not be blocked due to misinformation," Nizich's letter concluded.

The three complaints, as described by Nizich, were that Webster "is supposedly singlehandedly responsible for the new late-run Kenai River chinook escapement goal (and) allegedly reframed" the debate on the Kenai chinook management plan "to benefit setnetters at the expense of all other user groups and escapement" and that he "allegedly drives a personal agenda through unseemly means."

"The Governor never would have re-appointed him had if he believed such allegations were true," Nizich wrote.

Nonetheless, Stoltze, among others, leveled those same points in their floor comments. Webster's supporters noted that state law assigns the task of identifying the appropriate escapement range to ADFG and that the board is required to adopt the department's recommendation.

Chickaloon Rep. Eric Feige, the only Interior Republican in the House who voted to confirm Webster, noted that the board adopted the new escapement range on a 7-0 vote, obviously including Reed Morisky and Tom Kluberton, the other board appointees who were being confirmed.

Feige also said of his visit from KRSA, "I kind of felt like I was being intimidated to change my vote."

"I don't think anybody agrees to any of the character assassination that has been made of Mr. Webster," said Anchorage Rep. Les Gara, one of six Democrats, three from each body, voting against Webster.

Gara also noted his displeasure with ADFG calling it, "a department, in many circumstances, that has erred on the side of low escapement."

The term "escapement" refers to the number of salmon needed to reach their spawning beds to assure sustainability of the stock. Lowering escapement, which is expressed as a range, generally means harvest levels are higher.

Tkacz is a correspondent for the Journal based in Juneau. He can be reached at fishlawsbob@gmail.com.

Substitute Language for Proposal 135

5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon in order to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The department shall manage the Central District commercial drift gillnet fishery as follows:

(1) weekly fishing periods are as described in 5 AAC 21.320(b);

(2) the fishing season will open the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later, and

(A) from July 9 through July 15,

(i) fishing during the first regular fishing period is restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections **and Area 1**; additional fishing time is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;

(ii) fishing during the second regular fishing period is restricted to the **Expanded** Kenai and **Expanded** Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(iii) at run strengths greater than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open one additional 12-hour fishing period in the **Expanded** Kenai and **Expanded** Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(B) from July 16 through July 31,

(i) at run strengths of less than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during **all [ONE] regular 12-hour fishing periods [PERIOD]** will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;

(ii) at run strengths of 2,300,000 - 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during one regular 12-hour fishing period per week will be restricted to [EITHER OR BOTH] **any or all** the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, **and Anchor Point** Sections of the Upper Subdistrict **and Drift Gillnet Area 1, or restricted to any or all of the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections of the Upper Subdistrict** or Drift Gillnet Area 1; **the other weekly 12-hour regular fishing period will be restricted to any or all of the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;**

(iii) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, **one regular 12-hour fishing period per week will be restricted to the any or all of the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof and Anchor Point Sections of the Upper Subdistrict** [THERE WILL BE NO MANDATORY RESTRICTIONS DURING REGULAR FISHING PERIODS];

(iv) additional fishing time is allowed only in any or all of the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;

(C) from August 16 until closed by emergency order, Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 are open for fishing during regular fishing periods;

(D) from August 1 [AUGUST 11] through August 15, there are no mandatory area restrictions to regular periods, except that if the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed under 5 AAC 21.310(b) (2)(C)(iii), or the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total sockeye drift net harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods of the drift gillnet fishery, regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4].

(b) For the purposes of this section,

(1) "Drift Gillnet Area 1" means those waters of the Central District south of Kalgin Island at 60° 20.43' N. lat.;

(2) "Drift Gillnet Area 2" means those waters of the Central District enclosed by a line from 60° 20.43' N. lat., 151° 54.83' W. long. to a point at 60° 41.08' N. lat., 151° 39.00' W. long. to a point at 60° 41.08' N. lat., 151° 24.00' W. long. to a point at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 25.70' W. long. to a point at 60° 20.43' N. lat., 151° 28.55' W. long.;

(3) "Drift Gillnet Area 3" means those waters of the Central District within one mile of mean lower low water (zero tide) south of a point on the West Foreland at 60° 42.70' N. lat., 151° 42.30' W. long.;

(4) "Drift Gillnet Area 4" means those waters of the Central District enclosed by a line from 60° 04.70' N. lat., 152° 34.74' W. long. to the Kalgin Buoy at 60° 04.70' N. lat., 152° 09.90' W. long. to a point at 59° 46.15' N. lat., 152° 18.62' W. long. to a point on the western shore at 59° 46.15' N. lat., 153° 00.20' W. long., not including the waters of the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict.

(5) "Anchor Point Section" all waters seaward of one and one-half miles of the waters of Alaska baseline that are enclosed by a line from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at a point on the beach at 60° 04.02' N. lat., 151° 38.90' W. long., west to a point located at 60° 04.02' N. lat., 151° 49.00' W. long., south to a point located at 59° 46.15' N. lat., 152° 15.80' W. long., and east to a point on shore at 59° 46.15' N. lat., 151° 52.06' W. long.;

(c) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

RC 38

Adopted: 01/21/14

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 14-010

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY TO THE ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES REQUESTING THE BOARD TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON STOCKS BY IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS RESTRICTING THE UPPER COOK INLET DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY TO THE EXPANDED KENAI AND EXPANDED KASILOF SECTIONS.

WHEREAS, 7 of 11 statewide salmon stocks of concern are in the Northern District of Cook Inlet; and

WHEREAS, the sustainability of wild runs of all salmon species in the Northern District are at risk due to over-exploitation of mixed stock commercial fisheries in the Central District of Upper Cook Inlet; and

WHEREAS, the Central District Drift Gillnet fishery while targeting dominate Kenai and Kasilof sockeye salmon stocks, intercepts smaller stocks of northern bound salmon in a mixed stock fishery; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fisheries in 2011 adopted regulations to assist in a recovery and conservation of northern salmon stocks by directing harvest by the drift fishery to the Expanded Kasilof and Kenai Sections instead of fishing area wide; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fisheries will consider proposals that will expand use of the Expanded Kasilof and Kenai Sections to rebuild northern salmon stocks and also consider proposals

which seek to rollback protections for northern district stocks and exploit mixed salmon stocks; and

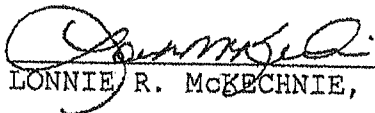
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough requests the Board of Fisheries, and the Alaska State Department of Fish and Game to expand the targeted harvest by the drift fishery within the Expanded Kasilof and Kenai Sections to insure that Northern District stocks can pass safely through the Central District, and to defeat proposals which would repeal or roll back Board adopted conservation measures requiring fishing within the Expanded Kasilof and Kenai Sections.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 21 day of January, 2014.



LARRY DEVILBISS, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:



LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Sykes, Arvin, Colligan, Salmon, Colver, and Halter

Adopted: 01/21/14

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 14-011

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY TO THE ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES OPPOSING ANY REGULATIONS THAT REDUCE TIME, OPPORTUNITY, OR HARVEST OF THE UPPER COOK INLET PERSONAL USE SALMON FISHERY.

WHEREAS, personal use fishing is a valuable economic and recreational activity for residents of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and provide the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Kenai Peninsula Borough with major economic benefits; and

WHEREAS, one of the primary issues concerning current personal use fisheries is allowing opportunity and regulatory windows for delivery of fish in sufficient numbers to provide reasonable fishing opportunity; and

WHEREAS, thousands of South-central residents participate in Kenai and Kasilof personal use fisheries due to the lack of comparable local opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the state of Alaska mandates that fish and game are a common resource for all Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, personal use fishing is important to residents living near the Northern District stream drainages of Upper Cook Inlet because it provides salmon for personal consumption; and

WHEREAS, personal use fisheries have occurred only twice in the last ten years in Northern District waters due to poor sockeye salmon returns; and


WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is concerned about fisheries management decisions that have affected the delivery of fish in sufficient numbers to provide for personal use fishing opportunities, and crowding and habitat degradation caused by concentrating fishing in limited openings and areas; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Fish and Wildlife Commission has developed recommendations to present to the Board of Fisheries at their Upper Cook Inlet meeting in January 2014, to remedy problems of fishing opportunity and crowding with Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough requests the Alaska State Board of Fisheries, and the Alaska State Department of Fish and Game does not adopt regulations that reduce opportunity, participation or harvest in the Kasilof River personal use set gillnet, Kenai and Kasilof dip net fisheries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is opposed to Proposals 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, and supports Proposals 142 and 282 to maximize the opportunity of Mat-Su residents to participate in personal use fisheries.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this
21 day of January, 2014.


LARRY DevilBISS, Borough Mayor

--- . AMMECT:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk
(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Sykes, Arvin, Colligan, Salmon, Colver, and
Halter

Amended: 01/21/14

Adopted: 01/21/14

~~MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH~~
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 14-012

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY TO THE BOARD OF FISHERIES REQUESTING THE BOARD TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON STOCKS BY ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE ESCAPEMENT GOALS FOR ALL SALMON SPECIES IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF COOK INLET.

