Upper Cook Inlet Proposals

March 4th-March 15th, 2027

Anchorage, AK

Comment Deadline:

February 17th, 2027



PROPOSAL 75

5 AAC 01.580 Subsistence fishing permits; record keeping and
5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.
5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area
5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area
5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area
5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area
5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area
5 AAC 77.525 Personal use salmon fishery.

Require recording of all salmon harvest in sport, personal use, and subsistence fisheries within Cook Inlet, as follows:

Implement and Enforce Mandatory Annual Reporting Requirements in All Watersheds Flowing into Cook Inlet

Require license-based, mandatory annual reporting for all user groups, including sport, personal use, subsistence, and nonresident participants.

All users must submit annual effort and harvest reports covering all anadromous salmon species, with enforcement tied to licensing eligibility.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Lack of consistent and enforceable reporting across all user groups harvesting anadromous salmon in Upper Cook Inlet results in incomplete data, increased pressure, and inequitable management.

Data gaps will persist, leading to continued decline in stock accuracy, increased pressure on critical spawning habitat, and further imbalance between commercial and in-river fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Improved stock assessment accuracy, equitable management, enhanced sustainability, and better protection for future stocks, especially those of concern or requiring better management outcomes.

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

PROPOSED BY: Erik Anderson (EF-F27-234)

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PROPOSAL 76

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area

5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area

5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area

5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area

5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

Establish a reporting requirement for coho salmon harvested within fresh and salt waters of Upper Cook Inlet as follows:

Create a new reporting section for Upper Cook Inlet sport fisheries, 5 AAC 56.XXX, requiring any person who retains a coho salmon in Upper Cook Inlet fresh or salt water to record that fish immediately on a department-issued harvest record or approved electronic reporting application, and requiring guides or guided businesses to report retained and released coho for each trip.

In Upper Cook Inlet sport fisheries, a person who retains a coho salmon shall immediately record that fish on a department-issued harvest record or approved electronic reporting application before leaving the fishing site or before the vessel reaches the next port or launch, whichever occurs first. A sport-fishing guide or operator conducting sport-fishing services in Upper Cook Inlet shall record for each guided trip the number of coho salmon retained and released, the water body or statistical area fished, and the number of anglers aboard, in a format approved by the department.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current Upper Cook Inlet coho accounting rules do not require exact retained-coho recording across all sport sectors and do not provide a consistent fish-by-fish reporting standard comparable to commercial fish-ticket accounting. As a result, major coho conservation decisions can be made using uneven accountability and incomplete local comparability. This proposal is intended to meet AO 360 by clarifying reporting obligations, improving communication procedures, reducing later administrative burden caused by poor data, and providing greater transparency for decision-making and management rationale. A clear retained-coho reporting rule would also streamline future conservation responses because managers would have better real-time information.

If nothing is changed, future coho restrictions may continue to be justified on mixed reporting methods rather than exact retained-harvest records.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Developed from prior draft proposal work and the uploaded Cook Inlet Coho Data Review. No local Advisory Committee vote has yet been sought.

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson (EF-F27-080)

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PROPOSAL 77

5 AAC 56.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area. and

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area

5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area

5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

Prohibit bait and reduce the coho salmon bag limit to one fish as follows:

No bait and 1 a day bag limit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Given recent concerns around the health of coho runs in Upper Cook Inlet, management of northern-bound and Kenai-bound coho needs to be improved ensure the long-term viability of the populations and to provide equal protection under the law for all user-groups who harvest them.

In 2026, the Board eliminated 70% of the Cook Inlet drift fishing grounds and instituted mandatory 32-hour closures for drift fishery twice a week, and mandated closure when we hit 3% of peak harvest, while making zero changes to freshwater harvest regulations. That's not right, especially when voluntary reports of freshwater coho harvest in Upper Cook Inlet are generally greater than the commercial coho harvest. If there is an issue with the health of coho stocks, all user groups should have proportional restrictions.

Any conservation burden must be shared proportionally across all user groups, in alignment with Alaska Constitution Article 8 § 15. No Exclusive Right of Fishery "No exclusive right or special privilege of fishery shall be created or authorized in the natural waters of the State," Article 8 § 17, which states, "Laws and regulations governing the use or disposal of natural resources shall apply equally to all persons similarly situated with reference to the subject matter and purpose to be served by the law or regulation," and 5 AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries, which states, "(b)…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest.."

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-124)

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PROPOSAL 78

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Prohibit the use of guides in the Upper Cook Inlet personal use salmon fishery.

Amend 5 AAC 77.540 by adding a new subsection (or appropriate placement within the management plan):

(f) No person may provide, for compensation or with intent to receive compensation (direct or indirect), guiding services or assistance in the actual harvest of fish in the Upper Cook Inlet personal use salmon fisheries. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, operating or handling gear (e.g., dip nets) for another, providing instruction or technique during fishing, directing harvest efforts, or physically assisting in landing or processing fish at the site. Transportation services to and from fishing locations are permitted, provided no assistance in the harvest, landing, or processing of fish is provided as part of the service.

Background and Justification:

Personal use fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet, as defined in AS 16.05.940(27) and managed under 5 AAC 77.540, allow Alaska residents to harvest salmon (primarily sockeye, with limits on kings) using dip nets in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers for personal household consumption, not for sale or barter. The intent of 5 AAC 77 (Personal Use Fishery), including 5 AAC 77.001, is to facilitate non-commercial harvesting, emphasizing self-reliance and equity among residents. Compensated guiding or harvest assistance directly counters this spirit by introducing commercial transactions into what is meant to be a personal, family-oriented activity.

Key points:

• *Counter to the Spirit of Personal Use*: These fisheries are designed for residents to personally harvest fish for their own or family's consumption, fostering self-sufficiency without reliance on paid services. Allowing compensated assistance (e.g., a guide handling a dip net, teaching techniques on-site, or directing efforts in crowded conditions) transforms the fishery into a quasi-commercial operation, where wealthier participants can "buy" expertise or efficiency. This erodes the principle that harvest should result from the permit holder's or household's direct efforts, blurring lines with sport fishing (where guiding is permitted).

• *Preservation of Non-Commercial Intent:* Paid harvest assistance injects market dynamics into a fishery barred from commercial influences. In high-pressure areas like the Kenai River dipnet fishery (typically open July 10–31) or Kasilof (June 25–Aug 7), guides could assist clients in targeting prime spots or maximizing catch, effectively commercializing a resource allocated for personal consumption. Transportation services align with the intent by enabling access without interfering in the harvest.

• *Equity Among Residents:* Without this prohibition, residents who can afford paid help gain unfair advantages (e.g., expert assistance in crowded shore-based dipnetting or boat-based positioning, or the use of sonar or electronic fish finders by guides to locate schools of salmon, enabling clients to maximize their catch more efficiently than independent fishers). This disadvantages self-reliant fishers, families, or those with limited resources.

• *Conservation Concerns:* Direct harvest assistance increases efficiency (e.g., professional techniques to target high-density schools, or guides employing sonar or electronic fish finders to

pinpoint fish locations, allowing for maximized catches). This could lead to localized overharvest or added pressure on stocks managed with tight allocations and emergency orders (e.g., combined Kenai/Kasilof household limits).

Transportation poses negligible added risk, as it doesn't enhance harvest capability.

• *Precedent and Applicability:* The Board has addressed similar concerns in other non-commercial fisheries (e.g., prohibitions on guided assistance in certain subsistence areas). Past Upper Cook Inlet discussions (e.g., 2020 cycles) debated guiding distinctions, allowing transport but scrutinizing harvest aid. This proposal builds on resident-only participation and household permit requirements, closing potential loopholes.

• *Enforcement and Clarity:* Clear language simplifies enforcement for ADF&G and Alaska Wildlife Troopers, focusing on harvest-related compensation while exempting transport.

Potential Impacts:

• *Positive*: Reinforces the non-commercial, self-reliant spirit of Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries; promotes equity; supports sustainable management by curbing enhanced harvest efficiency; maintains access via transportation for residents without boats/vehicles.

• *Negative*: Could impact resident businesses offering harvest assistance (they can shift to transportation-only services). Some fishers may lose access to paid expertise, but ADF&G resources (workshops, videos, online guides) can help bridge this.

Supporting Data:

• High participation and pressure in Kenai/Kasilof dipnet fisheries (often near household limits; ADFG sonar/harvest reports).

• Precedent from Board discussions on guiding in personal use contexts.

• Public comments in past cycles highlight equity and commercialization concerns in Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries.

• Statutory/Regulatory Basis: AS 16.05.940(27); 5 AAC 77.001; 5 AAC 77.540 (Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Amend 5 AAC 77.540 (Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan) to prohibit any compensated guiding or direct assistance in harvesting fish in the Upper Cook Inlet personal use salmon fisheries (including the Kenai and Kasilof River dipnet fisheries). This ensures these fisheries remain strictly for non-commercial, self- reliant household use by Alaska residents, without introducing profit-driven elements into the harvest process. Transportation to and from fishing sites is explicitly permitted, provided no harvest assistance is involved.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Jake Sprankle and Dustin Grimes

PROPOSED BY: Jake Sprankle (EF-F27-008)

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PROPOSAL 79

5 AAC 01.593. Upper Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery.

Modify administrative code to reflect fishing boundaries used in the Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 01.593(2) is amended to read:

(2) In the mainstem of the Yentna River **from 3/4 mile downstream of its confluence with Martin Creek** [FROM ITS CONFLUENCE WITH MARTIN CREEK] upstream to its confluence with the Skwentna River from June 1 through June 30 and July 15 through August 7 from 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Fish wheels operated in the Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery are all located in a river bend downstream of the confluence with Martin Creek. Since the inception of the Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery, a department marker has signified the downstream boundary of this fishery. Currently fish wheels are operating within this boundary although administrative code references the confluence of Martin Creek as the downstream boundary. This proposal would align administrative code with the department marker approximately ¾ of a mile downstream of the confluence of Martin Creek.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-267)

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PROPOSAL 80

5 AAC 21.368 Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

Established paired management actions for the Big River commercial set gillnet fishery, as follows:

We would like to continue fishing per the original management plan. If the Tyonek subsistence fishery is open then the Big River fishery should proceed as described in sections (c) and (d).
"(c) The open fishing season is from June 1 through June 24, except that if June 1 falls within a closed weekly fishing period, the season will open the next following open period.
(d) Fishing periods are from 7:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday." 5 AAC 21.368 (c and d)

If the Tyonek subsistence fishery is restricted, we request to be restricted in the same manner. If they are restricted to fishing 1 day per week, we request to be restricted to fishing 1 day per week. If they are restricted to 2 days per week, we would be restricted to 2 days per week, etc. according to the set dates and times for the Big River fishery in 5 AAC 21.368 sections (c) and (d).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We request that the board uphold the Big River Sockeye Salmon Management plan. Currently the Big River fishery is being closed by executive order to conserve northern district king salmon. The conservation measures already outlined in the existing management plan are sufficient to accomplish the king salmon conservation goals without the additional closure.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? We developed this proposal in coordination with our extended family of fishermen who work together at our set net operation in the Big River Fishery. Collectively we own 3 permits.

PROPOSED BY: Bruce and Pamela Markwood (EF-F27-006)

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PROPOSAL 81

5 AAC 21.366 Northern District King Salmon Management Plan

Make multiple amendments to the Northern District King Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

Amend the Northern District King Salmon Management Plan as follows:

(1) except as specified in (8) of this section, the season will open for commercial fishing periods with the first fishing period beginning on the first Monday on or after June 1, [MAY 25, EXCEPT WHEN MAY 25 FALLS WITHIN A CLOSED PERIOD, IN WHICH CASE THE SEASON OPENS THE NEXT FOLLOWING OPEN PERIOD] and continues through July 5 [JUNE 24,] unless closed earlier by emergency order;

(3) the harvest may not exceed 4,500 king salmon;

(8) from **June 1** [MAY 25] through **JULY 5** [JUNE 24,] the area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River is open to fishing the second regular Monday period only;

(9) if the Theodore, Lewis, or Ivan River is closed to sport **king salmon harvest** [FISHING], the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the fishing periods provided for under this section;

(10) if the king salmon sport fishery on the Deshka River, **Unit 2 Susitna Drainage,** as described in 5 AAC 61, **or Little Susitna River as described in 5 AAC 60.122 (9)** is

(A) conducted as a no bait fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per commercial set gillnet fishing period provided for in this section to no more than **six** [NINE] hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until [4:00] 1:00 p.m.;

(B) conducted as a catch and release fishery **or closed**, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, **close the commercial king salmon fishery throughout the Northern District;** [REDUCE THE TIME ALLOWED PER FISHING PERIOD PROVIDED FOR IN THIS SECTION TO NO MORE THAN SIX HOURS IN DURATION, OR FROM 7:00 A.M. UNTIL 1:00 P.M.;]

[(C) CLOSED, THE COMMISSIONER SHALL CLOSE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE COMMERCIAL KING SALMON FISHERY THROUGHOUT THE NORTHERN DISTRICT;]

(11) if the Chuitna River is closed to sport **king salmon harvest** [FISHING], the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from a point at the wood chip dock located approximately at 61° 02.77' N. lat., 151° 10.04' W. long., to the Susitna River to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the directed king salmon fishery;

(12) if the inseason Deshka River **or Little Susitna River** run projection is below the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial salmon set gillnet fishery throughout the Northern District.

