



**CHIGNIK INTERTRIBAL COALITION
427 AIRPORT ROAD
CHIGNIK LAGOON, ALASKA 99565**

October 28, 2024

Madam Chair and Council Members:

Thank you for your service on this board. It's good to see everyone again here and I hope you and your families are doing well. The update that I'm sharing today is mainly focused on fisheries related events that have occurred since I last saw you at the March all-RAC meeting.

As you know, the Chignik Intertribal Coalition is working towards solutions to ensure the future well-being of our Tribal members and communities. Our economic, social, and cultural longevity is tied to the health of our salmon runs in the waters from which we have long harvested.

This past summer, both state and federal managers closed our fisheries to maintain viability of the Chignik River Chinook Salmon population. This concurrent emergency special action was taken towards ensuring the continued viability of the Chignik River Chinook Salmon population. Since 2014, the escapement goal has only been achieved in 4 of the last 10 years with the 2023 weir count being the lowest on record.

As a result, we had unprecedented closures this season which expanded closed waters downstream into state waters to all subsistence users. Concurrently, the commissioner, under EO authority, restricted the commercial fishery in the Chignik Bay section of the Chignik Management Area to one or two days a week while still allowing mixed stock fisheries to continue harvesting in adjacent Area M and Kodiak districts. We believe this action was inconsistent with the sustainable salmon policy and mixed stock policy of the state Board of Fisheries. We know that mixed stock fisheries are indiscriminate, harvesting whatever comes into the net regardless of species or age. Allowing immature salmon harvest increases selective pressure on the species toward younger and smaller fish. In addition, recent entry of Southeast purse seine vessels into the South Peninsula fishery has exacerbated the Chinook and chum interception problem. These vessel owners are known as aggressive and high harvesters.

This past August, the Western Interior RAC submitted ACR 13 to the Board of Fisheries asking that Area M net depths and lengths be modified to improve chum and Chinook conservation. To be clear, ACR 13 is not asking the ADF&G or fishermen to modify their “adaptive management plan”. It is asking the Alaska Board of Fisheries, which makes policy changes to time, area and gear to correct an error in regulation.

I’d like to refresh your memory that in February 2023, the BoF listed Chignik Chinook as a stock of concern. The summer of 2023, Chinook escapement was recorded at 267 individual salmon which is the lowest on record and well below the range of 1300 to 2700. Also in February of 2023, ADFG attempted to combine the Early and Late runs into a single escapement goal. This proposal was vigorously opposed by our tribes and AC and our rationale is well documented in on-time public comments, countless testimony, and the Boards actions. The Board of Fisheries opted to establish Optimum Escapement Goals (OEGs) for the Early and Late run sockeye as an alternative.

We need to continue with the historical approaches that work, this is what drives us to pursue and acquire the research necessary to protect our salmon runs for long term sustainability.

I’ll close by stating that our path forward is continuing to acquire and present research to protect and sustain our salmon fisheries. We are asking the council to voice our need to the state and federal agencies that share the mutual goal of sustainable resource management. We hope the council receives our comments in good faith that we are doing what we can locally yet need additional assistance in recovering our subsistence salmon resources through federal management actions. We are supportive of stock assessments, research, and recovery plans to support the conservation of healthy populations and the continuation of subsistence harvest opportunity. Finally, we request that our concerns be included in your annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board members that they may give direction and resources to the federal in-season managers and staff working in the Chignik management area.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and thanks again for your service and good work.

Sincerely,



George Anderson

Chignik Intertribal Coalition, President