

# Bristol Bay RSDA needs renewed focus, strong voter participation

Bristol Bay fishers,

We are four former directors of the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association, and we're asking your help to fix an organization that has gone far off course. We're of the stalwart opinion that our current BBRSDA board of directors has lost sight of its goals, with the exception of working to preserve our salmon resource by fighting the Pebble Mine. Sadly, the RSDA is ignoring practically everything else of importance to the membership. We are writing you because we believe it is imperative that you exercise your right to vote in the upcoming election for the BBRSDA board of directors.

Maintaining a healthy resource and advocating for responsible land use in the Bristol Bay region are absolutely the BBRSDA's responsibilities, but they are not the RSDA's only responsibilities. The guiding document of the BBRSDA calls for a balanced work plan that addresses all the issues facing its members while striving to maintain and create more value in the product harvested.

**It is our opinion** that the Marketing budget and associated work plan are for all intents and purposes an extension and addition to the Sustainability work plan and budget. The Marketing group focuses on press tours that emphasize sustainability and on a movie that informs the public about the threats from the Pebble project. Is this effective advocacy for wild salmon? Unquestionably yes. But will this help market the current inventory, much less the glut expected in 2015? Absolutely not. No other projects in the Marketing plan invest significant amounts of money or staff time to accomplish the RSDA's stated marketing goals. The sockeye market has big storm clouds on the horizon with excess inventory going into the 2015 season. Additionally, the 2015 harvest is projected to be nearly 40 million fish (240 million pounds). We need a marketing plan that reflects this new reality.

Quality improvement – the one surefire way we can raise the value of the catch – has become an afterthought. No significant quality initiatives are underway, other than funding legacy projects such as ice barges.

**Every Bristol Bay drift permit holder** deserves a board that addresses key issues, operates within the bounds of stated strategic initiatives, and invests the members' money to achieve its goals in an effective and efficient manner. We should be collaborating with others to leverage these funds into a big, audacious marketing campaign that will expose more consumers to Bristol Bay sockeye. Bottom line: We need to act more like the trade association we were created to be. This is not being done.

We believe that the BBRSDA can be an effective tool representing members' interest on many levels. But we believe that this can



*The Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association represents drift gillnet permit holders. They pay a 1 percent assessment on their catch to support the organization's activities. Wesley Loy photo*

only be accomplished if the organization is guided by a board that leaves personal agendas at the door, strives to create and believe in the importance of a transparent process, and above all, gauges its advocacy in the context of how it returns value to the members whose dollars fund the organization.

We urge you to go to the BBRSDA website and read the candidates' statements, ask questions, and exercise your right. Vote! Your money and your future are at stake. ↴

*Mark Buckley, founding board member, 2007-08*

*Nick Lee, founding board member, 2007-11*

*John Fairbanks, board member 2012-14*

*Matt Luck, board member, 2011-15*