



Kenai City Council - Special Meeting

July 26, 2022 – 6:00 PM

Kenai City Council Chambers

210 Fidalgo Avenue, Kenai, Alaska

****Telephonic/Virtual Information Below****

www.kenai.city

Agenda

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Agenda Approval

B. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Resolution No. 2022-57 - Requesting the State of Alaska Commissioner of Fish and Game Allow the East Side Set Net Fishery Additional Opportunity to Harvest Sockeye Salmon During the 2022 Season. (Vice Mayor Glendening, Council Members Knackstedt, Pettey, Winger, Baisden and Sounart)

C. NEW BUSINESS – None.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT (*Public comment limited to three (3) minutes per speaker; thirty (30) minutes aggregated*)

E. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None.

F. ADJOURNMENT

The agenda and supporting documents are posted on the City's website at www.kenai.city. Copies of resolutions and ordinances are available at the City Clerk's Office or outside the Council Chamber prior to the meeting. For additional information, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 907-283-8231.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83327435902>

Meeting ID: 833 2743 5902 **Passcode:** 841223

OR

Dial In: (253) 215-8782 or (301) 715-8592

Meeting ID: 833 2743 5902 **Passcode:** 841223



Sponsored by: Vice Mayor Glendening, Council Members Knackstedt, Pettey, Winger, Baisden and Sounart

**CITY OF KENAI
RESOLUTION NO. 2022-57**

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE STATE OF ALASKA COMMISSIONER OF FISH AND GAME ALLOW THE EAST SIDE SETNET FISHERY ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO HARVEST SOCKEYE SALMON DURING THE 2022 SEASON.

WHEREAS, the City of Kenai benefits from well-managed salmon runs as a central part of its economy and quality of life; and,

WHEREAS, all user groups within the City: sport; personal use; subsistence and commercial benefit from healthy sustainable runs in the Kenai River; and,

WHEREAS, the City supports the implementation of fisheries regulations based on sound science and research-based biology intended to achieve a maximum sustainable yield providing for the highest possible number of returning salmon and greatest opportunity for all user groups; and,

WHEREAS, sockeye salmon runs in both the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers are currently projected to exceed escapement goals; and,

WHEREAS, personal use fishermen, sport fishermen, and the commercial drift fleet are all currently permitted to harvest sockeye salmon with expanded opportunities including sport fish limits of six per day and 24 hour a day personal use opportunities; and,

WHEREAS, in-river guides also have opportunities to guide clients for sockeye salmon; and,

WHEREAS, the only user group currently denied any opportunity to harvest sockeye salmon are the East Side Setnet fisheries participants; and,

WHEREAS, there are over 400 East Side Setnet Permit holders in the Upper Cook Inlet, with close to 90 percent Alaska Residents and approximately 80 percent of those Alaskans residing on the Kenai Peninsula Borough; and,

WHEREAS, the East Side Setnet fishery has a long history in the City of Kenai preceding Statehood; and,

WHEREAS, the East Side Setnet fishery provides direct employment opportunities, is a critical business component of local seafood processors and supports numerous other local businesses through its activities; and,

WHEREAS, in 2021, more than one million sockeye in excess of escapement goals entered the Kenai River resulting in economic opportunity costs estimated to be \$80 million dollars; and,

WHEREAS, the current late run king salmon return in the Kenai River **is projected to meet escapement goals** within an allowable margin of error using the Alaska Department of Fish and Game timing scenarios if the run is two days or more late; and,

WHEREAS, Department of Fish and Game harvest data shows that only 32 late run Kenai River large king salmon were harvested in the East Side Setnet fishery through July 14, 2022 representing a very small fraction of a percent of needed escapement; and,

WHEREAS, while all user groups are targeting sockeye, all incidentally catch king salmon while conducting their fisheries; and,

WHEREAS, allowing all other user groups to continue to harvest sockeye with increased fishing opportunities while completely prohibiting the East Side Setnet fishery to harvest sockeye is inequitable, does not appear to be scientifically based, will result in economic disaster for some East Side Fishermen and negatively impacts the economy of the City of Kenai.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KENAI, ALASKA:

Section 1. That the City Council of Kenai requests the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to authorize further sockeye salmon fishing opportunity for the East Side Setnet fishery during the 2022 season.

Section 2. That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the State of Alaska Commissioner of Fish and Game, all members of the Board of Fish and Governor Mike Dunleavy.

Section 3. That this Resolution takes effect immediately upon passage.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KENAI, ALASKA, THIS 26TH DAY OF JULY, 2022.

Jim Glendening, Vice Mayor

Henry Knackstedt, Council Member

Glenese Pettey, Council Member

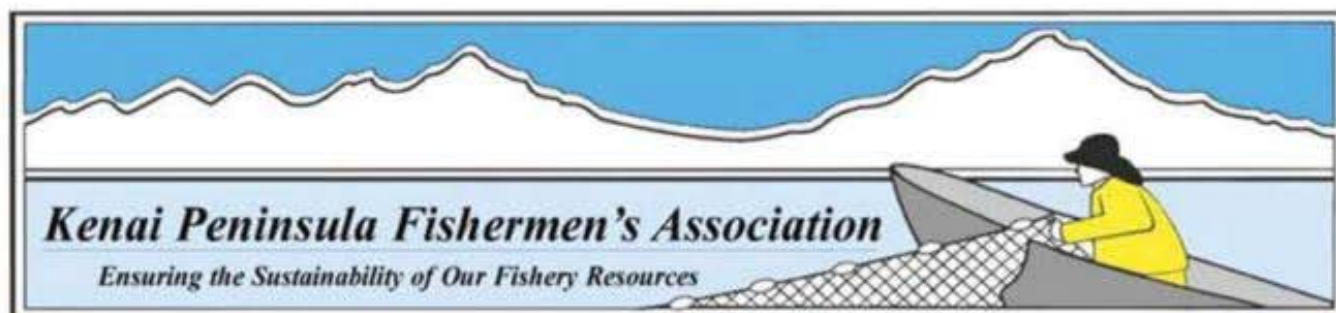
Teea Winger, Council Member

James Baisden, Council Member

Deborah Sounart, Council Member

ATTEST:

Michelle M. Saner, MMC, City Clerk



43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road • Suite F • Soldotna, Alaska 99669-8276
 (907) 262-2492 • Fax: (907) 262-2898 • E Mail: kpfa@alaska.net

PRESS RELEASE

July 20, 2022

The Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (KPFA), is a non-profit 501(c) (6) commercial fisheries advocacy trade group representing Cook Inlet (CI) fishing families since 1954. KPFA's mission is "**Ensuring the Sustainability of Our Fishery Resources.**" Our goal is to continue to strengthen our fishing community and to promote the economic stability of the Cook Inlet Setnet Fishery.

KPFA primarily represents salmon setnet permit holders on the East Side of Cook Inlet. The geographical area of the fishery reaches from the south at Ninilchik to Boulder Point in the north, spanning more than 60 miles along Cook Inlet's Eastside. The salmon harvested by the East Side Setnet Fishery originate almost exclusively in the Kasilof and Kenai River systems.

Some 440 limited entry permit holders, each one a small businessperson, fish for salmon in this area and are primarily Alaska residents. Eighty-six percent of the permit holders are Alaska residents, and eighty percent of those Alaskans live locally on the Kenai Peninsula.

Our correspondence today is to express the Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association's extreme concern for the recent action by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) to close the Kenai River to king salmon fishing. This action immediately closed the doors of the businesses of more than 400 families who work in the Upper Cook Inlet Setnet fishery! Revenues from these businesses not only support their fishing families, but also trickle down to a web of local businesses, including fish processors, fish tenders, truck drivers, mechanics, welders, fuel sellers, boat builders, and gear, grocery and

hardware stores, among many others. The loss of the fishery will do irreparable harm not only to the fishermen who will lose their livelihoods but also to the Kenai Peninsula's economy and food security. The nearly identical fishery closure that took place last year eliminated an estimated 80 million dollars that would have circulated into the local Kenai Peninsula economy.

Of all the user groups who harvest salmon in Cook Inlet – sport anglers, dip-netters, drift gill netters, subsistence fishermen, and professional guides, once again *only* the East Side setnet family businesses have been pulled from the water and forced to shutter their businesses.

The ADFG is citing king conservation to justify this closure. Their actions are guaranteeing yet another economic disaster for the East Side setnetters. To take an action that imposes such dire circumstances on only these fishermen, one would think that the setnetters' harvest must severely impact the run. This is not true!

To date, the total number of king salmon harvested by setnetters fishing on the 60 miles of beach from Niniitchik to Boulder Point is a total of **32 large Late Run Kenai Kings**. Those 32 king salmon represent 0.2% of the king run. So, under the direction of Governor Mike Dunleavy's Fish and Game Commissioner, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is closing the Kenai River to king salmon fishing and sending a century-old sector of the Kenai Peninsula's economy into economic collapse while putting more than 99 percent of the returning large late run Kenai kings into the river.

For the past few days, the king numbers have been increasing. Fish and Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang has stated that he will reopen the East Side Setnet fishery *if* the department projects meeting the 2020 Board of Fish imposed Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) of 15,000 Late Run Kenai River Large kings. The commissioner has the authority to open the fishery in emergency like this yet he refuses, citing fear of a lawsuit. While he waits to confirm that the OEG will be met, there is certain harm coming to those natal rivers where the kings and sockeye rear.

The Peninsula's sockeye salmon population is being put in jeopardy.

To date, the Kasilof River is projected to reach 761,000 returning sockeye, which is 441,000 sockeye over the upper end of the escapement goal and is on track to not replace itself. Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang is willing to devastate future sockeye returns for 0.2% of the king run! The biological escapement goal for Kasilof River sockeye

salmon of 140,000 to 320,000 has been exceeded! Additionally, the Kenai River is currently on track to exceed its sockeye goals if setnetters are kept on the beach. **These punitive actions are endangering future sockeye runs for ALL users.**

We believe in managing our fishery to the **scientific biological goals** set forth by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game which is a Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 13,500 late run Kenai River large kings. While the department waits to make the call on the run strength based on the Board of Fisheries imposed seemingly unattainable OEG of 15,000 large Kings, 400 family fishing businesses will be waiting on the beach asking to be allowed to harvest their target species of sockeye. The eagerly anticipated order to fish this season will provide much needed economic relief and social well-being for their families and will also provide relief from the certain catastrophic sockeye over escapements into the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers. The setnet fishery cannot survive without meaningful fishing opportunity.

It's sad that Governor Dunleavy hangs his hat on Alaska being open for business, while he continues to close a 140-year-old fishery year after year. His actions speak louder than words!

The Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association Board of Directors