

Fred Stager  
12014 Middle Bay Dr.  
Kodiak AK 99615  
10/01/2017

Chairman John Jensen  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Boards Support Section  
POB 115526  
Juneau AK 99811-5526

RE: UCIDA Agenda Change Request and  
Genetic Stock Composition of Sockeye Salmon in the Kodiak  
Management Area

Dear Sir:

I have been an area K seiner since 1984 and not once in all that time has a single Board of Fish regulation been to our benefit. It feels like we are the piñata of the North Pacific for every other user group to point a stick at and take a swing. As the regulations to our fishery have become increasingly restrictive, I've watched participation in this fishery plummet from 360 active boats and crew to the 160 or so that are still scraping a living. This destruction of the fleet can be seen downtown where this once lively area has been nearly abandoned. The demise of the seine fleet has taken its toll on the local support business' as well, as many shops, canneries, restaurants and grocers have quietly gone under.

This letter is written in opposition to the UCIDA agenda change request. Once again UCIDA has grabbed the big stick and cynically pressed the board to take up an agenda change request out of cycle when there is no Kodiak representative serving on board. How on earth can the concerns and interests of Kodiak residents and stakeholders be fairly represented without a representative?

Their request is entirely allocative in nature and frankly quite cynical, for example, despite the complete absence of genetic sampling in the Eastside Kodiak management region, UCIDA proposes a sockeye cap with full knowledge that the inner bay harvest of Saltery Cove sockeye alone will exceed their 20,000 fish cap limit. Additionally, the results of this study present no new information about the presence of Cook Inlet Sockeye in the July Kodiak mixed-stock fishery.

Kodiak fishermen have a long established history of a variable intercept of Cook Inlet bound sockeye, this study sheds no new light on this fact. Rather, it reinforces what has been known since the 80's: interception of Cook Inlet salmon in the Kodiak area shows tremendous variability in both location and time. This long established and traditional fishery has occurred

at least since the advent of Limited Entry without ever creating a conservation concern. There is no error in regulation, there is no new information, nor is there an "unforeseen" defect in the management plan that needs addressing. This proposal should be dealt with in the normal management cycle.

And how on earth can a sweeping new plan be based on data collected from these 3 seasons? While 2014, the year of lowest Cook Inlet intercept, was a fairly typical year in terms of weather, ocean currents and sea surface temperatures the latter 2 years of the study were anything but typical. In 2015 we had several unprecedented waves of warm water "blobs" hit the inshore and offshore waters of Kodiak island causing some very strange and profound biological and oceanographical anomalies: there was a huge die-off of inshore seabirds and whales and the starfish wasting virus took hold around local waters. Also in this year, Albacore tuna were seen jumping around the island. In fact we caught a Pacific Jack Mackerel in our net, a species associated with summertime waters offshore of the Columbia River. The water temperature outside Ayakulik on the south end of Kodiak Island was a shocking deep clear blue instead of the normal murky green, it was also a staggering 59 degrees in mid June, nearly 10 degrees warmer than average! At Cape Kuliuk, where I've fished since 1984 and never seen the seabed (though I sometimes set as shallow as 1 fathom of water) it was gin-clear out to 9 or 10 fathoms where you could see starfish and a few emaciated Pollock swimming about like they were starring in a low-budget Jacques Cousteau special.

The next year, 2016, was also marked by unusually warm clear water as a strong El-Nino event hit the island's waters even as the warm blob was fading. This caused more sea-bird and whale die-off, unusually hot, dry weather and strange patterns of fish migration the fish runs were late and erratic in their timing. The hatchery Pink Salmon arrived two weeks late and were accompanied by a tremendous shoal of salmon sharks leaping out of the water in pursuit. I've never seen or caught so much as one Salmon Shark in Izhut Bay, never even heard of one caught there, and in this El-Nino year there were hundreds of them gathered together.

A strong El Nino is uncommon perhaps a once in 15-20 year event while the "Ocean Blob" phenomenon has never before been seen. Are you going to call a seriously incomplete genetic snapshot of fish taken during unprecedented sequence of ocean conditions an accurate portrayal of the true workings of a complex biological system?

This agenda change request only makes sense as a cynical grab for fish, at a politically opportune moment, without any thought of the consequences. It does not address the enormous natural variability in the annual size of either the Cook inlet or Kodiak sockeye runs. It doesn't address the unpredictable geographic and temporal variability of Cook Inlet stocks in the Kodiak management area. Nor does it address the potential catastrophic effects that over-escapement of local Kodiak stocks could cause. The area K fishermen have a traditional and established precedent of harvest on Cook Inlet stocks when they are present, how does taking fish from one user group to another benefit the state of Alaska as a whole?

UCIDA's proposal will be devastating to my family. Although I make some money from the other fisheries, the salmon seine fishery has always been the main source of my families' livelihood; the only way I can make it is to fish every opener as hard as I can from early June until mid- September, it is a grueling marathon in which every day on the water counts. The importance of the mixed-stock fishery in July can't be overstated, this year we made 38% of our gross in July, which is typical. Through hard work and sacrifice we survived the aquaculture salmon crisis of the late 90's, but I was a younger man then (I'm 55 now) and my wife was able to help out as crew, I don't know if we can survive another man-made crisis.

The current July management plan, based only on the projected abundance of local stocks is working well. On behalf of myself and my family I ask you to disregard this attempt to rush an agenda change through out of cycle which could have dire effects on a fishery and a community.

Thank You for your consideration,  
Fred Stager and family

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. Stager', written in a cursive style.