(b) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Northern Cook Inlet king salmon stock status are currently experiencing stock status declines to where Chuitna River, Theodore River, Alexander Creek, East Susitna River (Unit 2) all remain as stocks of management concern — while it appears if Deshka River and Little Susitna River king salmon stocks already qualify for listing as stocks of yield concern and if spawning escapement goals are missed during the 2026 season each could be listed as Stocks of Management Concern. These are suggested regulations to rebuild these king salmon stocks and manage them on a more sustainable basis. Several management plan changes suggested in this proposal have already been utilized at different times in the past in efforts to rebuild or manage Northern Cook Inlet king salmon stocks on a sustainable basis that would more consistently meet established king salmon escapement goals.. Some suggestions would be entirely new regulations to address currently listed stocks whose status has not improved since the last Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries Meeting. Note: Particularly Theodore Creek king salmon and the question as to whether it would be listed as a Stock of Conservation Concern?

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal of management plan amendments was discussed and approved at a Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee Meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F27-142)
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PROPOSAL 82

5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan

Close waters to commercial king salmon fishing, as follows:

Modify the Northern District king salmon management plan to permanently close waters to the directed commercial king salmon fishery instead of being closed annually by emergency order.

5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.

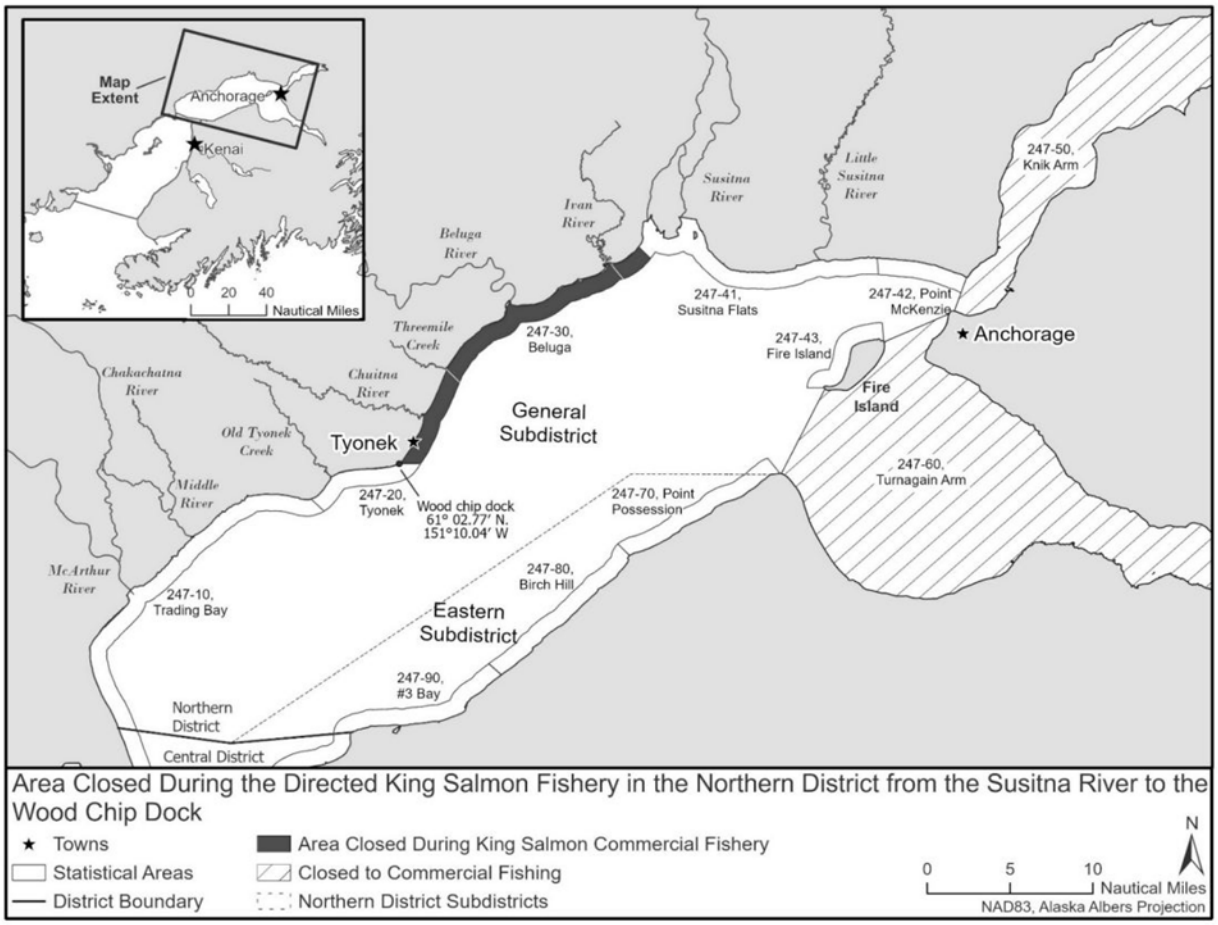
(11) [IF THE CHUITNA RIVER IS CLOSED TO SPORT FISHING, THE COMMISSIONER SHALL CLOSE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER,] the area from a point at the wood chip dock located approximately at 61° 02.77' N. lat., 151° 10.04' W. long., to the Susitna River **is closed** to commercial king salmon fishing for the [REMAINDER OF THE] directed king salmon fishery;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Modify the Cook Inlet, Northern District King Salmon Management Plan to close waters to the directed commercial king salmon fishery by regulation instead of being closed annually because of a regulation that requires it be implemented by emergency order.

At the 2011 board meeting, the Theodore, Lewis, and Chuitna rivers king salmon were identified as a stock of management concern (SOC). It resulted in a regulation which closed sport fishing for king salmon on those three rivers. At the same time, board also adopted a regulation that directed the department to close by emergency order, the commercial king salmon set-gillnet fishery from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River when the Chuitna River king salmon sport fishery is closed [5 AAC 21.366 (11)].

Closing these waters to commercial king salmon fishing by its own regulation will eliminate this need for an annual emergency order that has been written every year since 2011. These waters will then stay closed to commercial king salmon fishing until a new regulation to reopen that area is proposed and then approved by the board. A separate commercial fisheries proposal will have its own discussion and not be directly tied to reopening the sport fishery. Future board members and future department staff will have a much clearer understanding of the ramifications to king salmon stocks if commercial fisheries ever reopen in these waters.

This is not an allocative proposal because it isn't changing the closed waters. The proposal only changes how the commercial king salmon set-gillnet closure is implemented. There is no effect on harvest because those waters have been closed for the last 15 years. All other remaining waters of the Northern District remain open to commercial set-gillnet king salmon fishing. The only effects of this proposal would be to simplify regulations and to require a future proposal be submitted to reopen this limited area.



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

PROPOSED BY: Anchorage Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F27-065)

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PROPOSAL 83

5 AAC 60.XXX New section.

Establish a large fish optimal escapement goal for the Little Susitna River as follows:

Amend the Little Susitna River King Salmon Management Plan to differentiate between large kings and smaller jacks, and establish a large king escapement goal. Count king salmon escapement on the Little Susitna River using the same 34 inch measurement standard that is used by ADF&G on the Kenai River

At the 2024 BOF meeting, I submitted a proposal 239 asking the BOF to modify the Little Susitna River King Salmon Management by only counting king salmon larger than 20 inches.

ADF&G staff discussion did not support My 2024 proposal, mostly because of concerns about determining size and species while fish passed through the weir. My proposal was not approved by the BOF, but the Board directed the department to find and install a sonar line in the Little Susitna to help determine the size of spawning kings. This sonar line was installed during the 2025 season.

The sonar is in place now (2025 & 2026), and we have the technology, so we need to start differentiating between large king salmon and jacks. We need to count kings on the Little Su the same way they do on the Kenai.

Do not count jacks as part of the escapement goal. Even if ADF&G continues to count all kings at the weir start differentiating between larger kings and jacks.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Using the newly installed sonar on the Little Susitna River, count spawning king salmon in the same way it is done on the Kenai River.

As I understand it, the rational for the 34 inch criteria on the Kenai River is so that ADF&G staff technicians can differentiate between kings and sockeye. Sockeye salmon run timing on the Little Susitna River overlap much like on the Kenai. The sockeye are not as large on the Little Su, but there is also a large number of smaller “jack” kings. The fish could be counted in three categories of small jacks, sockeye, and large kings.

In the Little Susitna River, over the past ten years catching a king salmon between 28-34 inches would have been considered a great fish. My personal records over that time show that 42% of my kings were under 20 inches, and I could count on one hand the fish that I caught that were over 34 inches.

During the same time span ADF&G has counted EVERY king salmon that passes the weir toward the escapement goal, including not only all the “jacks” under 20 inches, but also the smaller kings under 34 inches.

Why is the escapement size different across Upper Cook Inlet water? I believe that ADF&G biologists need to have one size standard for all UCI water using sonar to count fish. This should include rivers in the Mat-Su Valley.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I discussed this issue with members of the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page (EF-F27-250)

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PROPOSAL 84

5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the preamble of the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of king salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department **to the extent practicable.** The department shall manage the Northern District king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport, **subsistence and commercial** uses in order to provide [SUBSISTENCE, SPORT AND GUIDED SPORT] fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon over the entire run as measured by the frequency of [INRIVER] restrictions.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Accepting the proposed regulation wording changes, existing regulations will be clarified and coordinated with other management plan wording.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Proposal discussed with members of the general public, processors, industry groups and commercial fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: United Cook Inlet Drift Association (EF-F27-068)

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PROPOSAL 85

5 AAC 21.200 Fishing districts, subdistricts, and sections.

Create a new commercial fishing subdistrict in the Northern District, as follows:

Create Northwest Subdistrict:

5 AAC 21.200 Fishing districts, subdistricts, and sections.

Amend (a) (2) to create the Northwest subdistrict as follows:

(2) Northwest District: All waters of the Northern District north of the point of the west shore at 60° 46.39' N. lat to north side of the shore of Beluga River terminus (61° 12.47' N, 150° 55.71'W)

Amend [(2)] to read as subsection (**3**) including language describing the new subsection as lying outside of the general district.

[(2)] **(3)** General Subdistrict: all waters of the Northern District not specified in (1) & **(2)** of this subsection.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal seeks the creation of a new Northwest subdistrict near the communities of Beluga and Tyonek on the west side of Cook Inlet that could enable additional commercial openers during times when sockeye salmon are the most common species in the area Or allow for commercial fisherman in the area to fish one net per permit for additional days rather than fishing 3 nets on two days per week to be conservative and in order to fly fish out to market.

Commercial fisherman and the salmon fishery in western Cook Inlet look quite different from their counterparts on the east side of the inlet. For several years they have not been served by a tender to take and deliver their catch to processors which has required several of them to fly their catch out to reach the market. In addition to the increased expense for these fishers of transporting their catch, foul weather can ground flights, and they often must choose not to fish open periods because they have no way of delivering their catch to market when air service is unavailable.

The creation of the northwest subdistrict is a recognition that this sub-group of fishermen is distinctly different and faces challenges not experienced by other fishers located on the road system and other areas of UCI. It will enable management staff to apply flexibility when regulating this component of the UCI fishery and define a subdistrict that can be managed in a manner that suits the department goals and the needs of subdistrict fisherman which look very different from the greater UCI but are currently managed under the same guidelines.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal has been developed by the Tyonek AC in consultation with both Native Village of Tyonek IRA Council and Tyonek Tribal Conservation District.

