



**Kenai
Area
Fisherman's
Coalition**

PROTECTING YOUR FISHING RIGHTS & RESOURCES

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Joe Balash, DNR Commissioner
Dept. of Natural Resources
550 W. 7th Ave., suite 1400
Anchorage, Ak. 99501

Dec. 30, 2013

Dear Commissioner Balash,

Kenai Area Fisherman's Coalition (KAFC) is a private angler sport fishing group dedicated to protecting the rights of private resource users in the Kenai area, habitat protection and conservation of our fisheries for future long-term sustainability. We have eight past ADF&G or USF&W fisheries biologists either on our BOD or in our membership.

Over the years, several of us in our organization, with Kenai River fisheries and habitat expertise, have submitted numerous applications to be considered for the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) board only to be rejected for unknown reasons. Some of us have volunteered to sit on KRSMA sub-committees to participate in the KRSMA process.

Those of us that have been involved with the KRSMA board for a long period of time have witnessed an erosion of public trust because of the bias in the member selection process. The board no longer represents a broad spectrum of interests on issues related to the Kenai River but is dominated by guided sport fish interests and organizations. Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA) and Kenai River Professional Guides Association (KRPGA) have long been recognized in our community as sister organizations with interests in advancing guide industry considerations. Between these two groups they now maintain five of the nine KRSMA board seats with people that have direct ties to their organizations. Even the Director of Parks, Ben Ellis, who oversees and approves these appointments is a past Executive Director of KRSA.

Furthermore, recent actions by some of the board members involved in the Alaska Fisheries Conservation Alliance (AFCA) Ban Setnet Initiative, has further demonstrated their bias towards other user groups in our community. KRSMA Chairman, Joe Connors, is also Chairman and initiative spokesmen for AFCA, and KRSMA board members Rickie Gease and Carol Padgett also signed on to the initiative packet that was delivered to LT. Governor, Mead Treadwell, for consideration. This involvement by these board members demonstrates a complete lack of respect and consideration for other members of our community. The allocative direction of this initiative has been deemed so disdainful in our community that both the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly and the Kenai City Council have voted unanimously to pass resolutions opposing this initiative.

This entire initiative process has created so much distrust between sport and commercial interests in our community that it has also made it more difficult for other sport fishing groups, such as ours, to continue meaningful communications with commercial fishing organizations necessary to resolving resource allocation and sustainable fishery issues. It has certainly tarnished the KRSMA image and probably can't be remedied

unless these individuals are removed from the KRSMA board and replaced with an unbiased cross section of a fair representation to all user groups.

In another matter, board member Dave Carey, resigned from the KRSMA board and was replaced by yet another member of the guide industry, Monte Roberts. Mr. Carey was a private angler and respected past Chairman of the KRSMA board. Superintendent Blackwell told me that he and Chairman Connors together selected river guide Monte Roberts to replace Mr. Carey and fulfill his remaining term. Mr. Roberts is currently the Fisheries Committee Chairman for KRPGA and has himself shown a bias against private anglers through a proposal that he has submitted to the Board of Fisheries for consideration.

In his proposal Mr. Roberts seeks to end the time periods that private anglers on the Kenai River presently enjoy when they can fish without the competition of guide boats and guide activity. If passed, this Board of Fisheries proposal would end the habitat friendly "Drift Boat Monday" that private anglers presently enjoy. It would also end the private angler Sunday fishery and restrict the fishing hours to 6am – 10pm. Currently, private anglers have the opportunity to fish in the mornings and evenings outside of the guide hours of 6am – 6pm.

These opportunities for unguided anglers to fish without competing guide activity was put into place because too many local private anglers were being displaced off of the river because of the increases in commercial guide activity. They were also put into place to help equalize the harvest rates between guided and unguided anglers.

Perhaps Superintendent Blackwell was unaware of the level of Mr. Robert's bias against private users or his involvement in authoring such a proposal when he supported his appointment. In any event, we are requesting a review of Mr. Robert's appointment to the KRSMA board and would like to see it be reversed and given to a non-commercial representative who is much closer aligned to the positions Mr. Carey represented.

KAFC still supports the original intent of the KRSMA board. We believe it can play an important part in the development and well-being of our Kenai River resources. We also depend on administrators, like yourself, to recognize the current representation on the board undermines the legitimacy of its intended principles to be an objective voice for all user groups.

Thank you in advance for considering our concerns in these matters.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dwight Kramer,
KAFC Chairman

cc: Governor Sean Parnell
Senator Peter Micciche
Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Kurt Olson
Representative Paul Seaton
KPB Mayor Mike Navarre
Kenai City Mgr. Rick Koch