

Nick Dudiak
8137 Fernwood St. Augusta, MI 49012

RC 011

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Alaska Board of Fisheries
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Re.: Support for CIRF Proposals 21, 23, and 27

Dear Board of Fisheries Members,

My name is Nick Dudiak. I am currently retired, but spent 20 years 1977 to 1997, as a Fisheries Biologist in Homer with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

One of my primary responsibilities was enhancing king salmon stocks in the Lower Cook Inlet. Conservation and protection of wild stocks was our primary goal. Another important objective was to promote and enhance recreational saltwater fishing opportunities. Numerous sport fishing enhancement projects were implemented to create new sport fisheries for king salmon and to reduce fishing pressure on fully exploited runs, such as the Lower Kenai Peninsula rivers.

These programs were designed to ensure there were no biological or management concerns created by these hatchery-stocked king salmon fisheries. It was a difficult balance and I did not always have the full support of the department. Nonetheless, in the long term, the enhancement programs have proven very successful.

The major objectives of the program were:

- 1) Enhance annually hatchery released king salmon stocks to increase sport fishing harvest;
- 2) Develop additional sport fishing opportunities in Kachemak Bay and the Homer area;
- 3) Obtain data on salmon imprinting and marine survival rates.

Current regulations appear to compromise ADF&G's ability to achieve the goal of ensuring that all king salmon produced by these enhancement projects be available to recreational anglers.

In 1993, I wrote a paper entitled "*Kachemak Bay Feeder King Salmon Fishery*." It contained a brief history of the Lower Cook Inlet recreational king salmon troll fishery dating back to 1960's. It also discussed the results of Coded Wire Tagged recoveries (adipose fin clipped and coded wire tagged king salmon) in Lower Cook Inlet between 1977 and 1993. During those 16 years, Lower Cook Inlet anglers recovered 76 coded wire tagged king salmon. Of those 76 king salmon, 75 were of non-Cook Inlet origin and only 1 was from the Halibut Cove Lagoon enhancement project and that was taken in the spring.

Many anglers have indicated they prefer to fish at the king salmon enhancement sites because angler activity in Kenai Peninsula rivers is very intense. This preference has helped shift fishing pressure from the natural systems and is considered a major goal and benefit provided by the king salmon sport fishery enhancement projects.

Unfortunately the department often regards input and observations from local recreational saltwater fishermen as "anecdotal", and disregards their input. However, historically, these fishermen volitionally turned in heads from CWT king salmon, resulting in the original preliminary data demonstrating that during the winter feeder season nearly all fish were of non-local origin. This allowed the Board of Fish in 1988 to develop the regulation of not requiring these kings to be recorded on the Harvest Record during

the winter period. Without the anecdotal information and voluntary cooperation of these fishermen, we may have gone all this time without the Kachemak Bay Winter King Salmon fishery providing important recreational and economical benefits to the Homer area. These latter benefits coincide with the current ADF&G Mission Statement.

This ultimately shows that first hand observations provided by fisherman can be very useful and creditable, and usually confirms the Department's own research. After review of the Departments studies dating back to the mid-1990s, it is no surprise that the results arrived at the same conclusion. Saltwater recreational king salmon trollers fishing south of Bluff Point catch feeder kings of non-Cook Inlet origin and have no impact on wild Cook Inlet stocks.

The Guideline Harvest Level present in the Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan appears to be unsupported by scientific data and is unnecessary. It is not rationally related or designed to achieve stated conservation goals. It may also promote an undesirable "risk to fish" and drive anglers to fish in more dangerous weather conditions. For these reasons, I **respectfully SUPPORT PROPOSAL 27 and encourage the Board to ADOPT PROPOSAL 27.**

Years of accumulated data, personal experience, and department studies support the conclusion that the "Special Harvest Area" extending from Bluff Point north to Anchor Point light, effectively protects returning Cook Inlet spawners and is an effective means to allow sport fishermen access to the offshore bait-rich feeder king zone while ensuring an insignificant to nonexistent impact on wild stocks.

As the biologist responsible for the original 1996 design of the currently used King Salmon Conservation Zone around the Lower Kenai Peninsula Rivers and having had a deep commitment to the protection of those stocks, I **fully SUPPORT and encourage the Board to ADOPT PROPOSALS 21 and 23**, allowing Lower Cook Inlet recreational saltwater recreational anglers to catch:

- 2 king salmon daily;
- No seasonal bag limit;
- No harvest card requirement;
- South of Anchor Point light.

I thank the Board for its time and consideration. If you would like further historic information, please feel free to contact me at 269-731-3499 (Eastern Standard Time).

Sincerely,



Nick Dudiak
Retired ADF&G Fishery Biologist