

RC 32

**Public Testimony
Board of Fish
December 2014**

I. Introduction:

Good Evening Chairman Johnstone and members of the Board of Fisheries. My name is Michael Bowen. I currently reside in Anchorage.

I have been involved with PWS/CR commercial fisheries for over the last 45 years. I started fishing with my father at age 8 and over the years I have participated in most fisheries in PWS and in other areas of Alaska.

I have served as co-chairman of the CR/PWS Fish & Game advisory committee and I have been a PWSAC board member for the last 13 years representing drift gillnet interests. My comments today are my own.

On proposals 11 and 12

The PWS drift fleet has been waiting for a fair enhanced salmon allocation plan for 25 years and we are still not there. Some people will say that the current plan is working and do not make any changes to it.

Information provided by ADF&G in their comments and presentations on the PWS allocation plan are inaccurate. If there was as they claim "Balanced concessions negotiated by each gear group" then why did CDFU gillnet division spend over \$100,000.00 to sue the dept and the Bof in 2006?

Leaving VFDA enhance salmon out of the current plan results in the PWS seine fleet harvesting over 70% of the total value of the enhanced salmon resource in Area E. All the hatcheries in PWS were built with State of Alaska public funds. VFDA's annual Pink and Coho salmon value to the seine fleet is over 16 million. VFDA is currently set to receive more funds from the state of Alaska to facilitate an increase in pink production that will widen the enhanced salmon gap even more. The current plan is not working when in 2013 the seine fishery harvests the largest pink return in history at over 80 million pinks and then is allowed to fish the drift gillnet piggybank at Port Chalmers the following year in 2014.

How does anyone justify giving one commercial user group over 70% of this publicly funded resource?

The original plan adopted in 1990 called for the use of historic catch values prior to enhance salmon production, which was 50% drift gillnet, 49% seine and 1% set gillnet. This is the same rational that was adopted by the SE plan in 1994 except it was for all enhanced salmon only.

In SE there are 17 hatcheries which consist of two regional hatchery associations, five private non profits corporations and two federal hatcheries. All of these hatcheries are included in the SE enhanced salmon allocation plan. Not one of these hatcheries has been excluded for the exclusive benefit of one commercial user group. It would never fly in SE and it should not fly here in PWS.

The current allocation plan really has nothing to offer the drift fleet as far as a safety net.

The chums that were remote released at Port Chalmers starting in the mid 1990s were our chums to begin with from the Wally Noerenberg hatchery. So if the seine fleet catches on average 55% or more of PWSAC value the drift fleet gets to catch its own fish at Port Chalmers. If seine fleet catches on average under 45% of PWSAC value they get to harvest all chums produced by PWSAC at Port Chalmers and the Wally Noerenberg hatchery. VFDA needs to be added to the plan.

Adding VFDA's value to the allocation plan will not result in any major changes to what has and is going now in our fishery. Assigned fishing districts and allocation percentages would remain the same. Even with VFDA out of the current plan the drift fleet has fished Port Chalmers 7 out of the last 9 years, they will fish there in 2015 and will probably fish there for several more years. Adding VFDA's value will make the current plan fair.

A lot has changed since 2005. PWSAC has increased its pink production, the seine fleet now experiences pinks prices that have quadrupled and record pink returns. Now is the time to include all enhanced salmon into the management plan

On **proposal 17** allowing the use of mono gillnet web. I would like offer the option for the board to defer action on proposal 17 until the SE BoF meeting in Sitka in February. The same proposal number 210 for SE drift fisheries is on the agenda for that meeting. I also would request that if proposal 17 is adopted that it be put in effect in 2016 as most gear for 2015 has already been ordered. I am currently on the fence for supporting this proposal and was hoping to see more public comments on this proposal at this meeting.

Thank you very much for all of your hard work and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.