



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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UFA Responds to AFCA Action to Reallocate Salmon through Initiative

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), the statewide commercial fishing industry trade association representing 36 member organizations, is deeply concerned about the Alaska Fisheries Conservation Alliance (AFCA) efforts to ban salmon fishing gear in urban areas in Alaska. Written in legislative bill format, the AFCA initiative is titled: "An Act providing for the protection and conservation of Alaska's fisheries by prohibiting shore gill nets and set nets in nonsubsistence areas." While targeting gillnets and setnets in Cook Inlet, the AFCA initiative also includes the areas of Valdez, Juneau, Ketchikan, and Fairbanks.

Although the AFCA action doesn't reference king salmon, many of the issues raised in the initiative are in response to low king salmon abundance. Alaska is currently experiencing a cyclical period of low king salmon abundance statewide. The proposed action is targeting commercial harvesters in a staggering social and economic assault on Alaska's seafood industry. AFCA has established their actions as a conservation issue, however the initiative is actually a purely allocative issue and only seeks to ban nets in urban areas. Eliminating nets doesn't target the problem, which is in-river and ocean survival of small Chinook salmon. Instead, the initiative misinforms Alaskans by claiming: "Limiting the use of shore gill nets and set nets in nonsubsistence areas as provided herein will materially contribute to the long-term conservation and development of fisheries and ensure consistency with the sustained yield principle". Theatrics and political games are no way to manage Alaska's natural resources.

It is clear to Alaska's United Fishermen that AFCA actions seeks to harm Alaska's resource management traditions and methods. All resources users including oil, mining and timber should resist the temptation to have their industry managed and regulated by "major rule". Alaska's resources should be managed under our Constitutional principles as applied through the public processes established for resource management. The Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) was created to specifically address these types of fishery allocation issues. The AFCA initiative seeks to sidestep both the Constitution as well as the BOF simply to obtain a result that may or may not provide more fish for recreational anglers.

UFA President Jerry McCune said; "UFA is opposed to the AFCA efforts that pit Alaskans against Alaskans. Any action to eliminate a commercial fishery will seriously harm the businesses and incomes of Alaska permit holders, crewmembers, processors, suppliers, fuel companies, transportation workers, and communities. Also, this approach seriously reduces the opportunity for the average Alaskan to enjoy a king salmon dinner at a local restaurant or to buy fresh king salmon at the grocery store"

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