



November 14, 2022

## Alaska Board of Fisheries

### Bristol Bay Finfish – November 29–December 3, 2022

#### RE: Proposal 36

My name is Shawn Dochtermann and I will be supporting Proposal 36. I'm a 37 year veteran fisherman in Bristol Bay, 20 of those years operating the F/V Isanotski. Since I started the fishery in 1985 in Egegik we have witnessed many changes, the addition of reels, level winds, high powered hydraulic motor, wider more powerful vessels, and dual permits. The newest tool are jet boats that can fish in illegal waters where the net does not float.

**The primary reason I support this proposal is it will prevent jet boats and possibly other shallow draft Bristol Bay drift gillnetters from prosecuting the drift gillnet fishery in an illegal manner. Jet boats are known to run their vessels at a high rate of speed into very shallow water as low as six inches and lay their nets out. Then they use a very long towline (possibly up to 1200 feet or more) made of spectra line to winch their net out of the shallow. This is illegal as the net is never drifting. The best way to stop this illegal fishing is to limit the length of the towline. A reasonable length for a towline is 100 feet which is approximately 3 lengths of a Bristol Bay vessel which would be easier to enforce by the AK State Troopers/Public Safety.**

**These long towlines are also a safety issue as well as if a person is trying to fish in the vicinity of the vessel with a very long towline that is not in shallow waters pulled tight it may be dangerous to a vessel that is drifting down into the towline. If the towline was in the water and towed tight it might catch a person or equipment on the vessel.**

I would also like to make an amendment to this proposal. I proposal that we put a limited length on the buoy end of the net as well, at 12 feet. Many vessels in Bristol Bay put extremely long end lines on their buoys. Some do it to help get the net out faster. Others use the long length to inhibit other vessels from going near their net to set, which becomes a safety issue. At night or during stormy conditions one can't see these long lengths of line attached to the end of the and the buoy. Some vessels use the long length of their line on the buoy to help the swell push that end of the net into the shallows to where the net is not floating. So for all these reasons I find it necessary to cap the length of the buoy line at 12 feet. Personally my lines to my buoys are six feet, so by doubling that I believe it to be a fair length for all vessels to get hooked up to each end.

Shawn C Dochtermann  
F/V Isanotski  
PO Box 866  
Kodiak, AK 99615  
425-367-8777



**November 14, 2022**

**Alaska Board of Fisheries**

**Bristol Bay Finfish – November 29–December 3, 2022**

**RE: Proposal 46**

Madam Chair and Alaska Board of Fisheries Members,

I'm Shawn Dochtermann a Kodiak resident and a Bristol Bay Driftnet permit holder. I've been fishing in the Bristol Bay salmon fishery since 1985, and as a vessel and permit holder since 2003. I want to state that I adamantly opposed to Proposal 46 as it will adversely affect any new entrants into the Bristol Bay Driftnet fishery. This is a very dangerous slippery slope that will only benefit a few but impact future generations in the Bristol Bay watershed as well as other state residents.

There are quite a few Bristol Bay fishermen that control two Bristol permits but have the second permit parked in a crewman or family member's name and now they want some type of relief even though Limited Entry Law was very clear when written into law, "one permit one person". Yes, the AK BOF has tested co-oping permits in Chignik that was dismantled and thrown out. Then you've allowed Kodiak set net permits to be stacked, but with a sunset provision that now only allows one permit to be owned and fished. If permit stacking is allowed it would take the lower rungs off the ladder for future entrants into the Bristol Bay Drift fishery. We've already witnessed the destruction of entry into the halibut and sablefish with privatization as the bar to enter those fisheries are so high you almost have to be a millionaire to buy in.

There are 1,862 S03T drift permits available to be fished. There were approximately 405 dual permit (810 permits) vessels fished in 2022. So there were about 1,052 single vessel permits. If this proposal were to pass and in one year 400 single permits were purchased and made into dual permits, there would be approximately 800 dual permits and 200 single permits. This would drive the price of permits up as well as make them so exclusive that almost all dual permit holders would possibly never sell them and then only pass them on to their family instead of sell them in the future.

Yes, the dual permits were created to get vessels off the water and create more space to fish. But it was a tool created so two separate people could fish together in a venture so that a new permit recipient could learn more skills to run a vessel while get a share of the catch for the permit and his work. There are some who enjoy being the second permit holder and want to stay a dual permit vessel and that is not a problem.

If a proposal doesn't benefit the watershed and all of the fishermen that fish the Bristol Bay area then it will only benefit a faction and therefore it should be opposed! The system is working just fine right now, so why try to fix something that is not broken?

Shawn C Dochtermann  
F/V Isanotski  
Kodiak, Alaska



## **Alaska Board of Fisheries**

### **Bristol Bay Finfish – November 29–December 3, 2022**

**Madam Chair and Alaska Board of Fisheries Members,**

#### **RE:Proposal 52**

My name is Shawn Dochtermann and I support proposal 52 as well as 49,50, 51 & 53. It's high time that the General District be reestablished. We've seen to many forgone fish escape up the rivers while they could have been caught and provide feeding the world. I would say one of the most important reasons to put a General District back on the books is to deter illegal fishing and allow all fisherman to have a fair chance to catch the overabundance of fish once all of the East Side Districts and the Nushgak have achieved their midlevel escapement goals. As it is now, only a certain group of fisherman are willing to go over the line every period. We've seen this illegal fishing push out to 1/4 mile, then a half mile and even further when the AK State Troopers are not there to give tickets. The only way to stop the thieving is to create an even playing field with the General District. This proposal if passed would allow all Bristol Bay fishermen to benefit and may even allow for the setnet fishermen to have more fish hit their nets.

Shawn C Dochtermann  
F/V Isanotski

Kodiak, AK  
425-367-8777  
drdrmann@hotmail.com



Nicholas Dowie  
nicholasjdownie@gmail.com

Madame Chair and Members of the Board,

I was born and raised in Kodiak, Alaska and am a life-long fourth generation set net fisherman of Bristol Bay, Nushagak District. I hold a doctorate degree in science and have been part of larger discussions concerning chinook management. I co-authored proposals 12 (withdrew support), 41, and 61 (withdrew support). My comments are as follows:

**Proposal 11:**

Support.

Proposal 11 captures many important aspects for addressing chinook salmon management, however this management plan requires a much larger discussion and should consider other avenues and ideas. This discussion should include:

1. End date to chinook conservation management plan. Any effective plan for reducing chinook catch while optimizing sockeye harvest should consider historical timing data for daily chinook escapement levels.
2. Total prevention of chinook harvest is not possible, but more optimal chinook:sockeye catch ratios should be highlighted, such as a reduction of mesh size to 4.75" or less when chinook projections fall below the escapement curve. This small mesh size also favors smaller size chinooks during harvest, as most are the same size as sockeye, and smaller chinook have a lower spawning importance.
3. For 3. Change "...the department in an attempt to conserve king salmon shall conduct a drift gillnet test fishery..." This should be changed to "...gillnet test fishery..." or "...drift and set net test fishery...". Set nets are stationary and in many cases, they could be a more standard metric for sockeye abundance estimates.

**Proposal 12:**

We would like to withdraw our support for proposal 12 and recommend the Board take no action.

We recognize the broader perspective of proposal 11 and understand that a much more comprehensive discussion will be had by the Board concerning chinook management. We would like to support the broader discussion for proposal 11, while still considering a specific end-date for chinook management and a maximum mesh size restriction for sockeye during chinook management periods, and are supportive of a higher level for optimization of the chinook:sockeye catch ratio. These comments will be added to proposal 11 during the comment period.



**Proposal 31 and 32:**

Support with amendments.

Fishermen in the Nushagak already record chinook salmon commercially sold or kept for personal use on their ADF&G fish ticket. These sections regarding commercial requirements should be removed.

I also believe the Board should consider a requirement to log specific or estimated daily landings of chinook salmon. Catch-and-release mortality data and studies exist for Bristol Bay. This data supported estimate would be insightful for future biological understanding of spawning to return ratios under changing ecological conditions.

Alaska residents with a valid subsistence permit should report any chinook salmon retained for personal use from a commercial opening on their subsistence license only. All commercially sold chinook would still be recorded on the ADF&G fish ticket. Currently, chinook salmon kept can be double reported on both a subsistence permit and an ADF&G fish ticket.

**Proposal 61:**

We would like to withdraw our support for proposal 61 and recommend the Board to take no action.

There are more pressing concerns with chinook management than this proposal. We recognize some of the inconsistencies with data collection in Bristol Bay, but that this data is considered with historical apportionment. Processors do record number of chinook and total pounds harvested, so extrapolated data does exist. This data also becomes additionally murky with any chinook kept for personal use.



**Name:** Nick Downs

**Community of Residence:** Bellingham

**Comment:**

I am writing these comments after reading the proposals for the Bristol Bay salmon fishery. I have been involved in the fishery for 25 years.

I have strong feeling about several of the proposals.

Proposals 36, 37, & 38 are all very similar and they would all accomplish roughly the same goal. I support them but with a slight modification on the length of the tow line. I have always had around 60 fathoms of tow line stored on the bottom of my net reel. In my years of fishing, I have used it on multiple occasions to avoid grounding my boat while being able to maintain connection to my net. This amount of line seems sufficient to help avoid certain situations while not creating a hazard to another fisherman in the area. In an attempt at simplicity, I would suggest a limit of 50 fathoms or 300 feet.

In recent years we have seen fisherman deploying longer and longer tow lines in order to gain a complete advantage over others in shallow waters. I have seen fellow fisherman with towlines to the extent of thousands of feet, often Spectra line. There are two main issues with this that I have experienced. The first being with that much line out the fisherman's net is not within sight of their vessel and you wouldn't even know they are connected to a net. Their towline is often just under the surface of the water and not visible. In this situation, it would be easy to get their towline tangled in your propellor. The second is that this extreme extended towline can block multiple sets outside of the fisherman's net from being able to be made and creates a disadvantage to others in the area.

I am in opposition to proposal 42 suggesting to repeal the permit stacking "D" permit operation of 200 fathoms of gear. With the recent large runs and catches I can see the merit in suggesting this but it was not that many years ago that the fleet was looking closely at a permit buyback system. The permit stacking is a very good solution to accomplish a fleet reduction without making it mandatory for all permit holder to participate and pay for it. Permit buybacks in other areas have created inflated permit values that were not linked directly to increased revenue from the fishery causing problems for new entrants. When the cycle goes back to smaller runs the reduced fleet made possible by permit stacking will be essential to keep fisherman in business.

Proposals 46 & 47 are essentially the same as I read them and I am in support of them. I do see the need to limit the number of permits an individual can buy and use in order to keep the permits from being owned by a select few wealthy individuals. I do think that if two permits can be fished on one boat than that the boat owner should be allowed to legally own and register the two permits. I would not support any one person from being able to register and fish more than the two that can be fished on that individual's vessel.

There are several proposals regarding the reestablishment of a general district after escapement goals for all areas are met, generally I would support this. I have seen firsthand how late in the season after enforcement is gone the fishery is dominated by those with the willingness to go further and further into closed waters. Those who are trying to abide by the boundaries are at an extreme disadvantage at this point in the season.

I can see the idea of proposal 56 but it would create a nearly impossible situation for tracking catches and enforcement of regulations. It also would create a lot more opportunity for those who are purposely not following the rules of the fishery. I oppose this.



**Name:** Eric Fjelstad

**Community of Residence:** Anchorage

**Comment:**

I support proposal 30 for the establishment of a limited youth fishery on the Naknek River.

1. Need - there is a pressing need to create opportunities for youth fishing on the Naknek. History has show that abundance and access drive participation in hunting and fishing. I've been sport fishing the Naknek 2x/year for the past 8 years. Outside of Ship Creek, the Naknek is by far the most intense sport fishing fishery I've seen in Alaska. I see virtually no unguided locals fishing on the Naknek, and I never see kids. The river is super competitive, and my sense is locals have concluded it's not worth their while to try compete for limited fishing spots with the highly motivated and effective guide fleet. It's a sad situation, and it's concerning. The Naknek is potentially a river in trouble, and it needs local eyes on the water. This is a good step to build local support for long-term stewardship.

2. Precedent - the State has a history of establishing youth only fishing and hunting opportunities (e.g., Campbell Creek/kings, Hatcher Pass/ptarmigan, Skilak Lake Road/small game). These regulatory programs quickly become baked-in with the regulated community - accepted as part of the overall management scheme. I've never heard anyone complain about youth fishing and hunting days. To the contrary, my experience anecdotally is that regulatory initiatives favoring kids are widely popular. Everyone recognizes that we need a strong pipeline of young fishermen to protect the resources we all love.

This should not be a hard decision for the board. Please support proposal 30.

Eric Fjelstad

See attached

---



Eric B. Fjelstad  
313 W. Harvard Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 229-5479  
EFjelstad@perkinscoie.com

## **Overview**

My name is Eric Fjelstad. I live in Anchorage and am an avid sportfishing angler. I have been fishing trout, steelhead, and salmon for 40+ years - first in the tributaries of the Great Lakes, later in the Pacific Northwest, and in Alaska for the last 28 years. I lived for 5+ years in Ketchikan and the last 23 years in Anchorage. If I am not working, I am fishing. I've been fortunate to experience some of the best sportfishing that Alaska has to offer. Most of my major life decisions have been driven by a passion for freshwater fishing, centered around steelhead, big trout, and kings.

I have been fishing the Naknek River for rainbow trout generally 2x/year (mid-September and mid-October) for about 8 years. I know the river well and have witnessed a very significant increase in angling pressure over this relatively short period. Most concerningly, it appears that Naknek rainbow trout are being impacted by super intense sportfishing pressure.

I support Proposal 17 as an essential step to protect the Naknek River rainbow fishery with two caveats: (i) the timeframe should be shortened to a limited 45-day window from September 1 - October 15 to ensure the measure is targeting rainbow trout only and not impacting access to salmon fishing, and (ii) the effective date should be delayed until September 1, 2024.

## **Naknek Rainbow Trout - Best in Class**

The Naknek River rainbow trout are recognized by hardcore trout fishermen as the very best on the planet. If Naknek rainbows were a place, they would be mentioned in the same breath as Denali, Yellowstone, and Yosemite. Three rivers in Alaska are known to have the largest rainbows - the Naknek, Kvichak, and Kenai - and the Naknek is the gem amongst them. Why? Naknek rainbows are bigger than those found in the other rivers. And the Naknek has a greater abundance of these bigger fish. Beyond that, the Naknek River itself is unique - it is big, technical water tailor made for fly fishermen favoring long casts with the "spey" style of casting. This is big game hunting for megafauna - people come from all over the world to do battle with huge Naknek rainbows. These rainbow trout are unicorns - exceedingly rare, unique, and special. They have no equal anywhere on the planet.



## **Health of the Naknek River Rainbow Fishery - Storm Clouds on the Horizon**

***Where are the Small Trout?*** There appear to be very few small trout in the Naknek River during the September 15 - October 15 period when trout of all sizes fatten up on salmon eggs and carcasses. By “small fish” I mean those ranging from 6” to 22”. I often fish for days on end at the Naknek and do not catch a single fish in this size range. Where are they?

I am aware of a recent study suggesting that the Naknek River rainbow trout are doing fine. The study was apparently based on an assessment of 153 trout captured in 2019 and 2020. I question whether critical management decisions should be premised on such a limited data set. I can only offer my personal observation, which is that over the past 8 years, I’ve noticed a marked decrease in the number of smaller trout in the Naknek River.

I caught *far* more fish in this size range - without question - 8 years ago than I do today. A working hypothesis is that intense bead fishing could be disproportionately impacting smaller fish. I am not a biologist, but I’ve spent a lifetime on the water. I pay attention and am observant to trends, particularly when things are going up or down. I see a discernible downward trend in small fish numbers. This trend is concerning since it begs the question: where will the next generation of big trout come from?

***The Huge Naknek Trout - Shiny Objects.*** It may be easy to miss what could be a very significant underlying problem - disappearing small fish - because of the consistent reports of an abundance of very large trout. When staring at a picture of a Naknek River rainbow upwards of 3 feet long, who wouldn’t conclude that the fishery must be healthy? These very large trout are shiny objects and get a disproportionate share of the attention. It is no surprise that the very largest trout are doing well. First, the record runs of reds into the Naknek River creates a food source that is exploited by the largest fish. Second, the largest Naknek trout are tanks. They are tough and built for battle - intense bead fishing pressure may injure or kill some of them, but most will survive. But small fish - unlike the largest tanks - are vulnerable to injury and mortality from bead fishing.

In short, the Naknek has very, very large trout. The numbers of the very largest of these trout may, in fact, be increasing. But that is not a surprise given the records runs of food for these large fish. It is hard to not stare at a shiny object, but the key point is the health of these very large fish should not be used as a convenient proxy for judging the population-level health of smaller fish.

## **Comparisons to the Kenai River Trout Fishery**

There is a tendency to look at another busy river - the Kenai River - and draw comparisons to the Naknek. The Kenai receives significant fishing pressure, yet the trout fishery appears to be doing great. It would be easy to look at the Kenai and conclude



“...the Kenai has an intense rainbow fishery, but the fishery is doing great. Therefore, we have good data that an intense trout fishery will not impact the underlying resource. All should be good on the Naknek.” I believe a conclusion along these lines would be seriously flawed.

As background, I fish for rainbow trout on the Kenai River nearly year-round. It is my home river, and I am a keen student of its trends and subtleties.

***Kenai Trout Have Sanctuaries. Naknek Trout Do Not.*** The Kenai is a very different river than the Naknek. Trout fishing on the Kenai River primarily occurs in two areas: (i) the so-called Upper River area (from the outlet of Kenai Lake downstream to the inlet of Skilak Lake), and (ii) the upper part of the Middle River (above Bing’s Landing upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake). These two stretches receive a lot of pressure from trout fishermen. But the Kenai differs from the Naknek in that rainbow trout go to many other places in the Kenai watershed where the trout fishing pressure is light to nearly non-existent.

Many trout migrate below Bing’s Landing and thrive in the water downstream from Bing’s to Soldotna, and even in the Lower River below Soldotna. Fishermen in these areas are primarily focused on catching salmon. Rainbow fishing in these areas is an afterthought for most fishermen, including guides, and the fishing pressure on trout is light. Many trout also follow salmon up various Kenai tributaries in July and August. These include the Upper and Lower Killey forks, the Funny River, the Moose River, etc. Trout are effectively unfished in these waters. In short, trout in the Kenai watershed have many defacto “sanctuary” areas where they feed, grow and thrive with little or no angling pressure.

The Naknek River is different - virtually all the trout (during fall feeding) exist in the relatively limited stretch of water from the outlet of Naknek Lake to Rapids Camp. This is where the food - salmon eggs and carcasses - collects, and every inch of this water is fished intensely. There are no sanctuary areas for Naknek River trout.

***Naknek Guides are Very Good at Catching Fish (Much Better than Kenai Weekend Warriors).*** The Naknek trout fishery is nearly 100% a guided fishery. The Naknek guides are good at their job, which is catching fish. They fish the same stretch of water every day and are remarkably efficient at finding and catching fish. The Kenai River is a very different fishery. The Kenai River draws a crowd from nearby urban areas (Soldotna/Kenai/Sterling, Anchorage, MatSu Valley). It has guided fishing trout, but most of the Kenai trout fishermen are locals. They are unguided, weekend warriors. These people are out having fun. Some of them are effective at catching fish, but many are not. Whatever their level of proficiency, there is no doubt they are not nearly as effective at catching trout as the guides.



The broader point is all pressure is not equal. 10 boats on the Naknek have a very different impact on a trout fishery than 10 boats on the Middle Kenai. 10 guide boats on the Naknek touch many, many fish. On the Kenai, if there are 10 boats, 6 or 7 of them would likely be unguided. Many of these unguided fishermen are simply out to enjoy the river experience, and they have nominal impact on the trout fishery.

***Naknek and Kenai are Fundamentally Different Fisheries.*** Kenai trout appear to be doing well. Like the Naknek, there seem to be more of the very biggest trout in the Kenai in recent years. But notably, I'm also seeing more smaller trout than I've ever seen. The full age spectrum of rainbow trout appears to be healthy - even thriving- in the Kenai River. The Kenai benefits from the same dynamic as the Naknek - the red salmon runs are strong. There is lots of food in the system. The Kenai differs from the Naknek in that (i) the pressure is less intense (and less effective), and (ii) the trout have sanctuaries where they are only lightly fished or not fished at all.

The key point to be made is it would be misguided to conclude (i) the Kenai River is a busy, intense rainbow fishery and doing fine, and (ii) therefore another intense busy fishery - the Naknek - should similarly be doing fine. I - and others who fish both systems - believe this conclusion would be misplaced. We see storm clouds on the horizon with the Naknek.

### **Management Policy for the Naknek Rainbow Catch & Release Fishery Should Account for Quality of Experience**

The Board manages *salmon* sportfishing based largely, if not entirely, on "health of fishery" considerations. This is absolutely right as a policy prescription because salmon are viewed by most Alaskans as a source of food. The management regime should - appropriately - prioritize access to the fishery over other considerations. Alaskans "get this" and accept that the standard approach for salmon is to catch your fish, then step back and make room for others to do so. It will likely be crowded, but that is the Alaska way. "Quality of experience" considerations have little to no place in a salmon fishery. But a trout fishery on the Naknek River is different.

The nature of a catch and release *trout* fishery is fundamentally different than a salmon fishery. With catch and release fishing for trout, there is no reason to be on the water other than enjoyment. The fish are not food. The goal is to catch them in a way, and under circumstances, that is fun and enjoyable. Unharmful. When considering the value of a catch and release fishery, the qualitative side of the experience should, appropriately, be squarely on the table as a management consideration. It should not be an afterthought. In rare cases - like a catch and release fishery on a crown jewel river like the Naknek - "quality of experience" considerations should be on equal footing with "health of the fishery" considerations as the foundation for management policy.



The Naknek rainbow fishery is like a house with a stunning view of a mountain. The house has value by itself, but its true value is the incremental value afforded by the view. The two are inextricably linked, and the sum is greater than the individual parts. When viewing how the Naknek rainbow fishery should be managed, the Board should absolutely view “health of the fishery” as the most critical issue. But, if the Board is to maximize the true value of this rare rainbow trout fishery for Alaskans (and others), it must prioritize the enjoyment of the fishermen as a major consideration. The Naknek rainbow fishery is catch and release fishing. If the enjoyment factor is being significantly degraded, then a central component of the fisheries’ value proposition has been lost.

### **Degradation of the Naknek Trout Fishing Experience**

Nobody who regularly fishes the Naknek would dispute the point that the intensity of the trout fishing has increased and, correspondingly, the quality of the angling experience has been degraded. There are a number of structural reasons that may explain why this is happening. It almost certainly will get worse over time.

***Naknek has Limited Places to Wade Fish.*** The portion of the Naknek River from Rapids Camp to the outlet of Naknek Lake is a relatively short river, a few miles long. But only a portion of this span of the river is suitable for wade fishing. There are approximately 20 places to wade fish on the Naknek. Why so few? The water is limited primarily because the Naknek is a deep, fast river with many large, slippery boulders. It is a difficult, dangerous river to wade, particularly when the water is high. If you are wade fishing, you are fishing in one of these 20 spots. Or you are not fishing.

This stretch of the river is fished intensely for trout from early September into mid-October. The guided operations are very good at what they do. They primarily target trout in this area by fishing beads from boats. They do their job well. Every inch of this section of the river is intensely targeted by guide boats. By mid to late September, many of these operations transition to wade fishing, and that is the point at which the overcrowding becomes acute. Simply stated, there are not enough places to fish. At peak season (late September/early October), there are at least 40 boats competing for roughly 20 places to fish. The math doesn’t work. The overcrowding with guide boats leads to an intense competition for these coveted spots. It also leads to an increasing amount of bad conduct on the river. The Naknek trout fishery is catch and release fishing. It is supposed to be fun. People come to the Naknek from all over the globe for the “trip of a lifetime.” But instead of showing these fishermen the best of Alaska, we are showing them the worst of Alaskans.

***The Investment Barrier for Naknek Commercial is Low. Degradation of Naknek Trout Fishing Experience Will Worsen.*** The Naknek is being loved to death because it is relatively easy to exploit. There are number of structural reasons for this.



- King Salmon is accessible by Alaska Airlines. It is relatively easy and cheap to reach the Naknek via a short flight from Anchorage.
- Land is relatively abundant and affordable in the King Salmon area. It does not take a small fortune to get a lodge going in King Salmon. Facilities are easier and cheaper to build and maintain on a road system with ready access to stores, shipping/USPS, and people.
- A good road system provides access to the entirety of the river. There are multiple boat launches.

Together, this means it is easier and cheaper, on a relative basis, to establish or expand a guided fishing operation on the Naknek than on other Bristol Bay streams. The experience of fishing the Naknek rainbow fishery will continue to degrade because the barrier for entry to add new capacity is low. And because the demand for fishing on the Naknek is nearly unlimited, people will continue to arrive and fill up the expanding fleet of guided boats. Market forces have not - and will not - address this problem. It is a classic tragedy of the commons - a race to the bottom as operators add capacity to grow their businesses.

### **The Board Already Manages Sport Fisheries Based on Quality of Experience Considerations**

There is no question the Naknek fishing experience is being significantly degraded. The policy question is what significance, if any, should be accorded “quality of experience” as a consideration in the Board’s management prescriptions. The Board could choose to let the commercial market manage itself on the Naknek River. That is the status quo today. We know exactly where that path leads. We will see the very best trout fishery on the globe reduced to the fishery equivalent of a Walmart or McDonalds - maximizing access with no regard for the quality of the experience. It does not have to be this way. This should not be a hard call. The Board has faced these issues to varying degrees on other rivers and has taken appropriate action.

***Relevant Kenai Peninsula Precedents.*** The Kenai Peninsula is crowded. Locals and tourists are vying for water and, as a consequence, the regulatory regime governing the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers reflects strong “quality of experience” considerations. A few examples follow:

**Kenai “Float Only” Mondays.** The Kenai has “float only” Mondays running from May 1st to July 31st. This rule takes power boaters and their potential clients off the river one day a week. Notably, it applies to guides and non-guided power boats. This prescription may have a modest conservation objective, but its primary purpose is undoubtedly to create one day a week where the river is less



frenetic. This is a significant management prescription based on “quality of experience” considerations.

**Kenai Special Rules for Guides.** The Kenai has additional, wide-ranging “quality of experience” regulations governing guided sport fishing operations. Most of these regulations are “time and manner” focused. The net effect is they reduce congestion on the river and materially contribute to a better quality of experience for fishermen. Highlights include:

- Guides cannot sport fish with clients.
- The Middle is closed May 1st through July 31st to all guided sport fishing on Sundays and Mondays from Skilak Lake downstream to Bings Landing.
- Guides can only fish this stretch of the Middle on Tuesday through Saturday and only during the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Guides cannot fish this stretch of the Middle for silvers on Mondays from August 1st through November 30th.
- Guides cannot fish in the lower Middle (below Moose River) for any species on Mondays from August 1st through November 30th.

