

“My name is JD Richey and I’m writing you to support Proposal 256.

I have been a salmon guide on the Togiak since 2014 and, prior to that, spent seven seasons guiding king salmon trips on the Nushagak River.

First off, I am 100 percent in favor of the fish egg ban on the Togiak.

I would, however, like to see the regulations amended to allow for the use of prawns (shrimp) or any bait that are not fish eggs, only as long as it is tipped on a jig, fly or artificial lure such as kwikfish or other plugs that are commonly wrapped in tuna or sardine . At Togiak River Lodge, we have made a concerted effort to shift the angling focus away from the struggling king stocks to the much more abundant sockeyes.

Over the years I have, along with other guides, worked on intentionally targeting biting sockeye — rather than having to “floss” (mouth snag) them. Catching these amazing gamefish when they voluntarily bite your offering makes for exceptional sport and has helped lodge clientele change their focus from kings to sockeye.

Essential to this program, however, is the use of shrimp. While the reds love it, kings tend to shy away from shrimp. Furthermore, we employ a rig that makes it impossible for incidental species like kings or trout to swallow the bait.

The set up is simple but effective: the shrimp is placed on a 1/8-ounce lead head jig and then suspended under a bobber. When a fish

rises off the bottom to take the bait, the hook lodges in the roof of its mouth and never gets taken deep — thus the impact on non-target species like kings is negligible. Fish other than sockeye can be released unharmed very easily with this method.

I care deeply about this river and this fishery and couldn't, in good conscience, support something that I thought would be detrimental to it. With the use of shrimp on jigs, we would be able to target the more abundant red salmon and give the kings a break.

In my mind, it's a win-win: Our guests will be able to still come and enjoy the true Alaskan experience and let chinook runs recover — all the while keeping economic benefits coming into the state.

Thank you,
JD RICHEY