WHEREAS, 7 of 11 statewide salmon stocks of concern are in the Northern District of Cook Inlet; and

WHEREAS, spawning escapement goals are the cornerstone of fisheries management; and

WHEREAS, escapement goals do not exist on the Susitna River for coho, chum, and pink salmon, even though this drainage is the largest producer of these species in the Upper Cook Inlet; and


WHEREAS, without escapement goals, the health of salmon stocks will continue to be unmanaged; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough considers it essential that escapement goals be established for all salmon species in the Susitna River drainage.

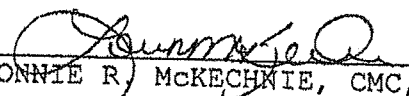
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough requests the Board of Fisheries, and the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game to establish escapement goals for

all salmon species and systems in the Northern District of Cook
Inlet.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 21
day of January, 2014.


LARRY DEVILBISS, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk
(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Sykes, Arvin, Colligan, Salmon, Colver, and
Halter

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



PC 300
1 of 4

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Mike Dunleavy
Senator

Comments of Senator Mike Dunleavy

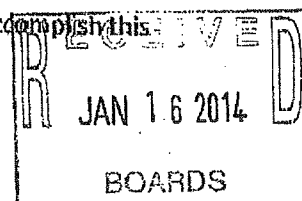
For the Board of Fish meeting of January 31, 2014

I offer these comments in a constructive manner with the understanding that you are much more immersed in the details of the issue and perhaps have a different perspective than I. I cannot overstate the importance of fish, or the lack thereof, to maintain the lifestyle and economy of my constituents as well as those surrounding the Inlet. During my campaign, and throughout my term, fishing has been at the very top of the list of issues important to my constituents and they feel very passionate about it. I have segregated my thoughts into two categories: (1) Board related; and (2) Proposal related.

BOARD ISSUES

- 1) I took office in January 2014 and your timetable deadlines required proposals to be filed by April. With all that was going on during session, it was virtually impossible to meet that deadline, and as a result, my specific recommendations were not available for public discussion and debate. Please consider implementing a change in this process to allow legislators a month after the close of session to submit any proposals that they would like considered by the Board.
- 2) The Board relies almost exclusively upon the Department for analysis and data to meet the seven statutory criteria for allocation. Several of these criteria require economic impact be taken into consideration, and yet, neither the Board nor the Department have such expertise available on staff. Further, the Board has no executive authority over the Department and cannot direct that the Department supply specified information or analysis. I have earlier communicated with each of you and the majority of your Board has recognized the need to have such expertise available at your direction. Please consider having the full Board comment on what staffing or independent contracting for economic modeling would be the most helpful in its deliberative process. Perhaps using the staffing approach utilized for the North Pacific Fisheries would work well for this Board. Any recommendations would be greatly appreciated. There may need to be a statutory change needed to accomplish this.

Senator Mike Dunleavy mdunleavy@allegis.gov





but I am willing to undertake that effort if it would result in better scientific and economic data and analysis being made available to this Board.

- 3) When the Senate was organizing, I specifically set my goal on being a member of the Finance Committee and as being Chair of the Finance Subcommittee on Fish and Game. The fact that I now occupy both positions is not happen-chance. As I stated earlier, fish in the Valley is a huge issue for my constituents and I will remain aggressive in doing all that I can to see consistent strong returns of salmon into the Susitna and westside drainages. I sponsored amendments to the Department budget to research specific issues that had been identified as lacking and which are essential to your deliberations. I solicit your input to identify any and all additional areas where data is not up to what you need to make sound scientific based decisions.

PROPOSAL COMMENTS

I would like to preface my remarks by stressing that my objective is to get more fish into the natal waters for future generations. It is not productive to continue the "Cook Inlet fish wars" nor will much long-lasting change occur until all sides come together and make a concerted effort to reach consensus. It is to all our benefit to do all we can to assure strong consistent runs for ourselves, our children and their children.

If the Department and Board do not establish well-based escapement goals for ALL Cook Inlet tributaries, my objective will not be sustainable over the long haul.

If the Board, in its allocative decisions, does not assure passage of salmon to meet mid-level escapement **THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM**, we will be unnecessarily risking the continued production of those rivers and lakes.

Additionally, the State needs to address the high-seas intercept as well as documented habitat issues in our breeding and rearing waters and the Board should reinforce the need for scientific data that would establish the impact each has on the fishery. With this information, the Board would be much better equipped to render better informed allocative decisions.

Even though I am of the opinion that there are other issues which need addressing by the Board, the following are what I consider to be the most critical related to the UCI and are listed in order of my priorities.

- 1) Establishing that meeting low end escapement of any and all species has much higher priority than avoiding exceeding high end for any species in the Cook Inlet drainages. Proposal 103 submitted by KRSA (page 107 of the green booklet) addresses this in a very concise and direct manner. For instance, before the Department is allowed to open up more harvesting of the Kenai sockeye, it must first conclude that such an opening is not going to jeopardize meeting the escapement goals of the Susitna sockeye or the Susitna coho.

I would actually advocate that the Department should be prohibited from utilizing its EO authority to address over-escapement of any of the species in Cook Inlet unless and until it



can demonstrate that the best scientific evidence strongly supports meeting the half-way level of any other species that may be expected to be harvested in that EQ opening. Half-way level would be the midpoint between the low and high end established escapement goals.

- 2) We all recognize that we have some very serious problems with the low returns in the Susitna drainage. Until we can successfully re-establish historic levels to these rivers and lakes, I would join with others in further restricting the drift gillnet fishery to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kaslof corridors. There are three proposals that approach this allocation issue differently. Of those three, Proposal 143 submitted by Tony Russ (found on page 156) raises an entirely different approach that is most likely too far reaching for the BOF at this meeting but is certainly something to consider for future meetings. Both Proposal 142 submitted by Dipnetters Association (found on page 154) and Proposal 138 submitted by MVF&G Advisory Comm (found on page 148) would restrict to these two corridors from June 19th through August 10th. This is the approach that I believe gives the best opportunity for northern bound coho and sockeye to pass through to their breeding waters. Neither of these proposals would allow fishing in Area 1 which is well known as a mixing zone and where a highly disproportionate amount of coho (92% by testimony of Pat Shields) were harvested during this past summer's restrictions. There is also Proposal 139 submitted by MSB Fish & Wildlife Comm (found on page 149) but it differs in several important areas in that in that: (1) it restricts drift net fishing from July 16th (as opposed to June 19th) through July 31st (as opposed to August 10th); (2) it maintains Area 1 within the restricted area whereas both of the other proposals eliminate that fishing zone. The Board should not overlook that when the Department opened the Area 1 last season, the cohos were absolutely slammed! And (3) it maintains the tier system hinged upon the run of Kenai sockeye while both of the other proposals eliminate this system and maintain the same fishing restriction throughout the entire time period regardless of the number of sockeye into the Kenai. If a tiered system is allowed to remain in place, any loosening of the restrictions need to be based on sockeye and coho returns to the Susitna in addition to any other threshold levels such as Kenai sockeye. To reiterate my earlier advocacy, BEFORE any loosening of the drift net fishery restrictions, the Susitna sockeye and the Susitna coho need to be protected.
- 3) It is of paramount importance to protect and even enhance the personal use opportunities of our Southcentral families. Proposal 142 submitted by the Dipnetters Assoc. (found on page 154) puts them on par with protecting the coho to provide the sport and guided sport fishermen the same reasonable opportunity to harvest. It goes without saying that there are literally thousands of Alaskans that fill their freezers and smokers with these fish and rely upon them for their dinner table.
- 4) Habitat issues are clearly important and an integral part of the overall picture impacting our fisheries throughout the Cook Inlet. Recently, a preliminary habitat assessment was done for the MSBF&G Comm and the data was of high value. Similar data would be most helpful to the Board so that it could judge the effectiveness of its allocative decisions. Proposal 235 submitted by Todd & Megan Smith (found on page 268) would expand on that but on a



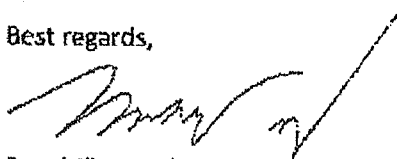
more thorough examination throughout the area. I believe that this information will prove extremely valuable for the Board and the Department to manage and allocate the fish resources into the future.

- 5) I believe it to be very important to establish escapement goals for all main tributaries in the Susitna drainage. Particular emphasis should be placed upon establishing coho, chinook and sockeye goals for such major tributaries as the Deshka, Yentna, Talkeetna, Little Su, Montana Willow and Alexander that have sustained historic major fishing opportunities for the sports fishery. I would also advocate that these goals reflect historic based calculations rather than figures predicated upon today's low returns.

