

AMBER ALLEN - Mat-Su Fish & Wildlife Commission RC# 43

Hi, my name is Amber Allen. I'm a member of the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission. I am also part owner of Millers Riverboat Service, Alaska's Anglers Rest Bed and Breakfast, and Millers Fish Processing and packaging service out of Wasilla Alaska.

I'm concerned and worried about the current fishing regulations creating a lack of opportunity to fish for king salmon in the Mat-Su Valley. King salmon are the state fish, so they should be the most important fish that the Fish and Game are concerned about managing, but they don't even have a consistent management plan for kings and primarily manage by discretionary emergency orders issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Don't you think that we should have a consistent king salmon management plan in the Mat-Su Valley if it is the most important fish and closest to the largest population in Alaska? The only thing consistent in the past few years is that the Eklutna Tail Race hatchery will be open for fishing, which in my opinion is more like a combat fishing ditch, than a wild and scenic Alaska river that tourists are all expecting to experience.

I joined the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission because I wanted to make a difference in bringing back king salmon sport fishing opportunities to the Mat-Su Valley. I have a full-time job with the school district and I'm 7 months pregnant, but king salmon are so important to me, that it is worth the sacrifice of hours spent in meetings to see this precious resource return to a sustainable sport fishery in the Mat-Su Valley.

King salmon are my favorite fish to catch. I love the amazing head shake that you feel when they are first hooked and that pure brute force that you feel when they peel line off the reel for the fight of their life! I go out in the boat with our customers every chance I get because I truly love fishing and sharing that moment with a person that has never caught a king salmon before. We've helped young kids catch their first king and it is amazing to pass that passion for the sport onto a child. We've also helped people in their 70s to 90s catch their first king salmon and it's amazing to help them fulfill that bucket list fish of a lifetime.

This is my husband and I's 12<sup>th</sup> year in business with our fishing guide service. King salmon regulations have been inconsistent and unpredictable for the last several years because they are mostly managed by emergency orders. King salmon make up half of our income, so a full closure like we experienced last year is devastating. The only way we are staying in this business is because we love it and we keep throwing money at it, but it will not take too many years of a full closed king season for us to go out of business.

Not having a king season in 2019 really affected my family's finance. As I told the commissioner earlier in a commission meeting held in December, "catch and release for kings would be a huge game changer for our business in a time of low abundance because people will still pay for a picture of a lifetime with an Alaska King Salmon, rather than us getting no business from a full closure."

That is why I support that the board adopts proposals number 199, 215, 217, and 219, that the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife commission proposed. These proposals give the commissioner more management tools to keep the Northern District King Salmon areas including the Deshka, Little Su, Yetna, and Talkeetna rivers open for King Salmon fishing to the public.

Thank you for your time and the work that you all do to try to keep more king salmon coming back the Northern District. Do you have any questions for me?