

Senate Resources Meeting 4.16.21

Board of Fisheries: Gov Appointee's

Letters of Support for Marit Carlson-Van Dort

(printed 4.15.21)

- Alex Kopun
- Chignik Intertribal Coalition-Georg Anderson
- Mayor of City of Chignik-Andrew Anderson

For questions contact Betty Tangeman
Senator Josh Revak's Office
465-3879

Members of the House Fisheries and Resources Committees:

I am writing to recommend Marit Carlson-Van Dort for reappointment to the Alaska Board of Fisheries and to set the record straight on incorrect information that has been fabricated and sloppily published by United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) about my family.

Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is eminently qualified to be reappointed as a member of the Board of Fisheries. Since her initial appointment to the Board in 2019, Marit Carlson-Van Dort has repeatedly demonstrated her understanding of the heavy responsibility that comes with serving on the Board of Fish. Her ability to weigh all sides of the many complex issues that come before the Board and make well-reasoned yet difficult decisions is a valuable asset for the State of Alaska. Her background in resources management and commercial fishing combined with her academic training in conservation biology and fisheries science equips her with a wealth of knowledge and expertise and the ability to think critically and weigh important information that is essential to a successful and diligent Board.

Ms. Carlson-Van Dort seeks to understand the impacts of proposals upon all stakeholders, including subsistence, sport, and commercial fishers – as a good Board Member should do. She understands and reviews the science behind all proposals and believes in sustained yield management principles, which is crucial to the health and well-being of Alaska's fishing industry.

UFA is threatened by Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's independence, intelligence and ability to cut through political nonsense that so frequently distracts the Board and makes for bad decisions. UFA's unfounded personal attacks on her and my immediate family are led by a bitter faction of UFA Kodiak leadership and are nothing more than sour grapes over the 2020 Kodiak Board of Fisheries meeting in which long overdue changes were made to the entire Kodiak Mainland interception fishery management plans. UFA cannot handle the fact that a Board was actually willing to take an honest and open look at the Kodiak Mainland interception fisheries and make changes to those outdated and seriously flawed management plans – and all while meeting in Kodiak no less!

Please do not be fooled into thinking UFA represents all Alaskan fishermen or that they even have the best interest of all Alaskan fisheries in mind. UFA has

openly and actively worked to hurt the viability of the Chignik sockeye fishery for many years. This current smear campaign against the only Board Member in the history of the Board of Fisheries with any ties to the Chignik Region is just the latest example.

With respect to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's ties to Chignik, I also wish to address the classless accusations made by UFA against my family. I am the "first cousin" UFA refers to in its attack. I have submitted proposals to the Board of Fisheries for over 20 years. The proposals I submitted in 2019 for the Kodiak meeting that was held in 2020 were done so with zero knowledge that my cousin would be appointed to the Board of Fisheries.

UFA's claim that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort "encouraged her Uncle" (my Father, Aloys Kopun) to "transfer his Chignik salmon permit" so she would not have a conflict of interest at the Kodiak meeting is false. My Father is 75 years old, has not actively fished salmon since 2001, and he hasn't owned a boat since 2012. My Father had promised to give his permit (a very common practice in true fishing families) to his oldest grandson (my oldest son) after he turned 16 and showed continued commitment to getting good grades and a willingness to attend college. My son turned 16 in June of 2019 and worked to keep his grades up that fall, and so my Father gave him his permit. My son just got accepted into Western Washington University and will be attending this fall, thus keeping up his side of the bargain. Despite what UFA would like you to believe, these plans were in motion long before Ms. Carlson-Van Dort was appointed to the Board of Fish.

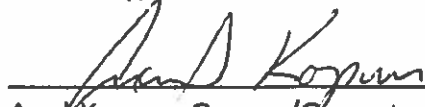
Another claim made against Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is that some Chignik fishermen are shareholders of Far West, Inc. This is true. What does that matter? There are also shareholders of Far West, Inc. that live and fish in Kodiak. This is a lazy argument – and an irrelevant one, too, because Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is no longer President of Far West, Inc. On multiple occasions – at the urging of members of your committee and UFA, no less, the Alaska Department of Law reviewed Marit Carlson-Van Dort's ethics disclosures and continually determined she was fully compliant with the Executive Branch Ethics Act and did not have an impermissible conflict of interest with any of the regulatory proposals that she participated in reviewing and adopting during her time on the Board. Should you question that outcome, I suggest you speak directly with the Department of Law.