**Kasilof Special Rules for Guides.** Guides cannot fish on any Sunday in July downstream of the Sterling Highway bridge.

What drives these policy prescriptions on the Kenai Peninsula? It is clear that these regulations are driven by a mix of “health of fisheries” considerations *and* “quality of experience” considerations. There is a decided thumb on the scale for “quality of experience” on the Kenai River. This is a good thing, and these measures are widely appreciated. The rules are part of the regulatory infrastructure. Nobody talks about these measures anymore. They are accepted - and appreciated - as “the way it is.”

The Naknek River rainbow fishery needs better management - modest regulatory changes, tailored to the particular challenges facing that river. Proposal 17 is not precedent-setting policy. Similar management prescriptions have already been successfully implemented on other rivers. These types of measures are popular and have the effect of increasing - not decreasing - the availability of the river resources to ordinary people.



## **Other Factors: Impacts on Locals, The Relevance of Existing Investments, and Slippery Slopes**

***Proposal 17 Would Benefit Locals.*** I rarely see “locals” fishing on the Naknek River. I almost never see locals fishing with kids on the Naknek River. Why? The Naknek trout fishery is so intense that locals simply stay home. They are voting with their feet, and the absence of locals on the water is the ultimate indictment of the status quo. Management policy should be centered on the ideal that a parent should be able to take a kid out on a weekend day and find a place to fish for a few hours. It should be fun. It should be enjoyable. That is not the Naknek. To start, they would be lucky to find a place to fish. With 40+ boats vying for approximately 20 places to fish, the chance that locals find a place to fish is very low. Everything about the status quo and direction of the Naknek trout fishery is antithetical to the interests of the local residents.

Local access should be a priority for the Board. Proposal 17 will create *more* space on the river for locals and Alaskans who want to fish, unguided, with people they know in King Salmon. The biggest beneficiary of Proposal 17 will be locals who will have a chance to get on the river, find a place to fish, and enjoy the experience. To be clear, Proposal 17 should not be seen as *limiting access*. It would *enhance* access for Alaskans.

***Existing Naknek Investments Should Not Impede the Establishment of Sustainable Fisheries Policy.*** Existing investments by commercial operators in a fishery are a factor that should be *considered* by the Board in management decisions, but the existence of investments should not *drive* overall fisheries policy. The Board and other regulatory bodies frequently make policy decisions that impact existing investments in fisheries. The crab fishermen in the Bering Sea are facing this right now - their huge investments in boats and processing capacity are in peril due to crashing crab populations. The Cook Inlet East Side set net fishermen appreciate this dynamic as well. Sport fishing guides in the MatSu Valley have undoubtedly lost business - if not the entirety of their investments - due to the policy measures instituted to protect depressed runs of kings. At the end of the day, the management of a fishery must be focused on the health and value of the fishery rather than protecting an incumbent’s mortgage.

With an iconic species - such as the Naknek River rainbows - adherence to the precautionary principle of management should be the driving consideration. Currently, the Naknek is, in effect, managed by the market - commercial operators - rather than through policy established by this Board. This is not a criticism of the Board or of the commercial operators. Circumstances on the Naknek have changed markedly over the past 10 years. Regulatory policy has not caught up - yet - with the rapidly changing situation on the Naknek. The operators are simply doing what they do best which is to invest in a fishery, market the resources to grow their businesses and, from there, deploying remarkable efficiency to the process of putting people on the water to catch



fish. But the process playing out on the Naknek today is no better regulated than a Walmart parking lot on a Saturday afternoon. It is a mess and getting worse.

Certain operators may face headwinds arising from the adoption of Proposal 17. But the history of sport fishing operators is they figure things out. They are hardworking, entrepreneurial, and they find and exploit new fisheries. Overall, this has been a very good thing for most fisheries and Alaskans, making remote, inaccessible places available for enjoyment of the public and providing critical economic activity in rural Alaska. But the Naknek has reached - and exceeded - a breaking point. Proposal 17 would effect change on the Naknek, and although it may create some headwinds, the operators will undoubtedly figure it out.

***Slippery Slope Considerations:*** Some may argue that Proposal 17 would establish a “slippery slope” precedent and lead to similar management prescriptions on other river systems in Bristol Bay. These concerns are unfounded - a strawman argument premised on a regulatory solution in search of a problem. Nobody is seeking to institute similar management regimes for other Bristol Bay rivers. Other Bristol Bay rivers no doubt have occasional crowding but nothing approaching the problems seen on the Naknek. There are structural reasons, discussed above, that make the Naknek uniquely vulnerable to exploitation.

## **Conclusion**

There is a compelling need for a change in the regulatory approach governing guided fishing in the rainbow trout fishery on the Naknek River. There is Board precedent for an approach centered around Proposal 17 based on decisions the Board has already made on other rivers. Proposal 17 recognizes the true value of Naknek rainbows, which is fundamentally tied to the health of these iconic fish *and* the experience of catching them in the unique fishing conditions that exist on the Naknek River. These iconic fish and the fishery that is focused on them should be managed sustainably to ensure that catch and release remains an enjoyable endeavor rather than a frenetic, stressful race to the bottom. There should be a grander vision for the Naknek than having it become a Walmart-style parking lot for sport fishermen.

For these reasons, I strongly support Proposal 17. But the Board should make two changes to Proposal 17 before adopting it:

***Limit the Regulatory Prescription to a Limited 45-Day Period.*** The regulatory scheme in Proposal 17 should apply only to a limited 45-day period where the rainbow trout fishing pressure is most intense on the Naknek River. It should start September 1st and run through October 15th. The proposed start date of June 8th is too early - it would subject salmon fishing, which is largely done by September 1st, to a regulatory regime that is not warranted or appropriate for salmon fishing.



*Delay the Effective Date to 2024.* Commercial operators should be given time to plan. The Board should adopt Proposal 17 with the change above (September 1st start date) but delay the effective day of the regulation to **September 1, 2024**. This will give commercial operators additional time to plan. They have invested in businesses and efforts should be made to minimize impacts on their operations.



**Name:** Krystal Foote

**Community of Residence:** Beaverton, Oregon

**Comment:**

As a permit holder, I SUPPORT proposals 35, 36, 37, 38 and 40.

**Rationale:**

#35: The 100 foot mandatory distance between drift gillnets and set gillnets is an insufficient distance to ensure productive, fair and safe practices for all parties. Increasing the distance to a minimum of 300 feet is a more realistic regulation for the drift fleet to adhere to and more realistic for enforcement to gain the documentation they need and for attaining the goal of keeping nets and gear from colliding.

#36-38: Long tow lines (in excess of 100 feet) allow drift gillnet fishermen to anchor their nets in shallow water, retreat (with their vessel) into deeper water while still maintaining control of the net. This practice of towing nets in strong currents and along mudflats has a massively negative impact on the quality of the fish, and it is technically not drift gillnetting, by definition. Allowing practices that produce a high volume of low-quality, unmarketable fish negatively impacts fishermen Bay-wide. This is incredibly demoralizing to fishermen who, for the betterment of all, prioritize quality over quantity. Limiting the length of tow lines is likely to have a positive impact on the quality of fish.

#40: I can confirm that this section of the district has developed a massive mudflat extending from the 18-foot high water-mark out to about the 12' water-mark of over 1,000 feet, which makes this area virtually unfishable. Changing this arbitrary reference point would enable fishing opportunities for fishermen looking for alternate fishing grounds when the fish are running on the west side channel.

---



## COMMENTS TO BRISTOL BAY FINFISH BOARD OF FISH PROPOSALS 2022 - Shannon Ford Ward, Set netter, South Naknek

### PROPOSAL 12

I support the concept of testing a mesh restriction and other ideas in order to give chinook a chance to get through prior to July 1st. We are not doing well by the kings. It's time to try some concepts, and this one seems to have the least impact on continuing other fisheries, such as sockeye. Sunsetting any laws would give a chance to observe the results, and either keep the regulation or try something else.

---

### PROPOSAL 14

I support the ADF&Gs proposal to clarify the law by specifying that set net only may conduct subsistence fishing in the special harvest areas.

---

### PROPOSALS 31 & 32

I support increased reporting of retained kings by both sport and commercial fishery. I report every single king that we keep, even if its a 4 lb jack. We need every single bit of data we can to solve the disappearing chinook problem.

---

### PROPOSALS 33 & 41

I am in support of the proposals calling for a revamp of the boundaries for set net sites due to erosion. We have seen an unprecedented increase in beach erosion over recent years. Setnetters should be allowed the opportunity to fish their sites with the water access originally intended.

