

RC#40

Tam Boeve
Mat-Su Borough

Mr. Chair and Board members-

My name is Tam Boeve. I live in Willow. My property is between Willow Creek, Little Willow and the Susitna.

I am a member of the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission. And I am on the Mat-Su Borough Assembly representing District 7.

My district covers 2/3 of the entire Borough and includes the communities of Meadow Lakes, Houston, Willow, Caswell, Susitna, Talkeetna, Chase, Trapper Creek and Skwentna.

The Commissioners who spoke before me- addressed the "how" of salmon sustainability. I'd like to just briefly touch on one of the reasons "why".

Approximately 15K people live in my district, many of them below the poverty level.

So many in fact- that all of the schools in the northern region are Title 1 schools.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the term-

It is a Federally recognized designation for schools where more than 40% of the children fall below the poverty level. In some areas of my district- that number is actually closer to 70%.

The schools include:

Meadow Lakes Elementary

Houston Jr/Sr High

Willow Elementary

Beryozova School

Su Valley Jr/Sr High

Talkeetna Elementary and

Trapper Creek Elementary.

Additional funding is provided to these schools for educational programs AND FOR FOOD.

Breakfasts and lunches are provided at a reduced or free rate for most of the children in these schools. 3 of the schools qualify for free meals for EVERY student.

In addition, many of the students are given a packed bag lunch to keep them fed over the weekend.

Even 20 years ago, families that were struggling financially- weren't worried about how to feed their families- they gardened, they picked berries, they hunted, and they filled their freezer with fish. Money may have been tight, but food was readily available.

All you need to do is look at a map to see that each of my communities grew up around the rivers. It is part of their identity. It is part of what makes them strong and proud and self-sufficient.

I understand that fish allocation is a complex issue and that there are environmental and economic variables. But it isn't easy to explain that to someone that just wants a chance to provide food for their family.

And according to the numbers- that is a real challenge for most of them.

Thank you.