

Trollers Want Stability Too

I would like to take this opportunity to speak to how low abundance affects my business as a troller and self marketer. There has been a lot of testimony over the past few days from the charter industry about how they need fish to sell the experience that they are selling to their clients coming in from out of state. They are looking to reallocate fish from the largely resident southeast troll fleet in years of low abundance to provide this stability. We would all love stability. There is inherent risk in trying to make a living fishing, I have no guarantees going into a season and I have known very little stability in my career as a fisherman. Quite the opposite. I have watched as our king salmon quota has been cut over and over and over again at treaty and now here we are with the charter industry trying to take additional fish from us.

Not unlike the charter fisherman selling their clients on the promise of an opportunity to catch king salmon, I am selling the promise of fish to my markets that I have not yet caught. Markets that I have been building over the course of two decades. Building connections takes time and effort and the only way I can keep these markets is by filling them. In years of low abundance this is especially difficult. Losing more fish in years of low abundance may mean that I lose these markets to farmed fish or other more easily available and cheaper options. When a market is lost there is no guarantee I will ever get it back. By their own omission I have heard people from the charter industry say that the number of fish is not as important as the idea that their clients will be able to catch a king salmon as part of their Alaskan experience. So why not lower the annual bag limit for non-residents to extend the retention period until cohos become more abundant in July? If what you are selling is an experience, whether that person takes 3 king salmon home or 2 is not likely to keep them from coming. In fact the data shows very little fluctuation in bookings to the charter fleet relative to the king salmon quota. Furthermore charter fishermen have access to halibut, sablefish, lingcod and rockfish during the time before the cohos show up. As a troller with no IFQ I do not have access to halibut or sablefish and the vast majority of my income comes from king salmon. If I don't have enough fish to fill a market that business will likely go elsewhere to meet their needs and I will lose business as a result. This idea that low abundance only hurts the recreational sector or hurts them more is simply untrue. In years of low abundance we are all going to struggle, that's fishing.

I have put a lot of work into marketing my fish. When I do so I am helping promote wild Alaskan seafood. I am helping to tell a story. A story that paints a picture of the place that salmon on your plate comes from. A story of wild rugged coastlines, mountains rising straight out of the sea, humpback whales breaching at sunrise. All of this is on our website and is promoted to the public through social media and community outreach. This story I tell inspires people to want to experience Alaska for themselves. The story I tell to sell my fish may end up in people seeking that experience for themselves on one of the charter boats here testifying before you. I am promoting Alaskan salmon and the Alaskan experience through my business. I need fish to fill my markets and make my business viable. The charter industry needs the promise of fish to sell the experience of Alaska to their clients. Reallocating more fish from the commercial sector is not the way to do this. If you want to provide stability, lower bag limits to lengthen the retention

period and create more opportunities for experience. Unlike the charter industry, the number of fish I am allowed to harvest will have a huge impact on my business and will likely mean the loss of customers as a result. Low abundance is hard on all of us, especially as the pie gets smaller and smaller through losses at treaty, but providing stability and protections for a largely non-resident charter fleet at the expense of a largely resident commercial troll fleet is not the answer.

Sincerely,

Joel Brady-Power
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