In concluding, I would urge the Board to create a allocative system based upon Discreet Fishery management practices much like what was done in Bristol Bay. Having lived many years in rural Alaska, I am acutely aware of the importance that fish plays in Alaskan's life. If is no different there than it is in the Valley even though the fish may be put to a different use. "In-river" runs must be protected and that means not only quantity but also quality. Nobody is going to spend money and resources to go catch a 20 pound Kenai King or a 12 inch Susitna Coho.

Thank you for considering my input and thank you for your service. It is both noticed and appreciated. If there is any of you believe is needed to better do your job, please do call. While neither I nor my staff can break away for the full two weeks of your upcoming meeting, I as well as John Wood with my staff plan on attending at some point.

Best regards,



Sen. Mike Dunleavy

RC 103

Submitted by: Senator Mike Dunleavy
Mat-Su Valley
February 1, 2014

Good Day,

Thank you for allowing me to address this Board regarding the important work that you are doing. My constituents have consistently placed **STRONG CONSISTENT RUNS** of all species of salmon in the Upper Cook Inlet/Susitna River drainage as one of their priorities.

As a result, this meeting is of utmost importance to our folks in the Mat-Su as well as thousands upon thousands of fishing families on the Kenai and in the Anchorage areas. What you decide here will determine for us whether we have 3 more years of the same dismal returns or, will this Board meeting chart a new course that more accurately reflects the changing demographics. **THAT** is the reason I flew in from Juneau specifically to give public testimony here today and to be available to answer any questions that you may have.

I presume you have studied my written comment (#300) which speaks in greater detail as to what I believe is the best course for my constituents' concerns. They are anxious to reinvigorate the salmon returns into the Susitna and other westside streams feeding into Cook Inlet. So today I will share with you their overall vision.

If I can successfully leave you with three major thoughts from them, it would be for you to have as **YOUR** goals to : (1st) Adopt actions designed first and foremost to **establish strong consistent runs** in the natal waters into the future **with emphasis on the fish** and the question of allocation being secondary; (2nd) Assure that the Susitna salmon runs are at the very least given equal protection as those of the Kenai and Kasilof when it comes to expanding commercial harvests in the Inlet. In other words, any corridor restrictions should not be loosened based

RC _____

solely on the Kenai sockeye count. Rather, they look for assurance that Susitna Coho and Susitna Sockeye runs are vigorously protected **before** diminishing commercial restrictions; and (3rd) Establish the policy to assign **amuch higher priority to insuring low-end escapements** over concerns about exceeding high-end escapements. After all, meeting the low-end is critical to the future existence of the fish while exceeding high-end escapements does not threaten the continued existence of those fish runs.

On behalf of my constituents, thank you for the opportunity to have their concerns heard.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Mike Dunleavy
Senator

February 27, 2013

Commissioner Cora Campbell
Department of Fish and Game
1255 West 8th Street
Juneau, Alaska 98111-5526

Dear Commissioner:

Thank you for your assistance in assisting the Valley delegation as we try and work together to address the fish disaster unfolding in the upper Cook Inlet and Susitna River drainage.

I view the overall picture as one that is unique to the state, which means that what may work for us in the UCI may not work elsewhere in the state and vice versa. It is for this reason that I would strongly encourage you to create a plan quickly that solely addresses the UCI fisheries with a "pilot program" mindset.

The approach I am recommending needs to be taken prior to the 2014 BOF meeting to allow more of all salmon species to reach the pertinent tributaries within the Northern District; and, aggressively develop in-season management tools to genetically identify the various stocks as well as acoustical telemetry and wiretag programs to allow the department to better identify the life cycles and travel patterns used by these fish, and longer-term activities to implement more weirs, monitoring devices, and when indicated, direct supplementation of weaker runs at their tributary source with programs such as achieved by ARED Inc. Setting and achieving biologically sound escapement goals needs to be a requirement for the Department and the failure to do so should be viewed as a serious failure the Department's management.

Below are five actions that need to be taken in order to enhance fish stocks to a long-term sustainable level so all Alaskans in the Upper CI and Susitna drainages can maintain "fish" as part of their lifestyle. Please review the action plans as well as the questions attached below.

1. First, and of utmost importance, is for the Department to ensure that the corridor program be maintained throughout the full month of July without exception.

2. Immediate action must be taken to have research done THIS season on both the genetics and a thorough wire tagging and acoustical telemetry program tracking and enumerating both adults AND smolt of all species of ND salmon.

3. The Department must lead the way in rebuilding and protecting the habitat with particular attention to the spawning areas.

4. Aggressive pike and invasive vegetation eradication programs as well as study of the impact of beaver dams in the drainage need to occur.

5. The majority of the stocks of concern and management of concern classifications in the entire state are all within the Northern District. Yet apparently the escapement goals that do exist do not remain at their existing levels. Instead, the escapement goals are being lowered as the stocks are diminishing. This practice needs to end.

In addition to the five areas listed above, below are several other concerns that I would request be answered.

**Every in-season management decision should be weighted in favor of meeting escapement goals through ensuring passage of Northern bound stocks and weaker stocks throughout Upper Cook Inlet.*

Please respond and let me know how your plan ensures this.

**No additional fishing time or area should be allowed under department's Emergency Order authority that has the potential of impacting Northern District stocks and weaker stocks throughout Upper Cook Inlet.*

Can you assure this will occur?

**Emergency Order closures should be used to help ensure passage of Northern bound stocks and weaker stocks throughout Upper Cook Inlet.*

Please tell me how your plan will accomplish this.

**A holistic research plan must be developed and immediately implemented for the spectrum of Northern District species and stocks and weaker stocks throughout Upper Cook Inlet and the movement as they transit the Cook Inlet.*

Please tell me if this will be the plan.

**Additional escapement goals and assessment tools must be immediately developed for Upper Cook Inlet species and stocks as well as for other weaker*

stocks of Upper Cook Inlet.

Please tell me what the plan will be to address this.

**Although other factors such as marine survival, habitat and invasive species may be contributing or confounding factors, these issues must not keep the department from exercising its in-season management authority to minimize intercept and bycatch of the depressed species and stocks.*

Please tell me if this is the plan.

Commissioner Campbell, the unfolding fish disaster in the Upper CI/Susitna River drainage is costing local businesses millions of dollars in lost revenue, shifting fishing opportunities to areas outside of the Mat-Su Valley, causing hardships on families in terms of increased travel time and escalating fuel bills, and potentially jeopardizing some of the Governor's initiatives such as the Watana Dam project, and wetland primacy initiatives. Individuals and groups are forming alliances to line up against the Governor's initiatives by using the fish disaster as the reason to put a halt to these initiatives. By addressing the fish disaster quickly and with sincerity, there may still be time to repair the damage already wrought. However, any delay will only exacerbate an already volatile situation.

I look forward to hearing back from you with a response to the items outlined above and an overall plan to address the overall issue. Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike Dunleavy
Senate District D

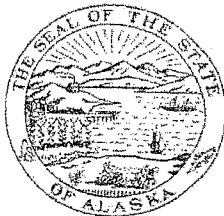
ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Joint Finance Fish and Game Budget Sub-Committee Chairmen

May 28, 2013

Honorable Karl Johnstone
Chairman, Alaska Board of Fisheries
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

Dear Chairman Johnstone:

This past legislative session has provided you and others deeply involved in the fisheries with tools that have not been made available in the past, particularly as they relate to the Susitna drainage. We would like to solicit your input early in this process in order to make sure that the data being collected is indeed the scientific data needed by you in formulating your salmon plans and in returning our salmon returns back up to full strength in the Susitna drainage.

Our staff has researched your decisions over the last 20 years relating to UCI and it appears that you have specifically addressed this in three decisions. In your 99-191-FB decision, the Board unanimously adopted its official "Findings" which concluded that:

"there are many species and stocks about which the Department and, as a result, the Board, are **TOTALLY** lacking good, reliable, long term information upon which to base management decisions except in the grossest of terms (e.g.. Northern District sockeye, all chum, all pink and most coho salmon). This lack of information and the overlapping special and temporal locations of the various mixed stocks and mixed species of salmon, as well as substantial differences in salmon stock abundance and salmon species abundance and in the productivity of these stocks and species, create **SUBSTANTIAL AND SIGNIFICANT MANAGEMENT DIFFICULTIES** for both the Board and the Staff of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game."

"It is impossible to manage mixed stock, mixed species, salmon fisheries for Maximum Sustained Yield (MSY) on all salmon stocks and species in circumstances where the composition, **ABUNDANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY OF THE SALMON STOCKS AND SPECIES IN THOSE FISHERIES IS BOTH UNKNOWN AND VARIES SUBSTANTIALLY** from salmon stock to salmon stock and salmon species to salmon species. A corollary of this fact is that managing a strong/dominant salmon stock on the basis of maximum sustained yield in a mixed stock, mixed

species salmon fishery, CAN RESULT IN THE OVERHARVEST OF THE WEAK/NON-DOMINANT SALMON STOCKS AND SALMON SPECIES. THE BOARD FINDS THAT THIS POTENTIAL EXISTS GIVEN THE PREVIOUS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF THE PAST 20 YEARS. (Emphasis added)

The next major action of the Board was the adoption of the Central District Gillnet Fishery Management Plan (5AAC 21.353) in 2011. Unfortunately, this expanded corridor approach was not implemented in 2011 due to a Court injunction obtained by UCIDA. Then in 2012, the corridor was kept in place only until July 21st as the sockeye count reached the 4.6M trigger. Obviously, this expanded corridor approach was implemented primarily, if not solely, for the benefit of the sockeye fishery and this was confirmed by the Board in 2011-266-FB where it officially found that "The board adopted these measures to allow the passage of more sockeye salmon to the northern portions of Cook Inlet."

Hopefully the Board remains fully committed to the principle purpose of 5 AAC 21.353 to "ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the Northern District drainages" and to "manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon". We worked hard in this last session to provide funding for numerous data collecting efforts to address these concerns and we would very much welcome feedback from each Board Member as to what data it is that each of you need to fulfill your obligations and to do so based upon actual scientifically sound data rather than a lack of data as has been the case in the past.

It is unclear from the records of what data, if any, is available to the Board to base its decisions on Chinook and Coho when they are being intercepted in the Inlet prior to arrival in the Susitna drainage. This lack of data is of utmost concern to the undersigned as it places the Board in an untenable position of being forced to make allocative decisions without any scientific data driving those decisions. We are very interested in obtaining feedback directly from each Board member on the following issues:

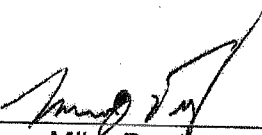
- 1) What data does the Board rely upon in maintaining or further expanding the existing corridors? What specific data is the Board lacking in this decision making process?
- 2) Chinook and Coho bound for the Susitna are being intercepted in the Inlet while they are suffering dramatic lower returns into the Susitna drainage. What data does the Board have, or need, to scientifically base their future decisions to protect these Susitna bound salmon to assure their safe passage through the Inlet to the Susitna?
- 3) Is there currently in operation a system that accurately measures the return of Chinook and Coho salmon in the Susitna drainage that provides a sound base for establishing escapement goals? If not, what needs to be implemented to obtain such reliable data?
- 4) What data is the Board lacking to assure that its directive is implemented to have the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery managed by the department pursuant to the explicit language of 5 AAC 21.353 "to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai coho salmon in order to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions" ?
- 5) What data will be required for the Board to establish a logarithm or other mathematical formula to apply to current data being collected so that escapement goals are established

that reflect salmon returns prior to the period of downturn that has occurred over the past several years?

- 6) The seven allocative criteria established in A.S. 16.05.251 require emphasis on socioeconomic factors to be determinative of BOF's decisions. What objective socioeconomic data does BOF currently have to base their judgment upon? Would it be advisable for the BOF to have access to professional economists to create objective systems to judge socioeconomic considerations for the BOF?

Thank you in advance for your response to these important questions and to the service you provide Alaskans through your work on the Board of Fisheries. We look forward to a continuing cooperative relationship in this regard.

Sincerely,


Sen. Mike Dunleavy


Rep. Bill Stoltze

cc: Board of Fisheries Members

Submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game by request of Board Member Kluberton

February 5, 2014

Substitute regulatory language for Proposal 209

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. (a) The purposes of this management plan are to ensure an adequate escapement of late-run king salmon into the Kenai River system and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the late-run Kenai River king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses in order to provide the sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency or inriver restrictions.

(b) The department shall manage the late run of Kenai River king salmon to achieve a sustainable escapement goal of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon, as follows:

(1) in the sport fishery,

(A) if the sustainable escapement goal is projected to be exceeded, the commissioner may, by emergency order, extend the sport fishing season up to seven days during the first week of August;

(B) from July 1 through July 31, a person may not use more than one single hook in the Kenai River downstream from Skilak Lake;

(2) in the sport fishery, that portion of the Kenai River downstream from Skilak Lake is open to unguided sport fishing from a non-motorized vessel on Mondays in July; for purposes of this section a non-motorized vessel is one that does not have a motor on board;

(3) from July 1 through July 31, if the projected inriver return of late-run king salmon is less than 22,500 fish, in order to achieve the sustainable escapement goal and provide reasonable harvest opportunity, the commissioner may, by emergency order,

(A) establish periods in the sport fishery during which

(i) the use of bait is prohibited; or

(ii) the retention of king salmon is prohibited; if the retention of king salmon is prohibited in the Kenai River, the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict is restricted to no more than 12 hours of fishing time per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure as described in 5 AAC 21.360(c)(2)(C);

(iii) when the use of bait is prohibited the commissioner may

(A) prohibit the retention of king salmon in the personal use fishery;

(B) notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360(c), open fishing periods in the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict, based on the abundance of sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof rivers, for no more than 36 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure as described in 5 AAC 21.360(c)(2)(C), during which

(i) the number of set gillnets may be restricted to either three set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; or

(ii) the number of set gillnets may be restricted to either two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth or one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth;

(iii) set gillnets used that are 29 meshes in depth must be marked as specified by the department;

(4) from August 1 – August 15, if the projected escapement of king salmon into the Kenai River is at least 16,500, but less than 22,500 fish, notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360(c), the commissioner may open, by emergency order, the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict to no more than 24 hours fishing time;

(5) if the projected late-run king salmon escapement [INRIVER RETURN] is less than 15,000 king salmon, the department shall

(A) close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon;

(B) close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and

(C) close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

(c) Repealed / /2014 [FROM JULY 20 THROUGH JULY 31,

(1) REPEALED 6/22/2002;

(2) IF THE PROJECTED INRIVER RETURN OF LATE-RUN KING SALMON IS LESS THAN 40,000 FISH AND THE INRIVER SPORT FISHERY HARVEST IS PROJECTED TO RESULT IN AN ESCAPEMENT BELOW 15,000 KING SALMON, THE DEPARTMENT MAY RESTRICT THE INRIVER SPORT FISHERY;

(3) REPEALED 6/22/2002;

(4) IF THE INRIVER SPORT FISHERY IS CLOSED UNDER (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET FISHERY IN THE UPPER SUBDISTRICT SHALL BE CLOSED;

(5) REPEALED 6/11/2005.]

(d) Repealed 6/22/2002.

(e) Consistent with the purposes of this management plan and 5 AAC 21.360, if the projected inriver return of king salmon is less than 40,000 fish, the department may not reduce the closed waters at the mouth of the Kenai River described in 5 AAC 21.350(b).

(f) The provisions of the Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.365) are exempt from the provisions of this section.

(g) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of this plan.

(h) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e). (Eff. 6/10/89, Register 110; em am 4/30/91 – 5/30/91, Register 118 [not printed]; am 7/21/91, Register 119; am 5/31/96, Register 138; am 5/14/97, Register 142; am 2/25/98, Register 145; am 6/13/99, Register 150; am 6/22/2002, Register 162; am 6/30/2002, Register 162; am 6/11/2005, Register 174; am 6/4/2008, Register 186; am 6/1/2013, Register 206)

Issues related to RC 151

Why are there numbers in this plan that are not escapement goals? Goals are goals and everywhere in Alaska, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game very successfully manages to escapement goals without goals within goals.

By voting yes and implementing a 22,500 in-river late run king target and putting a goal of 16,500 into effect beginning in August, you have effectively allocated 7,500 kings from the ESSN to the in-river fishery not only in July but after the in-river fishery season has closed in August. The collateral damage of that action is loss of opportunity for the Setnet fishery to take more than a million sockeye.

Shortly before adoption of 151, the BOF reconsidered and reversed the decision to adopt an OEG on the late run king plan of 16,600 to 30,000. The reason given for that reconsideration was trust in the department's conservative management style. Clearly your intent and action was to leave the OEG at 15,000 as supported by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

By adopting 151, the BOF reversed that ruling and unintentionally reinstated an OEG of 16,500. This forces the department to manage the East Side Setnet fishery to higher goal than is the in-river fishery, and the burden of meeting that higher goal is borne by the fishery that is not the primary harvester.

The effect of this decision will further restrict the ability of the east side setnetters to harvest sockeye and the department's ability to fish adaptively on abundance.

More importantly, this will likely shutdown the east side Setnet fishery even when we're within the department's SEG of 15,000 to 30,000 kings.

Management objectives are achieved at the end of the season. If managers manage to 15,000 prior to August 1, they will automatically be well under the goal when the new, higher goal goes into effect. Fishing subsequently will be closed. In fact, it forces the department to manage the commercial fishery to 16,500 kings for the entire season, since 16,500 is the goal the department must hit at the end of the year. This is punitive to the East Side Setnet fishery.

What we need:

Remove the in-river goal of 22,500 and replace it with an in-river goal of 17,000. ((In 2013 the inriver harvest was 1,600, this gives the inriver users 2,000 fish, which is 400 more than they harvested last year.))

Remove the 16,500 goal that goes into affect in August. This action will return the goal to the OEG of 15,000 recommended by the Department, the goal that you, as a board, reconsidered and voted back in. By voting in a second goal to go into effect in August, you force the department to the higher goal.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

RC 53

Co-Chair:
House Finance Committee

Chair:
House Finance Subcommittees for;
Alaska Court System
Fish & Game

Member:
Legislative Council
Committee on Committees
Legislative Budget & Audit (alt)



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January 30, 2014

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Boards Support Section
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Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Alaska Board of Fisheries Chairman Johnstone,
Board Members Kluberton, Jensen, Johnson, Huntington, Jeffrey, and Morisky,

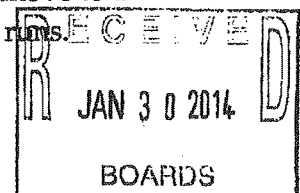
First, I wish to thank you for your service on one of the most important boards in Alaska government.

For my legislative district, I would be hard-pressed to identify many issues of more importance to my district, indeed, my region, than the ability to access salmon resources. Salmon is not only a major protein with which we fill our freezers and our pantries, it is also an important part of our lifestyle—one of the reasons for which many chooses to live in the Matanuska and Susitna valleys.

Reflecting the views of my constituents, as well as my own, it is our belief that northern district stocks have been managed as subservient to the central district commercial sockeye harvest for a long time. We must redefine the mixed-stock fishery to allow for Susitna Basin escapement. These stocks have been dangerously depressed for over a life-cycle of the fish. I believe the time to make this decision is sooner, rather than later. If not irreparable, irreversible damage to the scientific diversity of these stocks is almost certain.

Many of the people I represent also feel very strongly that we must move to a more terminal harvest regime for the dominant Kenai and Kasilof sockeye runs.

DISTRICT 11
BUTTE • CHUGIAK • EKLUTNA • FAIRVIEW LOOP
KNIK RIVER ROAD • LAZY MOUNTAIN • PALMER • PETERS CREEK



I am somewhat concerned by the mission results targets which the Office of Management and Budget lists for the Department of Fish and Game:

Commercial Fisheries "TARGET #1: Maintain total annual value of commercial harvests and mariculture production at over \$1 billion annually."

Sport Fisheries "TARGET #1: Return sport fishing license sales and revenue collection to 2008 levels to ensure excellence in fisheries management and research for the benefit of recreational anglers, the state's economy, and future generations of Alaskans."

While industry is viewed as an important part of the economy, the other is viewed as a source of revenue. While I appreciate the goal of promoting one aspect of an industry, I am very troubled by the seemingly disparate goals and stated priorities.

In closing, we must do a better job of providing more reasonable opportunities for the tens of thousands that participate in our Alaska resident-only personal use fisheries. We must honor the priority in the management plans that call for recreational priority for the use of King Salmon, Susitna Coho, and the management of northern district stocks to their natural streams.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on behalf of myself as well as the vast majority of my constituents. My best wishes to all board members and to your support staff as you make these important decisions.

Sincerely,



Bill Stoltze

RL77

**THE STATE
of ALASKA**REPRESENTATIVE
MARK NEUMAN

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January 31, 2014

Dear Alaska Board of Fisheries Chairman Johnstone,
and Board Members Kluberton, Jensen, Johnson, Huntington, Jeffrey, and Morisky,

Thank you for your willingness to serve and the sacrifices you make on this very important resource management board.

Access to Salmon is an important issue for many of my constituents and residents of the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Valley. Historically, we have relied on this resource to fill freezers and provide sustenance. Culturally, families and friends have joined together in gathering this resource as part of a lifestyle. Over the years, many have moved to the Valley to pursue that lifestyle.

Many of my constituents, my peers, and I believe that northern district stocks are managed subservient to the central district commercial sockeye harvest, and have been for some time. We believe that redefining the mixed-stock fishery to allow for Susitna Basin escapement is essential. These stocks have been dangerously depressed for more than a life-cycle and before irreversible damage is done, action is needed to preserve them.

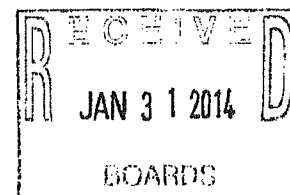
I also believe a more terminal harvest regime for the dominant Kenai and Kasilof sockeye runs is necessary.

Thank you,

Handwritten signature of Mark Neuman in cursive.

Representative Mark Neuman

BIG LAKE • HOUSTON • MEADOW LAKES • KNIK GOOSE BAY • SUSITNA



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE KURT OLSON

- Chair: Labor and Commerce
- Vice Chair: Rules
- Member: Resources, Community & Regional Affairs,
Economic Development Trade & Tourism,
Fisheries, Legislative Budget & Audit

Session: January - April
State Capitol, Room 24
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone: 907-465-2693
Fax: 907-465-3835



Official Business

Interim: May - December
145 Main Street Loop, Ste. 221
Kenai, AK 99611
Phone: 907-283-2690
Fax: 907-283-2763

February 11, 2014

The Honorable Governor Sean Parnell
Alaska State Capitol Building
Third Floor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell,

I am deeply concerned by the proposal adopted by the Board of Fisheries regarding late-run king salmon escapement goals on the Kenai River. The decision by the Board seemed rash. The inconsistency in the voting by the board members further served to confuse and confound user-groups. I believe that the time period for public process and consideration of comments and concerns made by stakeholders and the general public was insufficient to adequately address concerns and interests; especially given the unpredictability of member votes. The accepted proposal appears to be a de-facto stripping of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's departmental discretion on the management of setnet gear and in-season restrictions. The department is unlikely to modify the Board's gear prescription or opening restrictions until after the escapement goal is met; which theoretically could take all season.

I would like to see additional data regarding the effects or effectiveness of smaller web size and shallower nets on king escapement. The study presented to the Board of Fish could hardly be considered comprehensive and does not convince me that such regulations, even coupled with shorter openings, would in fact serve the purpose of meeting escapement goals.

Email: rep.kurt.olson@akleg.gov

The potential loss of hundreds of thousands of sockeye salmon could be a devastating blow to commercial fishermen, and is an undue burden on one user-group. Additionally, this opens up the prospect of overburdening current sockeye spawning grounds. This decision by the Board of Fisheries will also have impacts on life and safety issues on the Kenai Peninsula. Undue strain is forced upon local municipal resources as there is an attempt to manage the impacts of statewide pressure on the environment, local residents and limited-capacity infrastructure.

I, along with other Kenai Peninsula legislators, have long supported research and funding to study and preserve a sustainable fishery in Cook Inlet. While all Alaskans should be able to share in our bountiful fisheries, the Kenai Peninsula fishing community should not be punished for failures in the stewardship of Mat-Su salmon spawning streams and drainages.

The record-low predictions for king salmon runs on the Kenai River are upsetting. I am pleased that combating the problem is a priority to the state and stakeholders. However, targeting one user-group or region over another is a shortsighted and foolhardy approach. If comparable restrictions are not implemented on all user-groups, there are no assurances that chinooks able to bypass commercial nets will reach spawning grounds.

I would like to see justification by the Board that these new escapement goals are warranted and that the requirements for the public process were followed.

Sincerely,



Kurt Olson
Representative
House District 29

CC: Commissioner Cora Campbell, ADFG
Glenn Haight, Executive Director of Alaska Board of Fisheries
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Cathy Giessel
Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Paul Seaton
Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor Mike Navarre
Kenai Mayor Pat Porter
Soldotna Mayor Nels Anderson
Rick Koch, Kenai City Manager
Mark Dixon, Soldotna City Manager



Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Fish board actions do little to conserve kings

By Frank Mullen
Homer

Mark Hamilton, president of the Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA) recently opined that the Board of Fish (BOF) meetings had produced a "clear victory for Kenai kings." I disagree, and believe that any objective person would disagree as well.

Many have suggested that the blame for lack of kings lies with the offshore fisheries. Scientific studies show that minimal interception actually occurs. (Google: NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-AFSC-244). Others suggest that Cook Inlet set net interception is the culprit, but science does not support this theory either: ADFG statistics illustrate that CI set netters catch less than 13% of the second run and 0% of the first run. This leaves reasonable observers with one rational conclusion: In river habitat of Kenai kings may be stressed to a near breaking point.

A recent study (google: Turbidity Monitoring on the Lower Kenai River) illustrates clearly that turbidity caused by power boats elevates water quality to unacceptable State and Federal standards. This fact was ignored by the board. Dirty water is bad for salmon, especially kings who, for the most part, spawn in the mainstem of the Kenai. The banks of the Kenai have been chronically eroded over the past 30 years as a direct result of wakes generated by up to 600 boats per day. This powerful fleet of commercial guides has targeted kings on their spawning beds for more than 30 years. Thousands of hooks per day are deployed directly on spawning beds for most of the summer. The attendant noise pollution, exhaust, and wakes do not contribute to a successful spawning experience for kings.

The BOF could have taken some steps in the right direction to improve the

quality of life for kings in the river. They could have implemented more "drift only" days. They could have provided for spawning sanctuaries. But they did not. The reason? Mark Hamiltons' KRSA lobbied the board to deny these actions. Does this sound like a conservation group to you?

The BOF process has been lauded by some as an open and democratic process. Sure, everyone is allowed to speak, but the lobbying happens behind the curtain and most actions are predetermined prior to the obligatory public testimony. In essence, KRSA and their paid staff in collaboration with a cooperative BOF, control the details of the commercial fisheries management plan in Cook Inlet; a commercial fishery that provides 5% of the global production of wild sockeye. Raise your hand if this makes any sense to you.

You may have heard about the proposed initiative that, if approved by the courts, would eliminate set netting in Cook Inlet. This is the initiative brought forward by KRSA founding father Bob Penney that would, if passed, eliminate more than 500 working families in Cook Inlet. This initiative was sponsored by many KRSA present

and past board members, including current president Mark Hamilton. Eliminating set netters will never solve in river habitat problems.

The Endangered Species Act, in Federal Law, is designed to take action to protect a species when one or more of the following factors exist: 1) damage to, or destruction of, a species' habitat; 2) over utilization of the species for commercial, scientific, or educational purposes; 3) disease or predation; 4) inadequacy of existing protection; 5) other natural or manmade factors that affect the continued existence of the species. I believe that most of these five factors exist, and have existed on the river for many years.

With awareness that the early king run in the Kenai has been virtually decimated without any interference whatsoever from commercial fishermen, perhaps it is time to look beyond the BOF process for meaningful relief for Kenai River king salmon. Putting political considerations ahead of sound scientific management is morally, scientifically, and intellectually wrong. In the final analysis, the Kenai kings may pass onto the endangered species list at the hands of those who have created the illusion that they are protecting them.

--

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Honoring the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission has worked tirelessly since 2007 to allow for more fish to pass through the Upper Cook Inlet to the spawning grounds of the Mat-Su drainage; and

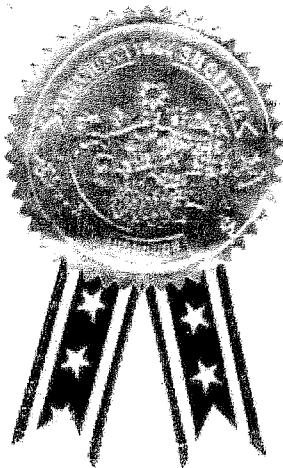
WHEREAS, the plummeting Coho, Chinook, and Sockeye salmon returns are at a crisis level, and the need for conservation in the Upper Cook Inlet was a necessity for sustainability of salmon in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission is comprised of volunteers and they unselfishly gave their time and expertise; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission presented a proposal to the Alaska Board of Fisheries to help return the salmon stock levels in the Mat-Su; and

WHEREAS, due to the work of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Alaska Board of Fisheries agreed by unanimous vote to a new framework of the management of commercial fisheries in Cook Inlet in an effort to allow the Mat-Su bound fish to reach spawning grounds.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly honors and applauds the members of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission, and Borough staff for their historic work to bring the fish back to Borough waters.



BEN ALLEN
ANDY COUCH
HOWARD DELO
JEHNIFER EHMANN
LARRY ENGEL
BRUCE KNOWLES
FRANKIE BARKER
PATTY SULLIVAN
STEFEN HINMAN
MAC MINARD



Dated this 4 day of March 2014.


Larry DeVilbiss, Mayor


Matthew Beck, Assembly District No. 2


Jim Sykes, Assembly District No. 1


Ron Arvin, Assembly District No. 3



Kudos to BOF for effort to make changes

Posted: March 12, 2014 - 7:17pm | Updated: March 13, 2014 - 8:29am

By Howard Delo

Big Lake

Members of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission and key borough staff were honored at the March 4 Mat-Su Borough Assembly meeting for efforts at the recently completed Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting in securing changes aimed at improving the health of our Northern District salmon stocks.

I am a member of this commission. While honored by the assembly's gesture, I want to point out the other folks who helped bring about these significant changes.

The commission is an authorized and recognized agency of the Mat-Su Borough.

Without the borough assembly's support, we would not have been in the position we were to work with the BOF in explaining our conservation concerns in the Northern District.

With this support, we were able to hire a professional biologist/consultant who is very familiar with Cook Inlet issues and is a great organizer and strategist. We received further testimony from the cities of Houston, Palmer, and Wasilla about the negative impacts being felt from lack of healthy salmon stocks. Several of our valley legislators also submitted written statements about our conservation issues.

Members from the Mat Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee and the Anchorage AC presented testimony and served on committees. Hundreds of Northern District residents submitted written and/or oral testimony during the meeting about the poor condition of our valley salmon populations. This level of public support from the Northern District hasn't been seen in decades, if ever, at a BOF meeting.

Two of our key borough staff are public relations specialists and played a major part in publicizing BOF happenings and "getting the word out" to the public about submitting comments. They arranged both TV and radio interviews for commission members and our consultant. Another borough staffer was instrumental in defusing the various habitat issues being portrayed as the only reason why there are no salmon in the Northern District.

And let us not forget our friends to the south, the Kenai River Sportfishing Association and the Kenai River Professional Guide Association for their support as well. While our areas and specific issues were different, KRSA and the KRPGA both aided us in their testimony and in arguing similar issues in their area. Getting kings into the Kenai is, in many ways, similar to getting salmon into the Northern District. Those points were not lost on BOF members.

While the MSBFWC might have been the tip of the spear, there were a bunch of other folks who played very important and key roles in our efforts. To all of them, I say a heartfelt "Thank You."

I was raised to thank a person when they helped me out in some manner. It would be very appropriate for sport anglers and those interested in healthy Cook Inlet salmon stocks to thank the BOF for their efforts in changing the basic approach to how salmon will be managed in Cook Inlet. Send your thanks to Board Support, PO Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526 or email them through the ADF&G website.

Comment

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United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



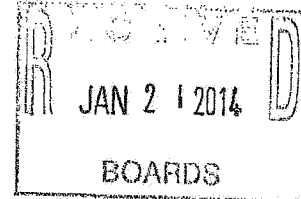
PC 301
1 of 2



FWS/AFES

JAN 1 2014

Mr. Karl Johnstone, Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99211-5526



Dear Mr. Johnstone:

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) will deliberate on 2013/2014 regulatory proposals that address Upper Cook Inlet fisheries in January 2014. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) would like to provide comments on seven of those proposals for fisheries within the Kenai River that will likely affect fish populations on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. We may wish to comment on other proposals or update our comments if issues arise during the meeting which may have an effect on refuge fish stocks.

Proposals 190, 191, 192, 193, and 194 request modifications to the Kenai River early-run Chinook salmon slot limits. Proposal 190 requests management modifications for Kenai River early-run Chinook salmon including the elimination of the slot limit as a liberalization during strong Chinook salmon returns. Proposal 191 requests repealing the slot limit to increase opportunity. Proposals 192 requests expanding the slot limit from 46"-55" to 42"-55" in length. Proposal 193 requests lengthening the slot limit season by two weeks to end on July 31 and expanding the slot limit from 46"-55" to 42"-55" in length. Proposal 194 requests restricting sport harvest to Chinook salmon less than 42" in length.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recommended Action: Support with modification. The Service supports and promotes resource conservation and is concerned that the current slot limit has the potential to negatively affect long-term sustainability of Chinook salmon stocks within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and other stocks within the Kenai River watershed. The most recent information collected by the Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department) indicates that harvest selection since implementation of the slot limit overlaps with the age and size composition of most spawning fish returning to the Funny River, and likely other tributary stocks comprised of smaller fish. The Service supports the concept of changes to the slot limit that will allow fishery participation while still ensuring long-term sustainability of all spawning stocks of Kenai River Chinook salmon. The Service is willing to work with the Department and others to come up with a solution, and is also supportive of other (and perhaps better) alternatives that may arise through the Board of Fish process that also achieve this goal.

