

Testimony on HB 220 before the House Fisheries Committee  
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My name is Will Mayo. I am the Executive Director of Tribal Government and Client Services for the Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks, Alaska, or TCC as we are commonly referred to. TCC is a consortium of 42 member communities in Interior Alaska.

I speak in favor of HB220.

Our member communities live first and foremost on a subsistence economy. Many people augment their livelihood with the cash economy, but living off the land is the true source of their food security.

Historically, 60% of the diet is derived from salmon, specifically King (Chinook) salmon. Chum salmon, though numerous, are not of equal quality, and Silver salmon have made up for some of the loss but the traditional methods of processing is difficult due to colder, wetter weather.

In recent years the Kings have declined alarmingly to the point that our member communities have even self-imposed a moratorium on harvesting Kings. This last season our fishermen worked cooperatively with ADFG in-season managers to take all necessary measures to increase escapement, agreeing to stringent management actions and limitations. The level of concern is extremely high. The commitment to recovery is total among our rural communities.

I spend many hours boating the Yukon River between my ancestral territory around Tanana, Rampart, and Stevens Village. I am a tribal member of Tanana and my father is from Rampart where my family has a camp. This last summer I traveled the river extensively with my family and witnessed the unbelievable. Fish camps sat empty for most of the season with no fish on the drying racks and smokehouses unused. There were few Kings to be had and camp activity was very minimal. It is a sad sight compared to my childhood memories of camp after camp full of activity with drying racks full. A low level of camp activity occurred toward fall-time with the arrival of the Silvers.

Under the direction of our tribes, TCC has been an active participant with the fisheries management systems. Our activities cover a wide spectrum of efforts, including regulatory processes, close interaction with state and federal managers, the creation of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (YRITFC), participation in the Yukon River Panel, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, training and advocacy, and scientific data collection projects with our biologists and local fishermen.

One area that we want to develop capacity in is in recovery and enhancement programs.

Everyone knows the great success of the Gulkana Hatchery program. This program successfully provides a personal use fishery in the Copper River drainage that contributes to food security for a broad swath of Alaskans all along the Alaska highway system, including Anchorage and Fairbanks. The Chitina dipnet fishery is one opportunity many Alaskans participate in annually.

We believe that there are also opportunities for the enhancement and recovery of Yukon river stocks that can be utilized along with the escapement model to address specific sub-species.

There is an advance in recovery technology that show promise for recovery efforts and with a track record in Alaska, Washington and California. It holds great potential promise for our interior discreet sub-species fisheries. This technology could benefit our remote communities similarly to what the Gulkana program has done for the urban populations. We wish to add this tool to our efforts, building skills and capacity for a well-balanced approach to fishery management. We want to do so with full cooperation and oversight by the ADFG through an expanded permitting system spelled out in this proposed measure.

This bill provides structure to the states' permitting system that is fair to everyone, allowing proposals to move forward while providing assurance that sound scientific processes are preserved.

We are not talking about hatcheries because we don't want that. We are only interested in the recovery of wild stocks through with as minimal intervention as possible, to preserve the wild nature of our resource.

Over the years, we have seen different discreet sub-species drop in returns to the point of cutting off important fisheries such as the crash of the Fall Chum runs in the 90's and now the Kings. We want to be effective partners in recovery efforts, working hand in hand with state managers to develop tools that work.

In these times of financial challenge, it makes good sense to work together utilizing affordable technology breakthroughs that can be scientifically applied under stringent controls and sound biology to aid in recovery efforts.

HB220 is a big step in the direction of sound scientific practices, applied to discreet sub-species recovery efforts. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

