

Board of Fish Testimony

Norm Darch 02.09.20

Chairman Morisky, Members of the Board,

My Name is Norm Darch, I am a Cook Inlet Setnet Fisherman and have been involved in the industry for about 33 years. My wife and I have raised our family working the fish site along with many extended family members and close friends. It is a rare thing these days to be able to spend that kind of time with family and friends.

I am not going to speak to you about specific proposals but rather concepts which I hope you will keep in mind as you make decisions regarding Cook Inlet.

I have read parts of the latest economic reports. There is no doubt sport and commercial users contribute greatly to the economy of the State and the CI region. I believe the strongest economy is a diverse one, both sectors are needed.

The dept of fish and game sets escapement goals to ensure biological sustainability and future yields. The latest discussions seem to be about needing to put more fish in the river to provide for a better in river experience. On the Kenai River, the PU fishery take their fish prior to being counted by sonar in the river. What happens when you put more fish in the river due to an increase in the IN-RIVER GOAL, (which is fish pass the counter)? A better in river experience? Maybe! However, from years 2011-18 sport fishing above the counter was only able to harvest about 1 out of 5 fish. So, the rest end up as spawning escapement which, when above the SEG, has a proven and predictable negative impact on future returns. Are we intentionally trying to manage the river for smaller returns?

Are you aware in 2019, 161,000 Alaska residents bought sport fishing licenses? Only 22% of the resident population participates in sportfishing and or PU fishing or 78% of the Alaskan Population does not participate for whatever reason. Shouldn't the 78% of Alaskans be able to have access to seafood?

Did you know, 83% of CI setnet permit holders and 79.5% of all CI permit holders are Alaska residents? We live here, our money stays here, we are your neighbors, co-workers, coaches, and volunteers.

Did you know, in 2019 CI processors sold 2.6 million lbs. of fillets into the markets of South Central Alaska?

Did you know, there are great organizations like Sea Share who donate countless lbs. of high-quality seafood products to food banks throughout Alaska?

"One of the best uses for Cook Inlet Fish is on the Dinner plates of Alaskan Residents." We agree!

Who makes seafood available for the 78%? WE DO!