

December 1, 2011

Undersecretary of Natural Resources Harris Sherman
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Undersecretary Sherman,

My name is Tele Aadsen, and I'm a second-generation salmon troller in Southeast Alaska. Salmon trollers are predominantly family operations; I began fishing at the age of seven, in 1984. My mother was one of a handful of female skippers at that time, and we comprised the only all-female troller. For the past 7 years my partner and I have run our own boat, the 43-foot *Nerka*, which he grew up on and took over as a 22 year old. Hook-and-line caught, we process and freeze our catch at sea, self-marketing a premium quality wild salmon to restaurants, grocers, and food co-ops across the U.S. This is our sole source of income.

Discussion of salmon sustainability frequently focuses on fisheries management and healthy oceans. Essential elements, yet incomplete. We must devote equal attention to the surrounding forests, which provide critical salmon habitat. In its streams, lakes, and ponds, **the Tongass National Forest provides 17,690 miles of salmon habitat**. Salmon are inextricably linked with the Tongass; the well-being of one directly impacts the other.

In Alaska, salmon mean far more than a meal or a paycheck. In a 2007 survey, **96% of Alaskans said salmon are essential to our way of life**. In our remote region, where many communities are island-based, closed systems, "way of life" is more practical necessity than sentimentality. **Nearly 90% of rural households in Southeast Alaska depend on salmon**.

What does a dependency on salmon look like? It looks like **over 7000 jobs**: men, women, and young people working on fishing vessels or in processing plants. In a tremendous ripple effect, fisheries contribute to local economies. In some of our small communities, salmon *are* the local economy. Grocers, restaurants, hotels, cold storages and transport systems all flourish with healthy salmon runs. **The combined economic value of commercial, sports, and subsistence salmon fishing, plus hatchery operations, is estimated at \$986.1 million**.

The economic impact of salmon doesn't stop at Alaska's border. Many fishermen spend the off-season in the Lower 48, enhancing the economy of multiple states. In 2009, my partner and I were able to purchase our first home in Washington, where we frequently have boat work done. Maintaining a safe, successful fishing vessel is an expensive, on-going effort: all across the West Coast, harbors, boat yards, diesel mechanics, refrigeration services, craftsmen, fiberglass workers, metal fabricators, gear stores, and other marine service professionals are direct beneficiaries of our good salmon seasons.

Beyond these enormous economic considerations, the Tongass is one of the few remaining wild places in America, an ecosystem of deep cultural significance, beauty and wonder. I'm profoundly grateful for my life as a commercial fisherman, and hope to continue providing quality wild salmon to Americans in a responsible manner. I'm committed to protecting the natural resources that allow this unique profession, and want to thank you, Undersecretary Sherman, for joining me in this effort. **Thank you for advocating for a healthy, sustainable future, prioritizing funding for watershed restoration and salmon habitat in the Tongass.**

Sincerely,

Tele Aadsen, MSW
F/V *Nerka*

<http://nerkasalmon.wordpress.com/>