

Board Members,

Thank you for being here, and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Todd Smith. I live on the Kenai where my family and I enjoy a variety of fishing, hunting, and other outdoor activities. Stocking our freezer with fresh Alaskan fish and game has been a tradition for generations.

I contribute my time to the boards of several organizations on the Kenai, including the Kenai/Soldotna AC, the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District, and Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association. I am a commercial setnetter, and also work as a contractor on the Kenai, where a substantial portion of my client base is dependent on our tourism and sport/guided fisheries. I believe that the best interest of Alaskans is having diverse, healthy, limited fisheries that complement each other *and* their surrounding communities. For the most part I think we have that on the Kenai and am thankful for it, despite how contentious things can get.

The following are several key issues that I hope you consider:

I encourage you to eliminate the Sockeye OEG's in the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. They create confusion and are not yield based. The department's yield-based goals on these rivers are founded on solid data and provide high yields and opportunity for everyone. The Kenai Inriver Sockeye goal ensures that inriver users above the sonar have opportunity, that healthy habitat is prioritized, and that yield-based spawning goals are met. OEG's are simply not needed.

I encourage you to provide protection for upriver and early returning Kenai King salmon. I don't believe that the current plan provides adequate protection for early returning Kenai Kings. I believe that disproportionate harvest on these fish even into late run season (after July 1st) has had a negative effect on the run.

I think that the use of eggs as bait in our inriver king fisheries should be a liberation, not the norm. The use of bait increases effectiveness, and the use of eggs as bait increases the harvest of larger female fish. I am not opposed to the use of eggs or bait, but as East Side Setnet fishermen with a relatively low exploitation rate of large Kenai Kings, I would prefer that the bait/no bait decision in the directed King fisheries be made independently of the commercial Sockeye fishery.

I value and utilize Alaska personal use fisheries, but I don't feel any expansion of those fisheries on the Kenai/Kasilof is appropriate. I support our state's efforts to improve access on the Kasilof river, however I fear that the lack of a local authority on that river could lead to a problematic fishery. I encourage the board to carefully consider whether or not a PU powerboat fishery is necessary or appropriate on the Kasilof river.

I do not believe that there is any data to show that setnet closure windows protect Kenai Kings, and I think that proposals seeking to create more commercial closure windows are misleading about the conservation effects and are simply aimed at reducing commercial opportunity.

Lastly, I would like to stress the importance of regular periods in the commercial fishery. They are one of the best indicators of abundance that the department has, and I think the timely data that they provide is beneficial to everyone.

Good luck in your deliberations, and again thank you for your time.