TAKE PRIDE
IN AMERICA



Mr. Karl Johnstone

2

Proposal 219 requests establishing two Spawning Conservation Areas to protect Chinook salmon that spawn in the mainstem Kenai River. Spawning Conservation Area 1 would close the mainstem Kenai River to sport fishing for Chinook salmon from July 1 – 31 from the mouth of the Moose River upstream to Skilak Lake; Spawning Conservation Area 2 would close the mainstem Kenai River to sport fishing for Chinook salmon from July 10 – 31 from the Sterling Highway Bridge upstream to the Moose River.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recommended Action: Support with modification. The Service supports and promotes resource conservation and fishery participation. Chinook salmon use waters on the mainstem Kenai River below Skilak Lake as a staging and spawning area, and a request was made to the Service to close the Kenai River within the borders of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge to sport fishing for Chinook salmon in February of 2013 as a conservation measure to protect spawning fish. The Service supports this proposal with modifications such that the spawning conservation areas and times reflect mainstem spawning and staging areas identified by analysis of the Department's recent radio telemetry data or other studies as appropriate. The Service is willing to work with the Department to identify appropriate time and area closures in the mainstem Kenai River below Skilak Lake to protect staging and spawning Chinook salmon on waters under Federal jurisdiction. If regulatory time and area closures are adopted, a proposal will be made to the Federal Subsistence Board to implement similar regulatory closures.

Proposal 225 requests changes to the general provisions for seasons, bag, possession, size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area. Proposal 225 requests modifying the Kenai River king salmon annual limit to two fish, of which only one may be greater than 28 inches in length from January 1 to July 31.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recommended Action: Support. The Service supports and promotes resource conservation and fishery participation. The Service supports proposal 225 for the goal of conserving large older Chinook salmon in the Kenai River. Reducing the annual bag limit to one fish over 28 inches would promote conservation of larger Chinook salmon while providing fishery participation and harvest opportunity. The Service is also supportive of other (and perhaps better) alternatives that may arise through the Board of Fish process that also achieve this goal.

Thank you for your time to review our comments on these proposals.

Sincerely,

Regional Director

Statement regarding Kenai River Habitat Reports

RC 238
Lisa Gabriel

Since 1999 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been tasked with providing Riparian Habitat reports on a Triennial cycle corresponding to the Upper Cook Inlet Finfish Meetings. This is a summary of my findings on habitat reports for the required assessments.

The H-8 Projects were done by Mary King as the Principal Investigator. She did the original reports called "Assessment of Angler Impacts to Kenai River Riparian Habitats". The 1997 assessment was released in a report June 1999. The 1998 assessment was released in a report with the same name in March 2001. The 1999 assessment was released in a report October 2002. After the habitat assessment in 1999, there was funding from Grant No. F-10-15 (H-8) for FY 2000 to continue the Assessment of Angler Impacts to Kenai River Riparian Habitat. That report has never been published. From what I understand, it never made it out of peer review. In FY 2001 there was funding from Grant No. F-10-16 (H-8) with the same name, with no report. In FY 2002 there was funding from Grant No. F-10-17 (H-8) with the same name, with no report. In FY 2003 there was funding from Grant No. F-10-18 with the same name, with no report. In 2004 there was funding from Grant No. F-10-18 (H-8) entitled "Kenai River Watershed" with no report that I have been able to locate.

When I requested copies of the current Habitat reports for the Kenai River, I was sent the report that was contracted by Kenai River Sport Fishing Association through the Watershed Forum in partnership with Inter-fluve. When I read the report, I see no new habitat studies, it is basically a report about the "Repair Projects" that have been done on the Kenai River which is essentially the Bandaid and not what is actually causing the wound. This report is not a habitat assessment to determine net loss from non-commercial users.

I do have the report that was given to the 2002 Board of Fisheries and the 2005 Board of Fisheries. Both reports are based on the original studies done in 1996-1998 with references to the 2000 and 2001 assessments. From what I have gathered with all of the information that is available to me, there has been significant habitat damage done to the Kenai River Riparian Habitat from Angler foot traffic. The native habitat has been impacted significantly, although the reports say that the cover has not been reduced, the type of cover has been changed. The natural grasses have been replaced by dandelions and horsetail, which are not as effective for bank stability.

In the 2004 report that was prepared for the Alaska Board of Fisheries 2005 Upper Cook Inlet meeting, on page 21 it was asked if we are encroaching on a point where the sport fishery for late-run sockeye salmon has grown to a size that may be negatively impacting rearing habitat of juvenile salmonids at a level that warrants concern? Do you have an answer to that question today? Later, it was stated that

"Salmon runs appear to be highly productive in the Kenai River at present, but cumulative impacts (e.g., development in the riparian zone, changes in water quality, changes in ground and surface water flow, increased bank erosion) may ultimately become a biological concern." "Results of the shore angler impact study showed significant changes to herbaceous and shrub/herbaceous habitats and was measured in three seasons (1998-2000)." What is the state of the riparian habitat on the Kenai River in 2013? Do we believe that the habitat is the same or better than it was in 2000?

The Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Management Plan states **"The sonar count levels established in (b)(2), (c)(1), and (c)(2) of this section may be lowered by the board if noncommercial fishing, after consideration of mitigation efforts, results in a net loss of riparian habitat on the Kenai River.** The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. **If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon in-river goal.**

It was asked of the Department "What report will be presented to the Board of Fisheries at the 2014 meeting for Upper Cook Inlet?" With the decline in King Salmon, why is the department not protecting the banks of the Kenai River, where juvenile chinook salmon rear, from increased foot traffic by sockeye fishermen? Why are the reports not being released in a timely manner? By the time the information is released, we will have lost 13 years of data and the ability to make adjustments for the good of the Kenai River and its Chinook, Sockeye and Coho salmon.

Although the Board of Fish cannot direct the department to fund or conduct habitat assessments, they can request current status determining no "NET LOSS" of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen. When this information is not available, we must assume that there is "NET LOSS" and take action. The Board of Fish does have the ability to lower in-river escapement goals or modify in river methods and means to mitigate negative angler effects on Chinook and Coho Riparian habitat if the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is unable or unwilling to provide these current assessments.

Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Sport Fishery (10 Proposals): 219–228

✓ **PROPOSAL 219** – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area; and 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Area Fisherman's Coalition.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish two king salmon spawning closure areas on the Kenai River during July. One spawning closure area would be from the Moose River upstream to Skilak Lake and sport fishing for king salmon would be closed in this area during the month of July. The other spawning closure area would be from the Soldotna Bridge upstream to Moose River and sport fishing for king salmon would be closed from July 10–July 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Kenai River, there are five king salmon “sanctuary areas” that contain sport fishing restrictions designed to protect king salmon from January 1–July 31. Those waters are at the confluence of the following streams; Slikok Creek, Funny River, Lower Killey River, Moose River, and Morgan’s Hole (Figure 219-1). Additional waters are closed to fishing from boats at Centennial Park from about river mile (RM) 20 upstream to RM 21, Morgan’s Hole at RM 31 and at the confluence of the Moose and Kenai rivers near RM 36. The seasonal king salmon area closures total approximately 3.1 river miles of the 50 river miles open to king salmon fishing. In addition, the Kenai River upstream of Skilak Lake and all tributaries are closed to king salmon fishing.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would close an additional 12 to 29 river miles, approximately 25–60% of the lower Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake, to king salmon fishing on an annual basis. This proposal would reduce the harvest of both early and late-run king salmon by an unknown amount. Early run harvest would be reduced less than late run harvest. Total fishing effort would likely decrease and crowding would likely increase downstream of Soldotna. Resulting decreases in harvest may lead to increases in escapement. However, conservation benefits to spawning fish would be limited because most mainstem-spawning king salmon spawn after the king salmon season is closed on July 31. All regulations relating to sanctuary areas, boating restrictions, tackle restrictions, and size limits would need to be updated to reflect this proposed change.

BACKGROUND: King salmon returning to the Kenai River are managed as two distinct runs: early (May 16–June 30) and late (July 1–August 10). Early-run fish spawn primarily in tributary streams, whereas late-run fish are destined primarily for mainstem spawning locations. King salmon of Kenai River origin are harvested in several fisheries, including a recreational marine fishery along the eastern shore of Cook Inlet from Anchor Point to Cape Ninilchik; commercial set and drift gillnet fisheries in Cook Inlet that harvest late-run king salmon; and the sport fishery and personal use fisheries in the Kenai River itself (tables 219-1 and 219-2).