---

### PROPOSALS 34 & 35

***- I am in the highest support and most concerned about the continuing impact to set net fishers by drifters operating their gear and boats directly over set net buoys, anchors, lines, and nets.***

As drift boats get bigger and faster with an increasing number featuring jet drives (as well as new captains buying into the industry and / or fishing new districts with which they are unfamiliar), we have seen a massive movement towards drift fishers operating in the shallows. What used to be an isolated occurrence has become every tide. The intent of separate gear groups and allocation was to divide the waters into distinct fisheries; one on the shore and anchored, and the other to drift freely in the bay. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. In the case of set net fishers, however, we pay for the privilege of fishing a specific site. We can't just pick up and go elsewhere. It's our allotted space. In my case, I'm the 4th generation to fish my site, with my daughter being the 5th. I will outline some direct results of these incursions below.

#### 1. BLOCKED ACCESS TO SET NET SITE

On our beach (Nak / Kvi district), we have observed a number of drift boats laying out



mere feet from an outer buoy, blocking access for set net fishers to drive along the seaward boundary of the set net sites. Think of it as a marine road; this is where skiffs go back and forth to deliver and return to clear or pull their nets. When they can't even get into the site, that's a problem.

## 2. DAMAGE TO SET NET BUOYS, ANCHORS, & LINES

Worse, drift gear routinely wraps the outer buoys, putting strain on the anchors and gear, often pulling them up entirely. It's very common to come back and find masses of cut web and line left as the drifter simply cuts off the tangled part and leaves. For many of us, we have pulleys. Mesh and detritus in the works make our site impossible to operate since it won't go through the pulley - possibly causing unintentional closure violations or quality issues if the set net fisher is unable to pull their net into shore and pick / pull it. If my running line is cut, I can't simply tie the pieces back together; they won't go through the pulleys with a knot in the line.

## 3. LOST FISHING TIME

Due to the extreme tidal movement, a lot of set net sites are unable to access their outer anchors except for very low tides, and sometimes not for very long before the water comes back. Putting in anchors and lines in the outer mud is something we dread each spring. It's a huge and unpleasant job! Even if someone had stocked a bunch of replacement anchors and buoys, it might not be possible to set up the site again for several tides. Damage to skiffs and certain gear could end the season.

## 4. QUALITY ISSUES

In addition to impacting how efficiently a set net fisher is able to access their net and fish, leaving chunks of drift nets with rotten fish tangled in set net gear creates another navigational hazard plus quality problems and waste. I have seen multiple drifters cut an entire shackle of gear loose to drift or tangle indefinitely, even while full of decomposing salmon.

## 5. THREAT TO LIFE AND PROPERTY

By far the worst, however, is when drift boat fishers drive over set net sites while the set net fishers are in the act of working their nets. I have filmed drift boats driving at full speed on the plane, right down the beach over every single set net, and travelling on the SHOREWARD side of set net skiffs that they nearly swamp. This is even more egregious than a boat which may come close to the outer buoy and claim they didn't realize the distance. These boats are actually on the other side of the skiffs, running right on the shoreline so that any cuts or pulls on the line would release the skiff, net, and running line out into the bay (an even harder problem to fix when trying to repair a messed up site!). Skiffs are routinely rammed as they are left tied onto their running line at a site; boat paint and dents tell the story, as do chunks of line or mesh. These are expensive and life-threatening violations. I have been on my skiff in the darkness, tied onto the inshore side of my net during a fog, and had a drift boat come at full speed straight for the shore at high tide. A crewman yelled and waved a flashlight, and the



boat veered at the last second. However, he caught our line and yanked the whole thing up, where it then drifted upstream to tangle around my neighbor. We ended up having to cut our entire net and line up to remove it from my neighbor's line, and it cost us several tides plus the gear loss. Obviously, the real tragedy would have been if the boat hit us (I'm sure we would all have died). But it illustrates the common trend for drift boats to operate anywhere they can get their boat, including what is clearly a set net area.

The problem is that laws already exist to prevent drift boat gear from coming within a certain distance of a set net site. There is little to no enforcement. I have called to report a violation in progress, filming the action which clearly depicts the boat name and number, time, and relation to set net gear. There is no response. I have yet to see a trooper arrive or any investigation generated by submitted pictures, video, and other documentation. There is a regular flyover of set net gear at low tide, presumably to check for any violations regarding gear distance, unpicked fish, or similar. We are easy to observe and therefore ticket. But there doesn't seem to be any interest in monitoring the set net beach region during the higher portion of the tide when drift boats decide to take up set netting.

***I urge the Board of Fish to consider the negative impact and threats being perpetrated on set netters if these situations are allowed to continue and grow in frequency and acceptance.*** Drift boats are getting bigger and faster, and there are always calls for increasing the size, permit numbers allowed, and similar. Our smaller fishery composed mainly of families (and a larger proportion of locals / watershed residents than the drift fleet) deserves to have their leased and licensed areas kept protected for their intended use.

---

#### **PROPOSALS 36, 37, & 38**

I support the idea of setting restrictions on tow line lengths, especially in connection with the above outlined issues and ongoing conflicts.

---

#### **PROPOSAL 58**

I am in great support of opening the NRSHA when escapement has reached a certain number upriver. For years, we have called for a set net fishery inriver, citing quality, safety, and efficiency as major results should this be allowed. Allowing the drift and set net fleet to fish in the NRSHA would conserve resources while allowing a greater harvest at reduced usage of fuel and similar. Recent seasons have seen an increase in bad weather as well. Fishing in more sheltered waters protects fishers, their gear, and their fish quality. This could also benefit local and watershed residents who may not own the larger, fast, and expensive boats.

---

#### **PROPOSAL 59**

I am in favor of repealing the line item preventing the continuous fishery of set net gear in Egegik. It makes no sense to require a set net fisher to pull and reset the gear every tide when they are just going to be catching fish again when the water returns. Increased wear and tear on machinery, and eliminating the short period setnetters have to return to camp and warm up / dry out / maybe eat something = higher risk of injury and accident. Drift boats can spell off and



carry their supplies with them. Set netters do not. There is no reason to pull and reset gear at low tide when the water is out anyway.

---

**PROPOSAL 61**

I am in favor of requiring more reporting on chinook size class on fish tickets. We need all the information we can get in trying to solve the riddle of what's happening to the kings!



PC27

**Name:** Robert Fuentes

**Community of Residence:** Dillingham, AK

**Comment:**

PROPOSAL 18 5 AAC 67.020 - I oppose this proposal. For our camp, and we have many hours on the water with a large number of fishermen we fish annually, we rarely catch an incidental trout or grayling while using spawn. In regard to kings, with the setup we use to target kings using spawn, we rarely catch a king deep in the mouth or in the gills. Many may not be aware of the different options out there on how to use a rig that spaces the bait from the hook which significantly reduces the chances of hooking a king salmon deep in the mouth to wound or kill it.

PROPOSAL 20 5 AAC 67.022 - I am in favor of this proposal. Currently, I don't think we can use bait but barbed hooks are allowed. I agree that barbless hooks are much easier on the fish.

PROPOSAL 28 5 AAC 67.022 - I oppose this proposal. There are several businesses in that area that this would affect significantly. Very few local fisherman fish this area. It would be best for guides/lodges to adopt a self-implemented policy to either not fish the area or just simply use artificial only or catch and release only.

PROPOSAL 29 5 AAC 67.022-I oppose this proposal. The problem is that there are not enough fish in-river. It makes no sense to allow commercial fishing to catch fish first and then let what possibly remains to enter the river. What makes more sense is to allow enough fish in-river first then allow commercial fishing to take place.

---



PC28

**Name:** Kimberly Fundeen

**Community of Residence:** King Salmon, AK

**Comment:**

I am commenting in support of Proposal 30. I believe that it is important for the kids in this District to be able to experience the joy of fishing and family bonding out on the river without being crowded by guides and their clients. I have lived my entire life in King Salmon Alaska. Some of my greatest memories are when I was a child and my grandfather would take me out fishing all year. The river wasn't crowded with guide boats then and the Chinook salmon were plentiful during the Summer months. We would take the whole family and go up Big Creek or out to a swimming spot where we could play, fishing or swim without fear of being run over by anyone. It isn't like that today because it's no longer fun to take the kids out fishing. I feel it's overrun with guide boats that crowd everyone out.

I believe that if Proposal 30 passed it would give the youth a chance to experience what it should be like to fish on our majestic river. To have fun without feeling like they didn't belong. The Naknek River should be enjoyed by everyone. Giving the youth one Sunday a month doesn't seem like a lot to ask. They are our future and should be able to experience this area like it used to be and I wish it still was.

---



PC29

**Name:** Julie Gaumont

**Community of Residence:** Corona del Mar, CA

**Comment:**

I am in SUPPORT for Proposal 33

I am a member of the Ugashik Village Set Netters

My name is Julie Gaumont

I have been set netting in Ugashik for 20 years and the last few years the mud is increasingly getting worse. The past 2 years we were not able to fish our entire net during the fishing period because we could not walk through the mud. We have to set the outside, wait until the tide turns so there is more water and then we tie the inside of our net up. But then we have to baby sit the net and when the tide goes out, we have to pull the net early so that we don't get caught in the mud.

I know we have lost many pounds because of this. If we were able to extend the offshore limitation from 600 feet to 800 feet from the 18-foot high tide mark, this would help tremendously and would allow us to fish our entire net for the entire opening.

