

Gabe Kitter  
Fish and Wildlife Commission  
Matanuska Susitna Borough  
Public Testimony  
Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues Board of Fisheries Meeting, 2026

**I. Federal Fisheries Management – Gabe Kitter**

Good afternoon, Madam Chairman and members of the Board.

For the record, my name is Gabe Kitter. I am a lifelong Mat-Su resident and a member of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission. I am testifying today on behalf of the Commission in support of Proposal 186, specifically as it relates to the challenges created by Federal fisheries management in the Cook Inlet EEZ.

The Commission is concerned that Federal management of commercial drift gillnet fishing introduces a level of uncertainty and risk that Northern District salmon stocks cannot absorb, particularly coho and sockeye that have not consistently met escapement goals in recent years.

First, the EEZ fishery has the potential to significantly increase total drift harvest in a mixed-stock fishery. While harvest is directed at abundant Kenai and Kasilof sockeye, Northern-bound stocks are harvested incidentally, and those stocks are less productive and less resilient. When uncertainty increases, conservation risk increases with it.

Second, Federal management does not provide the same in-season responsiveness available to the State of Alaska. When conservation concerns emerge offshore, they cannot be corrected quickly. That reality means the responsibility for conservation inevitably shifts into state waters, where the Board and the Department still have tools to respond—but only if those tools remain intact.

Third, EEZ fishing schedules overlap with the migration timing of Northern District coho, at a time when run timing, stock productivity, and fleet behavior are all uncertain. In complex fisheries like Upper Cook Inlet, uncertainty is not a reason to relax management—it is a reason to be more deliberate.

The Board has long recognized that when uncertainty is high, conservation responsibility must be shared across fisheries, rather than placed entirely on terminal users after impacts have already occurred. Conservative, precautionary management upstream in the fishery is essential to sustaining opportunity downstream.

Terminal harvest strategies and the Conservation Corridor have demonstrated that conservation and opportunity are not mutually exclusive. These tools allow the Department to harvest surplus sockeye efficiently while passing Northern-bound stocks when it matters most. Maintaining and expanding those protections are the focus to this year's meeting. It is essential that the uncertainty posed by the Federal management of the EEZ be taken into account through more conservative management actions.

In closing, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission urges the Board to adopt Proposal 186 as a measured, precautionary response to increased uncertainty—one that maintains

effective management tools, protects vulnerable Northern stocks, and supports long-term sustainability and opportunity for all Upper Cook Inlet users.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.