PROPOSED BY: Tyonek Advisory Committee (EF-F27-095)

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PROPOSAL 86

5 AAC 21.358- Northern District Salmon Management Plan:

Establish set gillnet commercial fishing periods and gear restrictions in new "Northwest Subdistrict" in the Northern District, as follows:

Allowing the Northwest District of Upper Cook Inlet to be Opened on Additional Days With Reduced Gear:

5 AAC 21.358- Northern District Salmon Management Plan:

Amend the Northern District Salmon Management Plan **5 AAC 21.358 (c)(4)** as follows

From July 1-August 15th, Northwest Subdistrict set-gillnet fishing shall be allowed Monday 7:00 am -7:00 pm, Wednesday 7:00 am-7:00 pm, and Friday 7:00 am-7:00 pm for all permitted fishers using one net that is no longer than 35 fathoms (per permit) provided that sockeye are the most abundant species in the harvest. Should coho become the most abundant species in the harvest, Northwest Subdistrict Fisherman would revert back to 5 AAC 21.331.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Having two weekly fishing periods for set-gillnets in the Tyonek subdistrict, (Proposed to be the new Northwest Subdistrict) makes it difficult to hire crews and effectively harvest fish, especially now that no tender is serving the area. Because the best option for these permit holders to get their fish to market is to fly them on small, chartered aircraft, poor weather during fishing periods, means these fishers must skip open fishing periods if flights cannot be made to get these fish to market in a timely fashion. The current laws allowing for EO's to open additional fishing periods would be triggered only after the fish have passed the subdistrict and are ineffective at allowing any meaningful harvest of fish even at times of abundance.

By defining the Northwest District in our previous proposal, we hope to establish a subdistrict that includes fisherman of the area that all face similar challenges. This NW-UCI subdistrict could then be opened based on local abundance of sockeye and potentially create additional open fishing times for subdistrict fishers which may include additional gear restrictions already allowed under 5 AAC 21.358 (c) (3) in order to provide opportunities to fish while also being conscious of the conservation of stocks.

By allowing additional gear-restricted open fishing periods three days per week versus the current two days per week, NW-UCI fishers hope to increase the likelihood of good weather fishing days when they can actually fish and get those fish to market. This will enable permit holders to better plan for hiring crews, transport the catch, and ensure that some fishing is allowed to take place each week, even if the result is lower realized catches. It will improve safety for subdistrict fishermen by allowing them greater options to avoid weather during the week and likely result in lower but more consistent effort. Having more consistent fishing openers targeting the abundant sockeye that are actually able to be fished by permit holders may enable tenders to once again serve this area.

By decreasing the number of nets and increasing the number of openers, fisherman of the region hope to have a more realistic chance of meaningfully taking part in the record sockeye harvests

being enjoyed by fishers who are served by tenders or located on the road system with access to processors

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal has been developed by the Tyonek AC in consultation with both Native Village of Tyonek IRA Council and Tyonek Tribal Conservation District.

PROPOSED BY: Tyonek Advisory Committee (EF-F27-096)

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PROPOSAL 87

5 AAC 21.358 Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Authorize the department to reduce the number of set gillnets used in the Northern District set gillnet commercial fishery after August 1, as follows:

5 AAC 21.358 (c)

From **August 1 through the remainder of the season** [JULY 20 THROUGH AUGUST 6], if the department's assessment of abundance indicates that restrictions are necessary to achieve the escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Northern District and immediately reopen a season during which the number of set gillnets that may be used is limited to the following options selected at the discretion of the commissioner [, EXCEPT THAT FROM JULY 31 THROUGH AUGUST 6, THE COMMISSIONER MAY ALLOW THE USE OF TWO SET GILLNETS IN THAT PORTION OF THE GENERAL DISTRICT SOUTH OF THE SUSITNA RIVER]:

(1) three set gillnets that are not more than 105 fathoms in aggregate length;
(2) two set gillnets that are not more than 70 fathoms in aggregate length
(3) one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Section (c) of the Northern District Salmon Management Plan authorizes the Department to restrict the number of nets per permit which may be fished in the Northern District set net fishery during a specific window of days in the middle of the commercial season, a fishing gear restriction which the Department typically does not have the authority to do. Section (c) was added to regulation as a tool for the Department to use to incrementally step-down the commercial effort during the peak of the sockeye run to protect Susitna River sockeye, which the Board of Fisheries had listed as a Stock of Yield Concern in 2008. In 2020, the Board lifted the Stock of Yield Concern listing, but section (c) was left in regulation. The Department has continued to utilize this "step-down" authority every season since the Stock of Yield Concern was lifted, but instead of using it primarily to protect Susitna sockeye, it seems the Department has been using this authority as a tool to manage coho harvest during conditions of low-abundance.

We propose that the date window of Section (c) be modified away from the peak of the sockeye run to align with coho run timing.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed with and by the Northern District Set Netters Association board.

PROPOSED BY: Northern District Set Netters Association of Cook Inlet (EF-F27-089)

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PROPOSAL 88

5 AAC 5 AAC 21.358 Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Reduce the number of set gillnets allowed in the Northern District commercial fishery, as follows:

Proposed revisions are as follows:

(c) From July 15 until closed by emergency order, the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Northern District shall be limited to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length.
(d) In addition to the provisions specified in (b) and (c) of this section, the department shall manage the Northern District commercial salmon fisheries to minimize the incidental take of coho salmon stocks bound for the Northern District by limiting the fishery to weekly fishing periods described in 5 AAC 21.320(a)(1).

~~[(e) FROM JULY 20 THROUGH AUGUST 6, IF THE DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT OF ABUNDANCE INDICATES THAT RESTRICTIONS ARE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE ESCAPEMENT GOAL, THE COMMISSIONER MAY, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, CLOSE THE COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET FISHERY IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT AND IMMEDIATELY REOPEN A SEASON DURING WHICH THE NUMBER OF SET GILLNETS THAT MAY BE USED IS LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS SELECTED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE COMMISSIONER, EXCEPT THAT FROM JULY 31 THROUGH AUGUST 6, THE COMMISSIONER MAY ALLOW THE USE OF TWO SET GILLNETS IN THAT PORTION OF THE GENERAL DISTRICT SOUTH OF THE SUSITNA RIVER:~~

~~(1) THREE SET GILLNETS THAT ARE NOT MORE THAN 105 FATHOMS IN AGGREGATE LENGTH;~~

~~(2) TWO SET GILLNETS THAT ARE NOT MORE THAN 70 FATHOMS IN AGGREGATE LENGTH;~~

~~(3) ONE SET GILLNET THAT IS NOT MORE THAN 35 FATHOMS IN LENGTH. Rev. Dec. 2023~~

~~(d) IN ADDITION TO THE PROVISIONS SPECIFIED IN (B) AND (C) OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MANAGE THE NORTHERN DISTRICT COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERIES TO MINIMIZE THE INCIDENTAL TAKE OF COHO SALMON STOCKS BOUND FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:~~

~~(1) ADDITIONAL FISHING PERIODS, OTHER THAN THE WEEKLY FISHING PERIODS DESCRIBED IN 5 AAC 21.320(A)(1), MAY NOT BE PROVIDED WHEN COHO SALMON ARE EXPECTED TO BE THE MOST ABUNDANT SPECIES HARVESTED DURING THAT PERIOD; ADDITIONAL FISHING PERIODS MAY NOT BE PROVIDED BASED ON THE ABUNDANCE OF NORTHERN DISTRICT COHO SALMON;~~

~~(2) AFTER AUGUST 15, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL LIMIT THE HARVEST OF COHO SALMON IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT BY LIMITING COMMERCIAL FISHING TIME TO THE WEEKLY FISHING PERIODS DESCRIBED IN 5 AAC 21.320(a)(1).]~~

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Northern Cook Inlet coho numbers have declined and escapement goals have not been achieved despite significant set net and sport fishery restrictions and closures in Northen Cook Inlet. The central district drift gillnet fishery management plan was revised by the Board in 2026 to increase delivery of coho into northern inlet rivers and streams. However, full benefits of central district drift gillnet restrictions

will not be realized where significant numbers of coho continue to be intercepted by commercial set gillnet fisheries in the Northern District. Additional restrictions are also necessary in the Northern District Salmon Management Plan to effectively share the conservation burden for depleted coho stocks equitably among all fisheries.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Andy Couch (EF-F27-076)

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PROPOSAL 89
5 AAC 21.350 Closed Waters

Amend closed waters to commercial fishing near the Little Susitna River terminus in Cook Inlet, as follows:

Closed Waters:
(c) Northern District
(1) within one statute mile of the terminus of the following salmon streams:
(A) Swanson Creek;
(B) Bishop Creek;
(C) Three-mile Creek;
(D) Chuit River;
(E) Nikolai Creek;
(F) McArthur River;
(E) Little Susitna River, and also within 900 feet of the streambed or channel throughout the intertidal portion of that stream out to the lower low water mark as demarcated or designated with GPS coordinates by ADF&G;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Please adopt a closed waters area around the Little Susitna River terminus with saltwater, similar in size to closed waters already established around most of the major and many minor salmon producing streams in Upper Cook Inlet. This is a needed conservation tool based on declining salmon spawning escapements for Little Susitna River coho, chinook, and sockeye salmon since year 2000, and also based on drastically reduced salmon harvests by inriver sport users of the Little Susitna River since the early 2000s. Uncertainty in production for these salmon stocks may be further compounded by increasing northern pike presence and warming water temperatures within the Little Susitna River drainage.

Anadromous stream terminus closed water areas of one-mile or larger are a long-established conservation measure successfully utilized in Upper Cook Inlet and throughout the State of Alaska to ensure adequate upriver salmon escapements, and additionally to provide for reasonable salmon harvest opportunities for inriver users. If adopted, commercial setnetters currently harvesting salmon near the Little Susitna River terminus may need to adjust where they set their nets, however we believe the likely benefits of: 1. more consistent attainment of Little Susitna River salmon spawning escapement goals, 2. more reasonable salmon harvests opportunities spread throughout a longer season for all user groups, and 3. better sharing of the Little Susitna River salmon conservation burden, justify this change.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in consideration of other regulatory Upper Cook Inlet closed water terminus areas and also in consultation with ADF&G staff — although the specific language was developed solely by the proposer in an effort to provide reasonable

harvest opportunities and better shared conservation burden for all user groups — consistent with Upper Cook Inlet standards currently in use.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee (EF-F27-140)

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PROPOSAL 90

5 AAC 21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.

Repeal permit stacking in the Northern District set gillnet fishery, as follows:

(i) A CFEC permit holder who **is registered to fish in the Upper Subdistrict or Greater Cook Inlet area,** and holds two Cook Inlet set gillnet CFEC permits may operate an aggregate length of set gillnets not to exceed 210 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth, except that in the Upper Subdistrict no more than 105 fathoms in length may be more than 29 meshes in depth. A single set gillnet may not exceed 35 fathoms in length. Notwithstanding 5 AAC 39.280, in order to identify the gillnet as a dual permit set gillnet, the permit holder shall mark the buoys as specified in 5 AAC 21.334 with both of the permit holder's five-digit CFEC permit serial numbers followed by the letter "D" on the identification buoy. In addition, each set gillnet operated under this subsection that is not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at one end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter. All identifiers must be displayed in a manner that is plainly visible, unobscured, and in a color that contrasts with the background.

(j) Only one set of legal gear may be fished in the Northern District.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Allowable commercial set netting gear is too liberal in Northern Cook Inlet. Historically even before permit stacking was allowed — Northern District set netting started with maximum nets / but was later restricted by nets and /or closed, because of inadequate early and midseason salmon escapements. This pattern of excessive commercial gear, early in the season, has reduced salmon passage upriver to meet coho salmon escapement goals, resulting in inriver restrictions and closures during the season — so reasonable inriver harvest opportunity has been lost. Permit Stacking in recent years exacerbates the problems caused by excessive Northern District commercial gear and, therefore, is inconsistent with the purpose language of the Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I've discussed this proposal idea with several people including set netters, ADF&G staff, personal use dip netters, and sport anglers. The proposal is submitted solely by myself.

