

PROPOSAL 48 – 5 AAC 06.331. Gillnet specifications and operations. Allow permit stacking for set gillnet operations in the Bristol Bay Area, as follows:

Allow Bristol Bay set net fishermen to have dual permits.

Fisherman in the Bristol Bay salmon fishery are allowed to hold and legally fish two set net permits per person.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the board to once again allow set net fishermen to have two set net permits in their names. This was allowed from 2009–2012 in Bristol Bay. During that time, my family purchased a set net operation from a family for whom I worked as a deckhand for eight years. Our long term goal is to raise our family fishing in the Bay every summer and pass it on to them the way it was passed on to me. Right now my kids are young, but are finally at the point where they can come out for part of the fishing season. However, it is a challenge to have them out there for the whole season. Additionally, I would like to be able to come out earlier and stay later to take full advantage of all the fishery has to offer. So, while I could simply not fish her permit during those times, that option is not financially viable for our family. The only other option is to have the permit in a deckhand’s name since they are there for the whole fishing season. This is not a great option either for obvious reasons.

While it’s easy to dismiss my request, I feel the board has a responsibility to give it more consideration. I am not asking for something that has not been done. To the contrary, I entered the fishery as a permit holder when they did allow permit stacking. What I have been unable to understand is why the board would have allowed the stacking of set net permits for a short three year period. That decision should have been a long term decision as I reasoned it had to be. Why would you allow people to legally purchase a \$40,000 asset and then require them to sell it 3 years later? This is a logistical nightmare that is unwarranted. All the arguments for letting the regulation sunset were weak; less new people entering the fishery, less local and native fishermen did not mandate reversing the decision. They were obvious outcomes of the experimental regulation period. Nothing happened in that time that was a surprise and certainly nothing that should lead everyone in the fishery to revert back to the way it was before.

Everyone knows fishing is a feast and famine industry to be in. But allowing stacking of two permits was a great way to help fishermen make fishing a more reliable source of their livelihood. Some year’s the return are low or we go through valleys where the price drops. Having two permits helps weather those storms. It helped us. It didn’t hurt anyone (that’s my argument of course), and it certainly didn’t impact the health of the fishery. If you were to reinstate set net permit stacking it would make our family grateful. We would have less to juggle in paperwork, I would be able to maximize the use of the permits we fish and would probably be able to stay out longer to make Bristol Bay a larger part of how my family supports and sustains itself.

PROPOSED BY: Corey Lockbeam

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