

Whittier Boat Owners Association
P.O. Box 230572
Anchorage, AK 99523

Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game
Board of Fisheries
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

March 6, 2016

RE: Proposal 203

Board of Fisheries Members,

The Whittier Boat Owners Association opposes Proposal 203.

On February 17th, during our regularly scheduled meeting, Proposal 203 was brought before the membership. Members voted **unanimously** to oppose Proposal 203. Whittier Boat Owners Association has existed since 1974. Members include recreational, charter and commercial boat owners who primarily boat out of Whittier.

We would also like to state the Whittier Fish and Game Advisory Committee held a meeting on February 13th, 2016 and voted unanimously to oppose Proposal 203. Reasons we oppose this proposal include:

- If harvest of cost recovery and common stock salmon are managed correctly there should be no reason for emergency closures. Brood stocks are a small fraction of the returns and sport fishermen harvest is even less (Main Bay).
- Emergency orders should be used to manage natural run stocks, not artificial hatchery stocks. There is no biological emergency if an artificial stock is diminished.
- As Prop 203 is written, hatcheries would be able to harvest 10's of thousands of salmon for cost recovery while sport fishing is closed. Sport harvest is too small of a fraction of the total hatchery returns in Prince William Sound for this to be an economical issue for PWSAC
- In Prince William Sound, annual commercial harvest of sockeye salmon averages more than 1 million fish per year. Main Bay hatchery harvests average more than 800,000 sockeye per year. Average sport harvest of sockeye salmon throughout all of Prince William Sound averages less than 10,000 fish per year. Sport fishermen are not the problem.

WBOA members believe the main purpose of this proposal is more of an ongoing attempt by PWSAC to restrict sport fisherman in Main Bay.

For years WBOA members, and likely many other sport fishermen, were told by Main Bay Hatchery staff that they can't fish inside the seine barrier even though this was false information. Sport fisherman can't fish within 300 feet of the fish ladder, but until recently there was no regulation preventing sport fishing inside the seine barrier.

PWSAC installed an unauthorized rope barrier outside of the seine barrier to keep sport fishermen away from the net, and the fish. Sport fishermen eventually resorted in calling the Alaska State Troopers to get the rope barrier removed.

After that happened, PWSAC worked with Fish and Game to create a new regulation that prevents fishing from boats within 60 feet seaward of the seine barrier and from boats within the seine barrier.

WBOA sees Proposal 203 as yet another attempt to restrict sport fishermen from the Main Bay sockeye salmon.

WBOA acknowledges there is a need to protect brood stock. WBOA acknowledges there are user conflicts at Main Bay. WBOA rejects Proposal 203 as a legitimate method of resolving either of those issues. WBOA believes the best method to resolve Main Bay issues is for PWSAC, Fish and Game, and commercial fishermen sit down with sport fishermen to mutually work out a plan that reduces user conflicts, protects brood stock and provides reasonable access for sport fisherman.

Sincerely,



David Lofland
Vice President, WBOA