PROPOSED BY: Andy Couch (EF-F27-203)

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PROPOSAL 91

5 AAC 60.XXX. New section.

Establish an inriver coho salmon escapement goal for the Little Susitna River as follows:

Adopt an inriver coho salmon goal for Little Susitna River coho salmon as follows:

Little Susitna River coho salmon Inriver Escapement Goal 13,450 - 18,700 fish as measured at Little Susitna River weir.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Upper Cook Inlet commercial fisheries need to be managed in a manner to provide adequate coho salmon to migrate through saltwater areas and up Little Susitna River to both meet ADF&G's SEG for coho salmon, and also provide reasonable inriver harvest opportunity throughout the season for the inriver sport fishery — as identified in both 5AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan and 5 AAC 21.358 Northern District Salmon Fishery Management Plan purpose language. In 2023, 2024, and 2025 coho salmon passage counted through Little Susitna River Weir was inadequate to meet the bottom of the coho SEG range — without providing any sport harvest above the weir.

Recently under the current management scenario, even after Little Susitna River coho salmon were projected below the amount necessary to meeting the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG ((9,200 - 17,700) fisheries were allowed to continue unrestricted for a while incase the run was "late." By the time ADF&g determined in fact that the situation indicated more than just a late run, and restrictions were made, followed by closures for the Northern District commercial fishery and Little Susitna River sport coho fisheries, too few unharvested coho salmon remained to even meet the lower threshold of the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG. This would also indicate insufficient coho available passing the weir to provide ANY sport harvest above the weir.

This situation might be better addressed by Board adoption of a Little Susitna River inriver goal to provide enough coho inriver for reasonable sport fish harvest opportunity both below and above the Little Susitna River weir.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This is an advisory committee proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F27-141)

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PROPOSAL 92

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

5 AAC 61.112. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

Close sport fishing for coho salmon in estuaries of Deshka River, Little Susitna River, Fish Creek and Jim Creek until half of the escapement goal has been counted inriver.

Fishing for Coho Salmon in the estuaries of the Deshka, Little Susitna, Fish creek and Jim creek will not be allowed until (50%) one half of the escapement goal for the system has been enumerated upstream. THIS INCLUDES NO CATCH AND RELEASE FISHING

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Fishing for Coho Salmon in the estuaries of the indicator systems in the Susitna drainage area.

Mortality rates of catch and release Coho salmon are extremely high 69% based on a fish and game report-Mortality of Coho Salmon caught and released using sport tackle in the Little Susitna River, Alaska, Doug Vincent-Lang, Marianna Alexandersdottir, and Doug McBride-. The fish in the study were caught on sport fishing gear by fish and game personnel and some volunteers. That was likely handled using techniques most anglers lack. Which means mortality rates are undeniably higher by the anglers. That's 690 out of every 1,000 Coho's that stage in the estuaries of the systems of the Deshka, Little Susitna, Fish creek and Jim Creek that die before being enumerated. This happens while they are staging in the estuary waiting for the water temperature and/or the timing to be correct to migrate upstream to the spawning grounds they came from to complete their life cycle and start the next one. These systems are the Coho indicator systems for the Susitna drainage area. These 690 dead Coho salmon don't get a chance to spawn in the system they came from. Catch and release mortality is a form of harvest.

In the past, when these systems were not projected to meet their escapement goals (SEG, OEG's) serious restrictions on harvest of these stocks were activated, some of which that are outside the Susitna drainage area. It's not responsible for Salmon management to have boiler plate restrictions in place that allow for more Coho's to accumulate and be harvested at a rate of 69% or greater while waiting for their turn to migrate upriver

In doing some reading to prepare this proposal for Coho, I came across a quote from Jeff Mount, a senior fellow at the public policy institute of California's water policy center and an emeritus professor of earth and planetary sciences at UC Davis. His quote speaks to what most biologists also understand. "Keep in mind , Coho Salmon, in particular go through boom-and-bust cycles" It's extremely hard to achieve minimum escapement levels on the indicator systems when the fish are stacked up in the estuary's with a continuing growing amount of effort/harvest no matter if it's catch and keep mortality or catch and release mortality.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson (EF-F27-010)

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PROPOSAL 93

5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area

5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

Reduce the coho salmon bag limit in the northern district to one fish and establish criteria for the use of emergency order authority as follows:

The bag limit in the northern district for Coho Salmon shall be one (1) until the Deshka, Little Susitna, Fish Creek, and Jim Creek all meet seventy-five percent(75%)of their escapement goals. Upon being met the bag limit can be adjusted by EO.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Coho bag limits in northern Cook Inlet. With some of the river systems in Northern Cook inlet nearing stock of concern status. Coho's are very boom or bust when it comes to spawning success, more towards the latter with the limited data we have. The rivers in the northern district of Cook Inlet endure a large amount of angling hours. A large amount of angling hours equates to potentially a large number of extractions from the river systems.

In the spirit of conservation, bag limits should be in the conservation to help with meeting escapement goals.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson, Paragon Fish Corporation (EF-F27-092)

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PROPOSAL 94

5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area

5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

Prohibit the use of bait in northern district streams until coho salmon have met half of their escapement goals as follows:

When fishing for Coho bait is a very good technique to insure catching Coho. Eliminate the use of bait in the northern district when fishing for Coho, until the Deshka, Little Susitna, Fish Creek, and Jim Creek have all achieved half(50%) of their escapement goals

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Coho salmon in the northern district of Cook Inlet needs to be conserved when they are staging to enter their natal river systems for spawning. With the recent action taken at the Statewide meeting it's fair to share the burden on conservation with all users. The harvest of Coho in the northern district of Cook Inlet is not a known number. There are no logbooks for the guides operating in the fresh water, and the very random sport fish survey that gets sent out is just that very random. Its accuracy comes into the discussion also. Some of these systems are nearing stock of concern status.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson, Paragon Fish Corporation (EF-F27-093)

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PROPOSAL 95

5 AAC 60.122 Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Modify season dates for the sport fishery on Fish Creek as follows:

5AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainage Area. Allow Sport Fishing in the Fish Creek Drainage through 23 July as follows

Change 5AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainage Area. Allow Sport Fishing in the Fish Creek Drainage through 23 July as follows

(5) In the Fish Creek Drainage.

(A) the waters from ADF&G regulatory markers located at its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located one-quarter mile upstream from the Knik-Goose Bay Road, are open to sport fishing [June 15 – July 14] June 15 – 23 July, and beginning the second Saturday in August through December 31 from 5a.m. – 10 p.m., except that sport fishing for king salmon is closed. The 23 July closure date may be earlier by emergency order, and sport fishing in July will close the day before the opening date posted on the personal use dip net emergency order

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Allow sport fishermen more opportunity to harvest sockeye salmon in Fish Creek in July prior to the opening of the personal use dip net fishery.

This fishery has been adjusted by the BOF each of the past two UCI meetings. Current statues are better now, but they need one more adjustment to the closure date. The run of sockeye on Fish Creek are very punctual, but they show up in large numbers after this fishery currently closes. We need a few more days of sport fishing before the personal use fishery opens.

* Prior to the 2020 Board of Fish (BOF) Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting there was no opportunity to fish for sockeye salmon on Fish Creek. This fishery did not open until August, and by then it was open primarily for coho salmon

* At the 2020 meeting, the Board approved proposal 227. This proposal allowed limited sport fishing for sockeye on Fish Creek. However this change only permitted fishing on the first two weekends of July, and depending on the calendar, there was limited opportunity to catch fish.

* At the 2024 BOF meeting, the Board approved proposal 245. This proposal permitted sport fishing on Fish Creek seven days a week through 14 July. This change increased the opportunity for anglers to catch sockeye on Fish Creek, but due to run timing there were not many fish caught.

* The Sockeye run on Fish Creek has been consistent and extremely punctual over the past 12 years. However, this run does not show up in good numbers until after the sport fishery closes. Over the past 12 years on Fish Creek Sockeye escapement has exceeded goals in 11 of 12 years

(not in 2016), and emergency orders were published opening the personal use dip net fishery averaging by 24 July.

There is a small allocative issue with this proposal, in that the sport fishery would be permitted more of this run. This is NOT a very popular fishery for sport caught sockeye, and the increased amount of harvested sockeye would not greatly affect the personal use allocation.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? As I submit this proposal in April 2026 I have not, but I plan to prior to the 2027 meeting. I have talked about this with members of the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission about this proposal. I intend to talk to the area manager about this proposal this summer.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page (EF-F27-074)

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PROPOSAL 96

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Modify sport fishing opportunity in Wasilla Creek as follows:

WASILLA CREEK DRAINAGE (including Rabbit Slough, Spring Creek, and Palmer Slough)

- If you retain a bag limit of salmon from the Wasilla Creek drainage, you may not fish for any species of fish in waters open to salmon fishing on that same day.
- July 15-August 15: Motorized watercraft having a total propshaft rating greater than 3 HP may not be used on the Wasilla Creek drainage on Saturdays and Sundays.
- Wasilla Creek drainage downstream of the Parks and Glenn Highways, October 1-July 1
- Open to fishing for species other than king salmon
- Wasilla Creek drainage, downstream of the Parks Highway and Glenn Highway, July 1-September 31
- Fishing is only allowed Saturday and Sunday and only from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day
- Wasilla Creek drainage, upstream from Glenn and Parks Highways
- June 15-April 14, open to sport fishing for species other than salmon
- April 15-June 14: Closed to all fishing except spear and bow and arrow harvest of Northern Pike and Alaska Blackfish

[WASILLA CREEK DRAINAGE (INCLUDING RABBIT SLOUGH)

- IF YOU RETIAN A BAG LIMIT OF SALMON FROM THE WASILLA CREEK DRAINAGE (INCLUDING RABBIT SLOUGH) YOU MAY NOT FISH FOR ANY SPECIES OF FISH IN WATERS OPEN TO SALMON FISHING ON THAT SAME DAY.
- JULY15-AUGUST15 MOTORIZED WATERCRAFT HAVING A TOTAL PROPSHAFT RATING GRATER THAN 3 HP MAY NOT BE USED ON WASILLA CREEK ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS.
- FROM ITS MOUTH UPSTREAM TO THE ALASKA RAILROAD BRIDGE, INCLUDING LAKES AND PONDS
    - JUNE 15-APRIL 14: OPEN TO FISHING FOR ALL SPECIES OTHER THAN KING SALMON
    - SPORT FISHING IS ONLY ALLOWED ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS AND ONLY FROM 5 A.M. TO 10 P.M. EACH DAY
    - BAIT AND MULTIPLE HOOKS ARE ALLOWED
- UPSTREAM OF THE ALASKA RAILROAD BRIDGE
    - CLOSED YEAR-ROUND TO ALL SALMON FISHING
    - JUNE 15-APRIL 14 OPEN TO SPORT FISHNG FOR SPECIES OTHER THAN SLAMON]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There have been reports of northern Pike in the Rabbit Slough/Wasilla Creek area, and although the department has not been able to obtain definitive proof of Pike at the time of writing, I expect that the department will have been able to document them by the time this proposal is heard by the board. In small streams with multiple access points, it is reasonable to assume that the public would be able to suppress Northern Pike populations if given enough opportunity.

The Wasilla Creek drainage is home to important native species that require protection, especially Rainbow Trout and Coho Salmon, but I believe that expanding the fishery within certain parameters would improve the sustainability of these native species if Northern Pike establish a breeding population in the system. These protections do add some complexity to regulation, but they do not restrict current legal fishing and instead provide more opportunity to remove a harmful invasive species.

