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Ron Somerville Testimony

Alaska Board of Fish Meeting

Sitka, Alaska

January 10 – January 23, 2018

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Ron Somerville and I am testifying on my behalf and as a member of the Territorial Sportsmen Board of Directors located in Juneau.

We are here because we are deeply concerned about the precipitous decline in our king salmon stocks. We are also concerned that the policies of the Board and the Department are contributing to that decline or are not adequately taking the conservation steps necessary to reverse this trend.

The purpose of my testimony is to place several questions before this Board.

- If the present king salmon crisis in northern SE is not a conservation crisis, at what point will the Board consider it a regulatory crisis?
- If the staff and the Board cannot guarantee any possible harvestable surplus why is a directed or indirect fishery be allowed on any of the depressed stocks?
- Except for terminal harvest areas how can you possibly authorize the retention of king salmon in waters inside the

surf line in northern SE during late winter, spring or early summer?

- How can the Board authorize fishing on stocks where the allowed harvests are all coming out of the escapement? There is “no” harvestable surplus.

The action plan presented by the Department provides numerous political options. It encourages this Board to avoid their responsibilities and delegate all decisions to the Department. This does take the pressure off the Board but it subjects our king salmon stocks and management strategies to political manipulations.

There is only one realistic option available to initiate a successful recovery strategy. The Board should close all fisheries that have traditionally taken Taku, Chilkat or King Salmon River stocks until there are several years where stocks have reached or exceeded their escapement goals. This should be similar to the actions taken during the 1980’s recovery effort for the Taku stocks. The Board can authorize closely monitored openings by the Department under strict conditions set by the Board.

We fully realize that the commercial fleet is dealing with complex mixed stocks. In some cases, the continued directed harvest of other stocks could continue if monitored closely by the Department and one key element is included – prohibiting

the retention of king salmon caught in these fisheries. This regulatory requirement is essential to assure that all users comply with efforts to provide maximum protection for king salmon stocks during critical migratory periods in late winter, spring and early summer.

Attachment #1 is included here to illustrate the management results over the last 11 years. The entire Taku king salmon harvest came exclusively out of the escapement.

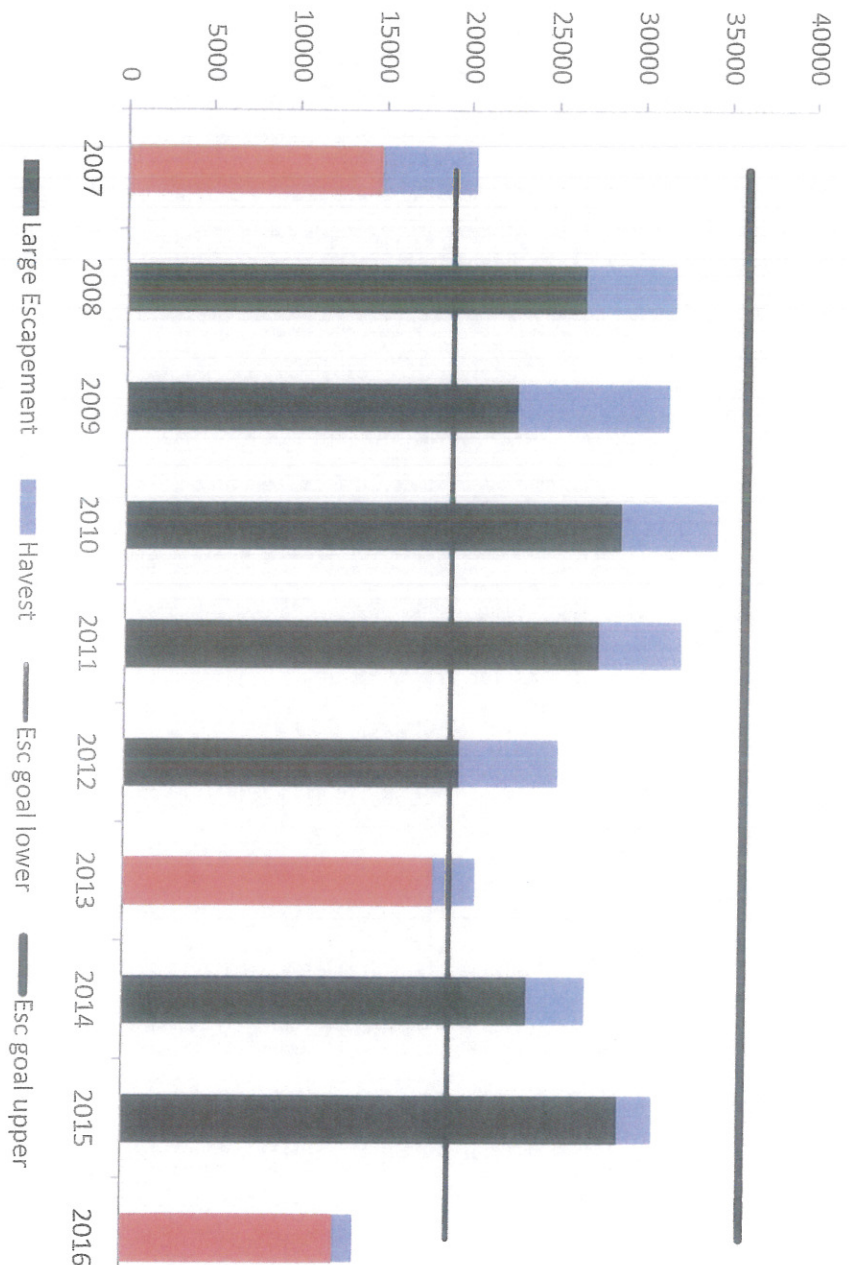
Included is attachment #2 which clearly illustrates where Taku and Chilkat River Chinook stocks are caught by the troll fleet. Obviously, just closing water or restricting fishing around Juneau and Lynn Canal does not provide the protection required to encourage the recovery of these stocks.

