

Alaska Trollers Association

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Representative Louise Stutes, Chairman
House Fisheries Committee
Alaska Legislature
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Representative Stutes and Committee Members:

Thank you, Madam Chair, for providing an opportunity to highlight salmon fishing in Alaska.

No matter how or why you catch salmon, or even if you just like to see them on your dinner plate, this important activity brings joy, revenue, and yumminess to nearly all Alaskan's and the state.

I represent the Southeast troll fleet - the largest resident salmon fleet in the state. 85% of troll permit holders live in Alaska, and here in Southeast about 1 of every 35 residents work on a troll boat. That's before factoring in the processing and support sector. Many trollers own diversified businesses and participate in other fisheries, like halibut, cod, and shrimp. Some direct market their products and many are co-owners of one of the nation's oldest and most successful seafood cooperatives.

I enjoyed today's presentations – everyone did a fantastic job – but they were only able to scratch the surface of this highly diverse and complex industry and its array of issues.

The fishing industry is Alaska's largest private sector employer and touches nearly every community in the state. UFA's economic handouts provide a great overview and I hope you will refer to them often.

The health of salmon and the salmon industry is crucial to Alaska's well-being. It's ALL about Alaska jobs and generations of families. There is absolutely nothing that can come close to replacing it in terms of social or economic value.

What's good for fishermen is good for Alaska. And whether or not you're part of the fishing industry - or understand anything about it beyond what you've heard today – YOU are a key component of its success. It is my hope that you will consider the following as benchmarks during your time in the legislature:

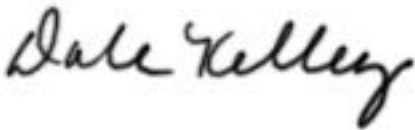
1. ADFG, DNR, DEC, and CFEC budgets must be sufficient to allow for robust data gathering, management of fish and their habitats, and defense of our fishing privileges. The fishing industry pays its way through a tax on every landing and other taxes and fees, so budget allocations for fisheries are actually investments in the state.
2. ADFG must be kept out of state fisheries allocation and maintain unencumbered Emergency Order authority, so that they can focus first on the fish that are the cornerstone of every fishery. The Commissioner must be on an equal par with other commissioners, and a strong habitat division maintained within ADFG, so that habitat can be adequately protected in the face of development.

3. The Board of Fisheries and Advisory Committees must be adequately funded and appointees should represent a broad cross-section of user groups and regions; candidates should be highly regarded amongst Alaskans as knowledgeable about fisheries and committed to conservation and balancing the interests of each region's harvesters. They should be permitted to vote – just like you – and only be prevented from participation if there is a true and well-defined conflict of interest, not simply because they hold a permit. Adherence to a lay board process will lead to better and more practical outcomes for the individuals and industries being regulated.
4. Ample resources must be committed within ADFG and the Department of Law to represent and secure Alaska's interests in key state, federal, and international fisheries management, habitat, and environmental arenas.
5. Commit to keep politics out of fisheries management whenever you can. You can do that by pledging to rely upon the many structures developed by our wise-founding fathers to care for and allocate Alaska's resources. Fish politics is messy and my guess is that you don't have time for it. Appointing good people to lead the agencies, the Board of Fisheries, Limited Entry Commission, and other boards and commissions will limit your fish-related task list to shoring up budgets and developing structural policies and statutes when necessary, while freeing you to concentrate on all those other weighty issues confronting Alaskans.

I could add more to your list, but time is short today. The bottom line is that salmon, and fishing, is important to Alaskans. Your support is essential for securing the key ingredients for its success – clean water, healthy habitat, abundant salmon, and a scientifically based, transparent process to make it so.

If I can answer questions or there is anything I can do to assist you on issues of concern to the fishing industry, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dale Kelley
Executive Director