

JS Testimony to 2020 UCI BOF

RC 063

Sunday, February 9, 2020

Thank you Chairman Morisky and Members of the Board,

My name is Jim Sykes, from Palmer, I served on the Mat-Su Assembly and it's Fish and Wildlife Commission. My wife and I are personal use dipnetters, usually in Kasilof. We'd rather dipnet closer to home, but Fish Creek is difficult and not always open. I'd like to thank the Board of Fish for getting more fish to the Kenai. It's significant.

I strongly support proposal #133, as well as #88. I also support the concepts establishing a personal use dipnet fishery, even if limited to Pinks and Chums.

Many problems from the past seem to continue to be with us, but I hope all user groups can agree we need to restore our in-river salmon resources to sustainability.

I've witnessed the decrease in most Mat-Su rivers over the past 40 years, and noticed a difference in how the Northern District is treated compared to the Central district. Decisions made in Kenai greatly affect Mat-Su. While I hear arguments about what the optimum escapement goals in Kenai, we in Matsu are lucky to meet any minimums.

Kenai has fish counters and real time information to adjust decisions based on initial forecasts. Mat-Su has no counters, except for the occasional weir. Most of the data is only evaluated after fishing season is over. In the past, west side rivers have provided sustainable runs. We need to continue the restoration efforts currently under way. It is one of the few ways that more fish can become available to both in-river and commercial fisheries.

Yesterday the board heard compelling testimony from Assembly Member Tam Boeve that much of the Northern Susitna Valley is recognized as an area of economic need—requiring additional nutrition for school students. Regular Alaskans need to be able to get fish for food as a priority.

All user groups are really in this together. Susitna Basin rivers have lost a great deal, but seem to be coming back with habitat protection and conservation measures that continue.

I ask the Board to expand the use of the corridor with some small adjustments, use best available genetic information, and bring the Northern district into this century with real time counters and in-season local management. Restoring sustainable in-river fisheries in Mat-Su means more fish for Cook Inlet.

I'll gladly answer your questions to the best of my ability. Thank you.