

RC 214

February 7, 2014

Board Support Section  
Alaska Department of Fish & Game  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Dear Chairman Johnstone and Board Members,

Although I address you today individually, as a member the Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee I have been approached by several of my Valley neighbors about the lack of salmon in the Valley rivers and streams. This group provided the following information, (please find attached):

**Attachment A:** ADF&G Estimates of Southcentral Alaska Sport freshwater Sea-run Chinook salmon harvest, 2003-2012: *Highlighted:* Susitna River Drainages

**Attachment B:** ADF&G Estimates of Southcentral sport freshwater Sea-run Coho Salmon, 2003-2012. *Highlighted:* Susitna River Drainages

**Attachment C:** ADF&G Estimated number of angler-days fished in Southcentral Alaska by area, 2003-2012. *Highlighted:* Susitna River Drainages

A quick perusal of these charts indicates that Chinook salmon harvest has decreased from a high in 2003 of 25,534 to a low of 2,785 in 2012. Likewise, Coho salmon has decreased from a high in 2006 of 45,738 to a low of 17,063 in 2012. Finally, in attachment C, angler-days fished have decreased from 187,300 in 2004 to a low of 96,601 in 2012.

The board has been provided with testimony by members of the commercial fishing industry that indicates weak salmon runs in the Mat-Su Valley are due to habitat issues, specifically failure of culverts, and predator fish populations.

I would like to point out that the Valley residents are accustomed to a high quality of life, especially in wild land settings. We are proud of efforts by the Matanuska Susitna Borough that has spent in excess of \$ 7,000,000 to replace or install culverts in drainages that contain resident species of salmon.

Furthermore, the Valley community holds in high regard organizations like the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Partnership. A bottom-up locally driven partnership that, through collaborative efforts with many other local groups, state, and federal agencies, businesses, land owners and other non-profits has raised funds to preserve fish habitat, work to protect wetlands, and educate the community "as a whole" on salmon conservation.

Lastly, loss of patronage from sport fishing related businesses in the local economy has been substantial. Recreational spending, a local driver for guides, sporting goods suppliers,

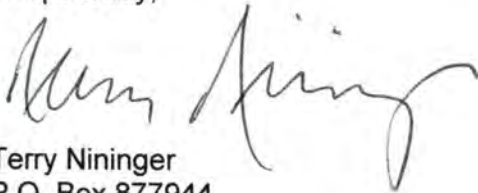
restaurants & lodges that accommodate the sport fishing crowd are suffering immensely. Some businesses are up for sale, others have already closed their doors.

It is our opinion that failure of salmon runs in the Mat-Su Valley has little to do with habitat issues. We believe that the fish are not being allowed to return to the area because of commercial interests out in Cook Inlet. We feel that the current plan for the driftnet fishery does not insure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern District drainages, and further, does not allow sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to catch salmon here in the Valley.

More importantly, putting angler concerns aside, if salmon are not allowed to populate the Valley rivers then there is no spawning activity and thus no future salmon population.

Thanks to efforts by the Mat-Su Borough and groups like the Salmon Partnership folks now have a heightened awareness of the salmon dilemma. We are strongly looking for resolution to these issues and sincerely hope that the Board of Fisheries will take a hard look at commercial fishing interests that are impacting the Valley lifestyle and local businesses.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Terry Nininger".

Terry Nininger  
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Alaska Department of Fish and Game

