

May 25, 2015

Chairman Hull and Council members,

My name is Katherine File, I live in Juneau and I am married to an IFQ stakeholder and seiner of 40 years. I am writing to you today to follow up on my testimony in June of last year. I attended the meetings and testified in person. My testimony of last year stated that if conditions didn't change we would no longer hire crew from the community and would sell IFQ because it is too costly and hard to catch. As of this year, we have had to sell some of our IFQ and we no longer have any crewmembers on our boat outside of our immediate family. We own our IFQ, permits and boat outright and have for decades.

Our eldest son was born the year IFQ was implemented and in 20 years we have seen this fishery go from bad to worse. We had hoped to one day give our boat, permits and IFQ to one or both of our sons. The sad fact is that neither one wants to deal with all the red

tape and both think that the fishery will not be viable in the next few years.

The robbing Peter to pay Paul management scheme is not working. We are seeing increased regulation that boggles the mind. Meanwhile, other user groups are not being held accountable for what they take out of the water. I, again, will state that ALL user groups MUST account for what they take out of the water. NO EXCEPTIONS. This includes personal use and subsistence. I do not understand the Councils reluctance in dealing with by-catch and other user groups while having no problem implementing draconian cuts and regulations on the commercial sector. By the way, as a side note, if my family wants halibut we go to the store and buy it as consumers. We do not take it off our boat.

The Observer program has only added to the hardship of this fishery. Having biologists from the lower 48 on the boat only makes it harder on the Captain and crew. This year after my husband had completed a trip with an observer, he received a call from a gentlemen in Sitka who was in charge of the observers. He asked if the observer had done his job. My husband replied he

didn't even know what his job was and that he didn't want him on the boat. The gentlemen from Sitka asked more questions of my husband as he was trying to overhaul gear. They finished their conversation and hung up. Later that day, my husband was called back and told the observer had not done his job correctly and needed to come back down to the boat and count hooks on gear. Before the trip, my son assisted the observer by showing him where the store was so he could purchase sea-sickness medication.

This has added undo stress to the crew and Captain. This amounts to nothing more than babysitting. We cannot ask them to do anything yet they require everything, including us knowing what their jobs are so that when asked, we can respond with an affirmative or negative as to how they performed in their duties. If this is to be required of us then we should be given a list of their tasks so we know if they are doing their jobs. This will save us time and frustration. We can gently remind them if they are forgetting something. That way it will not waste our time later on when we are working and trying to earn a living.

Observers amount to nothing more than enforcement on our boat. This was a concern from the very beginning and we were assured this was NOT the case.

The questions we are left to ask are, what exactly are we getting for our money? The data that has been collected has not helped in management. We have seen nothing that benefits our user group or the fishery in general.

Why are we paying for the program when we already pay a NMFS enforcement fee, federal taxes and the observer fee. The cruise ships have observers and the State of Alaska pays for them. I digress, that ship has already sailed, we are already paying the fee. We all know that when a government program is started, no matter how inadequate it is, you can't stop it.

I have been greatly disturbed about a particular part of the observer program. In fact, so much so, that I have contacted my Congressional Representative and Senators in Washington D.C. When they heard my concern they all agreed it was wrong, told me they would look into it and would get back to me. No one ever did.

When observers are de-briefed after a trip on a vessel, the powers that be determine if there has been any wrong-doing in the eyes of the law. If some infraction has been found, an investigator calls you, questions you and informs you of the fine and/or prison sentence. This brings me to my last question. Why are we, a proxy, crew member or our legal counsel not allowed to be physically present or listening telephonically or even get a written transcript when the observer is de-briefed? Do we not have a right to be present or to know what is being discussed about what has happened on our boat? Basically, we are being tried-in-absentia.

I know the answer you will give is because the observer will not be forth-coming with his/her observations because he/she will feel harassment. We feel harassed every time we get an observer but no one cares. It is like our rights do not exist. You may say well, you can have VMS. I would respectfully ask that all NPFMC members wear VMS type devices while they go about the Councils business and tell me if they like being observed by a third-party to see if there are any improprieties or laws that have been broken.

The regulations, the cuts to the IFQ and the lack of understanding as to how this affects the commercial mom-n-pop fishers and the lack of timely leadership and management are leading to the complete rationalization of this Federal fishery. It is my assumption that this is being done to purposefully put the small commercial fishers out of business so there are no stakeholders anymore. If I am wrong, then please let me know. If I am right, then please be truthful with the fishermen and their families as to the purpose of your policies.

Thank you for your time.

Katherine File

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