

Alakanuk City Council

P.O. BOX 167

ALAKANUK, ALASKA 99554

(907) 238-3313

2009 FEB -2 9:53

Friday, February 20, 2009

Robert D. Mecum, Acting Administrator
Alaska Region, NMFS, NOAA
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802

RE: Chinook salmon By-Catch
Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the salmon by-catch reduction measures in our Bering Sea management area. The high salmon incidental by-catch numbers of recent years in the Pollock fishery threatens our stock of salmon and detrimentally, negatively impacts our way of life, culture, tradition and livelihood.

Our salmon serves as an important cultural and has an economic role in our community and throughout the Western Alaska and the Lower Yukon River villages.

The salmon is a primary source of native food for us. It is also the backbone of our commercial salmon harvest, which provides a means of income for many of our local native folk, who reside in the Wade Hampton area of the Lower Yukon River.

This salmon is our irreplaceable resource that must be secured and protected by all means necessary.

We will be carrying the burden of conservation, even though the causes of the salmon decline are definitely not the result of our subsistence users along the Yukon River. To our understanding, there may not be enough Chinook salmon for our subsistence users this coming summer.

The model that is utilized in the draft environmental impact statement very drastically underestimates the impact to the Lower Yukon villages and to Western Alaska Chinook salmon stocks and to all our Chinook users.

We have been first hand dealing with the task of rebuilding our salmon stocks, despite being heavily regulated, since the mid 1980's. We are rebuilding the salmon stocks by reducing the amount given us for subsistence fishing.

We had absolutely no commercial fishing season for the Chinook salmon, in the summer of 2008, unfortunately.

With the depressed economy, the high cost of fuel, the high cost of groceries, the high cost of electricity, the high transportation costs, our local native folk are negatively, detrimentally struggling. With these burdens, obstacles and hindrances, we cannot make ends meet.

We know first hand of the immediate needs in our community. We need a long-term solution that addresses our stipulation. We intimately know the issues related to the fisheries and are integral to our livelihood.

We plead and ask that your respective council and the National Marine Fishery Service set a hard cap on the salmon by catch without delay to serve and protect the Chinook salmon that comes to the Lower Yukon river villages, Western Alaska, and the Wade Hampton area.

We advocate that the respective council look at all means necessary to reduce the by catch of salmon.

We hope that you may also consider the closing of the Pollock fisheries, to assist in rebuilding the stock of Chinooks.

We have first hand knowledge of our local conditions. We intimately and integrally understand the challenges facing us as a fisherman and subsistence user.

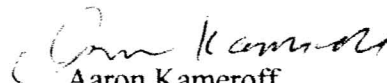
Unfortunately, we were and still are instituted very severe restrictions that adversely affects us negatively, detrimentally impacting us with stringent regulations that deprives us with the necessary means of supporting ourselves, feeding our selves and all our native families.

We thank you on behalf of our community and residents.

Sincerely,



Michael James
City Administrator



Aaron Kameroff
Mayor