

RC 8**Alaska Board of Fisheries**

C/o Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Re: Opposition to Proposal 171

Dear Chairman Morisky and Members of the Alaska Board of Fisheries,

I am a commercial salmon fisherman in Cook Inlet, where I own and operate a drift operation with my brother. Our family has relied upon Cook Inlet commercial fisheries for income as well as our own food security for three generations, participating in all sectors of this important fishery. As fishermen and Alaska coastal community residents we are strongly opposed to Proposal 171.

You have and will hear many good reasons for the board to take no action on this proposal. It asks the Board and Alaska to unnecessarily chooses winners and losers among the many different and important types of fishermen that rely upon fisheries access, and that support Alaska's diverse salmon food system, economy and culture. This prescriptive approach harms the Board's autonomy and ability to make informed decisions on a very wide array of issues, and it directly defies the sustainable salmon policy.

What I'd like to leave you with today, however, is a view of the public access to food that my business provides. Proposal 171 supporters have touted personal use fisheries as the paramount public access point for salmon. Putting food on tables, so to speak. And while it is one important access point, that some Alaskans have the ability to pursue, this proposal and its supporters discount the most fundamental role of commercial fishing — that of food provider. It is the reason I take pride in what I do as a fisherman.

Along with selling fish to a processing plant, I direct market salmon in the summer. It is a substantial part of my business model, and the only way I have made ends meet the last few seasons. 100% of my direct market customers are local residents purchasing whole fish for home use. About half of them are people that are no longer able to access salmon through personal use fisheries, for myriad reasons — time, age, disability — to name a few. The other half do not want to access fish through the personal use fisheries, and choose instead to purchase from a local fisherman. 100% of them want access to local healthy seafood. I am able to offer a reasonable price because the fish are whole and fresh and come directly off my boat.

I serve 30 plus families every summer. I know dozens of other fishermen in Cook Inlet that do that amount of direct marketing or more. I had to turn away dozens of families last year because of how limited my own fishing opportunity was. As you can see, this is one very important way that the public accesses our local fisheries for food. These families' access is not less important than those who are able and willing to pursue other means. This reason ALONE demands that Alaska not create a hierarchy of what kind of fisherman is more deserving of the fish. We must protect the autonomy of the Board to make these complex decisions, and the ability to balance access for the benefit of all of our important user groups.

Please take no action on Proposal 171.

Sincerely,
Hannah Heimbuch
Cook Inlet Commercial Fisherman