

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the Board. For the record, my name is Darlene Pete from Nunam Iqua located on the Lower Yukon River. I work as Tribal Administrator for the Nunam Iqua tribe. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share concerns we are facing in the AYK region.

I am married with 8 children and 2 new grandchildren. I grew up subsistence and commercial fishing with my late father since the early 1980s. Subsistence fishing has been an important part of our lives from since I can remember. Not being able to subsist for fish has negatively impacted our way of living, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Our main food source has been taken away which has caused hardships for many families. Our people are facing a food security crisis and food insecurity can cause serious health issues when people have to choose between spending money on food, utilities or health care. Poverty, unemployment even underemployment are the result of a resource depletion. A sad reality is food insecurity has caused systematic racism and racial discrimination, the have and have-nots. There are no road systems in our entire region, our villages are geographically isolated. Everything is flown or barged into our villages and with the high inflation costs, everything has become very expensive. Heating fuel is \$7.80 per gallon. For 30 gallons of heating fuel that would last a week or less costs \$284.00. Due to the high cost of living, most families survive by living off what the land and water provides. We are experiencing a type of civil unrest in our communities, alcoholism and drug use at levels never before seen, incarcerations and family division are all too common now and the most innocent are children who don't contribute to the problems, but are most impacted. There are limited jobs in our villages and most families are experiencing extreme hardship. Even for those who are employed year-round are not able to afford food, clothing, housing necessities or to pay utility bills. Some families must decide whether to buy food or heating fuel for their homes and cannot afford both.

Our salmon has always brought our people together to share, to learn and to teach our children how to survive. Our summer camps were full during the summer season but today, all our camping sites are empty which means our freezers are empty. We aren't able to teach our children our cultural values or what we were taught to survive. Our people are no longer unified and have become divided. We have seen an increase in bootlegging and illegal drug sales in dry communities which lead to an increased rate of teen crime, elder & child neglect, children taken into state custody, domestic violence, and broken families. All these issues are the cause of our people not living their

subsistence ways of life because we have no salmon. Our elders and people are hungry for the food they've known all their lives. Our lives have drastically changed in the last few years.

Every effort must be taken to conserve chum salmon. When we don't have enough returning chum salmon to even make escapement goals on our rivers- every fish counts!

I ask you to please, hear the cries of our people to save the stocks of salmon. During the past two years, we've seen a decrease in summer and fall chum salmon runs by nearly 90%! We have 100% loss of subsistence salmon fishing in our communities. There is no further conservation actions that the AYK fishery managers and subsistence harvesters can take. For these reasons and for all the families who are struggling in our villages who aren't able to be here today, I fully support Proposal #140 and the protections included. I ask that proposal #140 be passed so that our children who are our future leaders can experience subsistence harvesting, the life we've always known and to ensure they too can pass that knowledge to their children and generations to come. Thank you.

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