

Opposition to Proposal 78

Submitted by John Gilcrist

Dear Chair and Honorable Members of the Board:

My name is John Gilcrist and I am representing myself. I was born in Anchorage, raised in the interior and live in Soldotna.

I will address my personal concerns with Proposal 78. I believe this proposal is designed to eliminate commercial fishing in Cook Inlet. Most sportsmen I know are constitutionalists so I find it strange that KRSA would invite the masses to guide regulations into the future unless you consider their phase 2 to this scheme.

This proposal would undoubtedly set a precedent. Then Copper River would be the next victim.

This proposal also has the potential to bleed over into game regulations where there is also competition with guided sport hunting.

Fifty years ago I dipnetted at Chitina. You didn't have to hang off a cliff by your teeth back then, and I still had some. If people hadn't fought rural subsistence and tried to work with the people that lived there, it might be a lot easier to dipnet there today.

If I would have had the power and the perceived promise of more fish back then, I would have tried to shut down those commercial fishermen down at or near the mouth of the Copper River. Not out of thoughtlessness but ignorance. After all, they had big boats and caught a lot of fish for money. All I wanted was food.

I didn't realize that they put fish on their table, plus the salt and pepper, they paid the light bill, bought school clothes and everything. Cook Inlet fishermen are no different. Some have nice boats, some have ratty dories and some have boats that resemble the African Queen. Nevertheless, they are working members of society.

This state has declared it is open for business and these fishermen are made up of family businesses. And of course there are processors and distributors and all the support people whose jobs go along with commercial fishing.

I'm not sure anyone has considered what happens when you put those thousands of people out of work. The crime rate will go up. Drug and alcohol use will go up. The suicide rate will go up. Medicaid applicants will go up. State resources will be further stretched to meet these ills.

People that are heavily invested in their communities with their family and friends can't just move somewhere else, especially in a weak job market. Do we really need to do this to our neighbors? Access to some dipnetted fish for their freezers will not make up for the job losses.

Proposal 78 is too drastic and too damaging. I also live with a person who believes her family's history and culture in fishing for the past thousand years rates higher than a "5" on the value scale.

Thank you for listening.