

Testimony of Paul Dale, President of the Alaska Salmon Alliance to the Alaska Board of Fisheries

PO Box 586, Kenai, AK 99611

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Board members and staff members: My name is Paul Dale, my wife and I own and operate Snug Harbor Seafoods in Kenai. As president of the Alaska Salmon Alliance, I wish to incorporate Alaska Salmon Alliance comments in RC2 as part of my testimony.

My comments will be a brief review of significant events since the last UCI board meeting, and what I believe they might mean for your consideration of proposals and options you have before you. Far and away, the biggest deal was the setnet ban ballot initiative brought to us all by KRSA. Built on a foundation of deceit, arrogance, and selfishness, it will long serve as the low water mark for a user group's tendency to disrespect other groups as they strive to improve their allocations of an area's salmon resources. The effort was immediately opposed by every Peninsula city, the Kenai Borough, and municipal organizations. It certainly precipitated a chilling of any meaningful dialogue between user groups. I know it has for me personally and for the Alaska Salmon Alliance. Still, I firmly believe that dialogue between users is a necessary component for the development of better and more effective conservation and more reasonable allocations of Cook Inlet salmon.

I bring up this history, because the same group also brought a suite of prescriptive measures and paired restrictions to our management plans. In my opinion, these are not working nearly as well as many hoped. Worse, I feel we are experiencing climate driven changes in our fisheries, resulting in less accurate forecasting, missing age classes, and some really distressed looking fish. This is a time when we need to be nimble, ready to make quick and meaningful decisions to make the best of what is available. I am in favor of reevaluating these prescriptive measures with an eye toward the unintended consequences they seem to have caused. Chronic over escapements, foregone harvests, confounded adaptive management, missed opportunities to fish on abundance, these are their legacy. At a time when all Alaskans need to pull together to make ends meet, this is no way to run a significant regional economy.

At our last meeting, the only real open discussion of policy was on barbless hooks, and it was quite fun, and a pleasure to watch. Opinions flying, people adjusting their positions in reaction to each other. My hope is that we might engage in more of it.

Lastly, we need to figure out how to sponsor and pay for assessments that might inform better allocative decision making. An example would be the 29 mesh regulations despite the passage of 3 years, I am not aware of any work to establish the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness of its use.

Commercial fishing is an honorable and respected livelihood on the Kenai Peninsula, and throughout our State. Its economic contributions are well known, its community and cultural values just as important. You have an obligation for its care, and even to nurture it as might be possible.

We all appreciate your service, and look forward to your careful consideration of changes required to host an every improving utilization of our Cook Inlet salmon resources. Thank you