

# **Letters to the Editor**

## **Fishing board decisions biased**

Dear Editor:

The recent closure of the chum subsistence fishery on the Yukon River, like the chinook and sock-eye sportfishing restrictions on the Kenai River and the 83 percent chinook allocation to the commercial troll fishery in Southeast, is yet another example of a management scenario that maximizes the commercial harvest of common property fishery resources regardless of the impact on other user groups.

It is not surprising that Alaska's fishery resources have been and continue to be managed for maximum commercial harvest when you consider the manner in which fishery regulations are promulgated in this state. A seven mem-

ber "lay board," appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature, determines fishery regulations statewide. The qualifications for appointment are vaguely defined by statute and essentially any person can qualify regardless of the potential personal gain or conflict of interest.

Historically, the Board of Fisheries was comprised entirely of commercial fishermen with little change in board composition until recent years. The present board is still controlled by a commercial fisheries majority of four members. And, board members that have a vested interest in general are in a position to enact potentially beneficial regulations.

It seems to me that a management scenario that allows a lay board that has commercial use bias and a conflict of interest such as the Board of Fisheries to promul-

gate fishery regulations is not in the best interest of the citizens of the state and is inconsistent with the constitutional provisions that the fishery resources of the state are the common property of the citizens and are to be managed for the maximum benefit of all the citizens in a manner consistent with the public interest. And, I would expect that until such time that the composition of the Board of Fisheries truly represents the diverse fishery resource use that exists today in such a manner that no single user group has a majority, we can expect fishery regulations that maximize the benefit of one user group to the detriment of others.

Sincerely,  
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