Based on the king salmon regulatory actions of the Department in 2017 and the continued decline of local stocks, it is apparent that further sport fishing restrictions will be considered. Since, according to ADF&G data, the sport harvest was 34 Taku kings in 2017 and the commercial fleet harvested 1030 Taku kings the same year, it is obvious that the greatest threat to these stocks is the continued harvest by the commercial fleet. The Board and the Department must find a way to severely limit these harvests.

Relating to the options presented by the Department, we strongly recommend that the Board approve option C for the commercial fleet whether or not additional reductions are directed at the sport fishery.

ATTACHMENT #1

Taku Chinook Salmon Escapement and U.S. Harvest (large)



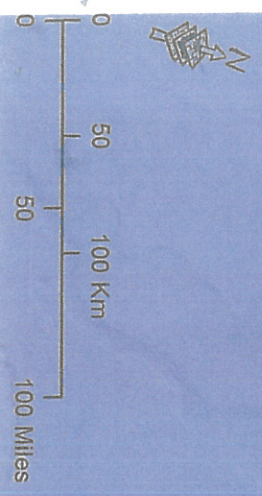
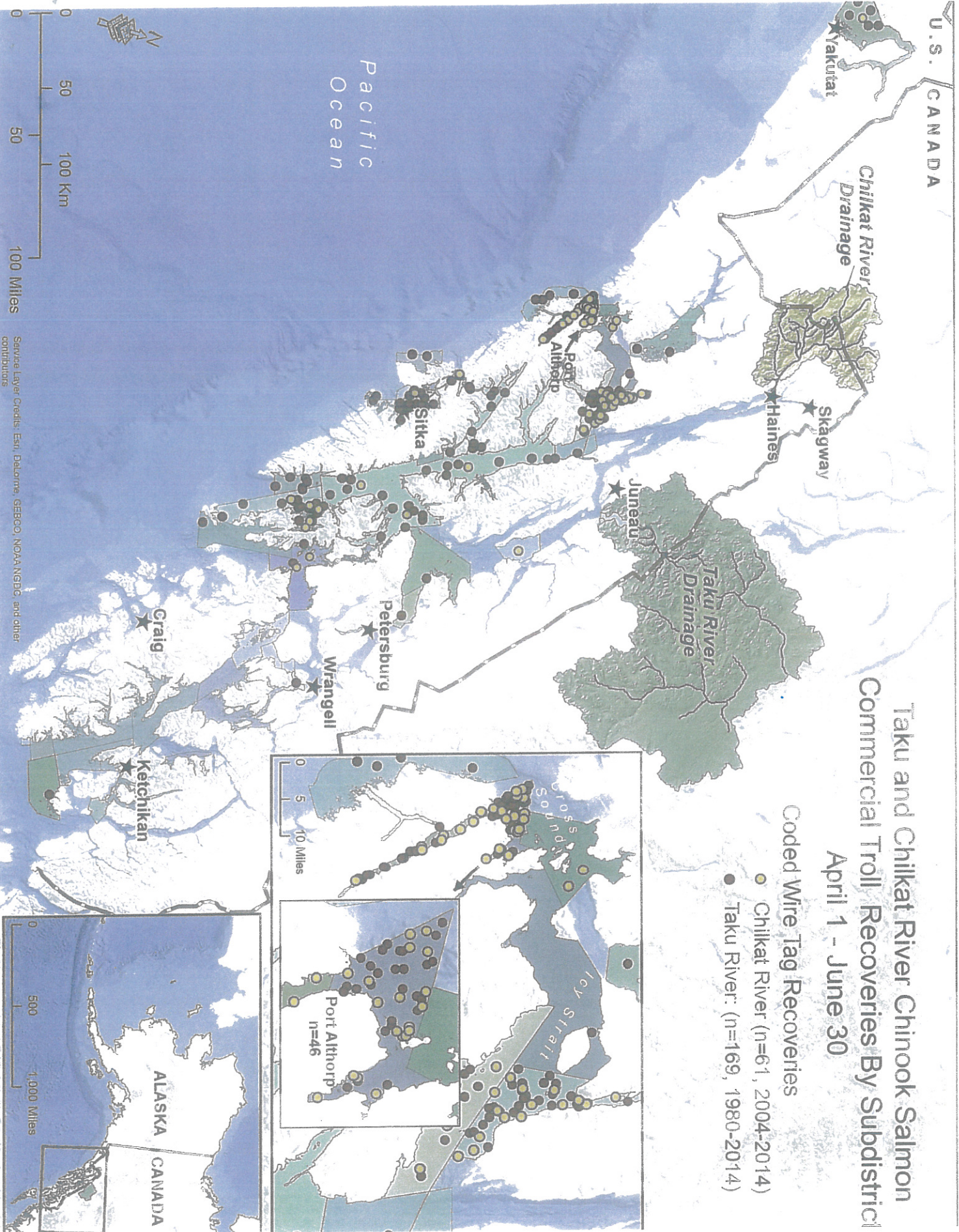
2017
2018
FORECAST

ATTACHMENT #2

Taku and Chilkat River Chinook Salmon Commercial Troll Recoveries By Subdistrict April 1 - June 30

Coded Wire Tag Recoveries

- Chilkat River (n=61, 2004-2014)
- Taku River: (n=169, 1980-2014)



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