

Introduced by: Johnson, Mayor, Cox
Date: 10/24/23
Action: Adopted
Vote: 8 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent, 1 Abstention

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION 2023-069**

**A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
DESIGNATE BY PROCLAMATION THE AREA OF THE UPPER COOK INLET EAST
SIDE SET NET FISHERY AS AN AREA IMPACTED BY AN ECONOMIC DISASTER
IN 2023 AND SUPPORTING A RECOVERY PLAN**

WHEREAS, commercial fishing in Cook Inlet was closed in 2023 for east side setnetters; and

WHEREAS, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement was 2,351,020. An estimated sport fishing harvest of 400,000 reduced the spawning escapement to approximately 1,950,000. The midpoint of the Sustainable Escapement Goal is 1,250,000. The actual spawning escapement is estimated to be 700,000 in excess of that management goal; and

WHEREAS, the upper end of the Biological Escapement Goal for the Kasilof River is 320,000 and in 2023 the Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement was 932,896, therefore, the actual spawning escapement is estimated to be 632,896 in excess of the goal; and

WHEREAS, according to ADF&G 1,366,534 sockeye were harvested in 2023 by the commercial drift fishery, with a price per pound of \$1.57 and average sockeye weight of 5.5 pounds; and

WHEREAS, assuming east side setnetters (ESSN) would have harvested 45% of the 1,312,896 sockeye salmon that were in excess of ADF&G management goals in the two rivers and a conservative estimate of 20% of the sockeye salmon that were caught in the drift fishery, the loss to the east side setnet fishery is estimated to be 864,110 sockeye salmon; and

WHEREAS, at a 5.5 pound average that loss translates to 4,752,605 pounds and with a price of \$1.57 the loss in dollars would be \$7,461,589, and spread evenly over the 435 permits in the ESSN fishery, the loss is \$17,153 per permit; and

WHEREAS, the Upper Cook Inlet ESSN is a unique Alaska fishery, 86% of the participants are Alaskan residents 80% of which are Kenai Peninsula Borough residents; and

WHEREAS, AS 44.33.285 authorizes the governor, upon recommendation of the commissioner of commerce, community, and economic development, to designate by proclamation an area as an area impacted by an economic disaster; and

WHEREAS, AS 44.33.310(3) provides that an economic disaster occurs where the annual income to workers in the designated area dropped below the average annual income for the base period, which is, for a fisheries failure, the years during which a fishery produced at economically representative levels as determined by the Department of Fish and Game; and

WHEREAS, the Kenai Peninsula Borough is a political subdivision of the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, an economic disaster declaration by the Governor would allow the legislature to appropriate funds for assistance grants and the governor may recommend in the governor's budget that capital projects planned for the area be accelerated and other steps may be taken as provided in AS 44.33.285 - .310 to accelerate the recovery from this disaster; and

WHEREAS, the Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association has urged the Kenai Peninsula Borough to ask the Governor of the State of Alaska to declare an economic disaster for the Upper Cook Inlet ESSN salmon commercial fisheries for 2023 due to the complete fishery closure of the 2023 season;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH:

SECTION 1. That the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly respectfully requests that Commissioner Julie Sande, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, recommend to Governor Dunleavy to designate, by proclamation, the areas of the Kenai Peninsula Borough affected by the 2023 Upper Cook Inlet ESSN Fishery closure as area impacted by an economic disaster.

SECTION 2. That the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly respectfully requests that Governor Dunleavy designate by proclamation, as described in AS 44.33.285, the area of the Upper Cook Inlet ESSN Fishery as an area impacted by an economic disaster and that the State of Alaska implement a recovery plan that provides private assistance and takes other actions that benefit commercial fisheries participants and others that rely on this important fishery resource.

SECTION 3. The Assembly also respectfully requests that the State of Alaska urge the Federal Department of Commerce and all other applicable federal agencies to render private and public assistance to all affected persons and entities.

SECTION 4. That a copy of this resolution will be provided to Commissioner Julie Sande, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, and to the Office of Governor Mike Dunleavy.

SECTION 5. That a copy of this resolution will be provided to State Senator Jesse Bjorkman and State Senator Gary Stevens, State Representative Ben Carpenter, State Representative Justin Ruffridge, State Representative Louise Stutes, and State Representative Sarah Vance.

SECTION 6. That this resolution is effective upon adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 24TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2023.

Brent Johnson

Brent Johnson, Assembly President

ATTEST:

Michele Turner

Michele Turner, CME, Borough Clerk



Yes: Cooper, Cox, Ecklund, Elam, Hibbert, Ribbens, Tunseth, Tupper
No: None
Absent: None
Abstention: Johnson