

Committees Goup 1 Comments Matanuska Valley AC

Chairman Jensen and Board Members,

Please consider the following points on proposals from Group 1

116 — Kenai River Sockeye Salmon Escapement Goal — In consideration of difficulty in attaining adequate escapement levels for Northern bound salmon stocks, it would be fair to follow the Department's suggestion of creating an upper end to the Keani SEG of 1.5 million sockeye salmon as measured by the Didson Sonar. Increases in the SEG should likely occur at all 3 escapement levels. If the Board wanted to manage in such a way as to spread the escapement throughout the range — then it also seems that an acknowledgement of sockeye salmon harvested above the sonar should also be included as an OEG. Subsistence and sport harvests both occur above the sonar and as you heard in testimony the sport harvest alone has reached 380,000 sockeye salmon on a large escapement year, but a lower figure that likely occurs on a most years is 200,000 sockeye. Therefore if the establishment of an OEG at 1.7 million sockeye salmon on large returns would accommodate both a new SEG range and the amount of sport and subsistence harvest already occurring above the sonar. Simplifying / clarifying management with one specific goal range absolutely should be done.

117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122 — if adopted would all change allocation in such a way that the vast majority of Upper Cook Inlet users would see a reduction in harvest opportunity. This would include subsistence, personal use, and sport users. Most — if not all — these proposals which would shift more harvest out into saltwater areas would increase the likelihood of failing to attain salmon spawning escapement goals in Northern District waters. These thoughts should be weighed carefully when considering all of these proposals.

137, 138, and 139 — All seek to repeal the 1% rule — which is a board adopted adopted allocation regulation or a specific trigger for transitioning to a sport priority for coho salmon harvest. When the commercial sockeye harvest drops to 1% of the season total for two periods in a row it only keeps going down from there. The 1% rule is also a carefully considered balance of providing commercial sockeye harvest on years with a late return of sockeye salmon —like 2015. Without a 1% rule allocation of Upper Cook Inlet goes away from the vast majority of users to the commercial sector, that already take a significantly larger harvest of Upper Cook Inlet salmon. If there are enough coho salmon to do away with the 1% rule — then there should also be enough to return to a 3 fish sport coho salmon bag limit through out all Kenai Peninsula freshwaters for the entire season.

141 —29 mesh depth — Matanuska Valley AC believes this option could keep set netters fishing on a more regular basis. Cost of replacement nets — people have testified it could cost thousands of dollars — but better opportunity to harvest throughout a season in a manner which would put more king salmon into the Kenai River is worth thousands of dollars. Consider a decision the board made in 2014 to limit motor use when sport fishing on the Little Susitna River to 4-stroke or clean-burning 2 stroke motors. This will cost users thousands of dollars — but was made in hopes of having a positive impact on the fish. An uninterrupted season of set netting along the beach increases harvest in an area with less impact on Northern bound salmon stocks — but should be done in a manner that minimizes impact on Kenai kings.

Andy Couch, Matanuska Valley AC — note: the AC was unable to vote some of these thoughts.

*Andrew M. Couch*