



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 8, 2017

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Paul Seaton, Co-Chair
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Juneau AK 99801

RE: Support for ADF&G Budget and Amemdments

Dear Co-Chairmen Foster and Seaton, and Committee Members,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is a statewide commercial fishing trade association composed of 34 commercial fishing organizations representing fishermen who participate in state and federal waters fisheries.

UFA supports the FY18 ADFG operating budget as amended by the sub-committee and adopted by the full finance committee on February 27. These amendments restore in-season management and assessment projects that have been cut or significantly under-funded since FY16 and will help give fishermen more access to fisheries. The changes also reduce the need for new ADFG test fisheries, which are effectively a tax on the seafood industry. Fish & Game collected \$2.8 million in test fishery monies in FY16, which directly reduced opportunity for fishermen and coastal communities.

Conservative management due to a lack of funding for assessment projects results in loss of income to commercial fishermen, processors, businesses, and communities. Lack of fishing opportunity reduces fishing tax revenues for the state general fund. It can also have long term, damaging effects on fisheries statewide, due to a lack of data for stock assessments and other critical analyses.

UFA worked with PSPA, Icicle Seafoods, and other processors in consultation with Fish & Game, to identify the assessment projects that are most critical to providing in-season information. This will allow fishery managers to prosecute fisheries throughout the state in a manner that best protects stocks while maximizing harvests.

The Fish & Game budget sub-committee did a great job finding revenue without using UGF funds. As we know, there are limited revenue sources available, so everyone worked to avoid using any additional UGF funding.

In summary, we would appreciate your support for these amendments, which will allow continued access to fisheries and create economic opportunity in coastal communities, without placing additional burdens on the state budget during these lean times.

UFA supports the FY18 Fish & Game operating budget as amended, to help ensure healthy fisheries statewide.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jerry McCune
President

Mark Vinsel
Executive Administrator