**Reasons to Change the Transfer of Limited Entry Salmon Permits**

Times have changed for many rural Alaskan communities participating in the salmon limited entry fisheries. Today, we have permits leaving the rural communities at an alarming rate. This out-migration of permits has snowballed mainly due to the “graying of the fleet.”

To prevent rural communities from shrinking, the State of Alaska needs to redefine the transferability of the limited entry permit. Currently, because of the restrictions on the transfer of permits, they are being sold to people outside of the fishing area and mostly to people living out of state. They go where the money is.

Part of the reason this is occurring is because of the high rate of alcoholism and drug use in many rural communities. In some cases, rural permit holders are unwilling to turn over permits to their children because they’re concerned they might sell the permit to get money for drugs. Currently the only way to have another individual fish a salmon permit is to transfer it in a sale.

I would like to recommend an idea that will hopefully curb this out-migration of salmon permits from rural communities. My proposal would allow an additional name to be listed on a salmon permit. This would enable the permit holder to allow the permit to be fished without fear that this asset could be sold by a person under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Adding another name onto a permit would allow the permit owner to mentor an up-and-coming fisherman in their community and help transition that individual into the fishery. In many cases, local fishermen are willing to step up and become independent salmon fishermen, given the opportunity.

One of the biggest obstacles young fishermen who want to pursue a career in fishing face is lacking an established credit history. Without it, it’s almost impossible for new entrants to obtain commercial bank loans to purchase boats and permits. Changing the limited entry salmon fisheries program so a second name could be added to the permit would assist new entrants by establishing a work history in their fishing career. That would later assist them in obtaining a commercial loan.

Adding a second name would also eliminate the permit holder’s fear of losing the permit. The second person listed on the permit would only have the right to sell fish for that season or as long as his or her name is on the permit card. The permit owner would retain all rights of the permit ownership.

An additional benefit of this change in the current statue of limited entry salmon permits would be to have the survivor of a permit holder retain the ability to be the first name on the permit and allow a second name to fish this permit. Under the current law this is not possible.

This is not how the system should work. Consider the following scenario: a man and his wife build a life together in a fishing community and have a couple of children. Their main source of income is commercial salmon fishing. If the permit holder dies, the wife should be able to maintain that permit in her name and place a second person’s name on the permit, if she chooses, providing that individual the ability to sell salmon with no other ownership.

It’s important to understand that the proposal would not allow the mentored fisherman to fish one permit and the permit owner to fish a different permit at the same time or during the same opening. That is not the intent of the resolution. This does not allow someone to lease the salmon permit out. While mentoring an individual in a salmon fishery, you can only fish that one permit. There cannot be deliveries on more than one permit during a commercial fishery period.

Out-migration in rural Alaskan communities has been a growing problem for years. Given the state’s current fiscal crisis, it’s more important than ever to maintain and increase economic opportunities for individuals and families. Since commercial fishing is the main economic driver for many rural Alaskan communities, empowering them to remain economically healthy so they can retain and grow their population base is essential. I’m hopeful this proposal will help to accomplish that goal.