

February 26, 2016

Local Boundary Commission
550 West Seventh Ave, Suite 1640
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3510

RE: Dillingham Annexation Petition

Dear Local Boundary Commission,

I am writing to oppose the City of Dillingham's petition to annex the setnet fishery on Ekuk Beach. In the petition the City of Dillingham lists services they provide as, "education, public works, ports and harbors, public safety, planning, tax collection, public utilities (water, sewer, landfill), roads and planning and zoning." These services have not been and in the future will not be provided to Ekuk or Ekuk fishermen by the City.

Ekuk is 15 miles southwest of Dillingham and not connected by road. Our fishery is unique. We do not use boats or skiffs to harvest our fish and we deliver to a local processing plant in Ekuk. We provide and maintain our own power and water. Our emergency medical transports are the bush pilots who fish by our side. And, like many rural Alaskan communities, we rely on State law enforcement from the Alaska State Troopers. We rarely use the Dillingham Harbor, and when we do it is with purchase of a full season harbor sticker in return for one or two uses. Those of us who fly through Dillingham pay taxes on our airfare in return for one or two hours waiting in the terminal. The City does not provide planning services and will never be able to support public utilities in Ekuk. I have been fishing in Ekuk from birth and have never encountered any City of Dillingham services, support or participation in Ekuk.

I am the fourth generation to fish our family sites on Ekuk beach. I put myself through college debt free through hard work on the fish site. And I am committed to preserving and growing our one-of-a-kind fishery for my descendants. The precipitous drop in oil prices in recent years has resulted in speculation on a significant, possibly up to 12%, fish tax to be levied at the state level by the Alaska Legislature. We are already adapting to historically low fish prices. Our fishery cannot sustain additional taxes by the City of Dillingham to fund services from which we do not and cannot benefit.

The investment required to start and maintain a successful fishing operation is already daunting. A young person must buy a permit, site lease, truck, supplies, cabin, and pay out crew shares in one of the only industries that announces price after the season is over. This can be an initial investment of more than \$100,000. Additional chunks taken out of our settlement checks for services we do not receive will only make it more difficult for young people to enter and continue the work and tradition of their ancestors.

I understand the struggles the City faces. And I pay for services I utilize. When I purchase groceries, fuel, and other materials in Dillingham I pay the sales tax. When I fly into the Dillingham Airport I pay the fees on my airfare. These are fair assessments in return for services I receive in Dillingham.

This petition proposes to include our fishery simply to assess fish tax in return for virtually no city services. In 2013 I paid the fix tax on my crew share and received no services and had no impact on the City. This is unfair and I strongly oppose the annexation petition which would continue it.

Sincerely,

Jamie O'Connor

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Wasilla, AK 99654