

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brent Hibbert, Assembly President
Members, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

FROM: Brent Johnson, Assembly Member BJ

DATE: November 19, 2020

RE: Resolution 2020-081: A Resolution Asking the North Pacific Fishery Management Council not to Adopt the Alternative 4, which would Prohibit Commercial Fishing in the Cook Inlet Exclusive Economic Zone (Johnson)

Resolution 2020-081 asks the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) not to consider Alternative 4 of the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Salmon Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Cook Inlet.

Several years ago United Cook Inlet Drift Association (UCIDA) and Cook Inlet Fisherman's Fund (ClFF) filed a lawsuit requesting that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the federal agency in charge of all anadromous fish species, follow the directive of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and fulfill its federally mandated oversight role in managing all Cook Inlet salmon stocks. That lawsuit ascended the courts to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the fishing groups won. As a result of that decision by the courts, the National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) and the Council and stakeholders have spent 3 years trying to work out the details for an FMP that complies with the federal law and the court order. The Council will take final action on the new FMP at their meeting that takes place December 4 and December 7-11 of this year.

On October 12, near the end of the last Council meeting, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game Deputy Commissioner introduced a 4th Alternative for the Council to consider for the new FMP. Alternative 4 would close all federal waters in Cook Inlet to commercial fishing. Federal water in Cook Inlet is the southern half of the Inlet, including almost everything south of Kalgin Island that is more than three miles from shore. This would close primary fishing areas traditionally used by drift fishers for over 70 years.