

12/3/14

RC # 31

### **Proposal 3: Unfinished public testimony of George Covell**

I submitted Proposal 3 to help reduce the costs associated with subsistence fishing within the Copper River District.

If adopted, this proposal would allow a fisherman who already has a 150 fathom net aboard to use just 50 fathoms of that net when engaged in subsistence fishing. The 50 fathom unit of gear would have to be clearly marked in a manner consistent with other gillnet marking requirements so as to facilitate DPS enforcement.

When we get a rare subsistence opener under the present regulations or even under those in Proposal 1, a commercial fisherman wishing to harvest subsistence fish must run back to town, swap nets (150fa for a 50fa) and run back to the district.

Depending where the fishing opportunity is best, a round trip like this can cost up to 4 or 5 hundred dollars. If the subsistence fishery were predictable, a fisherman might be able to pre-position a subsistence net on a tender but that is no guarantee as tenders have limited space and schedules to keep.

Some have argued that this proposal would tempt fishermen to deploy more than 50 fathoms and result in increased harvest. This argument misses the power of our modest bag limit and the degree of control it imposes on the fishery. It would be another matter entirely if we had the bag limits of the Glennallen Subdistrict. Our reality is, that when the fishing is good, subsistence fishermen often don't deploy the full 50 fathoms of gear and sometimes have to get it out of the water as quickly as possible – one of the reasons we team up with several subsistence permit holders aboard.

In conclusion, this proposal purposely borrows language from existing regulations regarding gillnet marking so that we don't unintentionally complicate the fishery enforcement challenge. I have talked to DPS and asked for their suggestions on marking requirements that would meet their needs. Hopefully, suitable regulatory language can be agreed upon at this meeting.