



United Cook Inlet Drift Association

43961 K-Beach Road, Suite E • Soldotna, Alaska 99669 • (907) 260-9436 • fax (907) 260-9438
• info@ucida.org •

Date: September 26, 2016

Addressee: Dan Hull, Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252
npfmc.comments@noaa.gov

RE: Agenda item B-2 UCIDA Ninth Circuit Court Decision

Dear: Mr. Hull,

On behalf of the United Cook Inlet Drift Association (“UCIDA”), I would like to express our sincere and genuine interest in working with the Council to develop a new or amended Fishery Management Plan (“FMP”) for the Cook Inlet Salmon Fisheries. UCIDA recognizes and appreciates that the Council previously declined to produce such a plan, and that the issue has only returned to the Council following litigation. Nonetheless, we hope that the Council is willing to see the present situation as an opportunity to improve the conservation and management of the fishery, and UCIDA stands ready, willing, and able to work with the Council to make the most of this opportunity.

We also appreciate the fact that it may be premature, at this point, to discuss how the Council might proceed in light of the Ninth Circuit’s decision. That said, UCIDA urges that the Council engage with stakeholders as soon as possible to help inform the scope of the Council’s choices. To that end, UCIDA suggests the NPFMC develop a salmon committee. The purpose of committee would be to consider the scope of alternatives, and as appropriate, to initiate and expedite the development of a salmon FMP for Cook Inlet. We recommend that the salmon committee includes two individuals representing the Cook Inlet salmon drift and setnet fisheries a member representing the seafood processing and marketing sector and additional salmon committee members as the Council deems appropriate.

The goal of the FMP should be to get the most benefit from our fisheries for food and economic well-being, while conserving ecosystem health and fish stocks for

continued productivity to benefit future generations of fishing families and coastal communities. Meeting the objectives of Maximum Sustained Yield (MSY) for salmon fisheries, intact food webs, healthy ecosystems, development and maintenance of a viable commercial industry, subsistence needs and recreational opportunities are important outcomes in any new salmon FMP.

We believe this is a timely opportunity to invest in environmental stewardship. The salmon resources in the Cook Inlet watershed are facing unprecedented threats to their survival and many stocks are in decline from the effects of climate change, warm water, invasive species, urbanization and management schemes based on faulty or incorrect data. We need to utilize the best available science and put the collaborative council process to work on these issues to ensure the sustainability of these resources.

When properly managed, the commercial salmon fisheries in Cook Inlet are the fourth largest in Alaska. The ex-vessel value of salmon harvested has, in the past, exceeded the entire value of all lower 48 salmon fisheries combined. The salmon industry is by far the largest employment sector in Southcentral Alaska. However, the viability of this industry is threatened and will require the combined efforts of the Council, ADF&G and the industry stakeholders working together to create a salmon FMP that will ensure its survival.

Sincerely,

Original Signed Document

Erik Huebsch
UCIDA Vice President