The Wasilla Creek Drainage also suffers from being very poorly defined. The old Wasilla creek channel, which drained into Rabbit Sough/Palmer slough a few miles up from Knik Arm, is now almost non-existent, and Wasilla Creek now joins Spring Creek just downstream of the abandoned E Nelson Road. My proposal would help clarify the boundaries, without significantly changing them, while also more explicitly including Spring Creek and Palmer Slough in the drainage. Although all of these systems merge before reaching Knik Arm, multiple maps, including Google Maps, ADFG's Alaska Lake Database, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Parcel Viewer maps all have different nomenclatures for various portions of the drainage.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I discussed this proposal with the local area management biologist.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta (EF-F27-180)

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PROPOSAL 97

5 AAC 61.112. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

Allow sport fishing opportunity for Arctic Grayling in Alexander Creek as follows:

(5) in the Alexander Creek drainage, and all waters within a one-half mile radius of the confluence of Alexander Creek with the Susitna River,

(A) sport fishing for king salmon is closed from January 1 – December 31;

(C) in flowing waters upstream of ADFG regulatory markers located approximately 400 yards upstream of Trail Creek, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used;

(D) in flowing waters, rainbow/steelhead trout, **and** Arctic char/Dolly Varden, [AND ARCTIC GRAYLING] may not be retained or possessed;

(H) from May 1 – July 13, sport fishing is closed within a one-half mile radius of the confluence of Alexander Creek and the Susitna River

(New section) in flowing waters, downstream of the regulatory marker located approximately 400 yards upstream of Trail Creek, Arctic grayling may be retained with a bag and possession limit of 2 per day and 4 in possession

-Date ranges may be necessary for the department to determine but we would like to see it open to retention at least starting June 1.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Harvest opportunity on Alexander Creek is limited to mainly pink and chum salmon. Coho salmon can be harvested when not restricted but I believe the limit is lower than the rest of Unit 1. Northern pike can be harvested as well with no limit but the department is trying hard to remove/suppress the population. Currently there is no harvest of resident species allowed.

Angler effort is low in Alexander Creek until coho salmon start showing up and it picks up slightly. Many local residents on the lower part of the creek have noted an increase of resident species, specifically Arctic grayling. The composition of fish species in the creek may be changing with the ongoing netting to suppress/remove Northern pike in the area which continues by the department. There is no assessment on resident species to my knowledge; however, residents on the creek have observed an abundance of Arctic grayling and believe a small harvest opportunity would not be detrimental to the population.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No – I did not have time to consult with the local AC.

PROPOSED BY: Lee McKnight (EF-F27-159)

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PROPOSAL 98

5 AAC 62.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

Sockeye salmon caught in the Big River Lakes sport fishery must be retained regardless of hook placement as follows:.

All sockeye salmon hooked and landed in this fishery must be retained regardless of hook placement. No catch and release fishing is allowed. Single hook - sinker or weight must be 18 inches away from hook.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To minimize catch and release mortality. This fishery is a very structured fishery where most anglers access fishery by aircraft only. The sockeye salmon are found in very large schools throughout the lake. It has been a sustainable fishery with relatively stable harvest and participation for 30+ years. We do not anticipate any expansion due to limited access. This will dramatically lower the number of sockeye salmon mortally wounded when being caught and released and will result in a more orderly fishery.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Hanes (EF-F27-041)

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PROPOSAL 99

5 AAC 62.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

Allow the use of bait from June 1 through August 31 in Big River Lakes, as follows:

Extend the use of bait in Big River Lakes fishery from, currently July 14 through August 31, to June 1 through August 31. This system does not have a King salmon return as do other Westside streams that have closures to protect King salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There is no use of bait allowed from June 1 to July 14 to harvest sockeye salmon.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Hanes (EF-F27-042)

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PROPOSAL 100

5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for season, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainage Area.

Update the list of stocked lakes for the Knik Arm drainage area as follows:

(3) rainbow/steelhead trout

(B) may be taken in stocked lakes and ponds from January 1 – December 31; bag and possession limit of five fish, of which only one may be 20 inches or greater in length; for the purposes of this subparagraph, "stocked lakes and ponds" include Anderson Lake, Barley Lake, Bear Paw Lake, Bench Lake, Beverly Lake, Big Beaver Lake, [BLAIR LAKE], Brocker Lake, Bruce Lake, Buck Lake, Canoe Lake, Carpenter Lake, Coyote Lake, **Crooked Lake,** Dawn Lake, Diamond Lake, Echo Lake (Matanuska Lakes Complex), Farmer Lake, Finger Lake, Florence Lake, Golden Lake, Goober Lake, Homestead Lake, Honeybee Lake, Ida Lake, Irene Lake, Kepler/Bradley Lakes, Kings Lake, Klaire Lake, Kalmbach Lake, Knik Lake, Knob Lake, Lalen Lake, Leech Lake, Little Beaver Lake, Little Lonely Lake, Loberg (Junction) Lake, Long Lake, (MP 86 Glenn Hwy), Loon Lake, Lorraine Lake, Lucil[l]e Lake, Lynne Lake, Marion Lake, Matanuska Lake, Meirs Lake, Memory Lake, Morovro Lake, North Knob Lake, North Rolly Lake, Prator Lake, Ravine Lake, Reed Lake, Reflections Lake, Rhein Lake, Rocky Lake, Ruby Lake, Rush Lake, Seventeenmile Lake, Seymour Lake, Slipper (Eska) Lake, South Rolly Lake, Summit Lake, Tanaina Lake, Twin Island Lake, Vera Lake, Victor Lake, Visnaw Lake, Walby Lake, Weiner Lake, West Beaver Lake, Wolf Lake, and Zero Lake;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Board of Fisheries has provided increased harvest opportunity in Knik Arm Drainage Area lakes which have been stocked by the department. This proposal updates the list of stocked lakes by adding Crooked Lake and removing Blair Lake.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-262)

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PROPOSAL 101

5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area and **5 AAC 61.110 General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Revise the list of designated lakes within Northern Cook Inlet with populations of invasive northern pike where anglers may use five lines while fishing for northern pike through the ice, as follows:

5 AAC 60.120 (7)(C) is amended:

(C) all waters east of the Susitna River, west of the Little Susitna River and south of the Enstar Gas Pipeline right-of-way (Figure Eight area lakes), Anna Lake, Beaverhouse Lake, **Big Beaver Lake, Colt Lake,** Cow Lake, East Papoose Lake, **Feather Lake,** Flathorn Lake, Gerry Lake, **Hock Lake** Horseshoe Lake, Hourglass Lake, **Long Lake (Meadown Cr. Drainage),** Loonsong Lake, Lynda Lake, [MEMORY LAKE], **Muleshoe lake, My Lake** all Nancy Lake drainage lakes except Nancy Lake, **Our Lake, Pear Lake,** Prator lake, Sevenmile Lake, **Silverbow Lake, Stepan Lake,** Stephan Lake, **Threemile Lake (Fish Cr. Drainage), Twin Lake,** West Beaver Lake, West Horseshoe Lake, and West Papoose Lake with five lines through the ice; allowable gear is limited to standard ice fishing gear as specified in 5 AAC 61.110(8)(B); fishing gear must be closely attended as specified in 5 AAC 75.033; all other species of fish caught must be released immediately;

5 AAC 61.110 (8)(C) is amended:

(C) Alexander Creek, Bulchitna Lake, Eightmile Lake, Fish Creek (lower Susitna River drainage), Fish Creek (Kroto Slough), Indian Creek, Witsoe Creek, and in Alexander Lake, Amber Lake, Crystal Lake, Donkey Lake, Fish Lakes, Hewitt Lake, Kroto Lakes, Lady Slipper Lake, Little Bulchitna Lake, Lockwood Lakes, Long Lake, Neil Lake, No Name (Cabin) Lake, Onestone Lake, Parker Lake, **Rainbow Lake,** Scotty Lake, Shell Lake, Shirley Lake, Sucker Lake, Trail Lake, Trapper Lake, Upper and Lower Vern Lakes, Whitsol Lake, and Whiskey Lake, with five lines through the ice; allowable gear is limited to standard ice fishing gear as specified in 5 AAC 61.110(8)(B): fishing gear must be closely attended as specified in 5 AAC 75.033; all other species of fish caught must be released immediately;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Northern pike are predatory fish invasive to Southcentral Alaska and can pose a significant threat to salmon and resident fish in the region. To encourage anglers to harvest northern pike, systems that primarily contain northern pike have regulations allowing anglers to use five lines through the ice. This proposal adds 14 lakes to the list of designated lakes and removes Memory Lake which has been treated with rotenone to eradicate northern pike. Adding these lakes may encourage anglers to fish these areas and harvest northern pike.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-260)

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PROPOSAL 102

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Allow special provisions for northern pike to apply whenever ice is suitable in Big, Mirror, Flat and Nancy Lakes, as follows:

5 AAC 60.122(a) (5)(F)(ii) is amended to read:

(F) in Big Lake, Mirror Lake, and Flat Lake,

(ii) [FROM NOVEMBER 1 – MARCH 15,] from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., five lines may be used to take northern pike through the ice; allowable gear is limited to standard ice fishing gear specified in 5 AAC 60.120(7)(B); only a single hook with a gap between the point and the shank that is three-fourths inch or larger may be used; each hook must be set above the bottom of the lake; only a whole and intact bait fish for which no seasonal or harvest limit exists as specified in 5 AAC 75.026(b) may be used as bait; fishing gear must be closely attended as specified in 5 AAC 75.033; all other species of fish caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

5 AAC 60.122(a)(10)(C) is amended to read:

(c)in Nancy Lake, [FROM NOVEMBER 1 - MARCH 15], from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., five lines may be used to take northern pike through the ice; allowable gear is limited to standard ice fishing gear specified in 5 AAC 60.120(7)(B); only a single hook with a gap between the point and the shank that is three-fourths inch or larger may be used; each hook must be set above the bottom of the lake; only a whole and intact bait fish for which no seasonal or harvest limit exists as specified in 5 AAC 75.026(b) may be used as bait; fishing gear must be closely attended as specified in 5 AAC 75.033; all other species of fish caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current regulations allow anglers to use up to five lines when fishing through the ice for northern pike from November 1 through March 15. However, ice often remains on these lakes after March 15. The five-line limit is intended to increase harvest opportunity for northern pike and encourage their removal from these lakes where they are invasive. When using five lines through the ice, anglers may retain only northern pike, and restrictions on hook size and bait apply. Removing the season dates will allow anglers to use five lines for northern pike at any time ice is suitable for fishing through the ice.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-261)

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PROPOSAL 103

5 AAC 41. XXX New section

Establish a new permit classification for invasive species suppression within Cook Inlet, as follows:

Establish a new section under 5 AAC 21 (Upper Cook Inlet) or 5 AAC 27 to create an **Invasive Species Suppression Permit.** This regulation would: Authorize the Department to issue permits to private entities for the high-precision eradication of invasive Northern Pike. Allow the use of non-standard gear, specifically ultra-fine 1/16th-inch mesh "skin nets" to capture all life stages from fry to adults. Permit diver-assisted benthic management to manually guide net leads, ensuring 100% containment and protecting sensitive lake-bed habitats. Authorize the use of vessels as mobile aquatic laboratories for on-site euthanization, data logging, and scientific sampling. Mandate Tier-4 Biosecurity protocols for permit holders, including 140°F thermal washes, 72-hour desiccation, and UV-C sterilization of all gear**.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Invasive Northern Pike are decimating salmonid rearing habitats in the Upper Cook Inlet Management Area, specifically within the Susitna River Basin and Alexander Creek drainages. Current regulatory frameworks and standard suppression efforts primarily target adult populations using standard gillnetting, often missing critical juvenile life stages. Additionally, there is no standardized regulatory requirement for high-level biosecurity (such as thermal and UV-C sterilization) to prevent the accidental spread of secondary invaders like Elodea during suppression activities. Currently, the lack of a formal permit system prevents specialized entities from utilizing high-precision technology and non-standard gear to assist the state in comprehensive eradication efforts.

Salmonid populations in the Susitna drainage will continue to decline as pike predation goes unchecked across all life cycles. The risk of cross-contaminating water bodies with Elodea or other aquatic invasive species remains high without mandated, multi-stage sterilization protocols. The state will lose the opportunity to leverage precision-eradication technologies that can achieve higher removal rates with lower impact on native species.

All user groups in the Upper Cook Inlet (Commercial, Sport, and Subsistence) will benefit from increased salmonid survival due to effective pike suppression. The ADF&G will benefit from having a regulatory mechanism to authorize specialized, cost-neutral assistance in remote and high-risk drainages.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have consulted with ADF&G and DNR biologists regarding the critical need for improved pike suppression and biosecurity protocols. However, the specific methodology proposed here—including the use of 1/16th-inch 'skin nets,' diver-assisted benthic

management, and mobile thermal sterilization—was developed independently by the author to address the gaps identified during those discussions. This proposal has not yet been reviewed by a local Advisory Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Jason Gibson (EF-F27-243)
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PROPOSAL 104

5 AAC 77.540 Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Allow an additional day per week for Susitna River personal use fishery as follows:

(h) Salmon may be taken by dip net in the Susitna River, only as follows:

(1) from July 10 through July 31, **Monday 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.**, Wednesday 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Saturday 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; the department may alter the time, or area of, or close the fishery, based on salmon abundance; the commissioner may, by emergency order, extend the personal use fishery through August 31 if the department projects that both sockeye and coho abundance will be above the upper end of all Susitna River escapement goals for sockeye and coho salmon;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Expand the personal use fishery in the lower Susitna River.

The lower Susitna River dipnet fishery has been in effect for six (6) seasons, of which four (4) of those seasons present six (6) days to dipnet and seven (7) days for the other years. During that time, the regulations allowed a total of thirty-eight (38) days for the Susitna River personal use fishery. However, over the history of the fishery, the salmon are scarce until after July 17. This effectively diminishes opportunities for harvest to four (4) days 66% of the seasons or a total of twenty-six (26) days available since its inception.

An additional day per week in the allotted time will offer better opportunities for people to utilize this fishery and harvest salmon.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No

PROPOSED BY: Kristine Ogonowski (EF-F27-054)

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PROPOSAL 105

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Modify the days open to personal use salmon fishing in the Susitna River as follows:

5AAC 77.540

(h) Salmon may be taken by dip net in the Susitna River, only as follows:

(1) from July 10 through July 31, **Thursday** [WEDNESDAY] 6:00 a.m. to 11 p.m.[,] **through** Saturday 6 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; the department may alter the time, or area of, or close the fishery, based on salmon abundance; the commissioner may, by emergency order, extend the personal use fishery through August 31 if the department projects that both sockeye and coho abundance will be above the upper end of all Susitna River escapement goals for sockeye and coho salmon;

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

5AAC 77.540 Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan

This fishery has provided harvest opportunity for salmon for residents in the Susitna River drainage. I would like the board to consider modifying the fishery to being consecutive days. The request is for 3 consecutive days but two consecutive days could also be considered if there is not a desire to increase the number of days. On a given year there are only 6-7 days available to harvest during a 21-day period. There is no shore access to this fishery and it has a restricted area so growth is unlikely to happen. It is my understanding that the department has not observed a significant growth in the fishery since this fishery began in 2020 and harvest is under 5,000 fish annually with most of the harvest consisting of sockeye salmon. In 2025 there will be 7 days available to fish and if we changed it to what I am requesting it would allow for 10 days to fish. I think that if you adopted this change the department could monitor harvest and use emergency authority to restrict if needed.

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

PROPOSED BY: Lee McKnight (EF-F27-160)

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PROPOSAL 106

5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.

Increase commercial smelt fishery guideline harvest level to 200 tons, as follows:

5AAC 21.505

(c) Not more than 200 tons [100 TONS] of smelt may be taken annually under this section

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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the board to change the harvest quota for smelt in Upper Cook Inlet from 100 tons back to 200 tons. Up until 2023, the quota was set at 200 tons. This amount was a good fit for the existing market structure and processing capacity. The best and most scientific study that has been done showed a biomass estimate of 53,000 tons of smelt in the Susitna River, where the fishery occurs. That's a harvest rate of .0037 or 0.37%. On top of that, a significant portion of the harvested fish have already spawned, making the actual effective harvest rate even lower. This has to be the least impactful fishery in the whole world.

At the 2024 Cook Inlet BOF meeting, the board passed a proposal to cut the quota in half to 100 tons. The proposers of that proposal said we need to take a "precautionary" approach in allowing a harvest on smelt. A 0.37% harvest rate is an extremely precautionary harvest level. Part of their reasoning was that the study was supposed to be for three years, but was only done for one year. But, even if in following years the biomass estimate were to have changed, it would have to drop nearly a hundred-fold before the harvest would be detrimental to the population. Long before that, it would be too difficult to harvest fish and effort would cease. When the board passed the proposal to cut the harvest, I don't believe they had a good grasp of what the fishery is really like. During their deliberations, I heard board members say things like "I don't think we should allow a fishery on smelt because they are sold as dog food and fertilizer". That kind of misunderstanding shows that the board made an uninformed decision.

Currently, there are five boats that take part in this fishery. It is unlikely that more boats will enter the fishery anytime soon. The lower quota makes for a more competitive scramble to harvest fish. It's already a tricky and dangerous fishery with sand bars and extreme tides. Going back to 200 tons would lessen the chance of taking unnecessary risks.

Our processors have shown they can handle the 200 ton volume and markets have been developed that have the desire for this valuable resource. A 200 ton quota makes this a more viable fishery which can sustain the small fleet and provide enough to keep the processors interested. 200 tons is still an extremely low harvest for such a vast resource.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I have spoken at length with the other fishermen, our processor, and the Central Peninsula Advisory Committee about have the quota set at 200 tons. They have always been in support of this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek (EF-F27-020)

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PROPOSAL 107

5 AAC 21.505 Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.

Increase the commercial smelt fishery guideline harvest level to 200 tons, as follows:)

5AAC 21.505

(C) Not more than 200 Tons of smelt may be taken annually under this section

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2024 when BOF last met to determine the quota for 2024,2025 and 2026 and eventually reduced quota for Eulachon Smelt (Species Name: *Thaleichthys pacificus)*
from 400,000 lbs to 200,000 lbs, there was an indication that some of prior year's harvest was going to low end applications like dog food and fertilizer. This was incorrect and we want to clarify how we handle and sell the Eulachon smelt we buy from our committed fishers.

Rogue Wave Processing operates a fish processing facility at 38664 Kalifornsky Beach Road and focuses on hiring local employees as much as possible. We have developed high end commercial retail markets for Eulachon Smelt that maximize the value of the resource by flash freezing all the product IQF (INDIVIDUALY) and not bulk block frozen. These are sold to consumers that appreciate the great quality we produce with the help of our committed fishers. We have strong customer demand that would take all the allowable catch should quota go back to or exceeds 400,000 in the next board cycle

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? We continually work with all Commercial fishers, and with ADF and G staff to manage catch, to maximize quality and make sure we do not exceed allowable quota limits. All have agreed that 200Tons is an acceptable amount to be harvested and processed accordingly.

PROPOSED BY: Richard King, Rogue Wave Processing General Manager (EF-F27-022)

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PROPOSAL 108

5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.

Increase the guideline harvest level of smelt in the commercial fishery to 200 tons, as follows:

Update (C) to state the following:

Item (C) Not more than 200 tons of smelt may be taken annually under this section

Currently the Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan states:

Current through May 30, 2025

(a)Smelt may be taken only under the conditions of a commissioner's permit issued under this section.

(b)Smelt may be taken only

(1)from May 1 through June 30;

(2)in the marine waters of Cook Inlet in that portion of the General Subdistrict northeast of the Chuit River and southwest of the Little Susitna River; and

(3)with a dip net.

(c)Not more than 100 tons of smelt may be taken annually under this section.

Proposal to change (C) to Not more than 200 tons of smelt may be taken annually under this section.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to Board to increase the Guideline Harvest Level back to the previous level of 200 tons annually since the demand for smelt has increased substantially and put people back to work fishing and canning and brings income into the State of Alaska.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. My son and I have been fishing in the smelt fishery for over 20 years, and we have consulted and received guidance for this proposal from the ADFW in Soldotna, Ak. We hope you will consider our proposal to increase the harvest of smelt back to 200 tons so we can satisfy the increasing market.

PROPOSED BY: Bruce Crookshanks, Cowlitz River Smelt Company (EF-F27-239)

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PROPOSAL 109

5 AAC 21.505 Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.

Increase the guideline harvest level of smelt in the commercial fishery to 200 tons, as follows:

Increase the amount of smelt that can be taken under the Cook Inlet smelt fishery management plan, as follows:

5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.

A. Smelt may be taken only under the conditions of a commissioner's permit under this section.
B. Smelt may be taken only
   (1) From May 1st through June 30th
   (2) In the marine waters of Cook Inlet into the portion of the general subdistrict northeast of the Chuit River, southwest of the Little Susitna River and
   (3) With a dipnet
C. Not more than 200 tons of smelt may be taken annually under this section.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the board to increase the guidelines harvest level back to the previous level of 200 tons annually because the demand for smelt has increased. This fishery provides jobs for numerous people from the fisherman, cannery workers, truck drivers, and the distributors that sell the smelt in the stores. I have been doing this fishery since it started and haven't seen any problems with it yet.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I came up with this proposal with some help from ADFW personnel in the Soldotna office. This is our 20th anniversary of this fishery. I would like to see the guideline harvest level increased back to the 200 tons.

PROPOSED BY: Darren W Crookshanks (EF-F27-251)

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PROPOSAL 110

5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.
Reduce the commercial smelt fishery guideline harvest level to 25 tons, as follows:

5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan.
Reduce the commercial smelt guideline harvest level in Upper Cook Inlet as follows:

5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan
…
(c) No more than [100] **25** tons of smelt may be taken annually under this section.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We are requesting that the board reduce the quota for smelt in the Cook Inlet commercial smelt fishery from 100 to 25 tons. Since 1999 the State of Alaska has formally recognized the importance of forage fish through the enactment of the forage fish management plan, 5 AAC 39.212 which states in section (b) that "The board finds that forage fish perform a critical role in the complex marine ecosystem by providing the transfer of energy from the primary and secondary producers to higher trophic levels. The higher trophic levels include many commercially important fish and shellfish species. Forage fish also serve as important prey species for marine mammals and seabirds", which is soundly reasoned and backed by a wealth of scientific and traditional evidence.

The most recent estimate of the Susitna hooligan population was an assessment conducted by ADF&G over a decade ago in 2016. This study indirectly estimated eulachon escapement into the Susitna River by counting eulachon larvae moving downstream and extrapolating from the fecundity of adult eulachon migrating upstream (Willette and DeCino, ADF&G, unpublished data). The study was intended to collect three years of data but was cut after one year, meaning there is no indication on whether this estimate was of a high or low escapement year, and no population trend is known for hooligan populations included in this harvest.

There is however a wealth of current research, and traditional data on the Chinook salmon and beluga whale populations of Cook Inlet that spans generations, countless recorded data points and published studies all pointing to the steep decline of these resources. These two resources have been central to the survival and way of life for Dena'ina people and have sustained the lives and cultures of the people of Cook Inlet for thousands of years. Though the causes of these declines are likely many, we do know that hooligan are critical to beluga and Chinook diets, which is also recognized in 5 AAC 39.212 (c) where the board found that "***abundant*** populations of forage fish are necessary to sustain healthy populations of commercially important species".

During the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting, ADF&G opposed the 100-ton reduction proposal in 2024 because "there were no biological concerns for the fishery" but did not state if there were concerns for the declining populations that feed on them. Despite this opposition, the board did recognize the importance of hooligan to these endangered stocks and adopted proposal 216 by a 5-1 vote. The recognition of the board of the importance of hooligan to the diets of

commercially important predators, *and* the recognition of the decline in beluga whale, and several UCI salmon stocks that consume them, means that conserving hooligan in UCI is of the utmost importance to the BOF.

Conducting the commercial harvest of a species that is key to the survival of other declining resources in the absence of population analysis is irresponsible. With the lack of current peer reviewed data on upper Cook Inlet hooligan, the best evidence we have is the traditional and local knowledge of residents which tells us that the people of Tyonek are seeing fewer hooligan on the beach, the people of Willow are seeing fewer hooligan in dip nets, and the people all around Cook Inlet can see that the predators relying on them are also struggling. According to RC157 submitted to the board in 2024, the value of these fish as forage for more commercially relevant species is estimated to be 3 times greater than the value of harvesting them (Konar et.al. 2019). Reducing the upper Cook Inlet smelt fishery by 75-tons will make available 75 tons of additional prey items that can be utilized by species up the food chain including Chinook and beluga whales. Keeping the harvest levels where they are will ensure that this 75-tons of biomass is transported out of our ecosystem to feed pets, gardens, and bait coolers far away from Cook Inlet.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal has been developed by the Tyonek AC in consultation with both Native Village of Tyonek IRA Council and Tyonek Tribal Conservation District.

