

Madam Chair and Members of the Board,

My name is Dale Pederson. I am an Aleut and member of the QTT Tribe from Sand Point and I represent myself. I oppose proposals, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, and 136 and here are the following reasons why.

1. The numbers don't add up.
 - a. In years where the AYK runs collapsed, the total number of Western Alaska chum caught in Area M represented only a tiny fraction, often as low as 5-7%, of the total run. If you closed area M entirely, you would be returning a few thousand fish to a river system that is missing millions. It is like trying to fill a swimming pool with a medicine dropper while the drain is wide open.
2. The Real Culprit: A challenging Ocean
 - a. The science points to a much larger, more daunting reality: the North Pacific and the Bering Sea have changed. Recent marine heatwaves have devastated the food chain. Juvenile chum salmon are entering an ocean that is too warm, with prey that is less nutritious. Scientists have documented thinner, else fit fish that simply aren't surviving their first winter at sea. Additionally, we are seeing increased competition from billions of hatchery-raised fish from other nations. Shutting down a small-boat fleet in the Aleutians won't cool the ocean, and it won't fix the lack of food in the Bering Sea. It's a local solution to a global environmental shift.
3. Punishing the wrong communities
 - a. Area M is not a faceless corporate industry; it is a fleet of small-boat, family-owned operations. These are Alaskans who have fished these waters for generations, many of who are Alaska Natives themselves. Closing this fishery doesn't just save fish; it destroys the economies of Sand Point, King Cove and False Pass. It pits Alaskan against Alaskan, forcing one region into poverty without providing any measurable relief to the other. /we cannot

build a conservation strategy on the backs of hardworking families when the biological benefit to the AYK is negligible.

4. Progress through management, not mandates

- a. We aren't saying do nothing. The Board of Fisheries has already implemented significant restrictions, including drastically reduced fishing time in June and chum caps that trigger closures. They are targeted, surgical tools that balance conservation with economic survival.

Total shutdowns are a blunt instrument. They ignore the progress made in bycatch reduction and the fact that Area M fishermen have a vested interest in the health of the entire salmon corridor. We should be focusing on habitat restoration, better ocean research, international treaties regarding hatchery overproduction, not just closing the nearest gate.

We all want the Yukon and Kuskokwim to be flush with salmon again. We all want our children to know the tradition of the fish camp. But let's not trade one tragedy for another based on a false promise. Shutting down Area M is an easy political win, but a biological failure. It won't bring the chum back, but it will take everything away from our neighbors in the Peninsula.

Let's stick to the science, focus on the ocean and work together as one state to solve the real problems facing our salmon. Thank you.