

February 23, 2024

Alaska Board of Fisheries
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, Ak 99811-5526

Dear Board of Fisheries,

I am a third-generation fisherman from Petersburg, Alaska. My father has been salmon seining before the initiation of salmon hatcheries, and I have heard his stories of the past with the shorter less stable seasons. Having grown up on his fishing boat, I remember as a very young kid getting to come out for the early season hatchery fishing at Hidden Falls in Southeast Alaska. These would occur long before the wild stock would begin to run. As an adult at 33 years, I have seen the years where the hatcheries have sustained the Southeast Fleet when the wild runs were weaker than expected. I have also seen how we struggled when the hatcheries themselves had poor returns, giving a glimpse of what the consequences would be, in the long run, if they did not exist at all. The hatcheries have given us both an early, as well as a late season harvest. It has also diversified our product by producing more chum salmon availability. It has brought life back to wild stock streams that had been struggling due to environmental devastation or early fishing behaviors. It has also lightened the load on the wild stock streams by giving more opportunities in the season resulting in the fleet spreading out and not getting congested at major entry points.

The Board of Fisheries dedication to the management of conservation and sustainability in Alaska fisheries is crucial and your work is unparalleled. The future of our salmon resources needs, and deserves the full consideration of this board, and the implications that Proposal 59 could hold statewide are serious and possibly detrimental.

Support for Removing Proposal 59:

I support the decision to remove Proposal 59 from the Kodiak meeting agenda. Proposals that modify regulatory changes in a specific region should be distinguished from those with statewide hatchery implications. To ensure reliability and fairness in the decision-making process, statewide hatchery issues, including any regulations with statewide precedent, should be addressed at a statewide venue.

Statewide vs. Regional Precedent:

Addressing statewide hatchery issues have the potential to establish precedents or modify hatchery regulations that could impact multiple regions. Salmon hatcheries are fundamental to Alaska's fisheries, influencing various regions and across multiple user groups. Numerous hatcheries are linked with Pacific Salmon Treaty mitigation obligations. Therefore, it is vital that this is done within an inclusive statewide venue. Considering the diverse interests, this allows for well-informed decision making that involves stakeholders from all regions. Safeguarding all hatchery-related regulations align with the goals of responsible resource management.

Opposition to Proposal 43:

We continue to oppose Proposal 43, for the following key reasons.

- (1) **Lack of Scientific Evidence:** Proposal 43 lacks substantial scientific evidence to support claims that hatchery fish have a detrimental impact on wild salmon populations or ecosystems. Decades of research and data show that hatcheries and wild salmon can coexist and even thrive together.
- (2) **Steady Increase in Wild Salmon Returns:** Contrary to the proposal's assertions, regions with hatcheries in Alaska have witnessed steadily increasing wild salmon returns since the early 1970s when these programs were established. Hatcheries have not replaced wild salmon but have provided a stable supply for commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries, while at the same time wild stock escapements are being met.
- (3) **Social and Economic Benefits:** Hatchery programs have been instrumental in meeting the demand for salmon while preserving wild stocks and their habitats. They support the livelihoods of Alaskans, contribute to local economies, and provide a buffer against the variability of wild salmon runs.

As an Alaskan and supporter of responsible resource stewardship for future generations, I thank the Board for this opportunity to advocate for sustainable fisheries management practices and the long term, science-based decision making when it comes to hatchery resources.

Sincerely,

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Petersburg, Alaska