Borough Finally Sends Locke Cod LLP Letter

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Erik Wander/KMXT

After weeks of discussion, debate and editing, the Kodiak Island Borough has finally sent a letter to the Secretary of Commerce. The letter, addressed to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, requests that he reject a North Pacific Fishery Management Council plan that significantly reduces the number of participants in the Gulf of Alaska limited entry cod fishery until a socio-economic study of its effects can be conducted. KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

Under the council's plan, roughly 70 percent of LLP holders would be removed from the fishery, because they did not fish cod during the qualifying years. Debate over the issue has pitted those who have fished their licenses and would likely benefit by the reduction against those who believe taking away so many licenses bars many who wish to participate in the fishery from that opportunity. After several drafts, the letter requests a thorough socio-economic analysis of the possible effects of removing so many LLP holders from the fishery.

Speaking at Thursday's work session, assemblywoman Pat Branson expressed her satisfaction with the final wording of the letter, saying it does not take sides in the debate.

-- (Branson 1 14 sec. "This is as neutral a letter ... with those corrections made.")

Assemblywoman Louise Stutes acknowledged that the issue had become a contentious one in the weeks since the letter was first proposed by assemblywoman Sue Jeffrey. Stutes, like most other assembly members, agreed with Branson's assessment of the letter.

-- (Stutes
1 10 sec. "I think it's a neutral letter
... to Kodiak of this action.")

Assemblywoman
Judy Fulp was the one member of the assembly who opposed the letter. She
described the issue as divisive for the community and said she had received
many calls from concerned people on both sides of the debate. She said the
letter didn't effectively convey everyone's concerns.

-- (Fulp
1 34 sec. "I listened to both sides ... they
are honest, good people.")

Fulp
said the letter also failed to include an invitation to Locke to visit Kodiak, something
the assembly had discussed previously. She said she believes the secretary
would be more likely to respond if he could gain a first-hand perspective on
the issue and that she would still like to see the invitation extended.

-- (Fulp
2 23 sec. "We wanted the secretary ...
fishing in on a charter boat.")

The idea of sending
a joint, borough-city letter had been proposed previously. However, City
Manager Aimee Kniaziowski said the city is now in the process of writing
its own letter. She said she's drafting a letter addressing many of the same points
in the borough's letter for the City Council's review. Borough Clerk Nova
Javier said the borough's letter was sent on Friday.

I'm
Erik Wander.

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