

RC094

Alaska Board of Fisheries
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January 13, 2018

Dear Chairman Jensen and Alaska Board of Fisheries members,

My name is Dalton Bergman and I am a lifelong Alaska resident. I have lived in Sitka since I was six years old and currently still reside in Sitka with my wife and two young children. I have been gillnetting for eight seasons and have owned and operated my own vessel, Mae Lou, for the past six seasons. I primarily participate in the Deep Inlet terminal harvest fishery as well as District 15 and 11 drift gillnet fisheries.

Current proposals that call for changes to the Deep Inlet terminal harvest rotation will absolutely devastate my current ability to sustain my current fishing operation. Gillnetters, like myself, fishing out of Sitka depend on the Deep Inlet enhanced salmon as our only local opportunity to catch salmon, enhanced or wild. Limiting my (our) ability to access fish, by further restricting the number of days for gillnetters in the Deep Inlet schedule, would impose great financial burden to my family, and the families of all gillnetters in Sitka.

By having the opportunity to fish close to home allows me to call Sitka home, by cutting my fishing time in half could cause me to relocate in order to be profitable. Lost fishing time by gillnetters would have an economic impact on the city of Sitka with decreased money being contributed to the community by local fisherman and visiting fisherman. The Sitka Advisory Committee to the Alaska Board of Fisheries voted not to support changes to the Deep Inlet rotation schedule. It is important to note that the Sitka Advisory Committee's vote to not to support changes to the harvest rotation schedule was passed unanimously with seine member support and no gillnet representation on the committee.

I recently finished a three-year term on the NSRAA board. Being a member of the NSRAA Board has provided valuable insight into the importance of managing the availability of salmon resources to all common property users. I have been able to learn about allocation issues, specifically the catch ranges in which gear groups are allocated to catch. I understand the seiners are out of their allocation range, however in 2017 seiners took 55% of the catch, while gillnetters took 20% in the Deep Inlet fishery. From my time spent on the NSRAA board, NSRAA is making efforts to correct allocation disparities with increased and new production. By changing the rotation schedule, NSRAA enhanced salmon would be primarily caught by one gear group based on catch percentages. Seining is a highly effective method to catch fish. Increased fishing time for seiners would disproportionately increase their catch in the Deep Inlet harvest with a negative impact on the economic sustainability of the Deep Inlet gillnetters.

I am a member of USAG and support the proposals they submitted (141, 154, 156, 157, 160, 169 and 170). I also support the on-comments USAG submitted about other proposals.

Thank you for considering this letter and the economic concerns of gillnetters,

Dalton Bergman