

# Testimony by Sparck spurs federal investigation

Recent testimony by Harold Sparck of Bethel spurred Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, into requesting that the National Marine Fisheries Service immediately launch an investigation into allegations that Japanese fishermen are misreporting their catch of chinook salmon in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.

Murkowski made his request after Sparck, a representative of Western Alaska subsistence fishermen, testified before Murkowski's Senate East Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee, that "significant unreported catches of North American chinook salmon" were taking place.

Sparck said U.S. observers aboard Japanese fishing vessels suspect the Japanese fishermen

were underreporting their chinook catches.

Sparck said the Japanese fishermen were avoiding delivery of chinooks to Japanese processing ships where U.S. observers could monitor the catch. Instead, Sparck said the Japanese fishermen were delivering their chinooks in such a way as to avoid U.S. observer notice and then for the official record mislabeling the high-value chinook as low-value pink and chum salmon.

"If these charges are true, it raises serious questions about the reported gains we supposedly have made as a result of the International North Pacific Fisheries Commission agreement," Murkowski said.

"Verification of these allegations may bring about the need for the renegotiation of some of the provisions of the agreement," he added.