

Thank you Madam Chair, members of the Senate Resources Committee. My name is Brian Gabriel. I am the Vice Mayor of Kenai and am representing the Mayor of Kenai and the Kenai City Council. At the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Kenai City Council, Resolution number 2015-14 was unanimously passed supporting the appointment of Robert Ruffner to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. You should have that resolution as part of your submitted written comments.

The purpose of this testimony is to support Robert Ruffner through his confirmation process to be seated on the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

Mr. Ruffner embodies the type of person that should be considered for this position. He has spent the past 18 years as the executive director of the Kenai Watershed Forum. In this role, he was instrumental in identifying issues and barriers related to successful fish propagation throughout the Kenai Peninsula. These issues included monitoring water qualities of drainages within the Kenai Peninsula Borough, replacing inadequate culverts with fish friendly culverts, working with other government agencies to improve fish habitat, monitoring and eradicating invasive aquatic plant species that pose a threat to our resident and returning fish stocks, and advocating for responsible land development adjacent to riparian water bodies within the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

When considering a person for this position, regardless of their background or perceived interests, the questions that should be asked is "Will this person be a good steward of the resource?" "Does the candidate possess the experience and background necessary to make sound decisions based on scientific information?" "Will this person be fair to all user groups to the best extent possible?"

We feel that the answers to these questions is an absolute yes.

As an Alaska Board of Fisheries member, we have no doubt that Mr. Ruffner will base his decisions on sound biological science, fairness to all user groups, and most importantly, what is in the best interest of the resource.

The City of Kenai is unique in that in addition to hosting the largest annual personal use fishery in the state of Alaska, we have subsistence users and numerous sport fish charter businesses within the city limits, we are the home port for a large portion of the commercial Cook Inlet drift and setnet fleets, we are shore fisheries leassors to several Cook Inlet beach fisherman, and we have several large fish processors located within our municipal boundaries.

Each of these user groups are important to our City and contribute to our economy. It is vitally important to us that the Board of Fisheries, through their decision making process, consider the impacts to all of these groups but also ensure the wellbeing of the resource for future users.

The upper Cook Inlet finfish meetings are arguably the most contentious meetings conducted and the Board of Fisheries role is to allocate the resource among competing users groups. Mr. Ruffner has demonstrated his abilities as a consensus builder who will reach out to these competing user groups to understand their specific concerns and work toward finding common ground. That being said, his number one priority will be the sustainability of the resource for future users.

Thank-you,