

To: Alaska Board of Fish  
Meeting in Valdez, Alaska  
December 1, 2017

RC 016

RE: Proposals 42, 43, 44, and 45

My name is Mike Spaetgens. I have owned an Eshamy District set net permit for 18 years. I oppose proposals 42, 43, 44, and 45. These proposals are re-allocative, will create more gear conflict and chaos than we have now, safety will be a problem, and enforcement will be difficult and costly for troopers.

There are 537 drift permits and 29 set net permits in Prince William Sound. There are 100-200 drifters in the Eshamy District during the season. Drifters have Copper River, Coghill, and sometimes Port Chalmers Districts, where we set netters have only Eshamy District to fish. Our Eshamy sites are traditional shore lease fishery sites and have been for almost 50 years.

Now in regards to proposal 45, drifters want to limit set net permit holders to 4 sites ready to fish with lines and buoys. Due to Coghill wild escapement concerns, Main Bay sub-district was limited to two 24-hour openings per week this year. Crafton Island sub-district was only open for two 12-hour openings. During the previous 8 years, we had two 48-hour openings per week. These longer openings spread out the drift and set net fleet over the whole district. This summer the set net fishermen in the Crafton Island sub-district had to pull their nets after 12 hours and move into Main Bay subdistrict for the final 12 hours. This caused more sets to be deployed in Main Bay and waters became even more crowded. With Crafton Island closed after 12 hours, an additional 10 + set net permits moved into Main Bay for the remaining 12 hours. How could they fish without having lines and buoys previously set in place?

Other set net areas in Alaska do not limit the number of sets that our fishermen are allowed. Proposals have been made to limit number of sets for set net fishermen at 3 prior Board of Fish meetings since 2000, and each time, they have been rejected. Troopers do not have the time or resources to enforce such a proposal.

There has been a suggestion to use sinking anchor lines, but this will not work for set net fishermen. Without raised lines and buoys in place, drifters would set over sunken lines and would stop us from setting our shore lease sites until they decide to move. That could take awhile.

There is plenty of open area in Main Bay and the rest of the District for drifters to fish. The Alternating Gear Zone (AGZ) next to the hatchery in Main Bay is open to drifters on alternating openings with set netters. When the AGZ is open to set netters, almost all set net gear is in the AGZ, leaving the rest of the bay open to drifters with little set net gear in the way.