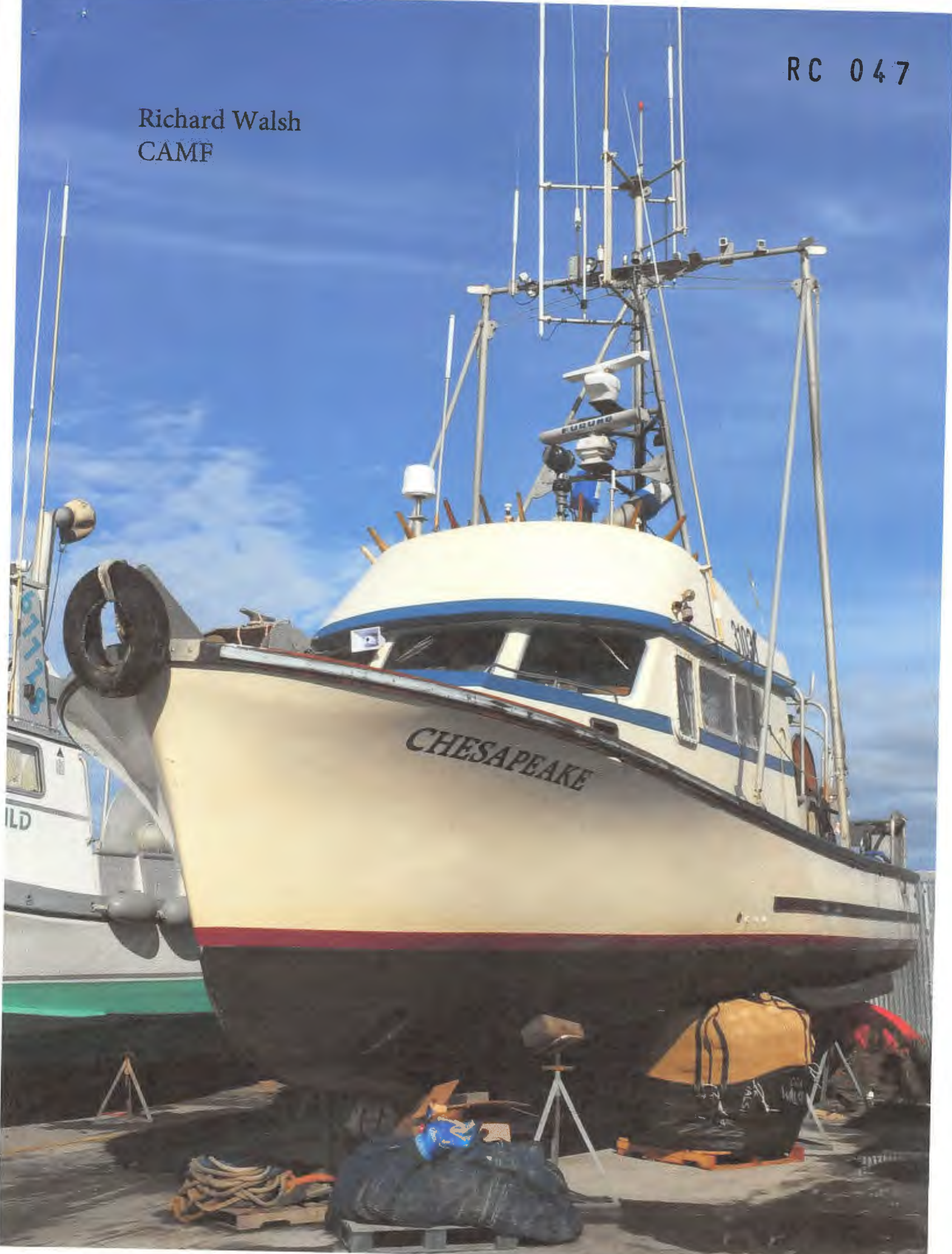


RC 047

Richard Walsh
CAMP



CAMF

Mister Chairman and members of the Board, my name is Richard Walsh. I am a life-long Alaskan resident and this summer will be my fiftieth season operating a commercial vessel in Alaska. Most of this time has been spent in Area M.

I support proposals number 149 and 159 and oppose proposal 158 and others that seek to further restrict commercial fishing in Area M.

Proposal 158 asks that the outer portion (1-½ mile to 3-mile off shore) of three north peninsula sections be closed until total run strength reaches prescribed levels in Ugashik and Egegik. This closure would place an undue conservation burden on Area M fishermen long before any run problems could be detected in Ugashik or Egegik and at a time when our local sockeye runs should be harvested. I should add: escapement levels have been met or exceeded in both these Bristol Bay districts for many years and if in the future a concern involving run strength should occur there are already regulations in place to restrict North Peninsula fishing.

