

Board of Fish Public Testimony, Supporting Information & Proposal Support/Opposition

Please refer to RC _____

I'm Ben Allen, owner / operator of Miller's Riverboat Service in Wasilla, Alaska. I guide fishing trips in the Matsu Valley for a living. I also have one guide working for me (who also lives full time in Wasilla) and guiding produces an important part of income for his family. Additionally I own / operate Susitna Rods a custom fishing rod building business. I am married and have 2 young sons. We solely depend on sport fishing opportunities in the Matsu Valley for our income.

The biggest challenge and possibly to our detriment, forcing us as a business and family, to relocate to another region or state, is the lack of consistency, declining opportunity and predictability in Matsu fisheries. Not harvest. I am sportfishermen.

The State's lack of investment in gaining information and monitoring Matsu fisheries, watersheds and ecology is extremely bothersome and unsettling to me. The State does not currently have the resources to responsibly manage and steward the Susitna River and Knik Arm watersheds. We should be studying the ecology of our rivers! We need to be counting Coho on important streams like Willow Creek. We need to have more Coho goals. We should have a sonar on the Susitna River and fish wheels with a mark recapture program.

I spend a lot of time throughout the Susitna and Knik watersheds fishing and guiding and have for the last 16 years professionally in the matsu, in addition to growing up fishing in southcentral Alaska. What I am seeing on the ground consistently across all fisheries, especially kings and coho is poor and declining numbers. I think we are in a time now, if we are going to responsibly steward the resource, conservation across the board (not reallocation) is really necessary to provide a predictable opportunity to all users and provide for a future for the next generation.

Opportunity and predictability is super important to me.

I look at most of these proposals submitted for this meeting and to me it seems like there is a demand to limit other user groups so another user group can take more. I guess I'd like to see more ecologically and sustainably based decisions, and less emotionally motivated reallocation.

For my colleagues, this may not be popular for me to say and I am just trying to speak the truth.

There seems to be a lot of hostility from the Matsu towards the Northern District Setnetters. I don't agree with it all and I don't really care for the division and negativity. I really think it would be beneficial for these 2 user groups to work together. There needs to be some changes, but allowing opportunity consistently should be placed in high accord.

In 2020, the board updated the king salmon plan to allow 6 hour periods 5 times a year to allow harvest of Kings commercially on years where catch and release was allowed in the river. This was a really good adoption by the board because it allowed opportunity for a user in a way that

has a minimal impact. This is a very low impact fishery and combating predominantly family run business's, using resources paid for by tax dollars is really unethical.

Northern district salmon management plan

Oppose

207, 208, 209, 210 (unrealistic to expect Judd and Larson to provide in season data)
213 (we can't define adequate projected coho, because we don't have coho goals and don't count coho in the majority of the watershed)

Susitna River Personal Use Fisheries

Oppose

229, 230, 231

I think the Susitna dipnet fishery is a great opportunity, but until Coho returns on the Deshka (the only Susitna Coho stock with a goal and counting) consistently achieves the sustainable escapement goal, expansion of the dipnet fishery should not be adopted.

Fish Creek, Kenai and Copper River all have sonars and dip netting is allowed liberalized when escapements are projected to be met, while the Susitna River does not have a sonar.

Knik River Area

Oppose

238- would be devastating to me and my business.

(see on time submitted public comments-Ben Allen) No scientific data to support restriction.

Boat participation is at an all time low since the establishment of the LSPUF (Little Susitna Public Use Facility) - use data can be confirmed with Alaska State Parks and ADF&G

240, 241, 242

243- (requesting more harvest when the minimum goal is consistently not achieved is not sustainable) Harvest of coho should be reduced across all user groups to ensure opportunity for future generations.

Support

239, 245, 248

Susitna River Sports Fisheries

Oppose

218

219- I don't agree with this concept, because it hurts and restricts trout fishermen who are honestly following the rules. The best access for bank fishing is at the stream mouths.

There has been talks of developing a wheelchair access at Willow Creek State Park mouth area. Closing this area for half the summer for half the year to trout fishing with trout gear (small spinners and flies with light tackle), because poachers and violators are breaking the law, would be unethical. The answer to this problem is to write tickets to violators and not penalize law abiding citizens, by taking away opportunity. People want to trout fish flowing

water and bank accessible access to flowing water is very limited in the Matsu Valley. We should be encouraging sportfishing opportunities and educating the public on responsible stewardship, not taking away opportunity.

221- Additional harvest of coho is not warranted granted poor returns consistently over the last several years. Before additional harvest is allowed, ADF&G must establish more escapement goals, such as on Willow Creek, and begin counting fish to observe and confirm long term viability of allowing more harvest.

225

Support

223, 224