

PROPOSAL 237

5 AAC 05.310. Fishing seasons.

Repeal the District 6 commercial salmon fishing season fixed closure date and replace with a closure date established by emergency order, as follows:

5 AAC 05.310 is amended to read:

(4) in District 6, the commissioner shall open the season by emergency order and close the season [ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1 AT 12:01 A.M.] by emergency order.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The market for commercially harvested fall chum salmon in the Tanana River drainage has shifted from primarily a roe market to a dog food market. Buyers of fall chum salmon for dog food do not buy the fish until weather cools down to prevent spoiling. In recent years, Interior Alaska has seen warmer fall temperatures extending later into October. Commercial fishermen in District 6 of the Yukon Area (which consists of the Tanana River drainage to its confluence with the Yukon River) do not begin fishing until mid-September. Currently the commercial fishery closes by regulation on or before October 1; however, there is a high market demand for fish beyond October 1.

By September 15, much of the Tanana River fall chum salmon run has entered the drainage and escapement goals have been assessed. When the fall chum salmon commercial roe fishery was more popular, there were many more fish wheels operating in District 6 than currently and commercial fishing activity started in August. The current commercial closure date for District 6 was established based on timing of the previous roe-based fishery. Now that the fishery has changed, there are only four fish wheels operating in the district and fishery timing has shifted later. This proposal seeks to repeal the fixed season closure date and replace it with a closure date established by emergency order so that commercial salmon fishermen in District 6 can meet market demands.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries
