

William Faulkner – Public Testimony – 2/3/2014 – 2014 UCI BOF meeting

My name is William Faulkner. I am a full time resident of Clam Gulch, AK; a Kachemack Bay shellfish farmer; and a proud East Side Set Netter.

I'd like to step away from the more short sighted aspects of this process; and address a catalyst which I believe, to an extent, has been overlooked - that being, people, and the growing population of Alaska. The levels of pressure on our riparian habitat and fish stocks will; and in the case of the in-river commercial King fishery, already have, become unsustainable. Anchorage has exploded from a population of 3,000 to 300,000 in the last 75yrs. Where will we be in 50? Where will the line in the sand be drawn? When 100,000 dipnetters descend on the Kenai; 200,000? When do you tell Alaskans that fish, like game, has its limits? For the sports, personal use, and guide fisheries to become sustainable, as the commercial fishery already is; those limits must be set.

The Kenai River must be given relief. Habitat issues must be addressed immediately. In a sea of factors, known and unknown, this is one of the few places where we can effect change. Anyone truly concerned about the Kenai King must support; spawning ground protection, an easing of in-river pressure, and a reduction in motorized vessel traffic and pollution. I encourage the board to refer to their own management directive – prioritizing pristine salmon spawning, rearing, and migratory habitat; not real estate prices on the Kenai River.

A return to un-biased biological management is crucial. ADF&G already has tools to manage our fishery. They only need to be free to do so. Windows set in stone, and paired restrictions only serve to cripple effective management, and further political fighting.

The most endangered species in Cook Inlet is the commercial fisherman; the families that settled the Kenai Peninsula; and a \$350 million a year fishery. As commercial fisherman we have been vilified, demonized and face a never ending battle for our public image, our homes, livelihoods, and the very fabric of our culture and community. These issues go way beyond what is in our freezer, or the size of the mount on our wall.

I do not support any proposals which seek to alter or restrict set net gear, until they are based on true science; not a 1 year study with unproven feasibility or the inadequate sampling of a handful of fishermen. I highly support the diversification of fishing areas to offer ADF&G an additional surgical management tool and any and all scientific exploration aimed at reducing the king harvest of the ESSN.

I'd like to thank the Board for the opportunity to speak and sincerely hope that this 2014 session will be remembered as a turning point for fishery policy in the Cook Inlet drainage from politics to science.

Sincerely,

William Faulkner

