

RCL69

March 20, 2013

Alaska Board of Fisheries
Boards Support Section
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
P.O. Box 115526-5526

Chairman Johnstone;

Please consider the magnitude of you decisions today on the lives of many commercial setnet families within Cook Inlet.

August 16, 2012, Juneau, Alaska - Governor Sean Parnell today urged Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank to declare a fishery disaster for the Chinook salmon fisheries in the Cook Inlet area.

“Upper Cook Inlet salmon fisheries were severely restricted and even closed for much of the season in order to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement,” said Governor Parnell. “These fisheries are economic drivers for the local and regional economy, providing direct and indirect jobs, income to families, bringing in tens of thousands of visitors, and supporting local businesses. Alaskans suffered substantial losses as a direct result of the decline of the Chinook salmon runs.

“I cannot overstate the importance of fisheries to the economy of the Upper Cook Inlet region. Throughout this area, impacts are being felt by commercial fishermen, sport guides, fish processors, and those who sell fuel, tackle, supplies, groceries, and lodging. Local governments will feel the impact of lost revenue to their economic base. The Upper Cook Inlet salmon fisheries affected by the decline of the Chinook salmon runs are crucial to the economic vitality of the region and the well-being of Alaskans”.

September 13, 2012, Unalaska, Alaska – Governor Sean Parnell today welcomed the news that Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank accepted his recommendation for a disaster declaration due to a commercial fishery failure on Alaska's Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and in Cook Inlet due to low Chinook salmon returns during the 2012 fishing season

“I appreciate Secretary Blank’s recognition of the severity of this situation for our coastal and river-system communities, and for the many families and businesses who rely on our Chinook salmon resources,” Governor Parnell said. “My administration has worked closely with our Congressional delegation, which is already aggressively pursuing an appropriation to ensure our communities and fleets get needed assistance.”

Today, Cook Inlet fishing families are still awaiting relief. We realize that no particular forms of relief will “make us whole” again, rather we are seeking a simple consideration from our State, entities such as this board, to administer guidance on how we can minimize the chances of this devastating calamity of ever happening again.

Department representative Mr. Clark mentioned in his presentation that fisheries managers were seeking a “balance”. A scale of justification that weighs the dramatic negative effects of having an intense fishery complicated without having clear goals and objectives. The ADF&G has worked extremely hard in the last few months to devise an interim escapement goal that will provide sustainability and yet offer opportunity to harvest surplus salmon for the betterment and the relief of the south-central community as a whole.

We urge you to consider that the current, scientifically defensible, peer reviewed data that supports a sustainable escapement goal of between 15,000 to 30,000 king salmon for the late run Kenai River king. This is the new, refined target range that the department did not have available in 2012. 5 AAC 21.359 needs to be updated to reflect that goal. On or after the 21st of July “needs to be implemented” to bring about consistency and a sense of predictability for all resource stakeholders. Onerous closure language needs to be extracted from the plan, it is redundant and is already stated within the duty and authority of the Commissioner.

In essence, we wholeheartedly urge the board to seek the “balance” by improving the current flawed plan by simplifying the language allowing the department to continue to manage the fishery in season and to be able to adjust to nature’s variables in an immediate manner.

Thank you,

Paul A. Shadura II

Representing The South K-Beach Independent Fishermen’s Association (SOKI)

Department representative Mr. Clark mentioned in his presentation that fisheries managers were seeking a “balance”. A scale of justification that weighs the dramatic negative effects of having an intense fishery complicated without having clear goals and objectives. The ADF&G has worked extremely hard in the last few months to devise an interim escapement goal that will provide sustainability and yet offer opportunity to harvest surplus salmon for the betterment and the relief of the south-central community as a whole.

We urge you to consider that the current, scientifically defensible, peer reviewed data that supports a sustainable escapement goal of between 15,000 to 30,000 king salmon for the late run Kenai River king. This is the new, refined target range that the department did not have available in 2012. 5 AAC 21.359 needs to be updated to reflect that goal. On or after the 21st of July “needs to be implemented” to bring about consistency and a sense of predictability for all resource stakeholders. Onerous closure language needs to be extracted from the plan, it is redundant and is already stated within the duty and authority of the Commissioner.

In essence, we wholeheartedly urge the board to seek the “balance” by improving the current flawed plan by simplifying the language allowing the department to continue to manage the fishery in season and to be able to adjust to nature’s variables in an immediate manner.

Thank you,

Paul A. Shadura II

Representing The South K-Beach Independent Fishermen’s Association (SOKI)