

City & Borough of Wrangell

BOROUGH MANAGER

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Date: March 10, 2026

To: Madam Chair and Members of the Alaska Board of Fisheries

From: Mason F. Villarma, Borough Manager

RE: Testimony to the Alaska Board of Fisheries – Opposition to Proposal 170

Madam Chair and Members of the Board,

My name is Mason Villarma, and I serve as the Borough Manager for the City and Borough of Wrangell, representing the people of our community.

Wrangell is home to approximately 60 Gillnet Permits, 7 Seine Permits, 59 Hand Troll Permits, and 50 Power Troll Permits. These fishermen are not only participants in our economy—they are the backbone of it. Commercial fishing in Wrangell provides jobs, income, and stability for working families, while also preserving a way of life that has defined our community for generations.

The City and Borough of Wrangell submits this letter in strong opposition to Proposal 170, which proposes a 25% reduction in permitted hatchery egg take for pink and chum salmon. This proposal mirrors prior efforts that have been rejected and continues to present the same fundamental concerns.

Proposal 170 represents a broad, one-size-fits-all reduction that is not grounded in Alaska-specific, regionally applied management data. While concerns regarding hatchery interactions with wild stocks are important and deserve continued study, this proposal relies heavily on generalized findings rather than clear, actionable evidence specific to Alaska's fisheries. Alaska's hatchery system operates under a well-established framework designed to prevent adverse impacts to wild stocks and is actively managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game using adaptive, science-based practices.

Most importantly, Proposal 170 fails to recognize the critical role hatcheries play in sustaining the economic and social fabric of Southeast Alaska. Hatchery production is not simply a supplement to our fisheries; it is one of the primary pillars keeping our regional fishing economy afloat.

For the commercial fleet, hatchery-supported returns provide stability in an increasingly uncertain industry. In many years, hatchery fish are the difference between a viable season and financial hardship. These fisheries support not only permit holders, but also deckhands, processors, tenders, fuel suppliers,

and small businesses throughout the region. A 25% reduction in egg take would directly translate to reduced harvest opportunity, lost income, and contraction across the entire maritime economy.

For subsistence users, hatcheries play a vital role in maintaining food security across Southeast Alaska. Salmon is not just an economic resource—it is a foundational food source for many of our residents. Hatchery production helps ensure that sufficient numbers of fish are available for harvest, particularly in years when wild returns are weak. Reducing hatchery output risks increasing pressure on wild stocks while simultaneously limiting access to critical subsistence resources.

For sport and recreational users, hatchery-supported fisheries provide accessible and reliable fishing opportunities that enhance quality of life for residents and support a growing visitor economy. These fisheries drive charter businesses, tourism activity, and local spending that benefit communities like Wrangell.

Additionally, the benefits of hatchery production extend directly to local governments through fisheries business tax revenues. These funds are essential for small Southeast communities, helping sustain basic public services, infrastructure, and community operations. A reduction in hatchery output would not only impact fishermen—it would reduce the revenues that allow our municipalities to function and serve our residents.

Proposal 170 attempts to address complex challenges facing wild salmon—including ocean conditions, climate variability, predation, and international bycatch—through a single, blunt regulatory action. Without a clear causal link demonstrating that a broad reduction in hatchery production will result in measurable improvements to wild stock productivity, this approach is speculative and carries significant economic risk.

Wrangell supports continued investment in science, monitoring, and adaptive management to ensure both hatchery and wild stock sustainability. However, Proposal 170 does not represent a targeted, evidence-based solution. Instead, it proposes a sweeping reduction that places disproportionate risk on Southeast Alaska communities without clear biological benefit.

For these reasons, the City and Borough of Wrangell strongly urges the Board to reject Proposal 170. Maintaining a stable, predictable, and responsibly managed hatchery program is essential to the economic health, food security, and long-term sustainability of our region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mason F. Villarma

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Borough Manager

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