

Dear Board of Fish Members,

This letter was written by the Naknek / Kvichak Advisory Committee. First and foremost we truly appreciate your time and energy in listening our concerns as well as your thoughtfulness in responding. We are aware there is only one board member present from the 2018 board cycle. As we welcome the new board members we are hoping that refreshing both new and old board members about the 2018 meeting will be helpful to moving forward with the current Board Cycle.

For the last 10 years, the Naknek River Sport Fishery, has been a growing topic of concern at our local Advisory committee meetings. This discontent boiled over prior to the 2018 BOF meeting at our April meeting. We heard an outpouring of concern from many user groups including our former mayor, borough assemblymen, lodge owners, local residents, former area fish and game biologists and even nonresidents seasonal workers and tourists. The testimony focused primarily on two main issues: overcrowding and its effects upon the quality of experience and health of the fishery and dwindling king returns. There was limited Fish and game data available for the AC to reference due largely to lack of funding. The last aerial survey for kings was done in 2009. The only data provided from a Alaska sport fishing mail in survey, the south west harvest survey (SWHS) and the guide logbook data (which since have been abandoned). This data did not reflect the qualitative data we were hearing from the public at our meetings. As authorized by Alaska Statute 16.05.260 advisory committees exist to provide a local forum for collection and expression of opinions and recommendations on matters related to the management of fish and wildlife resources. Our Advisory Committee spent countless hours crafting 6 proposals that were submitted for consideration in the 2018 BOF meeting. 9 additional proposals addressing these concerns were submitting by individuals for a total of 15 proposals regarding the Naknek River Sportfishery.

There was a strong representation from Sportfishing Lodge owners at the 2018 Dillingham meeting but limited representation from other user groups, due in part to the time and travel investment needed to attend these meetings. We felt as a result, the voice of the community as represented by the AC was not heard as strongly as it should have been. All 6 AC proposal failed, the 8 individual proposals failed and one was withdrawn and one minor compensation was made to adjust a catch and release boundary for king salmon. Many lodges were in opposition to conservation measures in the proposals because they felt they would adversely

affect business. Additionally, there was limited quantitative data to support the proposals.

The board did however recognize due to the overwhelming amount of proposals the need to explore the situation further. At the meeting, prompted by board member Cain, the board created a Special Committee of Naknek River Sport Commercial Services and Guide Fisheries – 2018-293-FB. **Despite the failed proposals, the creation of the committee provided reassurance to our AC and to the community as a whole that the problems on the Naknek were heard, were on the board's radar, and were going to be investigated further.** The committee intended to gain a broader perspective on the Naknek sport fishery from all user groups NOT just those present at the BOF meeting.

In the minutes at the 2020 work session, Board member Payton expressed an interest in having town hall meetings and getting subcommittee members out in the fall to experience the fishery. Those ideas would have been incredibly helpful to provide perspective the board moving into this board cycle as we revisit many of these issues again.

Instead, the subcommittee never met. Not once. Taking into account the limitations of covid during the last three years, could the committee have not met via zoom? Or could outreach to members of the public not present at the 2018 been obtained via phone or zoom? Additionally, all board members on the subcommittee are no longer on the board. Is the subcommittee dissolved?

Moving forward to today, we still come to the meeting with the same concerns only three more years magnified - overcrowding on the Naknek fishery greatly inhibiting quality of experience for all users groups and drastic decline in kings returns. We do appreciate the efforts of fish and game in doing two studies on the overcrowding during the fall trout fishery and a creel survey on the kings. This is an improvement but still limited data, specifically on the kings. We are still referencing the same SWHS and 2016 logbook data that again we feel is not consistent with the user groups experiences. How do we get out of the repeat loop of no funding, no data, no decision on these proposals?

Most importantly, how do we tell the community that they are being heard? What message was sent when the subcommittee designed to hear their concerns, never met? We feel this erodes the public's confidence and interest in participating in the public process as well as our advisory committees willingness to volunteer their time.

Lastly, we intend this letter to be informative as to the events of the last board cycle and NOT accusatory. Additionally, we have appreciated the efforts of fish and game at all our local advisory committee meetings and do believe that given the funds there would be more studies done. The frustration at lack of funding is not directed toward Biologists. But the lack the funding seems to be a constant and unchanging limitation. We hope this limitation no longer impedes decisions from being made – specifically regarding the urgency to address our King Salmon returns. We believe very strongly that conservation measures need to occur now. We look forward to meeting and working with all Board Members and fish and game biologists to find solutions to these problems. We appreciate everyone’s time and devotion to the health of this fishery. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Respectfully,

Naknek / Kvichak Advisory Committee

- SWHS not consistent with observation and experiences of local fishermen