

Madame chair and esteemed Board of Fisheries members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony to you today. Unfortunately I have a prior obligation that may keep me from appearing in person to read these comments, I signed up for the first day as this commitment would keep me from being able to attend in person on the second day, however the public comment on day was cut off before my turn came up thus jeopardizing my opportunity to read these comments to you in person. Please take the time to read my comments, and I hope I can still make my second call.

My name is Kenneth Jones and I am a third generation Alaskan, Cordovan, and Fisherman. I am also a licensed sport fish guide, waterfowl guide, and big game transporter. I am the Father of two young boys as well, and it is my dream that the commercial fisheries here in Alaska, and in Cordova particularly, will be sustainable and endure well into the future so they can benefit from the same resources that their ancestors have.

Unfortunately I am here today to sound the alarm and alert the board that this dream is under severe and immediate threat. The current state of the Copper River Fisheries is on an unsustainable trajectory that requires immediate intervention to protect the historical users of this fully allocated resource as well as protect the way of life in Cordova.

This threat is combined from the lack of continuity between the sport fishing and commercial fishing sectors of ADFG, paired with the continued expansion of unregulated commercialization of the upriver fisheries, both in the personal use and subsistence areas. The ADF&G management has effectively re-allocated the resources from the legal, historical commercial users down river to a new user group of unlimited commercial users upriver.

The run is at risk. Escapement goals are either not being met or have narrowly been met in 3 of the last 4 years despite unprecedented closures in the limited entry commercial drift fishery. Meanwhile, upriver, relatively little action has been taken and the burden of conservation has rested solely on the commercial drift user, allowing commercialized dipnet operations to thrive.

Limited entry was enacted in 1972 and the pressure on the resource enacted by the commercial drift fishery has not changed since. The fishery was sustainable for decades, never missing escapement goals. That all changed with the expansion of the fisheries upriver. Thousands of fishers upriver now flock to Chitna every summer, taking a larger portion by percentage, of the run every year-a larger portion of a run that was already fully allocated to the historical subsistence and commercial fisherman. In 2018, 2020, and 2021, the commercial fleet sat on the beach for almost the entire season to allow for enough escapement to make it up to the spawning beds so our run could survive and flourish into the future. As we struggled to make ends meet, for the benefit of the future, we watched as upriver users had a relative free for all on the entire run, decimating the escapement numbers and causing us to miss escapement goals in the natural system, and at our gulkana hatchery. This hatchery can be seen as the

canary in the coal mine in terms of what is happening upriver-while we sat on the beach to ensure sufficient sonar escapement numbers, the fish still didn't make it back. There is only one reasonable conclusion: the fish were harvested between the lower sonar and the spawning grounds/hatchery.

In 2017 the board removed the "shared burden" regulation that would have saved these fish and allowed them to make it to the spawning grounds. This was a travesty that directly, and negatively, impacted the sustainability of the Copper River run. The reasoning argued to remove this regulation was that it was not used and therefore not needed. In the following 4 years after it's removal, the regulation would have saved the run on 3 of 4 years, one of which, 2020, the SEG was not met, in direct violation of the departments mandates.

The immediate action I am seeking from this board is:

- implement mandatory reporting for upriver fisheries by supporting Proposal 6
- Curb the continued rise of commercialization on a subsistence resource by limiting this new group of commercial users to the PU fishery district by supporting Proposal 7
- Support and approve Proposal 19, re-implementing the shared burden regulation that was removed in 2017.
- Reject Proposal 27, which would open the subsistence fishery 24/7 in Prince William Sound and the Copper River.

Thank you

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