

Board of Fish 2023 Testimony

Madam Chair & Members of the Board,

My name is Warren Wilson and I am from King Cove where I have lived my entire life of 61 years. I am a 3rd generation subsistence and commercial salmon fisherman. Our subsistence involves all species of salmon.

I have been a salmon fisherman in Area M for 50 years and have been attending Board of Fish meetings for 38 of those years. I bought my first drift and gillnet permits in 1985, and fish both the south and north peninsula sections of Area M.

I am blessed to have a fine wife, who is originally from Sand Point, 2 children (son & daughter) and five grandchildren. And with my grandchildren I now truly understand subsistence with "Grandpa I want . . ."

I am also the Mayor of the City of King Cove, which incorporated as a city in 1949 in the Territory of Alaska & ten years before Statehood. King Cove has a population of 800 residents and is part of the Aleutians East Borough.

The Area M Salmon fishery is the mainstay of our city budget and funding our Departments of Public Safety, Public Works, Water/Sewer, Harbors & Port, Electric Utility, and Recreation. I am proud to work with 25 dedicated city employees who work hard and are very dependable in keeping our small city moving forward on a daily basis.

Our department of Public Safety consists of a Police Chief, 3 officers, Fire Chief, and active voluntary firemen and EMS rescue squads. This department's personnel work closely with our local medical clinic. Our public works department takes care of our water system, wastewater system, landfill, and road maintenance. I am also very proud of our recreation program that operates our teen center and public gym supporting a wide range of community activities for our youth and young adults.

Our electric utility system is focused on our two, small run-of-the-river hydroelectric facilities which produce about 90% of our annual electricity demand. We also have a diesel back-up system. We are currently working on a project to connect the city's electrical distribution system with our local fish processing company, Peter Pan Seafoods, so that we can start selling them our "surplus" hydro energy.

Our harbor & port staff of four keeps our two boat harbors and deep-water port in year-round operations hauling freight and fishermen's gear, selling fuel, using our mobile boat lift hauling boats of all sizes out of the water, and just being there to support our fisheries and local community.

Our waterfront area is active in supporting an Alaska Commercial store, a marine hardware supply store, and a welding shop which I own and operate with my son and cousin.

King Cove is also home to Peter Pan Seafoods. I'm proud to say they are American owned and have been continually processing salmon in King Cove since 1911. For 112 years now they have been the mainstay of our local economy.

Our local 2% fish tax is levied on our Area M salmon fleet and makes up about 40% of our budget. Currently, white fish and dungy and tanner crabs account for another 30% of our tax base. Now, with the closure and bleak outlook for Bering Sea king and snow crabs we have lost another 25-30% of our tax base. This is very concerning and scary for King Cove.

In closing, Board proposal # 140 is BAD for King Cove and I strongly urge each of you to reject it and not to put further restrictions on our June salmon fishery. Our local salmon fisheries have endured a large number of significant management strategies and changes over the past decades with area closers, capacity and time restrictions and gear restrictions.

Unfortunately, chum salmon are again at the forefront of our June fishery. The science that has been presented this year, along with the cooperation from our seine, drift, and setnet fleets working together to curb the chum catch in Area M clearly indicates ONE THING - we are sharing the burden of conservation.

As Mayor and elected member of the Aleutians East Borough Assembly, I am here to represent, support, and defend my fellow residents that we must have future salmon fisheries to continue raising and supporting our families in the Aleut Village of King Cove.

Thank you. And, I will be able to participate in the committee as a whole.