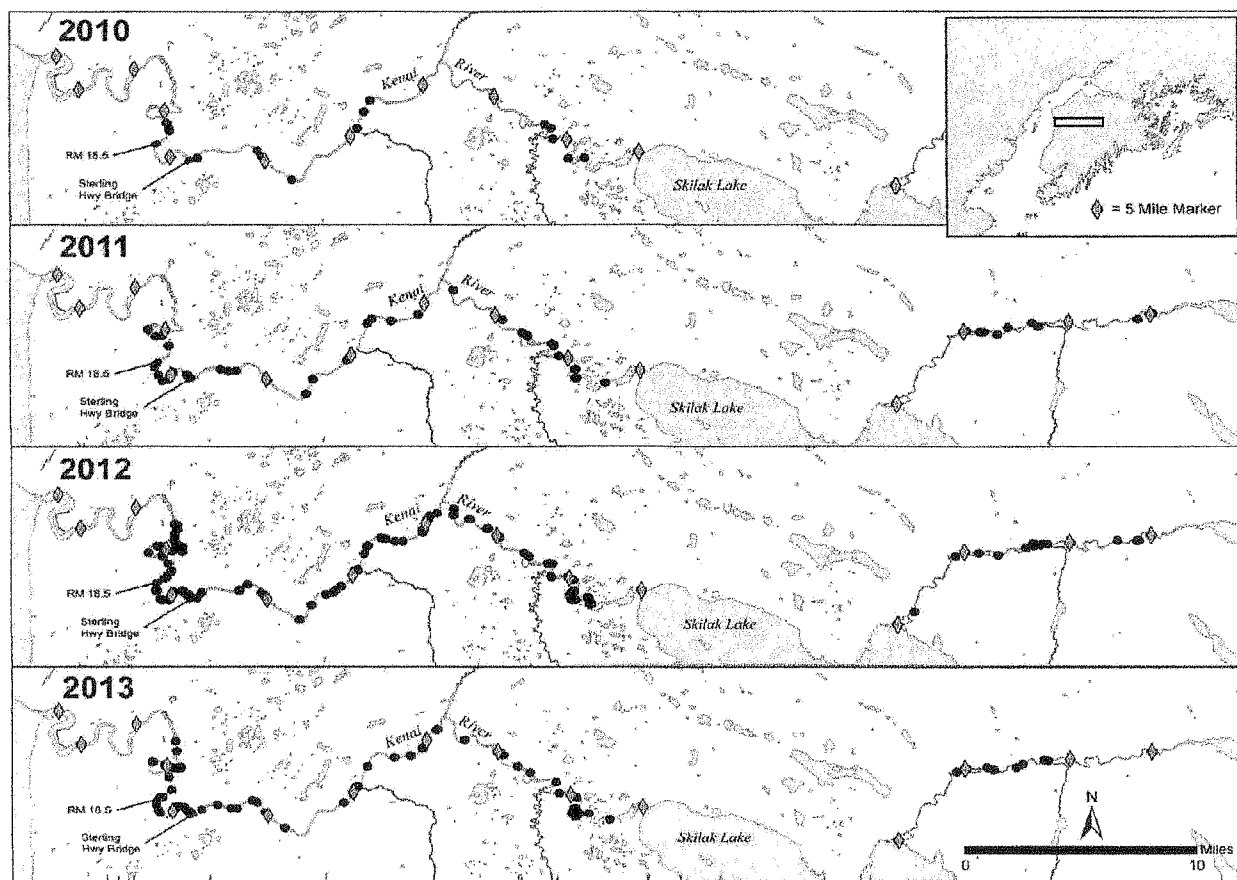


Figure 206-3.—Spawning destinations determined for radiotagged king salmon within mainstem Kenai River, 2010–2013.

Management plans for the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery have been structured to provide fishing opportunity under various run sizes and ensure escapement goals are achieved. In 2011–2013 the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery was closed or restricted to catch-and-release fishing during late June through July, 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek at approximately RM 18.5, upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake at RM 50. The area affected by these restrictive actions comprises about 60% of the Kenai River waters normally open to sport fishing for king salmon.

Kenai River king salmon radiotelemetry study results from 2010–2013 indicates mainstem spawning king salmon spawned throughout the Kenai River upstream of tidal influence. The most heavily utilized sections were RMs 14–15, 17–21 and 46–47 (Figure 219-2). The median date for the completion of spawning activity was August 21 for mainstem-spawning king salmon that returned during the early-run, and August 30 for mainstem-spawning king salmon that returned during the late run.

Since mainstem spawning king salmon did not show site fidelity to spawning areas until after the sport fishery closed on July 31, proposed regulations to conserve mainstem spawning king salmon by closing areas to king salmon fishing during July cannot be evaluated by spawning distribution.

To evaluate measures to conserve mainstem spawning king salmon while the fishery is open during July is also difficult because their distribution was different for each year studied. For example, the inseason emergency orders (EO) to close king salmon fishing upstream of Slikok Creek (RM 18.5) would have been more effective to protect mainstem spawning king salmon in 2012 and 2013 than in 2010 and 2011, because during 2010 and 2011 a large percentage of the early-run, mainstem-spawning radiotagged king salmon monitored remained downstream of Slikok Creek during July. The Kenai River downstream of the Soldotna Bridge (RM 21) was the most heavily utilized mainstem spawning area during the study, closures upstream of Slikok Creek have little conservation value for the largest mainstem spawning component. (figures 219-2 and 219-3).

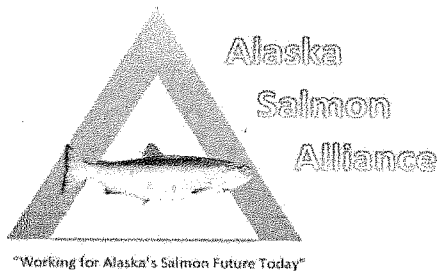
From 2010–2013, at least 96% of the radiotagged, tributary-spawning king salmon were located in closed waters (existing king salmon sanctuaries or spawning tributaries) by July 16 in every year studied.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal as a conservation measure. Tributary-spawning king salmon already have adequate protection through existing regulations and the department's use of EO authority to restrict the sport fishery as necessary. Closing large areas of the river to protect mainstem-spawning king salmon would provide marginal benefits according to the biology and behavior of mainstem-spawning Kenai River king salmon. Adopting this regulation would occur at the expense of exacerbating crowding in the lower river which could have a consequence that is counter to what the proposal is seeking. It would also increase regulatory complexity when added to the existing sanctuary areas and boat fishing closures, and creating three categories of sport fishing waters between the Soldotna Bridge and Skilak Lake, each having different methods and terminal tackle restrictions. ✓

With respect to conservation, the department has the emergency authority to restrict the sport fishery as necessary to achieve escapement goals.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

PC 198



100 Trading Bay #1, PO Box 586 Kenai, AK 99611
cell: 907.929.0388 office: 907.335.10005
accrarak@earthlink.net
www.aksalmonalliance.org

January 13, 2014

Mr. Glenn Haight, Executive Director
Boards Support Section
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

ATTN: Board of Fish Comments for Upper Cook Inlet Finfish

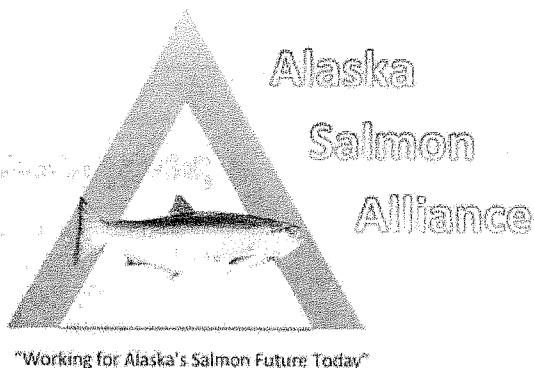
Dear Mr. Haight and Board of Fisheries' members:

With this submission, I am attaching a list of 239 supporters and their contact information, persons who support an ASA sponsored Save Our Kings request to the Board of Fisheries "to take decisive and immediate action to protect spawning king salmon and their freshwater spawning and rearing habitat within the Kenai River."

A copy of the ASA web site supporting statement and submission sample is attached, (www.aksalmonalliance.org) along with the complete list of supporters and their contact information.

Regards,


Arni Thomson
Executive Director



Search

Search

ABOUT ASA COOK INLET FISHERIES REPORTS ASA PUBLICATIONS
FISH NEWS GET INVOLVED CONTACT US
SIGN OUR PETITION - PROTECT OUR KINGS



Sign Our Petition – Protect Our Kings

The Alaska Salmon Alliance is sponsoring this petition to show support for responsible and inclusive in-river habitat protection for king salmon. The petition reads:

Protect Our Kings

We, the undersigned, urge the State of Alaska Board of Fisheries (BoF) to take decisive and immediate action to protect spawning king salmon and their freshwater spawning and rearing habitat within the Kenai River.

We want your help in communicating this important message to decision-makers across our state. Please sign this petition (below) if you too support responsible use and protections of in-river salmon habitat! You can also click on the petition text to add an additional comment of your own, if you wish. Please make sure to include your full name

Contact Information

Arni Thomson, Executive Director

Email: accrabak@earthlink.net
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and mailing address as required by Alaska Board of Fisheries petitions.

Scroll down to download a printable version of this petition if you'd like to collect signatures at your business, organization, or event! Please note that the Alaska Salmon Alliance will never share or sell your personal information with any other party.

Help Protect Kenai Kings

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We, the undersigned, urge the State of Alaska Board of Fisheries (BoF) to take decisive and immediate action to protect spawning king salmon and their freshwater spawning and rearing habitat within the Kenai River.

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Alaska Salmon Alliance "Protect Our Kings" List of Signatories That Support AK Board of Fisheries Immediate Action to Protect Spawning King Salmon and Their Freshwater Spawning and Rearing Habitat Within the Kenai River.

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Graves	Breann	35815 Alex Dr	Kenai	Ak	99611
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