

**Ann Samuelson's Testimony to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council
November 6, 2008 - San Diego, California**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Council. Thank you for your public service. My name is Ann Samuelson. I'm here today to represent the Clatsop County Commission and to support our fishermen. I am one of five county commissioners. I am also proud to say that I am the daughter of a former Columbia River fisherman, and I myself have fished the Columbia River. I also own a small business.

I am passionate about this issue and this cause, as are all of us in this room. In fact, the diversity of many groups working together to support our fishermen have, for me, made this experience unique.

As a former union employer I negotiated union contracts. I can't imagine negotiating with skilled workers, who have invested in their careers, and start negotiations by looking my employees in the eye and expect them to take a 20-percent pay cut--just so I could have more in my pocket.

Considering that the values of economic, habitat, and recreational sustainability are at stake, I know you are weighing the long-term effects of your decision. The Individual Fishing Quota will give our fishermen what they need to make an honest living and will give government more effective oversight. All stakeholders should be involved in this process, as we are doing here today. The difference is--this debate appears to have opposing sides. There is a "we vs. them" attitude, rather than an open and collaborative effort to move toward a resolution that works for all; for our fishermen, our

processors, and ultimately our communities. As public officials, it is our job to make collaboration happen.

Like you, I have many other priorities on which I could be focusing my energies today. I was shocked and frankly disappointed when I read in a press release that my participation here today was somehow being bought. I felt a responsibility to my community and to these fishermen, and the office I hold, to speak the truth. At the end of the day, that's all that really matters.

Please understand that I am here by my own motivation and by my own financial means. I have paid the airfare, lodging and transportation to be here--- out of my own pocket. Further, as a county commissioner, I receive \$800 monthly, with no benefits, as a stipend for public service. But I choose to be here today to share with you my grave concern for my community.

On August 27th the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners passed a unanimous resolution in support of our fishermen, and opposing processors quotas. I repeat-- it was unanimous-- even though we were challenged by an aggressive lobbying effort.

As public officials, whether appointed or elected, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council members share, as I do, a unique public responsibility. We are entrusted to act in the best interests of the greater good. Sometimes, that comes with great political peril. I am sure that each of you are doing your best to represent your states with integrity, conviction and a basic rule of doing the right thing regardless of the personal costs.

Perhaps you have experienced public character assassination. Perhaps you have endured severe political pressure. Know that I understand what that is like, and how that feels. It hurts even more when it comes from people you know and from people who have appeared to have supported you in the past.

This 20-percent allocation has become a divisive issue within my community and I imagine in other coastal communities as well.

I see no good coming from this. I see fisherman unable to pay their bills, feed their families or work for the betterment of our community if processors are given the gift of quotas without the risk that my friends the fishermen face. It seems as though a quota system, taking away 20 percent from fishermen and giving it to processors would be an unfair labor practice with no place to file a challenge.

My days of fishing are over, but fishing is part of the culture, diversity and history of the Pacific Northwest. Your 20 percent proposal for processors, although well intentioned, threatens the extinction of every small business in my community. I now view our local fishermen as endangered species. Government and regulatory agencies have protected, preserved and allocated this industry into poverty.

How far do we want this decline to go?

All of us have watched the Big Box stores challenge local small businesses. We must be careful not to adopt a plan that 'big boxes' our fishing industry. There is great danger of unfairness and limiting, if not eliminating, opportunities for small business now and in the future.

You don't want that to happen. I don't want that to happen, and I don't even believe the processors want that to happen. What you do

with this decision will determine if we are able to be and exist in the Northwest as a fishing industry.

Our local fishermen have sacrificed for many generations to provide this product which has great value to the processors and ultimately the consumer, or we would not be here today having this conversation.

Call me simple, but when is enough, enough? It appears that some stakeholders have the disease of more. Only you can prevent the financial ruin of our fishing industry. It is a huge responsibility and I respect your commitment to the goal of 'doing the right thing.'

Thank you.