



February 8, 2023

Sent Via Electronic Mail

Alaska Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
1255 W. 8th Street
Juneau, AK 99811
marit.carlson-vandort@alaska.gov

Re: AFN Resolution 22-2: "A Resolution Requesting the Alaska Department of Fish and Game support measures that decrease intercept of Chinook and Chum Salmon in Area M affecting the Western and Interior Alaskan Salmon Crisis"

Dear Chairperson Märít Carlson-Van Dort:

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), I write to share AFN Resolution 22-2 titled "A resolution requesting the Alaska Department of Fish and Game support measures that decrease intercept of Chinook and Chum Salmon in Area M affecting the Western and Interior Alaskan Salmon Crisis." Please forward this letter and AFN Resolution 22-2 to your colleagues on the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

AFN Resolution 22-2 was passed by the delegates at the 2022 Annual AFN Convention on October 22, 2022. AFN represents upwards of 120,000 Alaska Natives through our membership of 209 federally recognized tribes, 185 ANCSA village corporations, 9 ANCSA regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums.

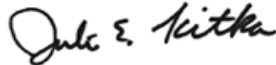
The resolution acknowledges the continuing decline of Chinook salmon in several major systems of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK), and the decline of summer and fall chum salmon in the AYK and in portions of the North and South Peninsula (Nelson Lagoon, Port Heiden) and the Chignik region. More specifically, AFN Resolution 22-2 urges support for proposals that significantly reduce Area M intercept harvest of Chinook and chum salmon in the June fishery. As such, AFN requests your consideration and recognition of the urgency of resolution 22-2 and the dire impacts on food security and the survival of our communities.

Additionally, the AFN Subsistence Committee, through Resolution 22-2, stressed the strong consensus for greater and swifter research capabilities to address our changing fish stocks. Resolution 22-2 requests that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducts an extensive ecosystem review of the effect of productivity of wild salmon stocks within the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands in comparison to populations of hatchery stocks, bycatch harvest rates, and Western Alaska stock escapements of Chinook, summer and fall chum, and coho salmon. And, further, to compare the

reduction of the average size of all wild salmon stocks, including sockeye, to the same. AFN and the AFN Subsistence Committee welcome the opportunity to discuss the current research strategies, opportunities, and gaps to fully understand the changes and threats to our salmon runs. Together, we can identify real solutions and actions that can be taken now to address our declining salmon stocks.

Thank you for your consideration of Resolution 22-2. We look forward to continuing this conversation and ensuring the food security and sovereignty of our Alaska Native communities. If you have questions regarding this letter, please call me at (907) 274-3611.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie E. Kitka". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "K".

Julie Kitka
President

CC: ADF&G Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang

Attached: AFN Resolution 22-2: "A Resolution Requesting the Alaska Department of Fish and Game support measures that decrease intercept of Chinook and Chum Salmon in Area M affecting the Western and Interior Alaskan Salmon Crisis"



ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
2022 ANNUAL CONVENTION
RESOLUTION 22-2

- TITLE:** A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME SUPPORT MEASURES THAT DECREASE INTERCEPT OF CHINOOK AND CHUM SALMON IN AREA M AFFECTING THE WESTERN AND INTERIOR ALASKAN SALMON CRISIS
- WHEREAS:** The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, and its membership includes 209 federally recognized tribes, 185 village corporations, 10 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs; and
- WHEREAS:** The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community; and
- WHEREAS:** Alaska Natives have stewarded their territories for over 10,000 years to ensure the health, well-being, social and cultural foundation, and spiritual existence of their peoples, as well as that of the animals, lands, and waters since time immemorial; and
- WHEREAS:** The continuing decline of Chinook salmon in several major systems of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK), and the decline of summer and fall chum salmon in the AYK and in portions of the North and South Peninsula (Nelson Lagoon, Port Heiden) and the Chignik region are threatening the food security of many Alaska Native communities; and
- WHEREAS:** The decline of run strength and average size of many salmon stocks is now threatening the continuing viability of those stocks into the future; and
- WHEREAS:** Alaska Native stakeholders bear the greatest burden of loss of salmon stocks; and have not reached Amounts Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) in several systems for many years; and
- WHEREAS:** The South Unimak and Shumagin Islands (Area M) June fisheries harvest chinook salmon, sockeye salmon and chum salmon in a mixed stock fishery. These stocks of salmon are bound for Bristol Bay and the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim region, as well as other areas across the North Pacific Ocean. These salmon stocks have historically been intercepted in significant numbers along the Alaska Peninsula.
- WHEREAS:** The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is the management authority for the commercial fishing in Area M; and
- WHEREAS:** ADF&G's stock reports from May of 2022 show that the 2020, 2021, 2022 Western Alaska Chinook salmon runs have been the poorest on record. In most

of Western Alaska, 2020 and 2021, chum salmon runs were the lowest on record. This year was the smallest return to all spawning streams for Chinook and Chum despite being the first time in recorded history wherein Yukon River Fishermen were not allowed to harvest any salmon anywhere in the Yukon River Basin (US and Canada) at any time; and

WHEREAS: Despite a complete ban on fishing on the Yukon River, including for subsistence needs, no limitations have been placed on commercial fishermen in Area M, and commercial fishers are catching historically high numbers of chum salmon— upwards of 2.5 million fish; and

WHEREAS: In response to requests to limit commercial fishing, the ADF&G has repeatedly noted that there is insufficient genetic evidence from the 10-year-old Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program (WASSIP) study to warrant reduction of Area M commercial fishing, and that a current multi-year genetic study will not be completed until 2026; and

WHEREAS: A coalition of AYK stakeholders has continually met over the last two years to promote emergency measures to reduce the harvest of Chinook and chum salmon in Area M because there is no time to wait for further genetic studies; and

WHEREAS: The Fairbanks Advisory Committee, Tanana Chiefs Conference, and other stakeholders have submitted proposals to the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) to be considered at the February 2023 BOF meeting on the South Peninsula, Area M, including proposals which would revert the Area M Salmon Management Plan to the 2001-2003 Management Plan thereby significantly reducing Area M intercept harvest of Chinook and chum salmon in the June fishery.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY the delegates of the 2022 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives to review and support Board of Fisheries proposals that significantly reduce Area M intercept harvest of Chinook and chum salmon in the June fishery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY the delegates of the 2022 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives request that ADF&G conduct an extensive ecosystems review of the effect of productivity of wild salmon stocks within the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands in comparison to populations of hatchery stocks, bycatch harvest rates, and Western Alaska stock escapements of Chinook, summer and fall chum, and coho salmon. And, further, to compare the reduction of average size of all wild salmon stocks, including sockeye, to the same.

SUBMITTED BY: TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE, KAWERAK INC., BETHEL NATIVE CORPORATION, SEA LION CORPORATION, ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS, YUKON KUSKOKWIM COMMUNITIES

BOARD ACTION: NO RECOMMENDATION

CONVENTION ACTION: PASS ON OCTOBER 22, 2022