

Dear Members of the Joint Legislative Cook Inlet Salmon Task Force,

I just returned from attending the Joint Legislative Cook Inlet Salmon Task Force meeting at the Soldotna Sports Center. The reason you are receiving this letter is because you advertised for months that I would be able to verbally give you my thoughts regarding the fisheries escapement problems in Cook Inlets northern district. I came to your meeting expecting to share my thoughts but because the Task Force mismanaged the amount of time they had to listen to the public, you denied me the opportunity to voice my thoughts. I signed up on your list to testify but was later not given the chance to even say a word.

Many people have been wondering for some time now what monumental issues this Task Force has been assigned to address. I listened to 3 hours of public testimony and I was not even allowed to testify myself. I lay this error at the feet of Task Force Chairman Representative Craig Johnson and his mismanagement of the time within the meeting. Many other peninsula residents were also told that they could not give testimony at this meeting, for this same reason.

All that waiting and then not being allowed to speak was frustrating enough but it was only the beginning of the huge numbers of swirling fisheries issues, which were raised at this meeting.

Many long time peninsula residents are familiar with the "Fish Wars", which have come and gone in the past on the peninsula but the people at this meeting have taken those issues and arguments and refined them greatly.

Basically the entire meeting was a 3 hour long reenactment of 30 years worth of Cook Inlet Fish Wars.

Most of the people there spent the entire 3 hours accusing each other for being the reason for any fisheries problem found within Cook Inlets fisheries. The issues varied but all focused in on a general claim from Yana and Sustina drainages, that someone is catching their northern district salmon!

Once the premise of the meeting was set, the responsible culprit was then to be searched out. This is the finger pointing part where everyone in the room claimed that since they are not "the problem", guess who that leaves to be the problem? The accusations then began flying with the resulting disclaimers coming from their targets. The MANY solution issues varied quite a bit.

Some of the issues and accusations were;

"A limited entry permit buy back". Just plant hatchery fish to make up for any escapement problems. Get rid of the pike in the lakes. Over-escapement. There is no such thing as "over-escapement".

We want fair public fisheries representation. 5% of Cook Inlets residents currently receive 80% of its salmon! 95% of Cook Inlets residents are upset because they cannot catch a salmon in rivers and streams!

80% of Cook Inlets northern bound salmon make it to their rivers! 80% of Cook Inlets northern bound salmon DO NOT make it to their rivers! We need more fisheries research to identify the reason for this northern district escapement problem. We need to "micro-chip" some northern bound returning salmon down beyond Kodiak Island and collect them to find the interception culprit.

The Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission should be given the job of removing some Cook Inlet permits. Gill netters are supposedly the pin within a type of "fisheries hand grenade", if you pull them out, the fishery will self destruct. Gill netters are the reason for the general lack of salmon within the northern district. Stocks are being over fished by all user groups. Alaska's fisheries must be allocated to generate a maximum benefit to all the states residents. The Fish & Game sonar's are mis-counting salmon.

Many northern district rivers and streams are failing to reach their required escapements. If everyone in the fresh water is required by law to log king salmon, why not also require everyone in the saltwater to do the same?

These were some of the major issues kicked about within this meeting. The point of the meeting was to basically let everyone know that Alaska's largest population center is extremely upset because they believe "someone" is wiping out their salmon before they even have a chance to reach their native rivers and streams. This Task Force appears to have been specifically designed to search out the offending culprit and eliminate them.

The commercial fishing industry at this meeting could defiantly feel the heat radiating from this Task Force.

The commercial industry basically got up and did a "song and dance" about how their industry is so much a basic part of the Cook Inlet fisheries equation, that if you were to remove or replace them, its fisheries would literary "self-destruct".

Their "fisheries self-destruction argument" focused in on the term "over-escapement" of salmon. The industries claim is that once you remove their gill nets, all Cook Inlets rivers and streams will automatically "over-escape" and result in the complete extinction of all Cook Inlet salmon. It is this commercial fisheries "over-escapement" term, which I would like to fully address.

There are some people out there who believe that the "salmon over-escapement" term is a real, scientific term, which is used to describe a real, scientific fact, however nothing could be farther from the truth. This "over-escapement" claim is the equivalent of making a Global Warming / Polar Bear connection.

