

# **Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation**

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March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

Subject: Senate Bill 42

Dear Senators & House Representatives;

The Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation expresses strong opposition to SB 42, and its companion House Bill 110 that would give a priority to personnel use fisheries throughout Alaska.

We are not opposed to personal use fisheries. To the contrary, we recognize their importance for Alaska families. We are strongly opposed however to legislation to mandate a personal use priority that would pose serious economic harm to the people of our region and other Alaskans whose economies are built on existing harvest regulations and management plans.

Harvest patterns upon which coastal economies have evolved must not be sacrificed to legislation that would supersede management plans developed in accordance with sustainability and established allocation criteria. SB42 and HB110, in every respect, violate the intent of regulations establishing personal use fisheries (5AAC 77.001(4)(b) allowing their prosecution “when that taking does not jeopardize the sustained yield of a resource and either does not negatively impact an existing resource user or is in the broad public interest.

The broad public interest is not served by a politically motivated and demonstrably unnecessary priority that would both jeopardize sustainability and undermine the economic livelihood of other resource users.

Current regulations provide personal use fishers ample opportunity to harvest established bag limits, and the Alaska Board of Fisheries recognizes a responsibility to do so within the provisions of (5AAC 77.001(4)(b) and Alaska’s established allocation criteria. Recent Board action at its December meeting in Cordova liberalized personal use bag limits on the Copper River, and Cook Inlet’s commercial fishing openings were long ago scheduled to accommodate the weekend preferences of Kenai and Kasilof River dipnetters. Current regulations work as they are intended, and in areas where the sustainability is not in question, no Alaskans are denied opportunity to harvest fish to feed their families.

The political impetus for a personal use priority derives from the understandably passionate interest in salmon from dense population areas connected to the road system. But despite fisheries managers best efforts at forecasting returns, nothing biologists can do will guarantee fish will be available on weekends or a personal use fisher’s preferred holiday. Would this priority require closing all commercial fishing in Cook Inlet order to increase the Kenai River personal user dipnetters chances for success? The inevitable

over-escapement on these river systems is totally incompatible compatible with sustained yield, and the economic disruption of such action, both short and long term, would be unconscionable. To think such a scenario farfetched is naïve, given the political pressure urban centers can exert and the very real propensity for litigation; witness recent efforts to ban commercial setnetting in Cook Inlet.

No natural resource harvester is guaranteed success, in commercial, sport or personal use fishing. A principal effect of SB42 would be to create an expectation success on the part of personal use fishers, exacerbating tensions between the various user groups. It would also require wholesale revisions of fishery management plans statewide, plans meticulously crafted over many years to insure sustainable harvests, setting the stage for negative impacts to coastal economies and sustainability.

We urge the Legislature to abandon SB42 and HB110 which, while seemingly well-intended and politically popular, will produce negative management and economic fallout with serious unintended consequences.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. V. Vactor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Norman Van Vactor  
CEO/President