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Re: Comments on Upper Cook Inlet Proposals and Suggestions for a Working Management Plan for Central and Northern Districts of Cook Inlet

Dear Chairman and Board Members,

As a former 49-year resident and current drift fisherman with 17 years of experience drifting in the central district of Upper Cook Inlet, I believe I have some very valuable insight to help solve the multiple fisheries management issues in Upper Cook Inlet.

A bit of my background I believe is warranted. I was asked by Governor Hickel to be a member of the prestigious Board you all now serve on. I declined because of frequent travel with my work and family. I was the person who brought to the boards attention the serious Pike problem that faces the Northern District approximately 20 years ago. I also visited the former manager of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial fisheries, Paul Ruesch, at least a dozen times to learn run timing and statistical information during the salmon runs for approximately 12 years.

I used that knowledge with my hands on experience and proposed the "Area 1" fishery that is now used to conserve Northern District stocks, though it was 4-6 years after I stopped fishing and being involved in the BOF process in 1996 that it was finally implemented. I stopped fishing because of my father's death in 1996 and took over his real estate business, which I still run. I returned to drift fishing last year because it is something my son wanted to do.

I want to start by saying I strongly support proposal 135 in extending the expanded Kasilof Section westward 1.2 nautical miles at its SW corner. I would like to add to this proposal that that line be extended from the proposed SW corner of the Kasilof subsection to point 5 nautical miles offshore and .25 nautical mile north of the drilling rig located near Stariski. During the first full inlet closure between July 9<sup>th</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup> this gives more opportunity for the drift fleet to harvest Sockeye salmon that are many times are still south of Ninilchik before the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> of July. This does not increase the interception of salmon heading to the Northern District.

I also strongly support Proposal 127, which allows one person to own and operate two permits from one vessel. This is a no brainer in my opinion as it reduces the amount of gear in the water and makes management decisions easier with fewer consequences if a management mistake is made. No manager can ever be perfect in this complicated and controversial fishery.

I oppose proposal 136 as written as I believe the drift fleet does play an interception role of Northern District salmon. With this said the current management plan that states July 16<sup>th</sup> – July 31<sup>st</sup> is the time frame for large interception rates for Coho salmon is wrong. Interception of any numbers of Coho does not occur until sometime between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of July depending on the run timing. Knowing this first hand, there is a solution to many problems that also face the Late-King run into the Kenai River. The Drift fleet should be used as the tool to manage escapement of sockeye and allow more king salmon into the Kenai River. Instead of using set-nets as the prime escapement management tool, the drift fleet should be used to do so. Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of July the drift fleet should be used at least 3 times a week or possibly every day or every other during peak concentrations of sockeye in "Area 1." This should easily manage sockeye escapement into the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. On large return years the drift fleet could fish every day between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> in Area 1 and still have a very minimal affect on the king return and manage escapement well. During this peak time between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> when the drift fleet is not fishing in "Area 1" it should be fishing in the expanded Kasilof and Kenai sections.

This management concept accomplishes three things. First it creates a more steady and predictable escapement into both rivers and eliminates the boom or bust escapement days each river faces when the set-netters are fishing as well. It provides an abundance of fish into each river that keeps all user groups happy, except of course the set-netters. Set-netters would given additional time when the escapement level reaches its mid point to prevent over escapement, as long as the minimum king escapement has been met. Second, it provides a better quality fish to go to market. Third, it meets the goals set forth in the Upper Cook Inlet and Late-Run King Salmon Management plans, and also still protects the Northern District stocks. It is a re-allocation plan that meets the needs of all users except the set-netters and I hope this board has what it takes to implement such a plan.

I also strongly support proposal 163 if amended to read a sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 700,000 – 1,100,000 fish. It should also be amended to read that if the top side of the SEG is exceeded in any year it will be managed for the lower end of the SEG the following year by allowing additional commercial fishing time and increased bag limits. Rivers cannot handle year after year of over escapement. The return numbers prove this. Zooplankton must be taken into consideration for the best returns possible.

I also strongly support the eradication of Pike by any means after the silvers have stopped running. Pike and the 400+ impassable culverts in the northern district are dramatically preventing the Coho run from rebounding. The drift fleet cannot be blamed for this and the poor returns because of this. It is possible Pike have moved south from the Susitna drainage into Theodore and Chuitna rivers.

Last there cannot be a Trophy fishery for King Salmon unless mid-escapement goals are met and no one should be allowed to hook more than one king a day.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak. Thank you