The "bear claim" latches onto the Global Warming issue by placing an endangered species label on them, thus leaving lots of bears with no ice to live on at the North Pole.

This endangered species claim is the equivalent of making it illegal to kill a resident New Yorker after the Twin Towers were blown-up, rather than going after the people who planned the attack.

If there is a real global warming threat to our polar caps, that would be the threat issue to resolve.

Placing an endangered species label on a bear does not address that threat, it could only result in a ton of bears left doing the doggy paddle at the north pole in the future.

Global Warming / Polar Bear Claims are in fact being used to prevent petroleum development in northern Alaska. Rather than just attempting to convince people of the need to prevent this development, environmental extremists have attempted to do an "end run" around the forces promoting northern petroleum development.

The salmon "over-escapement term" is also being used to do an "end run" around Alaskan residents who desire to remove gill nets from the waters of Cook Inlet. The endangered species solution on bears claims to save them for now but it cannot prevent their extinction within a watery grave in the future.

The salmon "over-escapement term" claims to require commercial fisherman to remove "excess" salmon from our waters, thus preventing fisheries disaster, which would result in excess baby salmon and not enough food for them to all live on during the winter. Polar bears left swimming around hundreds of miles out in the Arctic Ocean is the obvious outcome of an endangered species label but the flawed thinking within the "over-escapement term" is much less obvious and requires a much closer look.

Over-Escapement Of Salmon

The problem is that sport, commercial and personal use fisheries may all have legitimate claims involving Cook Inlets fisheries but what good are those claims if the fisheries in question vaporize away like ALL of the other great salmon fisheries, which do not exist anymore?

The term "over-escapement" of salmon has long been spouted as a real and natural consequence of not allowing the commercial fishing industry to remove "perceived excess fish" from fisheries.

The "over-escapement" of salmon term is a "smoke-screen concept" used by the commercial fishing industry to confuse people who do not understand fisheries management. The term attempts to persuade the general public into believing whatever the commercial fishing industry wants it to believe.

Try asking someone what the real definition is of the over-escapement term. The answer you will no doubt receive is one which involves fisheries management allowing so many salmon to escape and spawn, that the resulting "excess baby salmon" consume all the zooplankton which lives in the lake, resulting in them all starving to death. The result of such illogical fisheries management leaves all fisheries users with zero salmon to catch in the future. This

is an extremely simplistic explanation to an extremely complex question and results in many people jumping to the flawed "over-escapement " conclusion.

Over-escapement theory may exist, but to claim that it exists today, anywhere in Cook Inlet, is like claiming that because the possibility of war exists in the world, that it in fact also exists today in Alaska. The commercial fishing industry sees a dead and rotting river salmon, as a waste if it escaped beyond their opinion of a maximum sustained yield definition.

In reality the death and rotting of a salmon is as much a part of the natural salmon cycle, as any other part but the commercial fishing industry has decided to surgically remove it from the salmon cycle story for "their own reasons". The commercial fishing industry uses the term "over escapement" to justify their minimum escapement desires, which just happen to also make them more money within salmon sales.

These spawned-out carcasses are a vital link between generations of salmon. Without these decomposing carcasses it is impossible for nursery lakes to maintain adequate nutrient levels. Minimum sockeye escapements force nutrient levels to decline as biogenic fertilization is removed from the salmon cycle. Decomposing carcasses from adult sockeye have the real ability to enhance zooplankton by increasing phytoplankton production, thus allowing the same lake to feed many, many more salmon fry than was historically believed. The term "over escapement" is not even an issue in any Alaska fishery because our freshwater lakes have the unique ability to expand their total salmon rearing capacity with increased biogenic fertilization. This expandable biogenic factor has completely escaped the commercial fisheries thought process.

Freshwater zooplankton enhancement also improves an adult salmon's ocean survival by increasing the average size of out-going smolt salmon. Maximum biogenic fertilization, MBF in freshwater nursery lakes, like in a garden, produces the best environment for sustainable or extra phytoplankton. It is very necessary to deliver maximum or even excess biogenic fertilization to freshwater phytoplankton.

Without this fertilization, nursery lakes will eventually become nutrient impoverished.

This impoverishment works to prevent increased phytoplankton, which works to prevent increased zooplankton, which works to prevent increased juveniles, which works to prevent increased returning adult salmon. The desire for increased returning adult salmon is therefore directly linked to providing MBF.

