



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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## **UFA supports ASMI as client in MSC Salmon sustainability certification**

United Fishermen on Alaska voted on Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to support the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) in assuming “client” status for the Marine Stewardship Council’s (MSC) ongoing sustainability certification of Alaska Wild Salmon. Ray Riutta, Executive Director of ASMI and Joe Bundrant, ASMI Board Chairman, talked to UFA about the advantages of ASMI assuming the “client” role and also about their concerns with the MSC certification program.

Chris Ninnes, Deputy CEO of the Marine Stewardship Council, also addressed the UFA Board. Mr. Ninnes acknowledged that the MSC made a number of mistakes in working with their Alaska “clients”. He assured UFA that the “Stinky Fish” campaign was clearly one of their mis-steps and that, on his watch, this type of industry attack would not occur again. Chris recognized that MSC “certification” for sustainability needed review and consistency worldwide. On the other hand, Chris championed the merits of MSC certification. MSC is working to expand markets for “certified” Alaska wild salmon, it has intervened with more aggressive environmental groups to defend Alaska’s management of certified fisheries and MSC twice refused to certify famed salmon as “sustainable”. Finally, MSC is reviewing a funding construct, proposed by ASMI, for collecting logo use fees.

The UFA motion to support ASMI’s association with MSC was conditioned on the satisfactory resolution of six concerns. 1. The “Alaska Brand” is protected by allowing use of the ASMI Logo on all Alaska seafood regardless of whether or not it includes the MSC Logo. And, the Alaska Brand is promoted by continuing an independent ASMI certification of sustainability. 2. The MSC certification program remains “cost neutral” for ASMI with the primary costs of certification paid by MSC logo licensing fees. 3. MSC certification “conditions” do not require substantial changes to Alaska’s current fisheries management. 4. MSC maintains consistent certification standards. 5. MSC aggressively defends its brand. 6. MSC refrains from certifying farmed salmon.

Mark Vinsel, Executive Director of UFA, commented that “UFA support for the ASMI/MSC relationship was one of the big issues at the semi-annual UFA board meeting. The initial time allocated for debate was not enough for the Board to voice their views and the issues were further discussed late into the evening.” In the end, the Board vote was unanimous.

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