

**ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Regulation Proposal Form 2024-2025**

Proposals must be received Tuesday, April 10, 2025

**PO BOX 115526, JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-5526 or FAX (907) 465-6094 or online at:
<https://arcg.is/biqum0>**

BOARD OF FISHERIES REGULATIONS

Subsistence Personal Use Sport Commercial

***Which meeting would you like to submit your proposal to?**

- Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, and Chignik Pacific Cod
- Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Island / Chignik Finfish
- Arctic / Yukon / Kuskokwim Finfish
- Bristol Bay Finfish
- Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. All answers will be printed in the proposal book along with the proposer's name (address and phone numbers will not be published). Use separate forms for each proposal. Address only one issue per proposal. State the issue clearly and concisely. The board will reject multiple or confusing items.

1. Alaska Administrative Code Number: 5 AAC _____

***2. What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?**

This proposal addresses the urgent need to protect Pacific salmon populations migrating to the Arctic/Yukon/Kuskokwim (AYK) region by reducing bycatch in the Area M pollock trawl fishery. AYK salmon (Chinook, chum, and coho) are crucial for the ecological, cultural, and economic well-being of Western Alaska communities, particularly for subsistence. Salmon play a critical role in nutrient cycling, transferring marine-derived nutrients to freshwater ecosystems when they die after spawning, which supports the entire food web. The Area M pollock trawl fishery has been identified as a source of significant bycatch of AYK-bound salmon. This bycatch directly reduces salmon returns to the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, impacting subsistence harvests and ecosystem health. This proposal outlines specific, actionable steps to minimize bycatch in Area M and protect these vital salmon populations.

Salmon populations in the AYK region are facing significant challenges, including bycatch in commercial fisheries, particularly in Area M. Bycatch of Chinook, chum, and coho salmon during pollock trawling in Area M negatively impacts the already stressed salmon runs returning to the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers. The large-scale removal of salmon flesh and associated nutrients from the ecosystem disrupts the natural nutrient cycle, negatively impacting local ecosystems.

Specific concerns exist regarding the declining salmon runs in the Koyukuk River, a major tributary of the Yukon River. Communities along the Koyukuk River rely heavily on salmon for subsistence. Recent years have seen drastic reductions in salmon returns, leading to severe impacts on food security and cultural practices. These declines exacerbate the hardships faced by residents who depend on salmon for their livelihood. Any further reduction in salmon numbers due to bycatch in Area M directly affects the ability of Koyukuk River communities to meet their subsistence needs.

These proposed changes aim to directly address the issue of salmon bycatch in Area M and its broader impacts on AYK salmon populations and ecosystems, with particular attention to the Koyukuk River. Time closures and fleet relocation during critical migration periods will significantly

reduce bycatch of AYK bound salmon. Recognizing the specific needs of Koyukuk River communities is vital for ensuring their food security and cultural survival.

Implementing these regulatory changes is essential for the sustainable management and conservation of salmon populations in the AYK region, especially for the Koyukuk River. These measures will help protect salmon during their migration, preserve the ecological balance of freshwater ecosystems, and support the subsistence and cultural needs of communities that rely on these vital resources.

***3. What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say? (Please provide draft regulatory language, if possible.)**

1. Implement Time Closures and Fleet Movement in Area M: Introduce time closures for Area M and mandate the movement of the pollock fleet when bycatch of Chinook, chum, and coho salmon reaches a predetermined threshold. Trigger action when Area M starts catching bycatch.
2. Relocate Pollock Fleet During Salmon Migration: Require the pollock fleet operating in Area M to move north of St. Lawrence Island from mid-April to September 1. This period coincides with the migration of Chinook, chum, and coho salmon to their spawning grounds in Western Alaska's Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.
3. Prioritize Koyukuk River Salmon: Recognize the specific vulnerability of Koyukuk River salmon populations and prioritize their protection in management decisions. Any bycatch limits set should consider the needs of these subsistence-dependent communities.

4. Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

***Submitted By:** _____
Individual or Group

***Address** ***City, State** ***ZIP Code**

Home Phone ***Work Phone** ***Email**

**Indicates a required field*