

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT
FOR THE STAND FOR SALMON BALLOT INITIATIVE
FROM RETIRED STATE & FEDERAL SCIENTISTS & MANAGERS

We the undersigned are retired state and federal agency scientists and managers with considerable experience in salmon biology, habitat and management in Alaska;

Alaska boasts world-class salmon resources, and these resources support vital subsistence, commercial, sport and personal use fisheries;

These fisheries feed countless Alaskans, create important jobs and revenues for our local villages and communities, support Alaska's tourism industry, and feed people around the world;

Salmon occupy a critical role in the food chain and ecosystem where they support other species important for subsistence, personal use, tourism and guide industries;

The repeal of the Alaska Coastal Management Program in 2011, along with related efforts to accelerate state and federal permitting efforts, have dangerously eroded salmon habitat protection in recent years;

Salmon runs from Europe to New England and the Pacific Northwest have collapsed, and habitat impacts have played a significant role in these declines; Alaska has an opportunity to learn from these habitat management mistakes, but today, we are simply repeating many of them;

We recognize the inherent complexity of our salmon ecosystems, and while ocean conditions will continue to affect our salmon, increased development and use in our coastal watersheds – including large projects in sensitive areas - are a direct threat to healthy salmon runs now and in the future;

The Alaska Anadromous Fish Act – also known as Title 16 – is the only law that specifically protects salmon habitat in Alaska. No other state or federal law does what Title 16 does;

Title 16 was adopted at statehood, and while it requires the “proper protection” of wild salmon, there is no definition in law for “proper protection;”

Under the Alaska Constitution Article VIII, every Alaskan owns our public fish and water resources. Yet under current law, Alaskans have no right to public notice and comment on fish habitat permits;

Alaska must modernize its outdated fish habitat protection law if we hope to maintain healthy salmon runs now and in the future;

The Stand for Salmon Ballot Initiative 1 creates a reasonable balance between development and salmon habitat protection by adopting a series of well-considered standards for projects that may impact salmon habitat.

That's why we, the undersigned retired state and federal scientists and managers, strongly support the Stand for Salmon Ballot Initiative 1.

(over)

Mike Rearden, Refuge Manager
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (34 years,
retired)

Rich Gustafson, Fisheries Biologist
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (38
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Keith Pahlke, Fisheries Biologist
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