

2/24/2017

Upper Cook Inlet Finfish - Board of Fisheries Meeting

Transcript of Oral Testimony given by Trevor Rollman shortly after the lunch break on Friday, 2/24/2017

3000 Saindon Street, Wasilla, AK 99623

RE: Proposals 209-218

RE: Reference PC 59

Mr. Chairman and Board Members: Thank you for what you do.

Please reference PC 59 - specifically the map I made. This map shows the Northern District, broken into its sub-districts: The General District and the Eastern Sub-district and each of their respective statistical areas. I am a set-netter in the Eastern Sub-District and my family's fishsite is located at the red dot on the map.

I was a week old when I first arrived at that red dot and begin helping my mom and dad fish as early as I could, and I've been going back to that place and that lifestyle I dearly love ever since. Now I'm passing on this beloved tradition to my wife and three kids. This summer we plan to begin direct marketing our fish where we live in the Mat-Su Valley, joining many other Northern District set-netters who do so, but there are not many of us left.

Only about 25% of those who fished in the eighties continue to fish in the Northern District today. The number of fish we catch is few, but they are so valuable to us and to our long-standing traditional way of life. We are one of the most limited fisheries in the inlet. Any more restrictions will force more of us out of business.

In light of this, I ask you please to oppose any proposals that would further restrict our fishery, not only based on what I have just said but also based on the logic and data I'm about to present. We get to fish two days per week, Mondays and Thursdays, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., 12 hours each. This means that of the 168 hours in a week, fish get to swim through the Northern District untouched for 144 of those hours. Again, fish swim past our sites unobstructed for 144 of 168 hours each week. And, during King season we only fish one period per week giving them an additional 12 hours of free passage.

(Northern District set-netters are not the greedy over-consumers we are sometimes made out to be - our harvest is not "liberal" as it is described in some of these proposals.) [I did not say this orally, but I wish I had made this point]

Data backs up this logic. GSI data from studies conducted by the Department in the years 2006 to 2013 show that the average harvest rate of the Northern District set-netters of Susitna Sockeye was 1.68%. I repeat, Northern District fisherman catch only 1.68% of sockeye bound for Susitna streams. The harvest rate for Chinook over that same period, district-wide, ranged from .5% to 1.5%, even lower than Sockeye.

I ask you to please support measures that give the Department more flexibility in management; more tools, not less. Don't eliminate fisheries or further restrict them with parity regulations. These take tools

from the Department. Please do support gear step-down authority for the Department in sensitive fisheries so the department can manage with more precision within sub-districts or statistical areas.

Regarding my proposal, number 217, I would like to make a slight amendment that would retain the Department's step-down authority over gear. I will submit a more detailed RC regarding this soon.

In closing, managers have said we catch a statistically insignificant number of sockeye and kings and have not caused any decline in returns of any salmon species. The data I've cited shows this. At every Board of Fish cycle the plea from Northern District fishermen is simply to maintain the status quo of our two, simple, weekly periods. That is our primary request again this cycle.

I stand together with everyone who has spoken before me who wants to bring more fish North to Northern District streams and emphasize that we Northern District set-netters catch a statistically insignificant number of fish, yet these fish are incredibly valuable to us as income and a way of life.

Thank You.