

To the Alaska Board of Fish and the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game

From Richard L. Clark, ██████████ Clark's Point, AK ██████████

Subsistence Comment

We Alaska Native have a right to access to Native foods from coastal and river systems for the taking of salmon from the Nushagak River system, before a commercial fishing season can start.

One, us Natives in the Nushagak fishing district can only fish when there is a commercial fishing opening for the commercial fishermen. Us Native people have to compete with both the drift netters and set netters to go fishing and stop when the district closes down.

Two, us subsistence fishermen have to close down with the Nushagak drift and set netter fishermen. We are shut down by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Three, most of us subsistence fishermen use the big gear like 5 3/8 or bigger, so we try not to catch smaller fish. But with the commercial fishermen using smaller gear, we don't have a chance to get the bigger fish, which we prefer. We would not like to catch the smaller fish but the bigger fish. But with all the smaller gear that's in the water, the smaller gear catches all bigger and smaller fish at the same time. Most of the commercial fishermen are using smaller gear, smaller than the 5 3/8 inch mesh we use, so the commercial fishermen either catch the big fish or they fall off and die. This is what we don't like as subsistence fishermen. But we use what we catch and we have to take the smaller fish just like the commercial fishermen—no choice. We are stuck with the smaller fish. All the commercial fishwomen have mostly smaller gear because most of the fish that is coming into the Nusahagak district are small fish. These last few years, we are getting mostly small fish. We are now getting almost all small fish and most big fish are falling off and probably dying because of smaller gears in the waters. We are getting less and less king salmon because of the same reason, smaller gear.

Maybe we should keep commercial fishing closed longer until July 3rd or longer. And until we either reach the goal of fish up past the counter for escapement reasons, or get more kings up past the counters, leave the fishing closed until we get escapement up past the counters. Then you could open the Nushagak River and Wood River open indefinitely, until the silver salmon comes in when it would need to be closed again.