

Ben Allen Testimony

RC #44

BEN ALLEN

Board Members, I am Ben Allen, owner/operator of Millers Riverboat Service, located in Wasilla, AK. Guiding fishing trips, throughout Knik Arm and the Susitna Drainage, provides for my livelihood. I have been guiding fishing trips in the Matsu full time for 12 years. Millers Riverboat Service has been a successful fishing business in the Matsu since 1978. If the current trend of restricted King sportsfishing and low coho returns continue, I will be forced out of business. I have always been flexible and willing to try different fisheries such as trout and pike, but the bottom line is that the majority of Alaskans and visitors, want to catch and harvest wild salmon. Currently, we don't know if we will even have a King sportfishery in the Susitna Drainage or Little Su this year. King fishing comprises a significant portion of my income. I have lost a majority of my long term business due to the ongoing trend poor Coho and King sportfishing and regulation changes- that often occur with 2-3 day notice.

Coho sportfishing throughout the Susitna Drainage and Little Su for the last 12 years has been overall poor, largely unpredictable, and very regulated. After spending many days floating and hiking Eastside (Unit 2) streams, I strongly feel there are more Kings than Coho in those streams. The majority of streams in the Susitna Drainage do not have escapement goals for Coho, so there is no baseline for managers to ensure adequate escapement of these fish; additional conservation in the commercial fishery, than what is in current regulation, is desperately needed. Using Kenai River sockeye abundance as the baseline for allowing harvest of northernbound fish in a mix stock fishery is not a sustainable method for managing Cook Inlet salmon fisheries. Currently, Susitna and Knik Drainage coho and sockeye stocks as a whole, are in decline and current commercial regulations allow for the unsustainable of these fisheries. As a user who has spent countless hours & years fishing throughout the Matsu (Yatna, Talkeetna, Little Su, Deshka, Parks Highway, ect.), I can confidently state, that sport and guided sportfishermen have not been provided a reasonable opportunity to harvest Coho and King salmon, in the Susitna and Knik Arm drainage, over the entire run, consistently for the last 12 years.

I strongly support proposals 123, 126, 127. When applied, proposals 126 and 127, will increase run strength to all Matsu streams and will allow Alaskan sports and personal use fishermen an reasonable opportunity to harvest fish in a sustainable manner. If proposals 123, 126 and 127 are passed, commercial regulation will allow for a sustainable mangagement approach of which provides reasonable opportunity to all user groups. I support the concepts in proposal 200 and encourage Board members to recognize the Board finding quoted in 1985.

Thankyou for your time reading my comments. I will be attending the Board of Fisheries meeting and look forward to talking to you and making more comments on additional proposals.

Sincerely, Ben Allen

85-113-FB

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Policy Regarding  
Cook Inlet Northern District  
June Chinook Fishery

Because there appear to be available chinook surpluses for harvest, it is the Board of Fisheries intention to open the Cook Inlet Northern District commercial set net fishery. This is considered to be a very limited June chinook fishery, and strict time and gear limitations have been imposed.

It is not the Board's intention to circumvent the Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Plan. That management plan provides priority to sport fishing during the month of June. If there is no harvestable chinook population identified beyond the sport fishery requirements, the Northern District commercial set net fishery will be closed.

  
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Ron Jolin, Chairman  
Alaska Board of Fisheries

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