

Hello, my name is Wes Humbyrd.

I've fished Cook Inlet since 1966 and have been an Alaska resident since 1971.

It always seems to me like the guys who produce all the propaganda get the the rights to all the fish, and it's been propaganda and lies that the politicians in the MatSu Valley and commercial sport fish groups on the Kenai River have used against the commercial fishermen. It's always the commercial fishermen's fault when something happens to the fish. Just look at the Early Run of Kings in the Kenai River. These Early Run Kings should be considered as a Stock of Concern.

In the 48 years I've been fishing Cook Inlet, the last two years were the worst management of the fishery I have ever seen. It was a complete disaster.

We over-escaped both the Kenai and the Kasilof, to the tune of about 12 million dollars of lost revenue that could have enhanced the Kenai Peninsula economy.

It was a huge, unnecessary loss to all parties, and terrible management of a resource.

I called the head of Comm fish in Juneau on the cellphone around July 8<sup>th</sup> and told him that based on my experience and years fishing the Inlet, fishermen were starting to see a pretty good movement of sockeye into the Inlet with a few silvers mixed. The test boat was seeing the same thing.

I also told him that it looked like it's going to be a strong silver year and there should be no problem getting his silver escapement.

Then, on July 25<sup>th</sup>, with the streams overflowing with silvers, he put us in Area 1, supposedly to conserve silvers, and the fleet harvested 37,000 silvers. We would not have caught these silvers had the fleet been able to target sockeyes in the northern part of the Inlet.

The price of silvers that time of year is about a quarter of what we get for sockeye. We would have much rather been catching sockeyes.

The real problem is that as of 2010, ADF&G has identified 135 lakes, rivers and streams in the MatSu basin as pike infested. Many additional tributaries are still at risk in those watersheds around the Inlet.

This is a consequence of ADF&G managing Mat-Su pike as a sport fish instead of an invasive species for decades, against the advice of their own biologists.

Without a multi-year and multi-million dollar plan for suppressing and eradicating the pike, the salmon will never, ever have a chance to recover, no matter how many salmon are put in those streams. We're just feeding the pike.

The Mat-Su Borough and the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Sportsmen's Committee printed 5 pages of recommendations of what to do about returning salmon runs and escapement into the Susitna rivers and lakes, and not once did they mention pike.

Beaver dams got only one brief mention.

They don't want to take care of the problem that's in their own back yard.

So maybe it's time for the people in the Mat-Su to press the politicians for funding to eradicate the pike instead of playing the same old Blame Game on the drift fleet.

Another thing, we cannot manage what the Mat-Su people call a Conservation Corridor; the fishermen's name for it is an Allocation Corridor.

The Allocation Corridor does not work, and it results in the over-escapement of sockeye in the Kenai River and lost economic opportunity.

Not only that, but genetic studies have shown that we catch more Mat-Su sockeyes in the corridor than when the fleet is spread out Inlet-wide.

The salmon in Cook Inlet travel up the middle of the Inlet. Some of them peel off and go straight to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, but up to 50% go up north and out of our district, and then turn around at Boulder Point and head south again. The Northern District setnetters can have as much as 50% of their catch made up of Kenai sockeye.

We've tried for years and years to catch the fish as they come back down the beach toward the rivers. It can't be done.

Some people on this board say: "Let 'em fish like they do in Bristol Bay." Well, in Bristol Bay, they fish up the rivers. Do you want gillnetters drifting down the Kenai River?

They also fish right inside the setnet sites when the setnetters are not fishing. They lay their nets between all the setnet buoys and harvest that fish when they're moving through.

We aren't allowed to do that in Cook Inlet.

So I hope this board has enough energy and biological understanding that this Allocation Corridor they're trying to put us in is not going to work.

The way this fishery was managed this year cost the Kenai Peninsula and the State millions and millions of dollars because we could not harvest the fish in the middle of the Inlet.

I thought I would never have to say this... but we would have been better off with Federal oversight. We might have been able to harvest the surplus of salmon if we had been able to fish some Inlet-wide Openings.

We could not have done any worse.

Thank you for your time.

I will be here during committee time.

If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.