



Cordova District Fishermen United
PO Box 939 | 509 First Street
Cordova, AK 99574 | www.cdfu.org

January 8, 2022

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
4230 University Drive, Ste. 220
Anchorage, AK 99508-4650

Sent electronically to: Shiway Wang, shiway.wang@alaska.gov

Dear Director Wang, Chairman and members of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council,

Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) is a 501(c)5 non-profit membership organization representing the commercial fishing families of Prince William Sound, the Copper River, and the northern Gulf of Alaska. CDFU maintains an active Herring Division and represents the commercial stakeholders in the Prince William Sound herring fishery, despite this fishery remaining inactive for several decades now.

The Herring Research and Monitoring program (HRM) is a part of the Long-Term Research and Monitoring project (LTRM) conceived after the *Exxon Valdez* Oil spill. The program began in 2009 and continues to provide vital data and information needed for understanding what is limiting the return of herring in Prince William Sound (PWS). From its inception, CDFU has been supportive of this research effort and we continue to offer our formal support for the project. While the exact cause of the crash of the herring population may still be debated, it is clear that the PWS population stands alone in its lengthy recovery time when compared to herring stocks around the world. CDFU requests that EVOSTC fully fund the Herring Research and Monitoring program.

CDFU has been made aware that after nearly 12 years of funding, during the latest meeting the council voted in a manner that will seriously impair the functionality of the HRM program. Leaving out key projects such as program management, acoustics work, aerial surveys, tagging effort at Kayak Island and the larval herring work will increase the uncertainty in the modeled population estimate and lead to an incomplete picture of the Prince William Sound herring population moving forward. We urge the funding of program management and fiscal administration that turns a collection of independent projects into a cohesive program to be a priority for the Council in January. Removing projects like a novel tagging effort at Kayak Island and the larval herring work removes our understanding of mechanisms of migration and environmental controls on recruitment. Last spring, we saw an unprecedented spawning event around Kayak Island. With an approximate biomass estimate of 32.12 mile-days of milt, this added boom to the population is of great significance. Understanding the connections between the Kayak Island population and the PWS population is vital in the future of any commercial fishery on this stock.



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Specific budget items CDFU supports:

- 1) Support program management to ensure coordination among projects.
- 2) Support ADF&G Aerial Surveys for Area E Herring assessments.
- 3) Support for the herring tagging project to understand the connections between Kayak Island and PWS since they are in the same management area.

The future is beginning to look brighter for the PWS herring population, but without a fully funded program, ADF&G will not have the adequate tools to consider a future commercial fishery. Cordova District Fishermen United sends our formal support for the Herring Research and Monitoring program to be fully funded so that they may continue to work as a team to better understand the PWS herring population.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments,

Jerry McCune
President