

Response to department comments on proposal 29

Dear Board of Fisheries,

I apologize for not being able to testify in person, however attending this meeting would cost me several thousand dollars as I have a job as a teacher in the Anchorage School District and cannot miss classes, or afford travel and lodging from Anchorage.

I would like to respond to the clearly uninformed non-critical response to my proposal by department staff. While the department usually does a fantastic job in analyzing proposals and issuing recommendations in accordance with their mission and the law in this case they severely missed the mark.

First they implied that the south Kenai Peninsula are remote, in fact, nearly every part of each drainage is within a mile of a road. Every single angler that I have talked to who has hiked more than half an hour on deep creek has encountered anglers shuttled there by helicopters. It is embarrassing that anyone in the department counts a half hour walk from a road a remote location. It is clear that helicopter fishing on these streams is almost exclusively in non remote locations.

Second they say that there are no conservation concerns for lower peninsula steelhead then report data showing overall catch of Kenai Peninsula steelhead are a quarter what they were despite a massive rise in effort. The department's own data and past board actions have implied significant conservation concerns.

Restricting helicopter fishing is one of the easiest and least impactful ways to mitigate conservation concerns.

I understand that the department must remain neutral on allocative measures however to oppose this common sense regulation is in error. I have personally seen one company offer helicopter guided fishing in a location and cause a vibrant fishery to become unviable just from one company (this area is unmentioned in department comments, and because I do not want to single out the company responsible for collapse of the fishery, it will remain nameless).

It is imperative that the board act proactively to protect this unique and world class resource.