

Personal Comments

Again, for the record, My name is Dennis Zadra and I live in Cordova. I offer this as my personal testimony. When I first started guiding in Alaska in 1992 I was fortunate enough to end up in the Brooks Range. The first band of Dall Sheep I ever laid my eyes upon was a group of 13 rams and they were all full curl or better. I was fascinated! Early in my gillnetting career on the Copper River in 1996 I was getting ready to make my first low water set of the season. When I set my net it exploded with kings, 122 to be exact, with a 32 lb average. I guided on the Mulchatna River in 1993 and saw thousands upon thousands of caribou and the limit was 2 bulls for each hunter. I have seen the bounty that this State can produce, and it is incredible. That is not where we are now.

Many of Alaska's Fish and Game resources are in trouble from low sheep numbers, The Nelchina Caribou herd at record low numbers, no chums or kings in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, diminishing kings on the Nushagak River and the Kenai. Yet, the department that is tasked with managing the fish and game resources of the State seems to be distracted with these constant attacks on commercial fishermen. Halibut fishermen have been fishing Alaska waters for over 100 years, hatcheries have been in place for 50 years. If the department and the public are looking for the cause of these recent changes in stocks they are not going to find them in the small boat fishing fleet which has been here longer than statehood and has only shrunk in recent decades. In 1973 Alaskans, realizing that our fish populations were a limited resource and could not sustain unlimited users, passed the limited entry act limiting the number of commercial fishing permits. However, this same logic seems to have never been applied to the sport fish sector. If we are in fact seeing localized depletion of rockfish stocks in PWS I suggest the department and the board focus their attention on what has changed in the last 50 years and that is the shocking increase in effort by the sport and charter fleet. In 2022 the sport fish harvest in North Gulf Coast/Prince William Sound area rockfish was 99 thousand fish which is almost 500,000 lbs, in 1996 the sport harvest was 33k fish. That is a 300% increase in 25 years that dwarfs the entire 150k lb ghl for the commercial fishery. This BGP is not about rockfish conservation but more about State control of a Federally managed fishery and has serious legal ramifications. Perhaps a review of the Magnusen-Stevens act is in order to clarify these ramifications.

Thank you for considering my testimony.