

Testimony of Duncan Fields
Alaska Board of Fisheries
Kodiak Meeting January 7-10, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board:

My name is Duncan Fields. I have fished commercially in the Kodiak area for more than 50 years. In addition to actively fishing each summer, I professionally represent several Kodiak Island villages and their small boat fishermen on fishery issues. Many of the proposals being considered by the Board here in Kodiak impact me personally or will impact the interests of Kodiak's village fishermen.

34,000 Chinook caught in Kodiak's 2013 directed salmon fishery is about twice the 10 year average and raises some questions --- especially since Chinook stocks across the Gulf of Alaska are at a low ebb and our local Karluk stock is listed as a stock of concern. First, and most frustrating, is that we do not know the stock of origin for any of the Chinook caught in the Kodiak salmon fishery much less the proportionality of each stock. However, based on catch timing, distribution, fish size and maturity we can make some informed guesses that most of Kodiak's commercial catch consists of Canadian and West Coast Hatchery released Chinook rather than local Alaska stocks. This assumption correlates with an uptick in both charter trolling success and trawl Chinook bycatch in 2013 (see _____) while Alaska Chinook returns remain low. In the absence of better information, it's important for the Board of Fisheries to proceed cautiously regarding whether or not the Kodiak commercial salmon fishery needs further Chinook based regulation.

The NMFS at the direction of the NPFMC is in the second year of collecting genetic stock identification samples through an approved sampling protocol for trawl Chinook bycatch in the pollock pelagic (mid water) trawl fishery. Past sampling has indicated high percentages of non-local stocks in the GOA trawl fishery. However past sample methods could not move beyond presence or absence of Chinook stocks. The new sampling methodology indicating preliminary

stock assessments as well as proportionality should be available by late 2014. After seeing this information, if concerns remain, I would encourage the Board of Fisheries, in conjunction with the Department, to develop parallel genetic stock identification sampling protocol for Gulf of Alaska salmon fisheries.

A similar information gap relates to proposals 92, 93 & 94 --- the proposals associated with the Cape Igvak fishery. There is no credible information identifying the percentage of Chignik bound sockeye caught in the Cape Igvak section of the Kodiak District. As the Kodiak Advisory Committee indicated, genetic stock identification efforts should be undertaken before the Board considers allocation changes --- either directly or through fishery accounting as these proposals suggest.

Taking action on proposals 88, 89 and 90, regarding the Alitak area fishery would disrupt a fisheries management balance established over at least 5 board cycles. Old Harbor fishermen, who fish extensively in the area, generally favor the status quo. However, if the management plan is opened up, they believe additional issues should be on the table as well. Regarding proposal 91, Old Harbor believes it may be appropriate for the Board to consider small management adjustments to increase Upper Station escapement.

Each Board cycle has a theme or themes that develop in the intervening 3 years. One theme for this meeting is the decline of sockeye production in the Karluk River and, given recent fry counts, a bleak outlook for Karluk over the next several years. Karluk production drives fishing opportunities for the entire west side of the island, actually all the way from Spruce Island to Ayakulik. It's hard to overstate the importance of the Karluk fishery for Kodiak salmon fishermen. The West Side District, managed primarily on Karluk stocks, encompasses just over ½ of Kodiak setnet permits and much of the seine effort. Proposals 95 by Chris Berns and 96 that I submitted directly address equity issues that develop when Karluk sockeye runs are weak. I encourage the Board to see both proposals as occasional tools to address equity concerns.

Village fishermen as well as other small boat fishermen remain concerned about hard on bottom trawling in state waters. We believe the Board should adopt proposal 102 prohibiting non-

pelagic trawling in State waters. First, it's good State conservation policy, as reflected by past Board of Fishery decision, to protect near shore habitat. Second, the section on the west side of Kodiak Island that remains open to hard on bottom trawling was kept open in 1999 primarily to allow for a "small trawler" rockfish fishery. With the rockfish fishery now rationalized, the area is no longer needed and catches show that very little rockfish is harvested in the area. Third, there is comparatively little economic dependence on fishing in the area and catches of sole and skate and flounder can easily be obtained outside of State waters. Fourth, the near shore area may have tanner crab populations (see Department note) as well as halibut that are impacted by hard on bottom trawling --- the halibut bycatch in this area in April, may impact sport charter halibut availability in Uyak and Uganik bays early each season. And fifth, moving hard on bottom trawling out of this area reduces gear conflict with pot and longline codfish fishermen. It's time to complete Kodiak Area State waters closures for hard on bottom trawl gear and adopt proposal 102.

I want to mention four proposals in closing. First, there is strong support in the rural communities for proposal 100, the rockfish daily bag limit proposal, as amended by the Kodiak Advisory committee. Second, fishermen in Ouzinkie and Port Lions strongly support proposal 99, the setnet permit stacking proposal. Third, Village seine fishermen do not support proposal 98; use of a second seine permit to increase seine length. And fourth, I submitted proposal 97, the adverse weather proposal, because I think it represents progressive fisheries management. When folks object to this type of management approach, I'm reminded of when no one wore life jackets in the 60s or later when fishermen were slow to accept and use survival suits---- consequently, how many lives were lost? Why not manage fisheries accounting for the weather rather than working against it and, perhaps, save lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.