

**CONCERNED AREA M FISHERMEN**  
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(907) 235-2631

Chairwoman Marit Carlson Van Dort, Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
P.O. 25526  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-5526

October 25, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Carlson-Van Dort and Board of Fisheries members:

Re: Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee Emergency Petition

Concerned Area M Fishermen (CAMF) opposes adoption of the emergency petition submitted by the Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee and recommends the Board to vote against this petition.

CAMF represents 115 salmon gillnet permit holders (about 75% of the active drift gillnet fleet) who fish the Alaska Peninsula. A significant portion of our membership lives on the Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak, and the coastal communities of the Alaska Peninsula. CAMF has been active in the Board process for over 30 years; and has contributed in part to the development of these current management plans. CAMF representatives also served on the Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Project (WASSIP) Advisory Panel from which much of the science on the western Alaska salmon fisheries was derived.

First, regarding the petition, the Board will have the ability to review current regulations at its regular Alaska Peninsula meeting in February 2023. Basic elements of this petition are already contained in proposals which have been previously submitted to the Board for consideration at this regulatory meeting. The petition seems moot for these reasons.

Second, CAMF believes a finding of emergency in this case would not be consistent with the Board's stated petition policy, as the petitioners have not demonstrated a conservation emergency, aside from making an unfounded assertion of such in the petition.

**5 AAC 96.625. JOINT BOARD PETITION POLICY**

(f) The Boards of Fisheries and Game recognize that in rare instances circumstances may require regulatory changes outside the process described in (b) - (d) of this section. It is the policy of the boards that a petition will be denied and not scheduled for hearing unless the problem outlined in the petition justifies a finding of emergency under AS 44.62.250(a). In accordance with state policy expressed in AS 44.62.270, emergencies will be held to a minimum and are rarely found to exist.

For the record, the petition includes numerous factually inaccurate statements:

• ***“Alaska Department of Fish & Game management has failed to limit the 24/7 intercept fishing in North Alaska Peninsula Area M”***. This statement is false. ADFG has always allowed harvest opportunity on the outside beach of the North Peninsula using weir counts and aerial surveys when escapement levels warrant openings. If escapement levels are below goals, the fishery is closed to allow additional escapement. In 2022 no fishing occurred in the Bear River, Three Hills, and a portion of the Ilnik Section in proximity of Ocean River until July 8th when the Bear River experienced large escapements. This closure effectively closed approximately 60 nautical miles of beach to the north of Nelson Lagoon. In addition, ADF&G had 2 60-hour closures of the entire North Peninsula, one from July 1st to 3rd and another from July 15th to 17th. Keep in mind there was adequate escapement in the Ilnik and Meshik systems at the time. The closures were an effort to pass sockeye to Nelson River. Unfortunately, ADF&G saw no large improvements in escapement in the Nelson River as a result of the closures.

• ***“is the fact that intercept fishing of Nelson Lagoon Salmon begins in June and continues throughout the salmon season nonstop in the North Alaska Peninsula of Area M. This has affected escapement goals of Chinook, Sockeye, and later season Chum and Coho salmon. Therefore, a conservative approach to management must be demanded throughout all salmon species migration.”***

Escapement goals have almost always been met, in fact Nelson River has met its escapement 49 of the last 50 years, the one exception was in 2011. There are no goals for chums, Chinook and Coho escapements have been met in recent years.

• ***“Increase in Mesh Depth from 45md to 70md and unrestricted mesh size, has enabled North Peninsula Area M fisherman to achieve 30,000lbs per day/boat. With over 150 drift permits fishing North Alaska Peninsula any given day, unbelievable harvests are achieved in a 24hr period.”*** The depth of nets has never been limited to 45 meshes in the Bear River, Three Hills, Ilnik, and OPH sections of the North Peninsula. Until the early 90s there were no depth restrictions, a 70-mesh depth restriction was implemented to 1991. At no time has there been a 30,000 lbs. average catch per boat per day in the entire history of the fishery.

The Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee has an extremely narrow view when it comes to harvesting the valuable resources that are present in the North Peninsula. As stated in the petition “in a perfect world, a complete shutdown of all fishing in Area M would be optimal for ensuring conservation of Nelson Lagoon salmon.” WASSIP results showed that a very high percentage of the Nelson River reporting Stock return to Nelson Lagoon. 86% in 2006, 86% in 2007, and 96%

in 2008 sockeye returned to Nelson Lagoon and either harvested inside the Lagoon or counted as escapement. See figure 1.

A complete shutdown or a severely limited fishery would cripple the Area M drift fleet and processors. Without a viable North Peninsula fishery, it would be extremely doubtful a processor would be able to operate in the area. Nelson Lagoon would likely have no one to process salmon harvested there.

Finally, we urge the BOF to reject this narrow-minded petition and work to find reasonable ideas to help the Nelson Lagoon community.

