

Matanuska Valley Advisory Council Testimony  
Alaska Board of Fish Statewide Finfish and Supplemental  
Issues Meeting  
March 17-21, 2006-Anchorage, AK

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the board, my name is Ed Soto, I am a current committee member and will be testifying on behalf of the Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee:

Starting with Proposal 186, the Mat-Su AC unanimously supported this proposal. This proposal is about reaching escapement goals for Coho salmon into Mat-Su streams. The AC is very concerned over the lack of Coho escapement for spawning in Mat-Su streams and rivers and the restrictions placed on local harvest opportunities over the last few years. In Department staff comments for Prop 186, table 186-15, The Deshka and Little Susitna River alone have not met sustainable escapement goals since 2019 and 2021 respectively. The Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan uses sockeye escapement numbers on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers to drive management of Upper Cook Inlet (UCI)

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drift fisheries, however it is likely that Mat-Su bound coho are being intercepted by additional drift fishing allowed when Kenai and Kasilof sockeye reach threshold escapements. This proposal would require the department to restrict additional drift opportunities by limiting additional fishing time to the expanded Kenai, Kasilof and Anchor Point areas when sockeye escapement exceeds published escapement thresholds to protect northbound coho. This proposal was amended to include adding the Departments ability to further restrict Central District Drift gillnetting when Northern Cook Inlet indices fall below midpoint of the SEG range.

Next, I would like to comment on Proposals 11, 163, 164 & 165 on Trawl Fisheries in State waters. The AC supported Proposal 11 and opposed proposals 163, 164 and 165. The AC is overall opposed to any trawl fishery in state waters. Our reason for opposition is due to the bycatch of king salmon

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along with other non-targeted pelagic and ground fish while other users continue to remain under restrictions or closures. Additionally, we are concerned with environmental impacts resulting from bottom contact during the mid column pelagic fishery.

Hatchery Proposals 170, 171, & 172 addressing the amount of Pinks and Chums released were overwhelmingly supported with only one opposed and 2 abstaining for the three proposals. The AC recognizes the economic value of hatcheries however we are concerned over the potential impacts on wild fish stocks which should have priority, particularly in light of dwindling King stocks. Much of our discussion centered around the lack of information available to make informed decisions and therefore this fishery should be managed conservatively until it can be shown that there are no impacts to our wild stocks.

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For proposal 162, prohibiting commercial transport in subsistence fisheries, the AC unanimously opposed it. To be clear, we understand this to be for transport services with no fishing occurring from the transporters boat. Given sustainable populations, Alaskans should have the ability to subsistence harvest utilizing a transporter as many locations can't be reached by those without a boat. Being able to subsistence fish should not depend on one's exclusive ability to purchase a boat to get to the fish.

The Matanuska Valley AC supported both proposals 176 and 177, pooling bag and possession limits on vessels, by 7 - 6 - 0 split votes with the following pros & cons:

Pros:

- Helps elderly and others unable to fish
- Helps families with limited opportunity fill their freezers
- Why limit this when trawl bycatch continues to be an undealt with issue

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Cons:

- May be perceived as unethical
- Will charters be considered? Could be a substantial impact
- Possible regulatory ambiguity. One helps another...

Finally, for proposals 179 and 180 which proposes an annual limit to King Salmon harvest, the Matanuska AC strongly supported both proposals with a majority of members recognizing that harvesting king salmon in saltwater areas of Alaska has impacts on Alaska king salmon stocks. Since most of which are in decline, we support the annual limit.