

Alaska State Legislature

Kenai Peninsula Delegation

Senator Peter Micciche

District O
907-465-2828
Sen.Peter.Micciche@akleg.gov

Representative Ben Carpenter

District 29
907-465-3779
Rep.Ben.Carpenter@akleg.gov



Senator Gary Stevens

District P
907-465-4925
Sen.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

Representative Sarah Vance

District 31
907-465-2689
Rep.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov

December 8, 2022

Mike Navarre
KPB Mayor
144 N Binkley St
Soldotna, AK 99669

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mayor Navarre:

We write today to respectfully ask that you support a resolution requesting that Governor Dunleavy declare a disaster in the Cook Inlet East Side Set Net (ESSN) fishery for the 2021 and 2022 seasons.

The ESSN fishery has been affected by low returns and therefore, limited opportunities to fish. Combined, these have resulted in dramatic financial losses in the fishery.

As the seated and newly elected legislators on the Kenai Peninsula, we represent most of the ESSN permit holders, their families and crewmembers, and are aware of the diminishing chinook salmon returns that effect regulation resulting in greatly reduced fishing opportunity for the targeted sockeye salmon harvest and the corresponding financial impacts to area fishermen. After your own analysis of the ex-vessel values, we are confident you will agree with our assessment of the disastrous Cook Inlet ESSN fishery situation.

The numbers truly speak for themselves:

In 2021, the ESSN gross ex-vessel value was \$3,421,851. When divided into a 5-year average of \$9,063,869, results in a 63% loss or \$5,642,012.

In 2022, the ESSN gross ex-vessel value was \$958,284. When also divided into \$9,063,869, it results in a 90% loss or \$8,105,584.

The total loss for both years was \$13,747,597 or based on 440 ESSN permits \$31,244.54 each. A loss of this magnitude is a disaster for all concerned in this small fishery. These impacts not only affect permit holders but also the crew members of the fish sites, the processors and other support businesses. Ultimately, the losses incurred during the 2021 and 2022 fishing seasons could mean nearly a \$100,000,000 financial impact to the Kenai Peninsula.

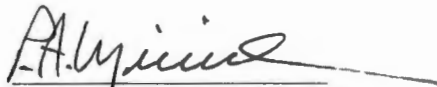
The 5-year average was determined by using ex-vessel values from 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019. 2018 and 2020 were not used in the determination as they were previously declared disasters. Current NOAA policy states that if a fishery has suffered a 70% loss, then a disaster has occurred.

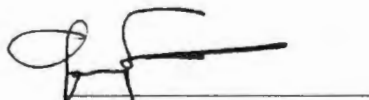
2022 was obviously a disaster. 2021, on its face, doesn't meet the 70% threshold. However, NOAA advises that the fisheries apply, and they may grant disaster status due to "extenuating circumstances".

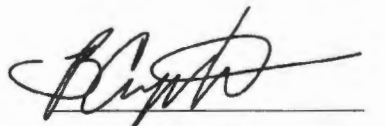
In closing let us again encourage your consideration of a resolution requesting Governor Dunleavy declare a disaster for this 140-year-old fishery. The residents who work tirelessly in this fishery continue to struggle financially, even on good years. The impacts felt by all during the 2021 and 2022 seasons are more than many can bear.

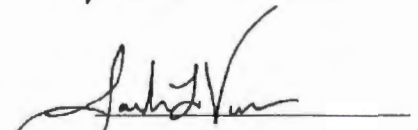
Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact Senator Micciche's office at 907-283-7996 if you have any questions.

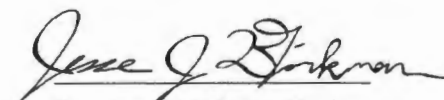
Sincerely,


Senate President Peter Micciche


Senator Gary Stevens


Representative Ben Carpenter


Representative Sarah Vance


Senator-Elect Jesse Bjorkman


Representative-Elect Justin Ruffridge