

Good afternoon,

My name is Amber Vaska and I am providing testimony on behalf of Karma Ulvi and the Chief of the Native Village of Eagle and the Chair of the Eagle AC. I would like to thank the Board of Fish Members for hearing our testimonies today, and Karma is sorry she couldn't be here in person, but is present via zoom.

Our subsistence needs are not being met. The Han people of the Native Village of Eagle have zero opportunities to fish for the last three years and the last ten years have had very few openers. Our salmon have been in distress for many years.

The Han Population in Canada, just across the border, have been conserving to save the salmon for the same period. Escapement Goals and Treaty Obligations are not being met. Only 12,000 Chinook crossed the Eagle Sonar in 2022. There were no Yukon River or tributary summer chum salmon escapement goals met in 2021 or 2022. Summer chum salmon escapement in 2021 was the lowest on record, representing an 84% decline from the 2010-2019 average, while that same year, it was a record high year in Area M with a harvest of over 1.1 million chum. This should be cause for serious concern.

The people of the Yukon River have conserved even though it is very hard on our families culturally, spiritually, and economically. We are hoping that the salmon would return in abundance for future generations.

There's a lot of factors that are driving the salmon declines, like warming oceans and rivers, disease, predators, low fitness levels, bycatch, and commercial fishing. These together are detrimental to the salmon population, especially when they are in a phase of recovery. In the face of uncertainty, the Sustainable Salmon Policy directs the Board to take action that errs on the side of conservation when there is documented of severely depressed escapements. It is all of our responsibilities to conserve because that is something we can control and how we can support salmon recover and reach their spawning grounds.

Alaskans along the Kuskokwim and Yukon River have experienced the burden of conservation for years now. It is time for all Alaskans to share the

burden. It is time for Commercial Fisheries to take responsibility and conserve our salmon.

Per Alaska Statute 16.05.258, the board of fish has the statutory obligation to prioritize sustainable salmon fisheries and provide reasonable opportunities for customary and traditional subsistence fishing prior to nonsubsistence uses. Subsistence is supposed to have the priority over all other uses. Except, subsistence fishing is closed on our rivers, while commercial fishing has an average harvest of 687 thousand for the past 4 years. Something must change, or we will lose our salmon stocks to extinction.

I would like to sincerely ask the Board to consider Proposal 140. We must be good relatives to our salmon and do something for these animals that cannot speak for themselves. We are not asking to stop Commercial Fishing but to cut back to fewer harvest times that supports reducing the fishing pressure on these chum stocks.

All of us need to work together to support our salmon. All Alaskans deserve the right to live their way of life and eat their subsistence and traditional foods. That is what is so beautiful about Alaska. I support Proposal 140, and thank you for your time today.