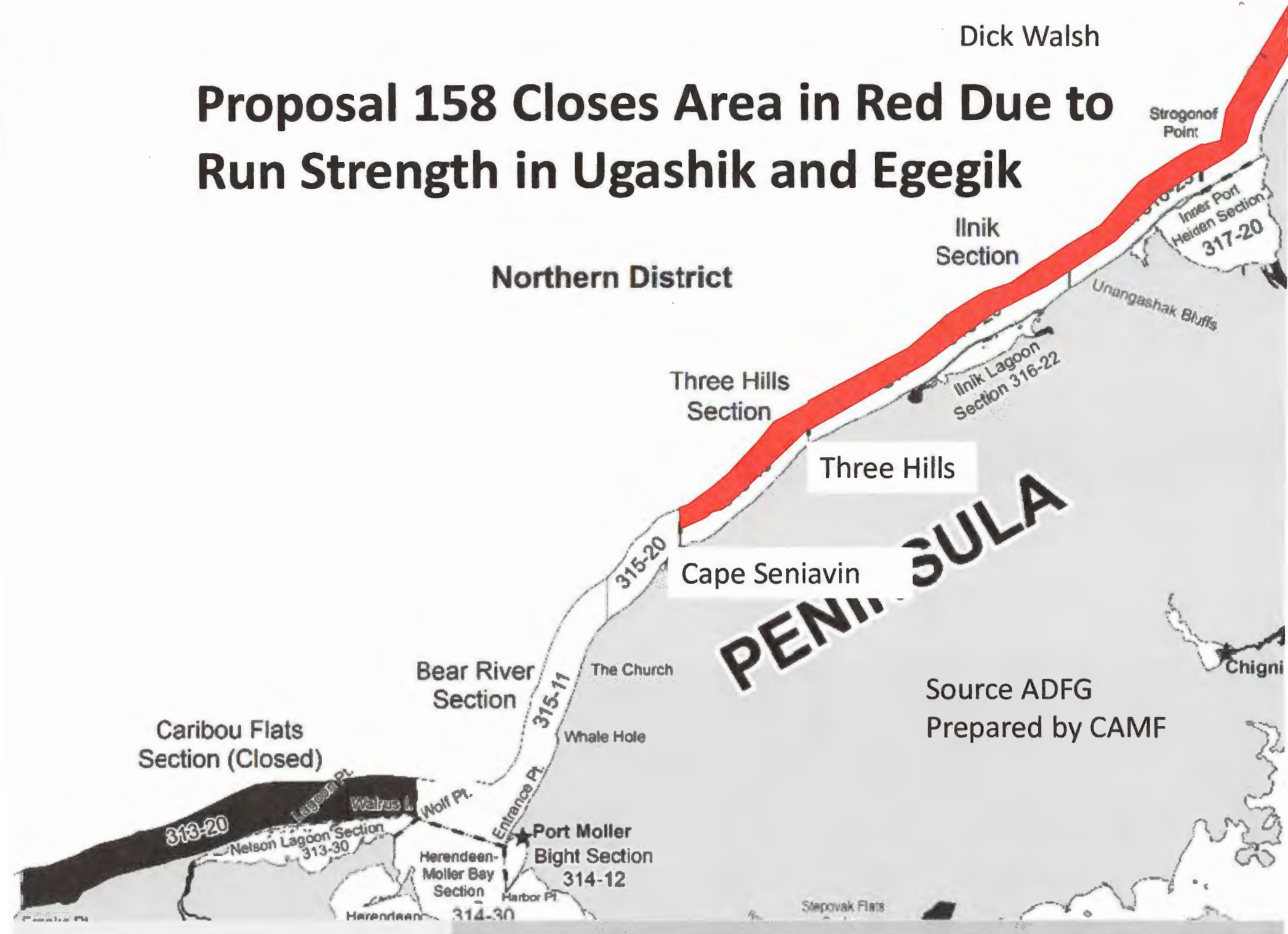
The recent FRI/BBEDC study concluded that stock composition was the same both from shore out to 1-1/2 miles and from 1 ½ to 3 miles off shore in both Ilnik and OPH sections. So whether we fish inside or outside the 1-½ mile off shore line, the amount we catch, of any given stock, is not going to change. The catching power of our fleet is determined by length of weekly fishing periods and amount of gear fished and both of these parameters are already restricted by regulation and emergency orders.

Area M is far different from Bristol Bay. We fish larger, deeper draft vessels because they are safer and perform well in the open North Pacific and Bering Sea where we fish. On the North Peninsula the weather is often windy and rough and extensive shallows exist near shore. If passed, this proposal would needlessly crowd our fleet into these shallow waters creating dangerous conditions for vessels and crew especially when weather is less than ideal. When fishing in such conditions, crew safety is my top concern and when it's time to haul the net, we do it as quickly as possible to avoid gear conflicts and breaking seas. Under these conditions fish quality suffers.

In conclusion, I think Proposal 158 is vague and poorly worded, unrealistically burdensome to the Area M fleet and completely unnecessary because regulations already exist to satisfy the perceived problems of its authors. I urge the Board not to pass this proposal.

Dick Walsh

Proposal 158 Closes Area in Red Due to Run Strength in Ugashik and Egegik



Richard Walsh
CAMF

