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**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
House District 35

February 23, 2009

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Alaska Regional Office  
PO Box 21668  
Juneau, AK 99802

This letter is written in regard to the proposed management measures put forth by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to limit chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery.

The proposals put forward are as follows:

- *Caps on the amount of chinook salmon bycatch allowed in the pollock fisheries, limits under consideration range from annual amounts of 29,300-87,500 Chinook, divided seasonally into a winter and a summer/fall pollock fishery*
- *Seasonal closure of the pollock fishery when these bycatch limits are reached, and/or*
- *Seasonal closure of areas where high salmon bycatch has traditionally occurred.*

In 1999 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted a management measure that established a 48,000 chinook salmon cap with a step down over four years to 29,000. (BSAI Amendment 58; NMFS Final Rule published 10/12/00) The cap applied to the Chinook Salmon Savings Area such that when the cap was reached the fleet had to move out of the savings area. At the time, "regardless of season or year, the majority of chinook salmon were intercepted in the Chinook Salmon Savings Area." (Amendment 58 EA/RIR/IRFA, Draft for Council Review, 1998) The expectation was that 29,000 fish would approximate the total amount of chinook bycatch for the whole Bering Sea because the majority of salmon were anticipated to be within the savings area and only small numbers would be encountered outside.

In subsequent years, chinook salmon distribution changed such that more and more fish are encountered outside of the savings area. Closing the savings area is no longer a functional mechanism to avoid salmon bycatch.

For this reason the proposed management measure to impose seasonal closures of areas where high salmon bycatch has traditionally occurred should not be considered as an adequate enforcement tool to prevent chinook bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. Area closures have proven to be an ineffective tool in reduction of overall bycatch.

A 30,000 fish hard cap will help ensure the health of the chinook fisheries that sustain and provide economic opportunities for Alaskan residents. Without such a cap there is not sufficient incentive for the pollock fleet to move forward with improved fishing practices that will minimize chinook bycatch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul R. Seaton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Representative Paul Seaton