I have attached a PDF document with photos where you can see a huge area of erosion and the mud is so thick.....it is very dangerous and if you get stuck, the tide comes in, you will drown.

---











Steven Gerry

ADF&G Board of Fish  
Boards support section

I oppose Proposal 40.

My name is Steven Gerry and I have been fishing on the westside of Kvichack district since the early 80s. I am the last of the westside fishermen originally involved with changing the rules.

The silting in happened in the 1980's and many fishermen up the whole westside bank were displaced. This bank has changed relatively little in recent years and caused no displacement of fishermen.

This change was implemented to give those westside fishermen a place to fish after being displaced by the silting in. Over the years many of those fishermen exited the fishery or moved to the Eastside to more consistent sites closer to the tenders.

There is lots of room on the westside for a fisherman to put a net and catch fish. More than ever in fact. This issue was dealt with in 1985 when the rule change allowed us to fish with the top part of our net dry at the time of the opening.

Opening up more space south of the line seems unnecessary considering how much is available to the north already. More space than there ever has been. Sites south of mine would affect my catch negatively and on top of that devalue my site as I start to eye retirement.

Doing nothing would cause no harm since no one has been displaced.

Thank you,

Steven Gerry



PC31

**Name:** Anders Gustafson

**Community of Residence:** Homer, AK

**Comment:**

Greetings,

I am writing to OPPOSE proposal #28 suggesting the closure of sport fishing of king salmon on the upper Nushagak, the Nuyakuk and Mulchatna river.

I have fished the Mulchatna River for kings since 1996, for many of those years I guided fisherman from around the world and shared this amazing resource with them.

Currently I serve on the board of the Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust and we work to protect this watershed and all of it's inhabitants.

I was also the Executive Director of the Renewable Resources Coalition that worked tirelessly to fight off the the development of the Pebble Mine.

My experiences have taught me that the constant vigilance is necessary to safeguard our incredible salmon resource. That said, we must also be vigilant to support our businesses and fisherman that patronize those businesses. Without their support and interest in our fishery we would not be able to fight the big fights like Pebble Mine and Land Conservation projects.

I am OPPOSED to Proposal #28 for the following reasons.

-I feel that the proposal unfairly affects a few small businesses while not affecting the business of proposer. How can one business tell the other they shouldn't be able to fish but they can? Is this even legal or constitutional?

-The cumulative impact of a few guides and small operations on the the entirety of the suggested closure is minuscule when compared to the impact from the Trawl Fleet, Commercial Fleet, and lower river fishery. The guides in this area are to a person conservationist who follow the best practices of catch and release possible. This has been documented in scientific surveys that I have help organize and participate in on those systems.

-ADFG tools for managing the fishery should be exploited to their full potential before a proposal like this are supported. Furthermore ADFG is still crunching numbers and research from this season and needs more time to make a reasonable assessment and recommendations.

This includes moving the North Line, fishing more in the wood river, changing mesh size, etc. King Salmon in the Nushagak System have just recently been deemed a "Stock of Concern" this will trigger a process based on the best science available.

Proposal #28 is NOT based on science and should be discarded.

Thanks you for your consideration,

Regards,

Anders Gustafson

Guide, Advocate, Executive Director, Board Member



## **PROPOSAL #28: PUBLIC COMMENT by HADLEY| OPPOSITION**

Our names are Wayne and Kathleen Hadley. We are a Montana family who have visited the Mulchatna River a number of times with our kids and grandkids and have always stayed at the Alaska Trophy Fishing Safaris camp operated by a family-owned sportfishing Alaskan business. We were surprised and distressed by Proposal #28 which would totally shut down the king salmon fishery year-round in the Mulchatna river drainage, as well as the Nuyakuk and upper Nushagak rivers. We strongly oppose Proposition #28 for a number of reasons as follows:

1. The proposal speaks of the declining king salmon numbers area wide, but only targets the Mulchatna, Nuyakuk and upper Nushagak rivers without providing any justification with scientific data or research on the amounts of pressure on the spawning areas for Chinook salmon. Up until this year there has been only one sportfishing camp on the entire 160-mile-long stretch of the Mulchatna river. The camp has a very short season of 4 or 5 weeks only. The fishing pressure is minimal at best and can no way be responsible for the declines in the king salmon fishery.
2. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game Sportfishing Division already has all the management tools they need for conservation of king salmon on the Nushagak and Mulchatna rivers. We know and have experienced Emergency Changes to the regulations when we were in camp. We have seen the Fish & Game Sportfishing Division issuing Emergency Orders to close the fishery, stopped the use of bait, required catch/release and changed catch limits. These tools should be used as circumstances require before any closure is mandated.
3. We enjoy watching the fish counts via the Nushagak sonar site in June when we are anxiously waiting for our trip to the Mulchatna. From watching those counts year after year, we know that the king salmon arrive around the first week of July which is before there is any fishing pressure at all. It's clear the outfitters on the Mulchatna river drainage put minimal pressure on the king salmon. Also, the Mulchatna River closes to kings on July 25, unlike the lower Nushagak, further ensuring there is no pressure on the spawning fish.
4. We believe it must be a collective effort on all king salmon user groups to help to diligently manage and conserve the fisheries without discriminating and penalizing one user group to take the brunt of the consequences with a blanket closure, especially when it holds no merit. Singling out a family-



owned Alaska sportfishing businesses which is the livelihood of this family is hardly fair. In addition, the folks at Alaska Trophy Fishing Safaris have always run their camp with the fisheries in mind, which is why we continue to go back to this particular camp. John Carlin promotes catch and release, urges camp members to eat and keep only the healthy stocks of fish and release all other species. He encourages sustainability of the fishery and river so that future generations have access to the same incredible resources. He is a true steward of the river and the wild fishery resources and should be the kind of sport fishery business Alaska encourages.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to comment and we urge you to reject Proposal #28.

Sincerely,

Wayne and Kathleen Hadley  
Deer Lodge, MT



Hello Fisheries Board members, Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the public.

My name is Dennis Harms. I Have spent 54 years on the water in the Mulchatna river drainage.

I can see that there are system wide problems with the King Salmon stocks that enter the Nushagak system.

My input is on Proposal #28:

Proposal #28 is one of the most self-serving proposals I have ever seen; shutting down the other guy, but not oneself. I don't believe it's even legal under the Alaska Constitution.

The proposal would statistically do virtually nothing to help the King Salmon stocks. The mostly catch and release mortality of fish caught in the Mulchatna by the couple of guides is statistically very insignificant compared to the other user groups of the Nushagak King salmon populations.

Whether a king salmon is killed in a Pollock trawl net, a by catch king in the commercial salmon fishery, or by a guide in the lower Nushagak, or by catch and release mortality -- it doesn't make any difference; it's one fish that will not spawn.

Through my decades of experience, I have observed many things:

1. The decline of the king salmon runs in central and western Alaska has mirrored the massive growth of the pollock trawl industry. Slow progress is being made to study just how many immature king salmon are killed in the trawl fishery, but some estimates put the number a 1.5 million king salmon killed that will not return to spawn. It is imperative that observers be put on every trawl boat and that methods must be developed to reduce the king salmon by catch.
2. Sockeye salmon are the life blood of the fishing industry and southwest Alaska communities. More king salmon are killed in an hour of commercial sockeye salmon by catch than the entire season than on the Mulchatna. This is where it gets tricky. If the king salmon stocks get too low, they will become a stock of concern by the Federal government. I don't think any commercial fisherman or subsistence fisherman wants that. It's in the commercial fishermen's long term interest to try not to catch incidental king salmon.
3. When the king salmon return is low or projected to be low, fewer than say 50,000 sportfishing should go to catch and release throughout the entire Nushagak system. Running the couple of guides out of business on the middle Mulchatna will do absolutely nothing statistically to protect king salmon.
4. Under current regulations that have been in effect for decades, spawning king salmon have been protected by the July 25 closure.
5. Most king salmon spawn far above the stake holder guides in the lower and middle Mulchatna. I do not know of any guides who fish in the spawning grounds of the Kuktuli above the Swan rivers, or on the Chilikadrotna or and of the upper reaches of the Mulchatna river.
6. One of the greatest threats to part of the Nushagak king salmon runs are the mining operations at the head waters of the Kuktuli river. Is it just coincidence that the king salmon returns have greatly diminished on the Kuktuli river since the exploratory drilling by pebble mine?

The king salmon runs on the Nushagak river are truly one of the greatest wonders of the area, and even the world. People have subsisted on them for thousands of years. It's paramount of importance to



PC33

protect this resource. Commercial fishing of sockeye is currently how many people make a living. They must look at the long term and help king salmon stocks to not become a stock of concern and invite Federal management. In closing, targeting a couple of guides on the middle Mulchatna will statistically do nothing to help restore the great king salmon runs of the Nushagak river.

I ask you to reject proposal #28 and to look forward to system wide solutions to keeping the Nushagak king salmon stocks strong.

Sincerely,

Dennis Harms

Fished and lived on Mulchatna summers 1968-2002, and visit area regularly 2003-2021.



