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## United Cook Inlet Drift Association

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April 6, 2017

Dan Hull  
Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

**Re: Recommendations for structure and goals for a salmon committee**

Dear Chairman Hull and Council members:

Please consider the following pages as an example of how a salmon committee could be structured and how the committee could provide recommendations to the Council to assist in the development of a Salmon FMP.

Thank you,

Erik Huebsch  
UCIDA Vice President

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRUCTURE AND GOALS FOR A SALMON COMMITTEE**

### **Intent**

Upper Cook Inlet has some of the largest wild, native runs of salmon in Alaska. For the local, regional and state economies to receive the full benefit from these abundant natural and renewable resources, a better method of management using the best available science must be considered. The purpose of this Salmon Committee is to provide a framework of ideas and methods for better utilization of the salmon resource while ensuring its sustainability and reducing the conflict between user groups. Engaging diverse stakeholders in a collaborative method of problem solving can provide new ideas and methods for achieving these goals. These recommendations would then be directed to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to facilitate the development of a Salmon FMP.

### **Membership**

The Committee will be balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Members must have a demonstrated commitment to working collaboratively to find solutions and be knowledgeable in ecological, fisheries and economic issues impacting the Cook Inlet region. Committee members selected will represent the interests of state and local government, commercial and sport fishing interests, habitat and conservation groups and local/regional Native Alaskan groups.

### **Objectives and Scope of Activities**

The Committee will be tasked with providing recommendations and goals for salmon management in Upper Cook Inlet that are in compliance with Federal and State laws. The overall purpose of this effort is to use the process of collaboration with the principles of stewardship and sustainability to create a multifaceted and integrated Fishery Management Plan that supports the social and economic health of the Cook Inlet region while maintaining healthy salmon populations.

Fisheries have played an enormous economic role in this region for over a century and have sustained the residents here for thousands of years. In spite of the value we all place on fisheries, many current management practices are proving to be unsustainable and wasteful. This Committee must objectively review past practices and provide advice on how to transition into a new method of management that fully utilizes surplus salmon stocks, maintain escapements within escapement goals and maintains healthy salmon stocks for future generations.

Enduring change will require addressing the fundamental problems with the existing system of creating management policies. Some of the problems that have been identified with the current

system are lack of knowledge about fisheries in Cook Inlet, management plans written by groups with a singular focus, management for political purposes and a disregard for science, economics and traditional uses.

In the Cook Inlet basin there are other specific problems that threaten the sustainability of salmon resources. Urbanization can be one of the most challenging problems as the effects on salmon populations happen gradually over time. Northern pike, an invasive specie, has devastated some salmon populations in the Mat-Su watershed. This threat has been recognized for over twenty years yet there is still no comprehensive plan to control or eradicate them. The invasive plant Elodea is of equal threat. There are large scale resource and industrial projects being considered for the Cook Inlet Basin that should be included when developing recommendations. These large projects have the potential for disrupting salmon harvest methods, impeding migration or eliminating spawning and rearing habitat.

Increasing revenues to the local, regional and state economies from Cook Inlet salmon resources will benefit all residents and could provide a model for increasing revenues from other regions of the state as well. Many fisheries resources around the state are underutilized and have the potential for increasing revenues and stabilizing economies.

The challenge in this effort is to understand and learn from the past while planning for the future. There must be a firm understanding of what is sustainable in order to develop clear, measureable, science based management policies that will provide benefits from our salmon resources for many decades to come.

The Committee will advise the Council by providing advice and recommendations for conserving and developing an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable fisheries management strategy.

### **Description of Duties**

The Committee will be solely advisory in nature. All activities of the Committee will be conducted in an open, transparent, and accessible manner. The Committee will be asked to perform the following duties or other requests made by the Council.

- Identify the key elements to be considered in a Salmon FMP while recognizing and balancing the unique and important resource values of Cook Inlet salmon for all user groups
- Offer recommendations on developing a Salmon FMP for Cook Inlet that will help to ensure the long term sustainability of our salmon resources and salmon fisheries.
- To the extent possible, for the greatest benefit of all users, develop recommendations to manage Cook Inlet salmon resources for maximum sustainable yield.

### **Membership and Designation**

The Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Membership is intended to represent a broad range of stakeholders and be knowledgeable of ecological, social, and economic issues impacting

the Cook Inlet watershed, while providing a balanced and broad representation within the following interests:

1. Fishery scientists and managers;
2. Regional environmental and/or conservation organizations;
3. Commercial fishing representatives;
4. Commercial seafood processors;
5. Tourism and Recreation fisheries;
6. Subsistence fisheries;
7. Federally Recognized Tribes and/or Alaska Native Organizations;
8. Federal and State agencies;
9. Local government representatives.

Committee members must have a demonstrated commitment to working collaboratively and finding solutions that meet multiple stakeholder values.

Committee advice and recommendations must be approved by consensus of the groups represented but not consensus of all participants.

One substitute (alternate) member should be selected for each interest group.