Any life-long Native Alaskan resident has relatives all over the State. Is UFA saying life-long, Native Alaskan residents shouldn't be allowed to serve on the Board of Fish? Or is it that only the Board Members that will do their bidding should be allowed on the Board?

I have been attending Board of Fish meetings since 1998. I have seen every kind of Board Member over that span. Many took their duties seriously. Some did not. My whole livelihood and the very existence of my hometown depends on fishing. In many aspects then, my livelihood and the health of my community is dependent on the Board of Fish Members that you appoint. All I can ask for is a Board made up of intelligent people who understand the impact their decisions have on the various stakeholders, who understand the responsibility that comes with their position on the Board, who are willing to look at the proposals that come before them with an open mind, and who can think for themselves and want to take care of the fish – because if you take care of the fish, everything else will fall in line. Marit Carlson-Van Dort is one of those people.

In my opinion, developed over 23 years of observation and often intense interaction with a multitude of Board of Fish members, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is an asset to the Board of Fish. You should confirm her reappointment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Axel Kopun', is written over a horizontal line.

Axel Kopun, Owner/Operator F/V Mylia Lynn



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to elaborate upon Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's voting record as a member of the Board of Fisheries (BOF) during the 2019-2020 Board cycle. I am going to compare her voting record to UFA endorsed appointee John Jensen, and Kodiak endorsed Gerad Godfrey for sake of comparison. In addition to the two meetings I attended in person, I went to the BOF website and listened to the recordings of the meetings and read the materials related to the meetings I did not attend. This information is readily available on the BOF website.

That cycle saw the Board have 4 major meetings – 1) Lower Cook Inlet Finfish on Dec. 10-13, 2019. 2) Kodiak Finfish on Jan. 11-14, 2020. 3) Upper Cook Inlet Finfish on Feb. 7-19, 2020, and 4) Statewide King and Tanner Crab and Supplemental Issues on March 8-11, 2020.

At the Lower Cook Inlet Finfish meeting, the Board took action on 35 proposals. **Marit Carlson Van-Dort voted the exact same as UFA endorsed John Jensen on 34 of those 35 proposals. The only proposal they voted differently on was a subsistence proposal.** The proposal was submitted by the Seldovia Village Tribe asking for a regulatory change to allow greater opportunity for tribal members to harvest salmon for subsistence. **Ms. Carlson-Van Dort voted in favor of the proposal, John Jensen and Gerad Godfrey voted against it. The proposal was passed by a 4-3 vote.**

At the Kodiak Finfish meeting, the Board took action on 23 proposals. **Marit Carlson-Van Dort vote the exact same as UFA endorsed John Jensen on 19 of those 23 proposals. One of the proposals they differed on was the proposal that modified the outdated Cape Igvak interception fishery. Another was a proposal that modified the outdated Kodiak Mainland fishery to protect Cook Inlet sockeye. These are the two proposals that have UFA, Kodiak and Area M fishermen so angry.** Another proposal she voted differently from John Jensen on was a herring fishery proposal that allowed seiners to fish before gillnetters in Kodiak's herring fishery. **Gerad Godfrey voted with Ms. Carlson-Van Dort in passing this proposal.** The final proposal that Jensen and Carlson-Van Dort differed on was a proposal that created a new sport fishery for King Salmon on the Dog Salmon River on Kodiak Island. **Ironically, given UFA's claims, Ms. Carlson**


Van-Dort was the only Board Member that voted in opposition of this proposal to expand sport fishing opportunity in Kodiak.

At the Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting, the Board took action on 114 proposals. **Carlson-Van Dort voted differently than UFA endorsed Mr. Jensen on a total of 11 proposals at that meeting. Of those 11 proposals she differed on from Jensen, there were 4 proposals that she and Godfrey voted the same way on. So, to summarize, Ms. Carlson Van-Dort voted differently from UFA endorsed John Jensen / Kodiak approved Gerad Godfrey on a total of 7 of 114 proposals at the Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting. Not all of those votes she differed on can simply be categorized as sport fishing over commercial fishing.**

At the Statewide King and Tanner Crab and Supplemental Issues meeting, The Board took action on 33 proposals. **Of the 31 proposals that UFA endorsed John Jensen was eligible to vote on, Ms. Carlson Van-Dort voted the exact same as Mr. Jensen on 29 of those 31 proposals, including in favor of 1 Chignik proposal as well as against 1 Chignik proposal (both results were unanimous).** Of the two proposals they disagreed on, both were proposals submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. One requested the Board and public consider adopting an ANS for subsistence findings for crab stocks in the Cook Inlet Area outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Non-subsistence Area since there are ANS amounts for the other shellfish stocks but not for the crab stocks. Mr. Jensen was the only Board Member in opposition to this proposal. The second proposal called for a new, updated Bering Sea Tanner crab harvest strategy used to set annual harvest limits. Mr. Jensen and Mr. Godfrey both opposed this proposal.

