

RC52

February 8, 2020

Daniel Hakkinen
PO Box 1398
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Dear Mr. Haight and members of the Board of Fish,

I've been a resident of Kenai, Alaska since 1952. For 57 of those years I've spent the summers on a commercial gillnetter in Cook Inlet. Since I was thirteen until my mid twenties I served as a deckhand and then obtained a permit and boat and struck out on my own. I've witnessed good years and lean, years with foul weather and calm and two oil spills. One thing I always felt was a constant was the hard work and dedication of our local biologists in trying to insure us, all of us, of prosperous seasons in the future. There is little they can do about what happens on the high seas but over time they have become fairly accurate at making predictions of returns and even better at managing escapements levels into the different systems to achieve maximum sustained yields. Over time, and I'm talking about the Kenai River, those escapement levels have been increased several times and now there is a proposal to do it again. If history tells us anything it tells us that continually adding more fish to a system that has a finite food supply, Kenai Lake, does not translate into more plentiful returns. Simply look at the years following the 1987 and 1989 oil spills when the run collapsed due to over escapements. Since the 1980's due to accelerated thawing of the glaciers the lake is becoming cloudier and the sunlight cannot penetrate into the water as far impeding the growth of the zooplankton. Adding more salmon to a lake with a diminishing food supply might make some people happy for a couple years but the long term results would be disastrous. The Kenai River system is capable of producing Red salmon runs of 6 to 11 million fish when managed properly. Those large returns were accomplished with even smaller escapement numbers then the ones on the books now.

I would strongly urge the board not to increase the escapement levels in the Kenai River and to give our area Biologists the flexibility to manage our fisheries to prevent over escapements like we had in 2019.

Let's manage for MAXIMUM SUSTAINED YIELD!

Sincerely yours,

Daniel Hakkinen
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