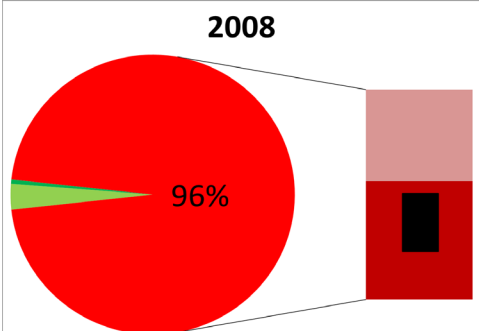
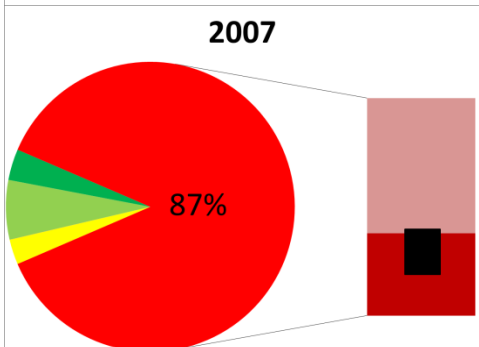
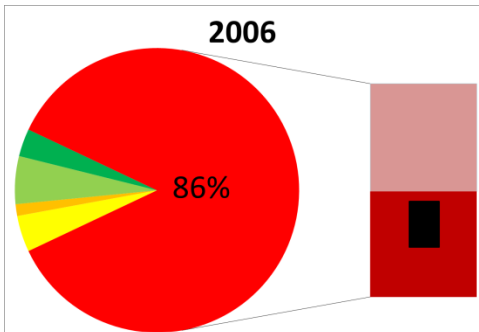
Sincerely,

Steve Brown, President  
35717 Walkabout Rd.  
Homer, AK 99603

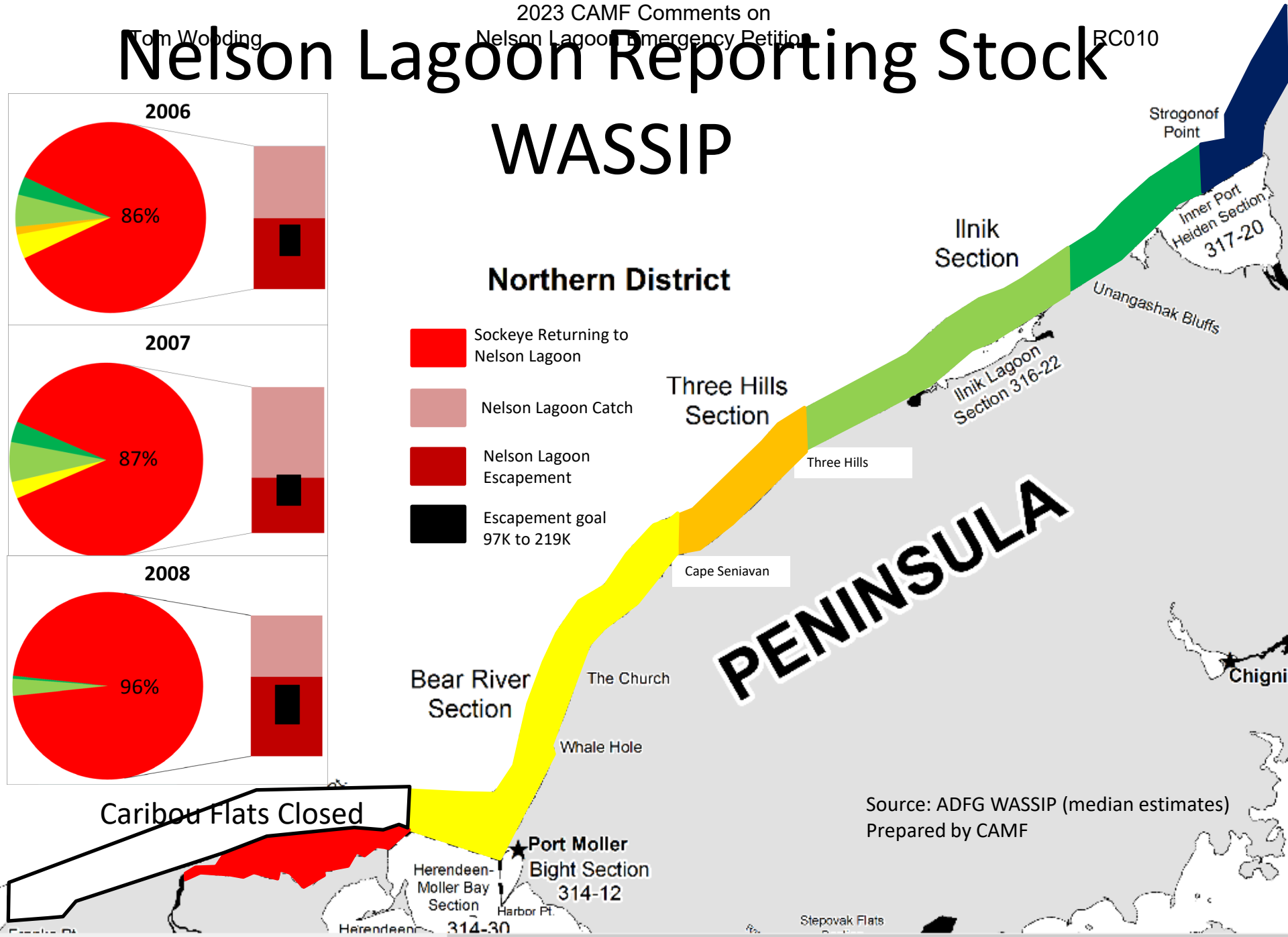
# Nelson Lagoon Reporting Stock

## WASSIP

### Northern District



- Sockeye Returning to Nelson Lagoon
- Nelson Lagoon Catch
- Nelson Lagoon Escapement
- Escapement goal 97K to 219K



Source: ADFG WASSIP (median estimates)  
Prepared by CAMF