In summary, during the 2019-2020 BOF cycle, the Board took action on 205 proposals. Of that total, Ms. Carlson Van-Dort voted differently than Mr. Jensen a grand total of 18 times, or roughly just under 9% of the time. Or to put it another way – **Ms. Carlson-Van Dort voted the same as UFA endorsed, long-standing Board Member John Jensen over 91% of the time in her year on the Board. Quite simply, her voting record does not support being called a “biased, closed-minded, sportfish advocate” by UFA or any other party.**

Sincerely,


Axel Kopun, Owner/Operator, F/V Mylia Lynn

To Whom It May Concern:

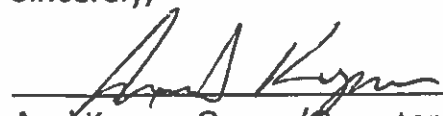
This email below showed up in my inbox yesterday. Obviously there is some disagreement in the UFA ranks if a life-long Chignik fishermen and Alaskan Native like myself, who has never been a part of UFA, gets an email like this sent to me.

Obviously UFA is working closely with Representative Stutes in their smear campaign against Board of Fish appointee Marit Carlson-Van Dort. While I have been told this is nothing out of the ordinary for a Legislator to work closely with a special interest group, I find it unethical that a Legislator will actively request and promote disingenuous information being distributed throughout the Alaska Legislature in what amounts to a personal vendetta against a Board of Fish appointee because they had the "audacity" to vote in favor of two proposals that did not favor Kodiak salmon fishermen.

The unfounded accusations and mis-information being bandied about, led by a disgruntled cabal of UFA members from Kodiak still upset by 2 proposals passed by the Board of Fish in January 2020, are simply an attempt to drum up opposition to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's re-appointment to the Board by relying on the knowledge that many Legislators are not very knowledgeable with Alaska's various fisheries and the internal conflicts that swirl within them.

The fact that this approach has been promoted by a member of the Alaska Legislature is very troubling to me. I hate to see the continued politicization of fisheries management because that does not help properly take care of the fish, which are ultimately the foundation upon which everything else is built. As a commercial fisherman and subsistence user unable to harvest any fish to sell and also unable to get my usual subsistence fish due to disastrous salmon runs I know this all too well.

Sincerely,



Axel Kopun, Owner/Operator, F/V Mylia Lynn

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Frances Leach <director@ufa-fish.org>

Date: Fri, Apr 9, 2021 at 9:58 AM

Subject: BOARD: Board Action Needed!

To: <usag.alaska@gmail.com>

April 9, 2021



Board Action Needed

Board,

At our February meeting, the Board unanimously voted to oppose Marit Carlson-Van Dort with abstentions from 8 organizations. To date, the legislators are saying they have only received two letters of opposition to Carlson Van-Dort (UFA and ATA). I've been lobbying legislators hard this week and will continue to do so, but they are all telling me the same thing: They are only receiving letters of support for the nominees.

The power UFA carries in the capitol building can only go so far. The success or failure of BOF nominees depends on grass roots effort. I've sent Action Alerts to our mailing list (2270 subscribers) and provided folks with talking points, email address and contact information for legislators, and call-in information for tomorrow's hearing. Currently, KRSA is running an email campaign and bombarding legislator's inboxes with letters of support. We must do the same. We also must call in tomorrow for public testimony and be on the record in opposition. I have been in daily contact with Stutes' office, and they are growing frustrated that we are not showing up in numbers.

Marit is calling legislators and denying everything UFA has called her out on. Israel Payton has been making calls as well, saying UFA's letter is not truthful. I can't stress enough how important it is for our board and member groups to get involved. You need to call legislators, write letters and call into public testimony- otherwise, this is a battle we will not win.

