

Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee

9998 Nelson Lagoon Drive

Nelson Lagoon, Alaska 99571-9801

Dear Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang, Chairman Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and Board of Fish Members,

Please find Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee's emergency petition to address the salmon return crisis of Nelson Lagoon.

Consecutive poor salmon returns of all salmon species to Nelson Lagoon has resulted in an emergency situation. Repeated lack of salmon returning to Nelson Lagoon has diminished the seasonal returns to a dismal level, where conservation of the Nelson Lagoon Lakes and Rivers system must take priority over all.

2022 salmon season has resulted in Aleutian East Borough to submit support for a federal fishery disaster determination for the 2022 Nelson Lagoon Sockeye salmon fishery on behalf of Nelson Lagoon to the Alaska State Governor. It is felt by the Nelson Lagoon Community that this declaration could have been done many consecutive years prior.

The Native Village of Nelson Lagoon and Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee strongly believe that intercept fishing outside of Nelson Lagoon (Area M) is a direct cause of this issue. Nelson Lagoon Salmon System is a terminal system, and any harvests outside of Nelson Lagoon is an intercept fishery.

Year after year, Alaska Department of Fish & Game local management has failed to limit the 24/7 intercept fishing in North Alaska Peninsula Area M. Local management is quick to address anything but the intercept issue, when it is obvious to the Native Village of Nelson Lagoon Community, Nelson Lagoon local fisherman and Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee.

Proposal 120, submitted to the board of fish for February 2023, addresses much of the concern and problems that have made the dire situation of Nelson Lagoon what it is today. Although the Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee supports proposal 120 for the most part, the Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee feels that proposal 120 does not express enough to conservation of the Nelson Lagoon Salmon System. Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee supports windows in North Alaska Peninsula Area M.

Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee would like to address the single most obvious common denominator every year, is the fact that intercept fishing of Nelson Lagoon Salmon begins in June and continues throughout the salmon season nonstop in the North Alaska Peninsula of

Area M. This has affected escapement goals of Chinook, Sockeye, and later season Chum and Coho salmon. Therefore, a conservative approach to management must be demanded throughout all salmon species migration.

Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee would also like to point out that a complete shutdown of North Alaska Peninsula Area M has never been realized in over 20 years, regardless of the lack of escapement. Minor attempts to address the ongoing situation at previous BOF, such as rolling closures (partial closure of a harvest area), has only proved that rolling closures are not enough, and that any limited fishing time of North Peninsula Area M has a positive benefit to Nelson Lagoon salmon escapement.

Harvests in June in the North Peninsula Area M northern sections, has resulted in an alarming decrease over recent years of June escapements in Nelson Lagoon.

Please address local ADF&G management and all Area M fishermen to focus on conservation and preservation of the Nelson Lagoon Salmon System over profit.

As mentioned in proposal 120, many contributing factors have affected Nelson Lagoon salmon escapement over the years. Increase in Mesh Depth from 45md to 70md and un-restricted mesh size, has enabled North Peninsula Area M fisherman to achieve 30,000lbs per day/boat. With over 150 drift permits fishing North Alaska Peninsula any given day, unbelievable harvests are achieved in a 24hr period.

Proposal 128, submitted to the board of fish for February 2023, addresses the net depth concern. This proposal is supported by Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee, however, the proposal 128 does not state the fact that Nelson Lagoon's current mesh depth of 29md will not be increased to 45md. Only the current mesh depth of 70md of North Peninsula Area M will be affected. 70md reduced to previous mesh depth of 45md.

In a perfect world, a complete shutdown of all fishing in Area M would be optimal for ensuring conservation of Nelson Lagoon salmon. Considering that unlikely event, Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee would like to see a complete shutdown of North Peninsula Area M by way of windows. To ensure a direct conservation effort by ADF&G management, Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee would like to see a more probable outcome of...

A mandatory minimum of 4 day complete closure, of any given week, throughout the entire salmon season to ensure conservation of all Nelson Lagoon's salmon stocks. Since a decrease in salmon returning to Nelson Lagoon has been realized in Nelson Lagoon several days later after any commencement of harvests in any given area in North Peninsula Area M, the farther away the harvest, the longer it takes to be realized in Nelson Lagoon, a mandatory sufficient shutdown period is imperative.

Reduction of all 70md nets to a maximum depth of 45md (pre mid 1980's).

No salmon harvests in June of Northern Sections of Area M. Only allowing harvest in Bear River section in June, only 3 days a week, and harvests only if Nelson Lagoon has reached its periodic escapement goals.

No salmon harvests ever in Three Hills and Port Moller Bight Sections of North Peninsula Area M. These two sections do not have salmon systems to support salmon harvests.

Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee would like the Commissioner and BOF to consider pre 1980 North Peninsula Area M management when lack of escapement had not yet been such a dire concern as today.

Sincerely,
Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee