

Nicholas Dowie
nicholasjdownie@gmail.com

My name is Nicholas Dowie. I was born and raised in Kodiak, Alaska, and I am a 4th generation and lifelong set net fisherman in the Nushagak District. I also hold a doctorate degree in science, in which I had a strong focus on evolutionary ecology. I coauthored proposals 12, 41, and 61. I have withdrawn support for 12 and 61, as I know Chinook conservation is a much broader discussion to be had here. For the rest of my testimony, I would like to focus on Proposal 41, concerning set net site erosion with possible changes demonstrated in a map found in PC55. There will also be a written version of this testimony provided.

As with much of coastal Western Alaska, significant erosion has impacted Ekuk Beach. Coastal erosion on Ekuk Beach presents a problem for regulated distances established in the early 80's, which were somewhat arbitrarily determined based on mean high water and land-based geographic markers. Erosion has and will continue to affect historic outer end anchoring locations regarding current regulatory offshore distances. Outer anchoring systems can be very old, costly, and time sensitive to establish, as only the lowest tides can be used to not only put out buoys and lines seasonally, but to develop an anchoring system over many years.

Modernizing distance regulations by establishing an outer boundary line with GPS waypoints is essential in many ways:

1. Allows for discernable enforcement with fewer waypoints (AWT comments)
2. Defines a distinct line for drift fishermen where their nets will not entangle set net sites.
3. Increases protection for set net sites, where, unlike the rest of Bristol Bay, there is no minimum offshore distance requirement for drift vessels and frequent incursions between gear types can occur, often with damage or interruptions to set net operations.
4. Provides an equitable solution for historic sites under changing climatic conditions.
5. Is a non-allocative issue as
 - 5.1. sites will be able to stay in historic locations.
 - 5.2. the set net fleet in the Nushagak District is typically very significantly behind in their allocation.
 - 5.3. if not implemented, historic sites will have to start moving shoreward and would decrease sockeye harvest in the future.

Additionally, changes in distances are currently stepwise based on geographic landmarks prior to the use of GPS, going from 500 to 700 feet at First Creek and from 700 to 1000 feet at Third creek. This problem is further exemplified as erosion has had a particularly large impact on First, Second and Third creek locations. These hard boundaries initially created were not equitable, as southerly nets at these locations can overshadow the northerly nets. This was the best methodology at the time, but GPS waypoints can modernize these subjective markers and offshore distances.

I also recommend removing the unnecessary waypoint at the First Creek location, that is currently illustrated on the map in PC55, to be more in line with removing this hard boundary step and limiting waypoints for enforcement. This specific area has high incursion rates for drift nets on set net operations, due to the current 200 ft "corner" it creates.