

Agenda 17
May 1978

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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The Honorable Mike Gravel
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gravel:

Thank you for your letter of March 23rd and the copy of S 2762 with your remarks on this Bill. Unfortunately, it arrived too late for the Council to consider at its March meeting. The next meeting is May 25th and 26th and I will put it on the agenda for their consideration.

I have read the Bill and your remarks with interest and only wish that the Council had been able to discuss this Bill prior to the hearings on April 17th. Personally, I believe that your proposals for regionalization of advisory subcommittees and for the enhancement and rehabilitation of traditional publicly owned fish stocks are very pertinent and desirable points in any aquaculture bill. The present division of land and water resources in Alaska between native groups, the Federal Government and the State make your third issue; land and water access for aquaculture facilities particularly pertinent for Alaska.

Even though aquaculture is an ancient practice in terms of world history there are still many unknowns, and the mistakes that have been made in its name in the United States probably overbalance the benefits we have been able to derive from it. Certainly, it should be approached with a great deal of caution and preliminary study. From the introduction of carp in North America, based on their success as a cultured species in Europe, to the introduction of new diseases in salmonid fishes exemplified by the current problems at the Petersburg Hatchery, the record of problems and disasters in the United States from aquaculture enterprises is rather frightening.

The second point made in your Bill regarding the enhancement and rehabilitation of traditional publicly owned fish stocks is, I believe, particularly appropriate for Alaska where our aquatic environment is relatively unchanged by man's activities. Those streams and areas that have been hurt have probably not suffered irreversible damage. The use of aquaculture to supplement native stocks, particularly while runs are rehabilitated or enhanced by protecting them during vulnerable portions of their life cycle is the area where I think our dollars and efforts can be most effective.

Again, thank you for allowing us to comment on your proposed legislation. I am sorry that the Council has not had an opportunity to respond as yet. I hope that their comments, available soon after the May meeting, will still be of use to you.

Best regards,

Jim H. Branson
Executive Director

cc: Council (50)