PROPOSED BY: Tyonek Advisory Committee (EF-F27-097)

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PROPOSAL 111

5 AAC 77.527. Personal use smelt fishery.

Align seasons for freshwater and saltwater in Cook Inlet personal use smelt fishery as follows:

5 AAC 77.527 is amended to read:

…

(1) there are no bag or possession limits;

(2) smelt may be taken

(A) [IN SALTWATER] from April 1 through **June 15** [May 31];

(B) repealed [IN FRESH WATER FROM APRIL 1 THROUGH JUNE 15]

(C) with dip nets; and

(D) with a drift gillnet only [FROM APRIL 1 THROUGH JUNE 15]**,** as follows:

(i) a drift gillnet may be used only in the Kenai River downstream of an ADF&G regulatory marker at Cunningham Park;

(ii) a drift gillnet may not be more than 20 feet in length, four feet in depth, and one one-half inches in mesh size; and

(iii) a drift gillnet must be attended by the person operating the gillnet at all times that the net is fishing.

(3) repealed 7/21/99.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current regulation establishes different season dates for freshwater and saltwater in the Cook Inlet Personal Use Smelt Fishery, which creates regulatory complexity, potential public confusion, and enforcement ambiguity. Aligning the season dates eliminates the need to delineate freshwater from saltwater at river mouths where large tidal exchanges make the boundary difficult to determine in practice. Extending the saltwater season to match the freshwater season will also better align harvest opportunities of smelt with the variable run timing of eulachon throughout the entire Cook Inlet area. Aligning the season dates simplifies the regulation, improves public understanding, and improves clarity for enforcement.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-263)

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PROPOSAL 112

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Prohibit the use of bare hooks in Ship Creek drainage, as follows:

Amend the gear regulations for the Ship Creek drainage to prohibit the use of bare hooks. I propose that all hooks used in the Ship Creek sport fishery must have either a manufactured artificial lure or natural bait attached (during periods when bait is allowed). This would require the fish to actively strike the tackle, ensuring a legal hook-set in the mouth and reducing the practice of flossing/snagging.

Does my proposal address any other issues?
Yes. It will improve the accuracy of harvest data, reduce fish mortality for those intended for the hatchery, and create a more ethical and orderly environment for the "combat fishing" crowds at Ship Creek. It also simplifies enforcement for Wildlife Troopers by providing a clear, visual standard for legal tackle.

Who is likely to benefit?

- Ethical Anglers: Those who prefer traditional lure and bait techniques.
- The Hatchery: More fish will reach the broodstock collection area without injuries.
- Enforcement: Officers can easily identify non-compliant gear from a distance.

Who is likely to suffer? Anglers who rely on "flossing" or bare-hook techniques to catch salmon may find it more difficult to land fish in the silty waters of Ship Creek.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The use of bare hooks (often used in "flossing") in Ship Creek leads to a high frequency of illegal snagging or foul-hooking of salmon. Ship Creek is a high-traffic, urban fishery with limited visibility. Many fish are hooked in the body, fins, or tail by bare hooks and are either illegally kept or released with significant injuries. This bypasses the traditional "fair chase" ethic of angling and puts unnecessary stress on salmon migrating to the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery. Current enforcement is insufficient to manage the volume of snagging occurring under the guise of legal fishing.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No

PROPOSED BY: Roger Peterson (EF-F27-158)

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PROPOSAL 113

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Modify date of the youth-only fishery on Ship Creek; as follows:

Proposal change to current youth only chinook fishery on Ship Creek.

5 AAC 59.122 (14) in the Ship Creek drainage,
(J) a person 16 years of age or older may not sport fish in the Ship Creek youth fishery zone, established in Ship Creek between the upstream side of the C Street Bridge upstream to the downstream side of the restaurant bridge, during the designated youth fishery day, which occurs from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on the [THIRD SATURDAY] **Second Saturday** in June.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Adjust current youth fishing day to allow more participation from youth anglers and to allow youth anglers to participate in other youth fishing days in other near by fisheries.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Discussed with ADFG in the Anchorage area office.

PROPOSED BY: Dustin D Slinker (EF-F27-187)

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PROPOSAL 114

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Create a coho salmon youth-only fishery on Ship Creek, as follows:

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual,
and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Create a youth-only fishery on Ship Creek, as follows:

5 AAC 59.122. (14) in the Ship Creek drainage,

(X) A person 16 years of age or older may not sport fish in the Ship Creek youth fishery zone, established by ADF&G regulatory markers to include a portion of the Ship Creek between the upstream side of the C Street Bridge and upstream to the downstream side restaurant bridge, during designated youth fishery day, which occurs from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. annually on the last Friday in July.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Establish a youth-only fishery on a section of Ship Creek to allow anglers 15 years of age and younger the ability to fish for coho salmon.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Anchorage area office.

PROPOSED BY: Dustin D Slinker (EF-F27-188)

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PROPOSAL 115

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the Seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Close the king salmon fishery, clarify regulations and sport fishing opportunities for salmon, other than king salmon, in the Eagle River drainage, as follows:

5 AAC 59.122 (a) is amended to read:

…

(4) in the Eagle River drainage,

(B) the waters **upstream of the** [FROM] Route Bravo Bridge [UPSTREAM TO ADF&G REGULATORY MARKERS LOCATED AT MILE 7.4 OF THE EAGLE RIVER ROAD], including waters within 100 yards of its confluence with the South Fork **and the North Fork and its tributaries**, but not including the South Fork, **are** [IS] open **year-round** to sport fishing for all finfish species, except king salmon;

(C) **Repealed** [FROM SEPTEMBER 16 – MAY 31, THE WATERS UPSTREAM OF ADF&G REGULATORY MARKERS LOCATED AT RIVER MILE 7.4 OF THE EAGLE RIVER ROAD AND THE NORTH FORK AND ITS TRIBUTARIES ARE OPEN TO SPORT FISHING FOR ALL FINFISH SPECIES, EXCEPT KING SALMON;]

(D) [FROM AUGUST 15 – MAY 31,] the South Fork of Eagle River from its confluence with Eagle River upstream [TO THE FALLS,] is closed to sport fishing for salmon year-round;

(E) **Repealed** [THE SOUTH FORK EAGLE RIVER UPSTREAM OF THE FALLS IS OPEN TO SPORT FISHING];

(F) **Repealed** [THE WATERS FROM BAILEY BRIDGE ON FORT RICHARDSON ARMY BASE UPSTREAM TO ADF&G REGULATORY MARKERS IN THE CHUGACH STATE PARK EAGLE RIVER CAMPGROUND ARE OPEN TO SPORT FISHING FOR KING SALMON ON SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS, AND MONDAYS FOR FOUR CONSECUTIVE WEEKS BEGINNING ON THE SATURDAY BEFORE MEMORIAL DAY;]

(G) **Repealed** [THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR KING SALMON IS ONE FISH, 20 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH, EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN (b) OF THIS SECTION, THERE IS AN ANNUAL LIMIT OF TWO KING SALMON 20 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH AND A HARVEST RECORD IS REQUIRED AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 75.006; A KING SALMON 20 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH THAT IS REMOVED FROM THE WATER MUST BE RETAINED AND BECOMES PART OF THE BAG LIMIT OF THE PERSON WHO ORIGINALLY HOOKED IT; A PERSON MAY NOT REMOVE A KING SALMON FROM THE WATER BEFORE RELEASING THE FISH;]

(H) **Repealed** [AFTER TAKING A KING SALMON 20 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH, A PERSON MAY NOT SPORT FISH FOR ANY SPECIES OF FISH THAT SAME DAY IN WATERS OPEN TO SPORT FISHING FOR KING SALMON.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Eagle River opened to king salmon fishing in 1992 following a 28-year closure. In 1990 the department stocked king salmon into Eagler River to establish a king salmon fishery and these regulations were adopted to provide opportunity for returning hatchery king salmon although that hatchery return did not materialize, and the stocking program ended in 1995. There are no plans to reinitiate king salmon stocking in Eagle River.

Currently, the king salmon fishery on Eagle River operates over four 3-day weekends in a small section of the river. Recent harvest of king salmon has been low and not always captured in the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) due to low response rates; however, the department has observed an increase in activity with anglers targeting sockeye and coho salmon in Eagle River, although this effort is not well documented in the SWHS.

Given the low abundance of king salmon throughout southcentral Alaska and widespread freshwater closures for king salmon fishing, the department closed the king salmon fishery in Eagle River by Emergency Order in 2025 and 2026. Annual surveys of two Eagle River tributaries, the South Fork Eagle River and Meadow Creek, indicate below average returns that are too low to support a fishery in the populous suburb of Anchorage.

This proposal would protect king salmon by closing salmon fishing on the South Fork Eagle River year-round and by closing the short king salmon fishery between Bailey Bridge and the ADF&G regulatory markers at the Chugach State Park campground, the only reach of the drainage where king salmon harvest is currently allowed. These measures are intended to protect the remaining king salmon stock in the drainage.

In addition to providing protection to king salmon, the proposal simplifies existing regulations by removing date-specific provisions on both the Eagle River North and South forks, aligning management throughout most of the mainstem Eagle River, and eliminating reference to a highly specific regulatory marker at river mile 7.4 on the North Fork of the river. This approach reduces regulatory complexity, improves clarity for the public, and provides conservative king salmon measures, while maintaining modest opportunity for salmon other than king salmon on the mainstem of Eagle River.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-264)

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PROPOSAL 116

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Open Fire Creek to sport fishing, as follows:

- Fire Creek is not currently listed, and will need to be added if this proposal is approved by the BOF
- Special regulations for Fire Creek should be the same as other Anchorage Bowl drainages:

* From its mouth upstream to the spillway of Lower Fire Lake, open year round for all species except king salmon, 3 per day, 3 in possession, only 2 may be coho.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Please consider permitting sport fishing for sockeye salmon on Fire Creek to give anglers access to a rare natural sockeye salmon run in Eagle River.

Fire Creek is a small creek that starts at the spill way of Lower Fire Lake and runs under the Glenn Highway at the North Eagle River exit. The creek passes through at least four beaver ponds, and then eventually drains into Knik Arm. There is a fairly consistent run of sockeye salmon that attempts to return to Fire Lake to spawn most years.

Add a new section for the Anchorage Bowl under special regulations that allows sport fishing for salmon. This section can largely be copied from any current special regulation fishery.

- Current regulations as written basically mean that if a creek or river is not listed as open to salmon fishing, then that water is closed to all fishing for salmon.
- Under the Anchorage Bowl section of the regulation summary, on the first page, Other Salmon...
- **"In unstocked lakes and ponds and in all flowing waters: <u>closed to salmon fishing unless allowed under special regulations</u>**
    - Lower Fire Lake is stocked with trout by ADF&G.
    - Fishing under the bridge below the spillway is a popular place to fish.
    - In September the sockeye salmon pile up in this area, and anglers looking for stocked trout can not resist targeting the sockeye.
    - Fishing in this drainage is currently happening on a small scale.
    - The new (under development) Powder West development will increase fishing on Fire Creek.

* Adopting this proposal makes any fishing for salmon below the spillway legal.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I discussed this issue with the area manager biologist at the 2024 BOF meeting

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page (EF-F27-249)

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PROPOSAL 117

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Allow fishing for Arctic grayling year-round in Symphony Lake, as follows:

5 AC 59.122 is amended to read:

…

(17) in Symphony Lake,

(A) sportfishing is open **year-round** [JULY 1 – MAY 1];

(B) the bag and possession limit for Arctic Grayling is five fish, of which only one fish may be greater than 12 inches in length.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Symphony Lake is a remote lake and is accessed by anglers that hike approximately 5 miles. The lake was devoid of fish until it was stocked with Arctic grayling in 2001 and 2003. Department assessments determined that current regulations are unnecessarily restrictive; by allowing sport fishing year-round, regulations would be simplified while allowing additional harvest opportunity that may alleviate density-dependent stunting of Arctic Grayling in Symphony Lake.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-265)

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PROPOSAL 118

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Reduce bag and possession limits and limit gear in Sand Lake, as follows:

Establish a trophy lake within the Municipality of Anchorage at Sand Lake. Retention of fish 16 inches and greater is prohibited. Only one single-hook artificial lure or fly and bait is allowed.

