Ahtna Incorporated
Customary and Traditional Use Committee
10/12/2023

Ahtna Incorporated supports ACR#8. We believe this request meets the criteria for a conservation concern based on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game daily management objectives for the Miles Lake sonar. These numbers are based on historical run-timing to achieve the in-river goal. In the last four years, a daily management objective has not been reached until an average of June 3rd. During this time, when the management goals have yet to be met inriver, the commercial fishery has done well in Prince William Sound.

The Ahtna people and residents of the Copper River Basin have noticed that salmon have been returning later than normal, and this could potentially be due to climate change. There is noticeable change in the Copper River flow patterns and temperature that directly affect salmon health and populations. These changing environmental factors result in smaller salmon size, increased stress, diseases, and pre-spawn mortality. All these factors contribute to further jeopardizing the Copper River Basin ecosystem, subsistence, and economy.

Salmon were genetically sampled on their spawning grounds to classify unique stocks and then compared to commercially caught salmon in Prince William Sound for in-season management purposes. We are anxious to see the results of this study as we believe it will validate our indigenous knowledge that the Upper Copper River stock is the first stock to enter the river therefore being disproportionately affected by the commercial fishery. The changes in run timing and the commercial harvest have greatly impacted the people who rely on this harvest to feed not only themselves and their families, but other community members.

There has also been an increase in subsistence and personal use fishermen from other regions because of the poor or lack of fishing and their inability to participate in fisheries on the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers.

We believe that this is a conservation concern that needs to be addressed.