It is then just logical that system escapement goals will be at a maximum if salmon carcass fertilization goals are also at a maximum. Biogenic fertilization extends from rivers and lakes into inlets and oceans where these biogenic nutrients function at the start of the food chain to produce adult salmon within all stocks.

This chain of [escapement events] shows that minimal salmon escapement goals must result in minimal biogenic fertilization, which must result in reducing both juvenile and adult salmon survival.

Commercial fisheries "over-escapement logic" leaves out the fact that maximum salmon production can be expanded with additional biogenic fertilization. This expansion is possible the same way it is possible to also expand the production of a vegetable garden by replenishing the soils nutrients with fertilizers.

Increasing phytoplankton production within a freshwater lake has the ability to increase the total number of salmon returning to that system. This is possible because the same area of a lake can sustain many more salmon fry, if that lake has received a maximum dose of biogenic fertilization from rotting salmon carcasses.

This is the plain truth which the commercial fishing industry refuses to accept, while instead claiming that excess salmon carcasses are a total waste and that there is no lack of nitrogen within our lakes, rivers or oceans.

The truth is that the Pacific Ocean is currently at an all time historic low with regard to nitrogen levels.

It is not coincidental that the Pacific Ocean is currently at a 50 year low in both salmon production and it's water nitrogen ratio. It is also not a coincidence that minimum escapement "sterilization commercial gillnetting" has been active for the past 50 years in Alaska.

This nitrogen reduction has effected the production of everything in our oceans. Low freshwater biogenic fertilization production results in low saltwater production of herring, shrimp, sandlances, candlefish, squid, anchovies and many other elements within the oceans food web. When these elements are reduced within the food web, that reduction will be felt by all salmon stocks.

Sterilization fisheries management operates off an incorrect assumption that nursery lakes cannot utilize additional salmon carcasses.

The truth is that maximum salmon production cannot be completely based on the square footage of a lake like the commercial fishing industry would have you believe. The truth is that an EXPANDABLE life cycle exists, thus the same lake can feed many more additional juvenile salmon if the proper amount of nutrients are added to the water.

The "one-size fits all" salmon management rearing philosophy of the commercial fishing industry, is a bankrupt philosophy. Sterilization fisheries management does produce maximum commercial fisheries profit, thus motivating persons benefiting from these profits to "honestly testify" that we need to "minimize salmon escapements in order to reach a maximum yield".

Unfortunately these individuals do not understand that their "one-size fits all" salmon management beliefs are flawed. These people do not understand that additional rotting salmon within a lake, allows that lake to expand its salmon product just like a vegetable garden.

When a person views thousands of salmon carcasses washing up on a shore, they should be able to see the truly amazing connection those carcasses have within our fisheries future. The "in-river or lake death" and rotting of a single salmon must be viewed as a gift to our fisheries future and NOT as a negative, past management error, which needs to be corrected.

In Conclusion

I have presented this information because of the many confused persons testifying at your May 23 meeting, concerning the use of the "over-escapement" term, here in Soldotna, Alaska. The meeting was more about "who the salmon culprit is, that is intercepting northern bound salmon" but I think that the real problem rests within fisheries managers who believe in sterilization gillnetting management.

The Bristol Bay fisheries environment allows millions and millions of salmon to "over-escape" into their rivers and streams, yet those systems produces many more salmon than Cook Inlet. I believe Cook Inlet's main problem is that we have way to many gill nets fishing its waters and escapement levels need to dramatically raised inlet wide.

Commercial fishermen are not the pin in the "fisheries hand-grenade", which prevents our fisheries from self-destruction. Alaska's salmon fisheries are not totally measured by the square footage of spawning area or freshwater lake habitat available to salmon. These fisheries are like expandable engines, which have their upper limits like everything but we are not even close to approaching those yield limits within Cook Inlet.

In conclusion I request that the State of Alaska allocate specific funds to finance research beyond Kodiak waters to discover the industry or culprit who is intercepting northern bound salmon. This could be easily done within a micro-chip tagging program with tracking chips inserted within the body of a salmon, west of Kodiak Island waters. Once these tags are then located within dead salmon, the true culprits will be identified and corrective actions may be taken.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts on this important issue. I do wish I could have given you this information within testimony.

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