PC34

**Name:** Brad Heil

**Community of Residence:** Homer Alaska

**Comment:**

I oppose Proposal 35 attempting to change 5 aac06.335 . Proposal seeks to increase the min distance from 100 ft to 300 ft min set net separation from driftnets.

The original intent of this regulation serves its purpose creating a safety margin and separation of 100 ft of enforceable corridor separating gear types. The horsepower increase in drift boats actually increases safety factor by ensuring drift boats have more maneuverability to manage gear in water and avoid any contact/conflict between gear types. Actual citations are few and far between and would be best served by actual data from Alaska state Trooper citation Data available.

There does exist tension between,Setnetter and drift fisherman, reflecting Setnetter belief that drift fisherman unfairly catch fish destined for the beach. The original regulation of one 50 fathom net for set nesters opposed to 3 or 4 nets per drifter reflects the high catching efficiency of set nets near the beach. Allocations are easily managed to disperse the majority of fish to the beach prior to catching by drift fleet.

If drift fleet posed a genuine safety hazard we surely would have record of hazard to human life or equipment as these 2 gear types have managed to work together for many years at this point.

Thanks for your time and expertise on these matters,

Brad Heil, 62 yrs old, commercial fisherman 40 yrs.

---



PC35

**Name:** Tanner Heil

**Community of Residence:** Homer, Alaska

**Comment:**

I oppose Proposal 35 attempting to change 5 aac06.335 . Proposal seeks to increase the min distance from 100 ft to 300 ft min set net separation from driftnets. The original intent of this regulation serves its purpose creating a safety margin and separation of 100 ft of enforceable corridor separating gear types. The horsepower increase in drift boats actually increases safety factor by ensuring drift boats have more maneuverability to manage gear in water and avoid any contact/conflict between gear types. Actual citations are few and far between and would be best served by actual data from Alaska state Trooper citation Data available. There does exist tension between, Setnetter and drift fisherman, reflecting Setnetter belief that drift fisherman unfairly catch fish destined for the beach. The original regulation of

one 50 fathom net for set nesters opposed to 3 or 4 nets per drifter reflects the high catching efficiency of set nets near the beach. Allocations are easily managed to disperse the majority of fish to the beach prior to catching by drift fleet. If drift fleet posed a genuine safety hazard we surely would have record of hazard to human life or equipment as these 2 gear types have managed to work together for many years at this point.

Tanner Heil, 27, Bristol Bay fisherman 15 yrs.

---



PC36

**Name:** MICHAEL JACKSON

**Community of Residence:** Bellingham

**Comment:**

Proposal 12:

We would like to withdraw our support for proposal 12 and recommend the Board take no action.

We recognize the broader perspective of proposal 11 and understand that a much more comprehensive discussion will be had by the Board concerning chinook management. We would like to support the broader discussion for proposal 11, while still considering a specific end-date for chinook management and a maximum mesh size restriction for sockeye during chinook management periods, and are supportive of a higher level for optimization of the chinook:sockeye catch ratio. These comments will be added to proposal 11 during the comment period.

Proposal 61:

We would like to withdraw our support for proposal 61 and recommend the Board to take no action.

We recognize some of the inconsistencies with data collection in Bristol Bay, but that this data is considered with historical apportionment. Processors do record number of chinook and total pounds harvested, so extrapolated data does exist. This data also becomes additionally murky with any chinook kept for personal use. We also acknowledge that current regulations do only allow for 5 chinook under 20" a day for sport fishing. We apologize for that oversight.

---



**Name:** Ace Keim

**Community of Residence:** Anchorage, AK

**Comment:**

proposals 34 and 35 are similar in nature. I am opposed to both of them. It is not necessary to increase the operational distance from one another between the gear types. Actual snag ups between gear types are rare. Fish run near shore very often. Set nets already have the immediate beach location where the density of fish is often highest. The current rules regarding the outer limits between gear types is adequate.

Proposals 35-37

I oppose these proposals.

The use of extended amounts of tow line in some situations are a matter of safety. It allows boats to fish in areas that would be otherwise impossible to fish without going dry. This has benefits to management on these large runs as it can allow fish that might otherwise get past the fleet to be caught further increasing over escapement. It also spreads out the fleet which is likely an indirect benefit to the people who are proposing this change.

In certain locations the use of additional running line can allow a boat to keep the vessel in enough water to operate without going dry which would be a violation. There are already rules in place not allowing you to "anchor" your net. For instance you are not allowed to let your net go dry on land. I feel that as long as you are keeping your net in the water it isn't anchored, it is simply not drifting due to the lack of current in shallow water. The safety of navigation concern cited is unwarranted. The boats that are in and around places where this may be in play are well aware of what is going on as it is primarily shallow draft jet boats in the area. High Traffic line fishing which takes place all over in Bristol Bay creates far more potential for vessel accidents.

There are also situations where the use of additional tow line can allow a fisherman to get out of a dangerous situation when drifting over across sand bars in high current/ weather situations. I have been able to avoid potential danger in the Nushagak district where currents were trying to pull my net across the top of a sandbar. I was able to avoid going dry by letting sufficient line out to remain in navigable waters to regain control of my net and prevent my boat from grounding and being pounded by surf on a bar.

There is no need to reduce the length of tow lines. There are real world situations where long tow line can be used for safety and the instances where they are being used as a fishing tactic are a miniscule make up of the fishing operations taking place. If a fisherman using additional tow line lets their net or vessel go dry there are already rules in place where that is a violation. If you can keep your net and vessel in the water and afloat I think it is a fair tactic.

Proposals 42-44

I oppose these proposals.



The fleet is primarily a tool for manage management of the run. In recent years many fishermen have invested heavily in modern highly efficient equipment to be able to handle high volumes of fish with a reduced boat count and less gear in the water. So there is no problem there.

I believe around 450-500 boats operate as a dual permit currently. That means those 450-500 permit owners would need to have access to a vessel to utilize there permit. Given the amount of time the dual permit regulations have been in play I highly doubt there are 450-500 suitable/ seaworthy vessels available to fulfill that requirement if permit stacking was disallowed.

I know many permit owners who have entered the fishery with the expectation of utilizing it to leverage a job on a quality operation. Allowing dual permit stacking is good for the dual permit holders (easier access to the fishery, potential to learn), it is good for the operation hiring the dual permit holder, and it is even good for the operations that are single permits and oppose permit stacking because it removes 1 boat and 100 fathoms of gear from the water for every boat utilizing a dual permit.

Proposal 45

I oppose this proposal.

This one is so ludicrous I don't even know what to say.

Clearly penalizing people who have invested more into their operations should not be penalized. The opportunity to operate as a dual permit exists for any Bristol Bay drift fisherman. Choosing to take the additional financial risk to get an extra 50 fathoms of gear or not is personal choice available to everyone. You can't penalize those willing to invest more and reward those unwilling to.

Furthermore every dual permit boat is helping the fleet as a whole because now there is one less boat and 100 fathoms less gear in the water for everyone to compete with. This is a benefit for both single and dual permit operations

Proposals 46-47

I support these proposals.

To me, allowing a permit holder to own two permit make sense at this point in time. It would probably result in a reduction in over all number of boats somewhat, but there has been a large addition of boats that are newer, faster, larger, safer, more efficient at harvesting salmon. With the more modern fleet in play there will still be plenty of capability to manage runs effectively.

I personally fish with a 10 person group of other fishermen in Bristol Bay. Half of my group each year "leases" a "D" permit each year via medical transfer. There is always a large amount of permits on the market available each year for such "leases". The intent of limited entry is to have the permits in the hands of people who are actually going to fish use them for access to the fishery as opposed to a vehicle for passive income through such leases. With the number of leases available each year, it seems as if the medical loop hole is being exploited past what it is intended for. Obviously there are situations where the medical transfer is necessary.



Allowing a permit holders to own both permits themselves would disincentivize these sort of leases and allow the person who is actually seeking access to the fishery to utilize the permit in the manner intended by limited entry.

#### Proposal 48

I support this proposal.

I think it would be a good thing to help support the small primarily local fleet that participates in the Togiak district.

#### Proposals 49-54

I support these proposals.

These proposals are all addressing a singular issue. There may be some variance in the details in each proposal, but the intent is the same in each.

Each year later in the season there are line fisheries where there is still as steady flow of fish and the remaining boats congregate there to catch them. Inevitable the presence of enforcement more or less disappears creating a situation where the district lines in these places become more of a rough guide line at best.

Strategy is very simple. If you are in the front of the line you are almost certainly going to be catching the most fish. With the threat of enforcement gone people begin leapfrogging further and further past the established boundaries. This forces you to have to choose between fishing illegally if you wish to be successful or catching substantially less. Now we have a situation created where those taking the biggest risk or showing least regard for the rules are the ones who are being rewarded the most.

I believe a large percentage of fisherman on both sides of the line in these scenarios would prefer to not have to fish in this way.

