

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE KURT OLSON

- Chair: Labor and Commerce
- Vice Chair: Rules
- Member: Resources, Community & Regional Affairs,
Economic Development Trade & Tourism,
Fisheries, Legislative Budget & Audit

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Official Business

February 11, 2014

The Honorable Governor Sean Parnell
Alaska State Capitol Building
Third Floor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell,

I am deeply concerned by the proposal adopted by the Board of Fisheries regarding late-run king salmon escapement goals on the Kenai River. The decision by the Board seemed rash. The inconsistency in the voting by the board members further served to confuse and confound user-groups. I believe that the time period for public process and consideration of comments and concerns made by stakeholders and the general public was insufficient to adequately address concerns and interests; especially given the unpredictability of member votes. The accepted proposal appears to be a de-facto stripping of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's departmental discretion on the management of setnet gear and in-season restrictions. The department is unlikely to modify the Board's gear prescription or opening restrictions until after the escapement goal is met; which theoretically could take all season.

I would like to see additional data regarding the effects or effectiveness of smaller web size and shallower nets on king escapement. The study presented to the Board of Fish could hardly be considered comprehensive and does not convince me that such regulations, even coupled with shorter openings, would in fact serve the purpose of meeting escapement goals.

Email: rep.kurt.olson@akleg.gov

Paul Shadung
SOKI

The potential loss of hundreds of thousands of sockeye salmon could be a devastating blow to commercial fishermen, and is an undue burden on one user-group. Additionally, this opens up the prospect of overburdening current sockeye spawning grounds. This decision by the Board of Fisheries will also have impacts on life and safety issues on the Kenai Peninsula. Undue strain is forced upon local municipal resources as there is an attempt to manage the impacts of statewide pressure on the environment, local residents and limited-capacity infrastructure.

I, along with other Kenai Peninsula legislators, have long supported research and funding to study and preserve a sustainable fishery in Cook Inlet. While all Alaskans should be able to share in our bountiful fisheries, the Kenai Peninsula fishing community should not be punished for failures in the stewardship of Mat-Su salmon spawning streams and drainages.

The record-low predictions for king salmon runs on the Kenai River are upsetting. I am pleased that combating the problem is a priority to the state and stakeholders. However, targeting one user-group or region over another is a shortsighted and foolhardy approach. If comparable restrictions are not implemented on all user-groups, there are no assurances that chinooks able to bypass commercial nets will reach spawning grounds.

I would like to see justification by the Board that these new escapement goals are warranted and that the requirements for the public process were followed.

Sincerely,



Kurt Olson
Representative
House District 29

CC: Commissioner Cora Campbell, ADFG
Glenn Haight, Executive Director of Alaska Board of Fisheries
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Cathy Giessel
Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Paul Seaton
Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor Mike Navarre
Kenai Mayor Pat Porter
Soldotna Mayor Nels Anderson
Rick Koch, Kenai City Manager
Mark Dixon, Soldotna City Manager