Hearing Information:

On **Saturday, April 10** at 1:00 PM, there will be a (H) Fisheries & Resources Joint Meeting and they will be considering BOF nominees. UFA is opposing Marit Carlson Van-Dort and we encourage our member groups to send in letters opposing her confirmation. Letters may be e-mailed to:

housefisheries@akleg.gov and houserresources@akleg.gov

We also are encouraging UFA members to call in to testify in opposition of her confirmation.

To listen in or testify through the following numbers - call & ask for the specific committee hearing:

- From Anchorage based phones call 907-563-9085;
- From Juneau based phones or outside Alaska call 907-586-9085;
- From other areas of Alaska, call toll-free 844-586-9085

...and ask for the specific hearing.

[UFA Letter of Opposition Carlson-Van Dort](#)



[Talking Points Opposition Carlson- Van Dort](#)

United Fishermen of Alaska | PO Box 20229, Juneau, AK 99802

[Unsubscribe usag.alaska@gmail.com](mailto:usag.alaska@gmail.com)

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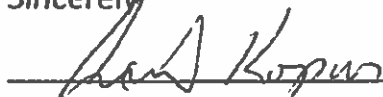
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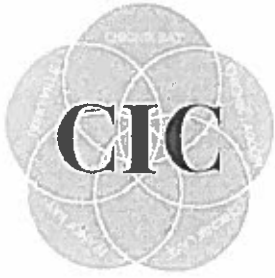
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Sincerely,



Axel Kopun, Owner/Operator, F/V Mylia Lynn



CHIGNIK INTERTRIBAL COALITION
127 AIRPORT ROAD
CHIGNIK LAGOON, ALASKA 99563

April 13, 2021

Senate Resources Committee

senate.resources@akleg.gov

Subject: SENATE RESOURCES CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Dear Members of the Senate Resources Committee:

This letter comes at a time while our tribes are experiencing the shock of losing our income and security of knowing we can feed our families. Since 2017, our people have experienced repeated fishing disasters. Unless you have lived through this, its difficult to describe the depth and breadth of this loss.

The Chignik Intertribal Coalition represents the tribes of Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, Ivanof Bay and Perryville. We write to ask you to reappoint Marit Carlson-Van Dort to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

We believe she brings a highly effective balance in weighing decisions on the Board of Fisheries during this critical time for the future of the small sockeye and Chinook salmon returns to Area L.

Contrary to recent accusations, the Alaska Department of Law reviewed Marit Carlson-Van Dort's ethics disclosures and determined that she is fully compliant with the Executive Branch Ethics Act.

Marit has, in fact, listened to all interests and impacts of proposals upon all interests, including subsistence, sport, and commercial fish stakeholders. She has in fact, demonstrated weighing scientific evidence provided by the Department of Fish & Game and oral/written testimony provided by the public.

Our communities have few resources to protect the future sockeye and Chinook runs to Area L and we believe that the Legislature should consider all community concerns. Marit Carlson-Van Dort comes from our people and we are proud of her background in commercial fishing. We are proud of her background in conservation biology and fisheries science and how she applies this science as a Board Member. This is something we encourage the Legislature to weigh in her favor as you consider her reappointment.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Respectfully,

George Anderson

Chignik Intertribal Coalition, President

Dear members of the Senate Resources Committee:

The City of Chignik would like to express its support for the appointment of Märit Carlson-Van Dort to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

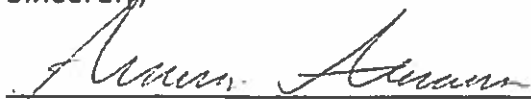
Since her appointment to the Board in 2019, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has repeatedly demonstrated her ability to weigh all sides of the many complex issues that come before the Board and make well-reasoned yet difficult decisions required of diligent Board Members. A life-long, native Alaskan, her background in resources management and commercial fishing combined with her academic training in conservation biology and fisheries science equips her with a wealth of knowledge and expertise and the ability to think critically and weigh important information that is essential and sorely needed on the Board of Fisheries.

There has never been anyone with ties to the Chignik region appointed to the Board of Fisheries prior to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's appointment, and as such important knowledge of the unique issues and aspects of the Chignik fishery and region has not been represented at the Board level like the other areas of the State.

Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has been an excellent member of the Board. You should confirm her reappointment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Andrew Anderson", is written over a horizontal line.

Andrew Anderson, Mayor, City of Chignik