Fortunately there is a simple solution that most seasons (particularly as of lately with large returns and plenty of escapement) can fix this issue. If all Eastside rivers have reached escapement goals, there really becomes no need for the arbitrary north and south lines as defined by current district boundaries. Remove south line from Naknek/Kvichak, north and south line from Egegik, a north line from and Ugashik. How we deal with an offshore boundary doesn't matter to me much as there are a couple of suggestions and the real problem areas are generally focussed near shore on the various North and South lines. With an East Side general district open fisherman won't have to deal with the stress of choosing to fish illegally or not, and those who simply disregard the rules those most will no longer be rewarded for it in the absence of enforcement. There are some good suggestions regarding how to handle landings in proposal 53.

#### Proposal 55

I support this proposal.



it just makes sense to simplify things and reduces opportunity for confusion.

Proposal 56

I support this proposal. I doubt I personally would use it, but I can see why some would. Also it could be a source of revenue for ADFG. I see no problems with it.

Proposal 58

I support this proposal. If escapement goals are in good standing I see no reason why not to allow harvest in the in river fishery.

---



**Name:** Chris Klosterman

**Community of Residence:** King Salmon

**Comment:**

Proposal 30

In the interest of our future fisheries and future generations of fisherman. Guided sport fishing pressure continues to increase every year on the Naknek. Guides are becoming increasingly competitive over fishing areas and fishing times. This proposal would have limited impact on guided operations and allow for community members with children to share the resource without having to compete with professional fisherman and promote the resource with future generations.

Proposal 25,26,27

It's no secret that our King Salmon populations are in severe decline. The demand for guided sport fishing of King Salmon has exceeded the opportunity of the waters. As long as current regulation allows unrestricted opportunity professional guides will be able to fill boats. People want to catch Kings. I want to catch a King. I haven't caught a king on the Naknek in 2 years. Guides are getting more technical as the fishing gets tougher each year. Restrictions need to be made in an attempt to allow the Kings a chance. The tributaries draining in the Naknek need to be closed. I have been flying out of King Salmon for 20 years and have always seen spawning kings in the upper waters of Big Creek and flown surveys with ADFG. Recent years they are far apart and few between. Somebody do something for gods sake. Change is hard and necessary.

Proposal 18

With the Naknek becoming increasingly competitive primarily due to guided operators more and more guides are using beads as a primary method. 10 -15 years ago it was maybe 1/4 of the pressure was from bead fishing from my own observations. Beads are effective to a fault and require less input skill and mobility for an angler to fish. Fish are hooked in eyes and many areas outside of the mouth as a result of bead being pegged above the hook and as a result there must be increased mortality. In addition to the increased mortality the quality of fish are more and more frequently missing maxillary and other pieces of fill plate etc. This in my opinion does not reflect on a world class fishery. It's more reflective of factory lodge fishing. God forbid anglers would have to stand on the bank and cast a fly rod under their own power to catch a rainbow on the Naknek.

Proposal 20

Bait. If you need bait to catch rainbows, char or any other sport fish the fishing must be pretty poor. Barbless and artificial lures will help preserve fisheries from future generations to experience.

To: Alaska Board of Fish  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau Alaska 99811-5526



PC39

From: Joe Klutsch  
P.O. Box 313  
King Salmon  
Alaska 99613

RE: Proposals 17,18,19,21,22,24,25,26,30

Preface: These proposals represent the culmination of years of experience of many people who have for several generations fished on the Naknek both as guides and general residents, the vast majority of which support these changes in an effort to stem the drastic decline of king stocks and the unsustainable pressure on rainbow stocks. They also address the ever-increasing issues of overcrowding and loss of quality of experience.

#### Proposal 17

I authored this proposal which is much less restrictive than the one which the Naknek/ Kirchick AC submitted during the last cycle. Please consider it a "compromise" from the proposal which was noted in the section "what is the issue you would like the board to address and why." I did this with intent of showing how the new proposal is indeed a "compromise" by being much less restrictive while accomplishing the goals of controlling combat fishing and improving quality of experience.

#### Proposal 18

This proposal is well written. The justification is succinctly and accurately stated. I recommend the proposal be adopted.

#### Proposal 19

This proposal was crafted by my son. I had no hand in its making and was extremely pleased with rationale he offers. He has spent most of 35 years in the area affected, personal fishing,



guiding with me and on his own. His rationale is based on firsthand knowledge and experience with regards to declining stocks and overcrowding. The proposal should be adopted.

#### Proposal 21

Another proposal crafted by my son goes straight to the issue of excessive level of effort for rainbow trout particularly by nonresident both guided and non-guided, [conclusion: include changes are not arbitrary bottom page 16] I request the proposal be adopted.

#### Proposal 22

This is a very important proposal which was in the making for several years. It is written in a way which concisely explains the conservation issues over nearly 20 years of ever declining king runs. Commercial sport operators are targeting kings in shallow water "holding holes" every day once these fish are running. There is inevitable hook mortality, and I am personally confident there are some large kings being retained. It is in the interest of true conservation and fishing opportunities for future fishermen. Recommend the proposal be adopted.

#### Proposal 24

This is another "true conservation" proposal which reduces the bag and possession limit for kings and stipulates that only male king salmon may be retained. Allowing females to escape and spawn is critical for this dangerously depleted population.

Some will argue you can't tell a male from a female; this is dubious argument at best. In the world of hunting, we are expected to tell the difference between a hen and a drake flying at 30+ miles an hour; a nanny from a Billy at up to 600 yards; a mature full curl ram from a Uewe at the same 600 yards and I could go on but you get the point. If you're not sure, don't shoot, if you can't tell if it's a female, release the fish.

#### Proposal 25

This proposal is the same as #24, it appears there was some confusion when the proposal book was printed. However, #25 goes into greater detail about his perspective of the situation as it has evolved over his lifetime. Like all the proposals I am commenting on, there are genuine biological problems that cannot be simply dismissed as just "social issues." [conclusion: Local knowledge matters] Please read somewhat lengthy rationale carefully as they are truly meaningful. Recommend that the board adopt proposal 24 or 25.

## Proposal 26



PC39

This proposal has a great deal of merit. It is authored by a young man [now 37years old who has lived on the Naknek River his entire life]. His arguments are accurate, and heart felt.

If the board chooses to adopt proposal 24 or 25, the reduction in bag and possession along with requiring females may not be retained, a closure from painter bobs cabin up to Trefons cabin at the lake would not be necessary. You could begin the closure from the existing ADF+G marker at rapids camp up to Trefons cabin. Which is the critical mainstem spawning zone on the river. Local residents like fishing the painter bobs stretch and it is deep water.

All the creek closure components of this proposal are well founded and should be adopted.

Recommend the board adopt with suggested boundary changes as an amendment.

## Proposal 30

This is an excellent proposal which will afford great opportunity for kids to participate and learn without the hoards of aggressive guided fisherman occupying the river in the described area. The proposal regulation asks for only 4 Sundays over a 4-month period. It is not too much to ask, recommend the board adopt.

## Conclusion

The level of effort on the Naknek River by guides and transporters supported by large scale lodges primarily owned and staffed by people who are not Alaskans has grown to a completely unsustainable level.

You may hear from some people who will suggest that there is no "evidence" of problems with rainbow stocks particularly middle age class fish. Nearly 50 years living on this River has shown myself and most other residents of the area that this is not an accurate assessment.

After over 10 years of public discussion, many Advisory Committee meetings, these proposals reflect the support of the vast majority of true area residents. Local knowledge matters. We are past the point of inaction or more surveys. [paralysis by over analysis].



PC39

The credibility of the board process, public confidence in ADF+G combined with genuine public fears about the biological future of this fishery are REAL and require regulatory action now.

My time to testify is extremely short.

Please ask me all the questions you think may be helpful.

Respectfully, Joe Klutsch



PC40

**Name:** Ryan Kocherhans

**Community of Residence:** St. George

**Comment:**

I think that the ENTIRE river system should go to catch and release, as opposed to certain areas being closed outright for targeting King Salmon. There are numerous lodges down river from us that are meat packing (we encourage all our guests to release King salmon). If we are closed, then so should lodges downriver. I propose catch and release regulations for the ENTIRE river system, not just those high on the river system. We do not target salmon on their spawning beds, much like the meat packers down river from us. We keep far less King salmon than any other lodge on the river. As stated, once in the freshwater system, ALL of these salmon are headed for spawning grounds, not just the fish near us. Please see my recent media on Instagram/Facebook regarding the preservation of the area. Thank you

---

I founded Alaskan Remote Adventures 3 years ago, based upon principles of preserving the sport and protecting our King Salmon run. If the river is closed to King Salmon fishing, then the ENTIRE river should be closed. I propose that it goes to a catch and release regulation (which I already enforce with my guests) as opposed to closing the upper river and not the lower river. Once the King Salmon have entered the freshwater, they are ALL spawning, not just the fish we catch up river. If King Salmon regulations are passed, it should apply to the ENTIRE river system, not just the upper river locations. I encourage catch and release with ALL of my guests, please see my recent lodge media regarding this topic. We primarily fly fish, which is a catch and release sport naturally...I fear that the other lodges down river from us do not practice this, as I know they bring guests to catch and keep king salmon, which we are morally opposed to.

Ryan Kocherhans

Alaskan Remote Adventures

(801)725-1025