**Estimates of Southcentral Alaska sport freshwater Sea-run Chinook salmon harvest, 2003-2012.**

SOUTHCENTRAL	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
(J) North Gulf Coast/Prince William Sound	51	245	229	206	80	42	205	139	51	32
(K) Knik Arm	2,549	2,543	3,665	3,787	4,294	2,813	2,152	1,057	1,012	292
(L) Anchorage	3,626	3,102	4,221	3,133	2,740	2,555	884	1,130	600	113
* (M) Susitna River drainage	24,534	24,192	24,632	24,864	20,341	13,426	8,368	8,894	8,701	2,785
(N) West Cook Inlet drainages	1,124	782	546	1,038	1,380	437	829	854	76	0
(PF) Kenai Peninsula freshwater	25,472	26,383	30,066	26,265	26,461	23,397	15,637	14,136	15,089	2,226
(Q) Kodiak	1,007	1,476	1,020	1,488	625	58	81	1,232	1,435	382
(R) Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands	3,020	4,029	2,880	3,655	2,256	2,071	2,790	2,041	2,906	2,687
(S) Kvichak River drainage	577	1,213	1,440	1,132	1,075	988	300	418	1,427	917
(T) Nushagak, Wood River and Togiak	6,868	8,421	9,444	8,688	11,315	7,644	7,171	4,514	6,529	6,804
Southcentral Total	68,828	72,386	78,143	74,256	70,567	53,431	38,417	34,415	37,826	16,238





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**Estimates of Southcentral Alaska sport freshwater Sea-run Coho salmon harvest, 2003-2012.**

SOUTHCENTRAL	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
(J) North Gulf Coast/Prince William Sound	17,371	17,041	11,353	6,478	8,864	8,782	16,357	17,158	16,408	16,392
(K) Knik Arm	24,514	34,298	26,802	39,843	27,682	35,847	37,271	26,208	8,484	5,014
(L) Anchorage	12,934	13,304	14,590	19,643	9,777	17,996	10,598	4,451	7,350	4,141
* (M) Susitna River drainage	34,657	38,269	36,223	45,738	30,261	41,708	31,193	30,327	21,806	17,063
(N) West Cook Inlet drainages	14,239	15,769	12,313	11,940	12,580	14,673	9,801	9,030	6,292	7,813
(PF) Kenai Peninsula freshwater	70,303	91,636	70,365	59,262	53,739	70,757	67,220	65,631	55,632	49,050
(Q) Kodiak	12,451	17,346	16,897	16,568	13,564	13,415	14,962	11,105	14,634	9,949
(R) Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands	10,853	11,639	8,363	8,583	8,486	11,808	11,656	9,895	6,824	7,808
(S) Kvichak River drainage	1,418	2,782	2,088	2,246	1,316	2,490	1,921	2,086	2,517	2,381
(T) Nushagak, Wood River and Togiak	5,033	6,800	5,028	5,819	6,121	10,495	6,070	4,321	6,086	8,332
Southcentral Total	203,773	248,884	204,022	216,120	172,390	227,971	207,049	180,212	146,033	127,943



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**Estimated number of angler-days fished in Southcentral Alaska by area, 2003-2012.**

SOUTHCENTRAL	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
(J) North Gulf Coast/Prince William Sound	241,527	280,213	265,673	251,048	318,595	262,336	268,736	235,772	238,423	194,166
(K) Knik Arm	103,061	113,528	115,763	119,795	120,681	136,572	122,299	106,281	66,684	58,673
(L) Anchorage	104,004	101,943	101,041	103,800	91,881	111,121	79,743	61,704	48,187	45,407
(M) Susitna River drainage	188,621	187,300	169,556	172,717	174,049	148,738	140,201	122,235	104,065	96,601
(N) West Cook Inlet drainages	16,470	14,880	16,108	15,771	19,705	16,627	13,752	12,780	10,088	10,682
(P) Kenai Peninsula/Cook Inlet	702,110	792,538	818,329	732,675	837,812	741,636	704,201	663,197	676,552	669,715
(Q) Kodiak	88,837	94,138	115,728	95,224	111,210	102,039	96,952	81,459	84,429	85,406
(R) Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands	34,371	52,842	34,882	38,354	48,185	39,738	42,319	38,932	36,201	35,974
(S) Kvichak River drainage	24,203	26,278	26,452	32,209	33,684	29,475	23,748	25,703	25,297	21,885
(T) Nushagak, Wood River and Togiak	40,987	46,011	49,078	44,259	43,550	34,638	30,394	23,429	37,024	33,754
Southcentral Total	1,544,191	1,709,671	1,712,610	1,605,852	1,799,352	1,622,920	1,522,345	1,371,492	1,326,950	1,252,263