

**Testimony of Howard Delo for UCI BOF meeting in Anchorage
January 31 – February 13, 2014**

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and board members for allowing me to speak. I also want to thank you all for your time and efforts involved in sitting on this board. I've "been there and done that," and know the commitments and sacrifices you all have made to do this necessary and usually thankless work.

In the department's comments on proposal 103 on page 1 of RC 2, they state: "This proposal would also prioritize achieving the lower end of all escapement goals over exceeding the upper end of any escapement goal. Although it is not stated in regulation, the department has been consistent and clear that achieving the lower end of an escapement goal has the priority over exceeding the upper end of the escapement goals. Regulatory text that would be added under the third element of this proposal is unnecessary and provides no additional clarity to the department for fishery management." I beg to differ!

In 2008, I was a member of this board. At the Upper Cook Inlet meeting that year, the department specifically asked for the authority to go outside a management plan to meet escapement goals affected by that plan. ADF&G had EO authority to restrict fishing in Cook Inlet, but did not have authority to expand fishing beyond the management plan sideboards. By granting this requested authority, the department would have total flexibility in managing to meet escapements. With a minimum of significant discussion, the board unanimously voted that authority to the department.

About a year or so later, former Deputy Commissioner David Bedford called me to discuss some other issues. This topic came up and I asked why the department was making no efforts to curtail commercial fishing when runs were weak. Mr. Bedford's immediate response was that the department only intended to use this authority to add additional commercial fishing time when strong runs threatened to overflow the upper end of an escapement goal. He said this authority did not apply toward curtailing commercial fishing time when runs were weak.

My understanding from the discussion of this topic during the 2008 board meeting was that granting this authority to the department would create a two-edged sword – allowing extra fishing time in strong run years and reduced time in weak run years. Mr. Bedford strongly disagreed with my position.

I later polled the three remaining board members (plus myself) from the 2008 meeting as to what they understood granting that authority to the department meant. To a person, they all responded that the department was to reduce time, outside the management plan

if necessary, in weak run years to make escapements and could extend commercial fishing time beyond the management plan specifications in strong run years. That made four-for-four in the understanding of how the authority was to be used.

Placing this prioritization in regulation would very definitely clarify how the department is to manage our Cook Inlet stocks.

A final thought, if you will permit. In the January, 2014 issue of the online magazine ADF&G publishes, there is an article about the history of Upper Cook Inlet salmon fisheries. One of the main reasons Alaskans wanted statehood was to take over the management of salmon fisheries devastated by federal management practices. Let me quote from the article: "The plan to restore the salmon runs in Cook Inlet and other areas of the state was simple. The first step was to fill river systems to the brim with spawning salmon. The best way to increase the number of fish seemed to be to stop killing them. Andy Anderson, the Department's first commissioner, was quoted as saying to his biologists, '*Gentlemen, the governor has instructed me to return the salmon runs to their former abundance regardless of the pain that is inflicted on the people. I'm charging each one of you to make sure every stream in your district is filled to the maximum spawning capability. Now, if you allow an over-escapement, depriving the fishermen of their livelihood, you can expect to be criticized. But on a personal level, gentlemen, I want you to understand that if you allow an under-escapement, you can expect to be fired.*'"

We are facing similar issues regarding our salmon runs in the Northern District at this time.

I would like to be involved in the committee process.

Thank you.