

RC315

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John Jensen, Chair
Alaska Board of Fish

RE: PROPOSAL 159 – This proposal seeks to prohibit the use of all aircraft used to locate salmon or direct commercial fishing operations during open commercial salmon fishing periods in Southeastern Alaska Area.

Chairman Jensen and members of the Board of Fisheries,

I am in support of Proposal 159.

- Would equalize or “level the playing field” of the fishing effort amongst the fleet
- Would make Alaska Wildlife Troopers more effective in capturing those that are fishing illegally.
- Would benefit ADF&G area biologist fishery management in ways of escapement and amount of fishing time and area allocation.

As a young fisherman, as well as, a first generation fisherman, it is very challenging to enter into a commercial fishery especially SE Purse Seine fishery. I have not had the resources and knowledge that comes with fishing operations and knowledge that are passed down through generations. I pride myself on being able to find fish on what I have learned. I do not use a spotter plane because I would rather trust my own intuitions of where to the fish. I also do not have the financial means to afford a spotter plane or aircraft. In past years there have been many instances where without spotter planes flying over my fishing spot, I would have had a great catch for the day. Spotter planes have many times negatively impacted me both financially, as well as, relations to those who use spotter planes. As a young fisherman who is trying to make her payments to the State of Alaska for a seine vessel and permit, each day of fishing makes a difference. The days that planes have flown over my productive set has financially made a negative impact.

On January 18, 2018 an article in the Alaska Dispatch News amongst other periodicals stated about Curtis Demmert on the Tlingit Lady who was caught fishing illegally in closed waters or “creek robbing”. There has been known fishermen who use aircraft as a look out when fishing illegally or notify fishermen when there is a school of fish in closed waters. Banning use of aircraft will reduce the amount of blatant illegal fishing in closed waters by having an aircraft aid in spotting fish in closed waters or if the presence of a AK Wildlife Trooper is in the vicinity. Alaska Wildlife Troopers agree;

“AWT supports this proposal. This proposal would promote safety by reducing conflict between spotter aircraft and aircraft used for enforcement and it would make enforcement more effective because aircraft would not be used to detect the presence of AWT.”

Prohibiting the use of spotter planes can be useful to area biologists when managing fishing opener areas and time limits. As an example spotter planes had put fishermen on streaks of fish out in the

middle of open waters that could not be detected from water level. Those fish were intercepted before getting to the streams and spawning grounds they have traditionally gone to. As well, as much as we hate to admit it, again fishing illegally in closed waters plays a part in management too. Biologists fly over waters and streams and see escapement and brood stock goals. If a fisherman fishes in closed waters where biologists have deemed it brood stock or are trying meet escapement goals, the illegal fisherman can wipe out that stock of fish. In response to that the biologist do not have the ability to meet escapement goals. Then in turn the biologist does not open an area of which the amount of time and days are reduced to the fleet as a whole. The fleet as a whole suffers, as well as, the escapement, trends, what the biologists are seeing of fish activity are skewed. In the article published January 18, 2018 goes to the point that because of fishing in closed waters the stocks may be damaged. A possible result is that of closing more areas surrounding streams and/or less fishing time to meet future escapement goals.

"Curtis Demmert, now 32 of Klawock, was fishing in Coco Harbor, on Dall Island to the west of Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska, according to the charging document and other court filings. It's an area that has been closed to commercial fishing for at least 29 years, a state biologist told wildlife troopers investigating the matter." "It will take years to determine whether Coco Harbor streams were in fact damaged, prosecutors said."

Spotter planes help assist in illegal activity but also place fishermen on fish in areas that traditionally fishermen wouldn't set their nets.

In closing I feel that prohibiting aircraft on fishing days would give fish a fair chance, level the field out for every fisherman especially the entry level fishermen, as well as keep those that are fishing illegally in check.

I support proposal 159.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Amy Schaub