

Memorandum

To: Committee of the Whole

From: Duncan Fields

Date: January 12, 2016

Re: Proposal 60 --- Limiting over escapement in the Karluk system

The local Advisory Committee recognized proposal 60 created issues with the mechanics of establishing a "clean up" fishery in Karluk lagoon. Nevertheless, there was broad support for the concept of limiting Karluk over-escapement. Consequently, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Board "table" the proposal so that the means and methods of harvest could be worked out with the community of Karluk and the Department of Fish & Game. In addition, the Department of Law has indicated that Proposal 60, is not possible as a "cost recovery" fishery because the stocks into the Karluk system are not hatchery or "enhanced" stocks. Finally, the Department of Fish and Game has indicated a reluctance to close the weir in Karluk. Their reluctance appears to be due to possible interruptions in the entry timing of some component of the Karluk run (although this is a bit vague) and because of possible precedent elsewhere.

Failure to close the Karluk weir when over-escapement is about to occur represents a schizophrenic approach to fisheries management. We manage Alaska's sockeye salmon fisheries on known reproductive biology of each sockeye run (brood tables) and the rearing capacity of each sockeye system. We set escapement goals accordingly. There is general agreement that when sockeye systems exceed escapement goals we actually return less fish to the system. In other words, at some point for sockeye systems more fish into the system does not equal more fish out of the system and the system will "crash" compromising the constitutional mandate for sustained yield. Nevertheless, at the same time, with a weir across the entry river and therefore the means to stop over-escapement the Department is reluctant to do so. These two policies are clearly inconsistent. By not stopping over escapement when the means are available to do so, the Department unilaterally creates the risk for all involved of a systemic "crash".

Let's work toward consistency. Providing direction to close the Karluk weir when the upper end escapement goals are likely to be reached is consistent with the establishment of upper end escapement goals.

My request continues to be that of the Kodiak Advisory Committee: Table the proposal and request that the Department, local advocates and the community of Karluk work toward a plan for harvesting fish that remain in Karluk lagoon when the weir is closed.