

RC415

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Alaska Board of Fisheries
P.O. Box 116526
Juneau, Alaska 99811

fax'd to: 907 465-6094

Via email to: Glenn.Haight@alaska.gov
Lena.gilbertson@alaska.gov

Re: Proposed closure of subsistence fishing on the Chilkat River

Dear Chair and Board Members:

I speak to you as a subsistence fisherman. I rely on subsistence fishing in the Chilkat River. An important and primary resource I, and many family members and residents of Klukwan, rely upon is the Chilkat sockeye salmon. This reliance is for sustenance, spiritual, and cultural reasons. It has been relied upon by people in the Chilkat Indian Village for thousands of years. To prohibit us from providing for ourselves takes sustenance from our tables. This is also at the end of the long winter season when no fishing could be done as the salmon were not returning to spawn as yet. We look to May and June to start replenishing our food supplies for the coming seasons and coming winter. Neither I nor others target King Salmon while we are fishing for Sockeye.

You propose to shut down fishing in the Chilkat River in order to allow greater escapement of King Salmon. Your apparent worry is the potential by-catch of King Salmon by subsistence fishers in the Chilkat Indian Village. This proposal, as I understand, is to be effective until the 1st of August, 2018.

The goal of assuring that King Salmon continue to return to the Chilkat River is a good goal. That goal finds strong support in our community.

The King Salmon depletion is not a result of over harvesting by subsistence users in the Chilkat Indian Village. Our supply of King Salmon is diminished by over harvesting by fisheries being conducted way before the salmon get to Chilkat Inlet and Chilkat River. The salmon return through the lower Lynn Canal, Icy Straits and Chatham Straits. Fisheries that are authorized in those areas and in outside waters take the substantial majority of King Salmon long before they reach our local waters. I know you are aware of this. I don't know how you would not know of this reality as it is your responsibility to know this.

To admit that you don't know what the by-catch of King Salmon is in those areas is to admit that you are not doing your job properly or thoroughly.

Your idea of stopping our ability to provide for ourselves in order to limit our by-catch of King Salmon, without having done all you can to limit the harvesting of King Salmon, either as a targeted species or as a result of by-catch of King Salmon is not acceptable.

It is my understanding that the Board of Fisheries, acting on behalf of the State of Alaska, has an enforceable obligation to protect subsistence harvest. That such protection includes shutting down subsistence harvesting as a last resort. Shutting down subsistence harvest in the water where we provide for ourselves is not your last resort.

You must cut down on the harvesting of King Salmon in those other fisheries that are targeting King Salmon or

are harvesting with by-catch. After you have done all possible in those areas, then you may have met your obligation. Until then the obligation stands as a bar to shutting down our subsistence harvesting.

I believe that you take your obligations seriously. I also believe that you must think this situation through more thoroughly.

Thank you in advance for your serious thoughts on protecting the subsistence harvest that we rely upon.

Tony Strong

I hereby authorize an unsigned copy of this document to be included in the record of the Board of Fisheries Board meetings being conducted in Sitka. A signed copy will be delivered to the ADF&G offices in Juneau on the 23rd.