(xx) in Sand Lake,

- **(A) Only one baited/unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure or fly may be used.**
- **(B) Rainbow/steelhead trout 16 inches and over may not be retained.**
- **(C) Rainbow/steelhead trout less than 16 inches 2 per day, 2 in possession**
- **(D) Arctic char 16 inches and over may not be retained.**
- **(E) Arctic char less than 16 inches 2 per day, 2 in possession**
- **(F) Lake trout 16 inches and over may not be retained:**
- **(G) Lake trout less than 16 inches 2 per day, 2 in possession**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Most lakes in the Anchorage area are currently managed as a put-and-take fishery to allow for harvest opportunity, which limits the opportunity for fish to attain trophy size. Continued harvest pressure reduces the likelihood of developing a quality fishery near the urban area. Anglers seeking larger fish generally must travel outside the Anchorage Bowl to find such opportunities.

This proposal would provide a managed trophy fishery within Anchorage by protecting larger fish from harvest while still allowing limited harvest of smaller fish. The single-hook restriction would help reduce hooking mortality and support the conservation of larger fish. This regulation would benefit anglers seeking trophy-sized fish, catch-and-release opportunities, and a higher-quality fishing experience close to home.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Discussed with ADFG in the Anchorage area office.

PROPOSED BY: Dustin D Slinker (EF-F27-184)

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PROPOSAL 119

5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Reduce bag and possession limits and limit gear in Lower Fire Lake, as follows:

Establish a trophy lake within Eagle River at Lower Fire Lake. Retention of fish 16 inches and greater is prohibited. Only one single-hook artificial lure or fly and bait is allowed.

(xx) in Lower Lake,

- **(A) Only one baited/unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure or fly may be used.**
- **(B) Rainbow/steelhead trout 16 inches and over may not be retained.**
- **(C) Rainbow/steelhead trout less than 16 inches 2 per day, 2 in possession**
- **(D) Arctic char 16 inches and over may not be retained.**
- **(E) Arctic char less than 16 inches 2 per day, 2 in possession**
- **(F) Lake trout 16 inches and over may not be retained:**
- **(G) Lake trout less than 16 inches 2 per day, 2 in possession**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Most lakes in the Eagle River-Anchorage area are currently managed as a put-and-take fishery to allow for harvest opportunity, which limits the opportunity for fish to attain trophy size. Continued harvest pressure reduces the likelihood of developing a quality fishery near the urban area. Anglers seeking larger fish generally must travel outside the Eagle River-Anchorage Bowl to find such opportunities.

This proposal would provide a managed trophy fishery within Eagle River by protecting larger fish from harvest while still allowing limited harvest of smaller fish. The single-hook restriction would help reduce hooking mortality and support the conservation of larger fish. This regulation would benefit anglers seeking trophy-sized fish, catch-and-release opportunities, and a higher-quality fishing experience close to home.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Discussed with ADFG in the Anchorage area office.

PROPOSED BY: Dustin D Slinker (EF-F27-185)

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PROPOSAL 120

5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.

Reduce limit and establish an annual limit for Arctic Char/Dolly Varden in Anchorage Bowl Drainage, as follows:

Establish bag and possession limit of one fish, of which only one may be 20 inches or greater in length; an annual limit of two fish 20 inches or greater in length; a harvest record is required for Arctic Char in local Anchorage stocked lakes and ponds.

(4) Arctic char/Dolly Varden may be taken from January 1 - December 31 in

(A) stocked lakes and ponds; bag and possession limit of [FIVE] **one** fish; **an annual limit of two fish 20 inches or greater in length**; no size limit; for the purpose of this subparagraph, "stocked lakes and ponds" has the meaning given in (3)(A) of this section; **a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006;**

(B) flowing waters and unstocked lakes and ponds; bag and possession limit of [FIVE] **one** fish;[, OF WHICH ONLY ONE MAY BE GREATER THAN 12 INCHES IN LENGTH] **an annual limit of two fish 20 inches or greater in length; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In stocked lakes there is not a size limit for Arctic char. In flowing waters and unstocked there is a size limit in place—only one fish in the bag limit of 5 may be over 12 inches.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Discussed with ADFG in the Anchorage area office.

PROPOSED BY: Dustin D Slinker (EF-F27-186)

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PROPOSAL 121

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.
Amend the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern delisting criteria and commercial drift gillnet fishery closed waters, as follows:

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.
...(1) achieved or exceeded for three consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish **of all ages and sizes,** which is the estimated number of spawners needed for maximum sustained yield and is expected to achieve the goal [ESTABLISHED IN (a) OF THIS SECTION IN FUTURE YEARS]; or .....(f) In the Central District, the commercial drift gillnet fishery is closed within **1.5** TWO miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The recovery plan omits a portion of the spawning population. This plan totally ignores the fact that small males, smaller than 28", age 1-2, regularly spawn with females larger than 28".

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Proposal discussed with members of the general public, processors, industry groups and commercial fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Roland Maw (EF-F27-069)
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PROPOSAL 122

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Increase the maximum number of dip nets allowed for commercial fishing in the Upper Subdistrict, as follows:

Proposal Title: Increase Allowable Dip Nets per Permit for Eastside Set Net Permit Holders During King Salmon Conservation Restrictions

Proposed Regulatory Change:

5 AAC 21.___. When ESSN permit holders are restricted to dip nets during king salmon conservation, a permit holder may operate up to eight (8) dip nets per permit.

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

Executive Summary:

Eastside Set Net (ESSN) permit holders in the Upper Subdistrict are required to abandon their primary gillnet gear and fish with dip nets during king salmon conservation restrictions. This mandatory gear substitution reduces allowable fishing area per permit from approximately 6,090 square feet to approximately 78.5 square feet, a reduction exceeding 7,500 percent. ADF&G; data shows ESSN king salmon harvest is already minimal under existing restrictions and not a primary driver of escapement outcomes. This proposal provides a proportional adjustment by allowing up to eight dip nets per permit during restriction periods, partially restoring fishing capacity while maintaining conservation objectives.

Problem Statement

ESSN fishermen must abandon primary gear and fish with dip nets during conservation restrictions, reducing fishing area from approximately 6,090 sq ft to 78.5 sq ft—over a 7,500% reduction.

ADF&G; Data Context

ADF&G; has imposed repeated restrictions on the ESSN fishery. Reported king salmon harvest is extremely low, sometimes single-digit fish per season. ESSN harvest is used as an indicator of run strength and is not a primary driver of escapement. Despite restrictions, king salmon returns remain low, indicating broader causes beyond ESSN harvest.

Key Gear Comparison

Set net gear: 6,090 sq ft per permit. Dip nets (4): 78.5 sq ft. Reduction: ~7,500%. Even 8 dip nets remain under 3% of original gear area.

Conclusion

This proposal maintains conservation goals while correcting a disproportionate reduction in fishing capacity applied to ESSN permit holders.

Appendix Summary

Set net area: 2 nets at 3,045 sq ft each = 6,090 sq ft. Dip nets: 4 nets total 78.5 sq ft. Difference: 6,011.5 sq. ft, or ~7,660%. Dip nets represent ~1.29% of set net area.

Fleet comparison: 2025 ESSN dip net participants fished ~10,676 sq ft versus full ESSN potential of ~2,679,600 sq ft, representing approximately 0.4% of standard gear footprint.

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

PROPOSED BY: Erik Anderson (EF-F27-244)

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PROPOSAL 123

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Extend the commercial dip net fishery in the Upper Subdistrict until August 15, as follows:

Amend the regulation governing the commercial dip net season dates in the Upper Subdistrict to read as follows:

5 AAC 21.382(g)(2): From June 20 through **August 15** [JULY 31]; (A) allow for the use of dip nets as an alternative gear type for holders of a SO4H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit;

Justification for the BOF and ADF&G Staff:

1. Zero Impact on Stocks of Concern: The legal requirement of the commercial dip net fishery prohibits the retention of king and coho salmon, requiring them to be released immediately. Extending the season to August 15 poses no biological threat to late-run king or coho salmon.

2. Biological Soundness: Sockeye runs historically remain strong through the first two weeks of August, often grossly exceeding ADF&G escapement goals. This extension allows the Department to utilize commercial dipnetting as an in-season management tool to control sockeye escapement without triggering the King or Coho concerns traditionally associated with set gillnet gear in August.

3. Proportionality and Common Use: The number of sockeye harvested by commercial dip nets during this two-week extension is minimal relative to the overall Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) harvest, yet it provides critical economic viability to ESSN permit holders. Allowing the harvest of surplus sockeye when there is no conservation concern for King mortality aligns with the Alaska Constitution's Common Use clause.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under the current regulatory framework established for the Upper Subdistrict, the commercial dip net fishery (operated by S04H permit holders) is restricted to a season closing date of July 31. This date is arbitrary, not grounded in biological science, and unnecessarily leaves harvestable sockeye unutilized.

Historically, the East Side Set Net (ESSN) fishery has operated through mid-August and into September to harvest strong late-season sockeye returns. In recent years, sockeye salmon counts in August have consistently exceeded upper-end escapement goals. The commercial dip net gear type was specifically authorized as a live-release alternative to harvest this exact surplus while completely mitigating the harvest of Kenai River late-run king salmon and coho salmon. Because dip nets allow for the immediate, live release of non-target species with a near-zero mortality, closing this fishery on July 31 provides no biological conservation benefit to Stocks of Concern. Instead, it prematurely eliminates a low-impact harvest tool, resulting in over-escapement of sockeye and severe, unjustified economic harm to small commercial operations.

If the July 31 closure remains in place, ADF&G will be denied a proven, zero-mortality management tool to control late-season sockeye over-escapement. Harvestable surplus sockeye will continue to go unutilized, directly conflicting with the State's mandate to manage resources

for maximum benefit and common use. Furthermore, small commercial fishing operations will continue to be denied economically vital fishing time, despite posing no biological threat to king or coho salmon stocks.

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

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (EF-F27-217)

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PROPOSAL 124

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Extend the commercial dip net fishery in the Upper Subdistrict to August 15, as follows:

5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

…

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

…

(5) From June 20 through [July 31] **August 15**;

(A) allow for the use of dip nets as an alternative gear type for holders of a SO4H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit;

…

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern plan the board established a new experimental commercial dipnet fishery to allow some level of opportunity to setnet fishermen while fishing while our traditional gear type is closed. This fishery was fished by a small percentage of the setnet permits last summer and some amount of success was achieved by fishermen trying to keep their family small businesses and industry alive. Historically the East Side Setnet fishery has always gone until August 15 by regulation and a not insignificant percentage of the harvest occurred in August. When the dipnet fishery was put into regulation it was set to close on July 31. Discussion at the meeting on my ACR that modified and provided additional opportunity in the dipnet fishery last year made it clear that the Board took this action for the purpose of "Coho Conservation". This was frankly ridiculous and makes no sense whatsoever for a multitude of reasons:

1) There are no stated conservation concerns on Kenai and Kasilof coho salmon, furthermore it is a king salmon stock of concern plan and has nothing whatsoever to do with coho.
2) No other targeted sockeye fishery has any considerations of coho conservation in the stock of concern plan. This is despite the fact that multiple other sockeye fisheries have coho impacts orders of magnitude higher then the commercial dipnet fishery.
3) In fact, no targeted coho fisheries have any restrictions listed in the stock of concern plan, and no regulatory restrictions have been made on targeted coho fisheries in their own respective management plans.
4) The plan in fact allows for setnet opportunity in August and this occurred in 2025.
5) The commercial dipnet fishery was implemented entirely due to its capacity to be perfectly selective and release of coho is already mandated!

The entire thing is clearly no more then continued persecution of the east-side setnet fishery. With the majority of the fishery occurring in the northern statistical areas close to the river the harvest was still quite good on July 31 and any fishing time in August would be meaningful to the few fishermen trying to make a go at this fraction of a fraction of our historical fishery.

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

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person (EF-F27-209)

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PROPOSAL 125

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Allow commercial dip net fishing in the Kasilof Special Harvest Area, as follows:

Add an area near the mouth of the Kasilof River, in the Kasilof River Special Harvest area for Commercial Dipnetting only as follows:

(2) from June [20] **25** through July 31(F)[THE NUMBER OF KING OR COHO SALMON THAT ARE RELEASED MUST BE RECORDED ON AN ADF&G FISH TICKET UNDER THE DISPOSTION CODE FOR LIVE RELEASE] **notwithstanding (E) of this section, a new commercial fishing area is established for the use of commercial dip nets near the mouth of the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area as follows:**

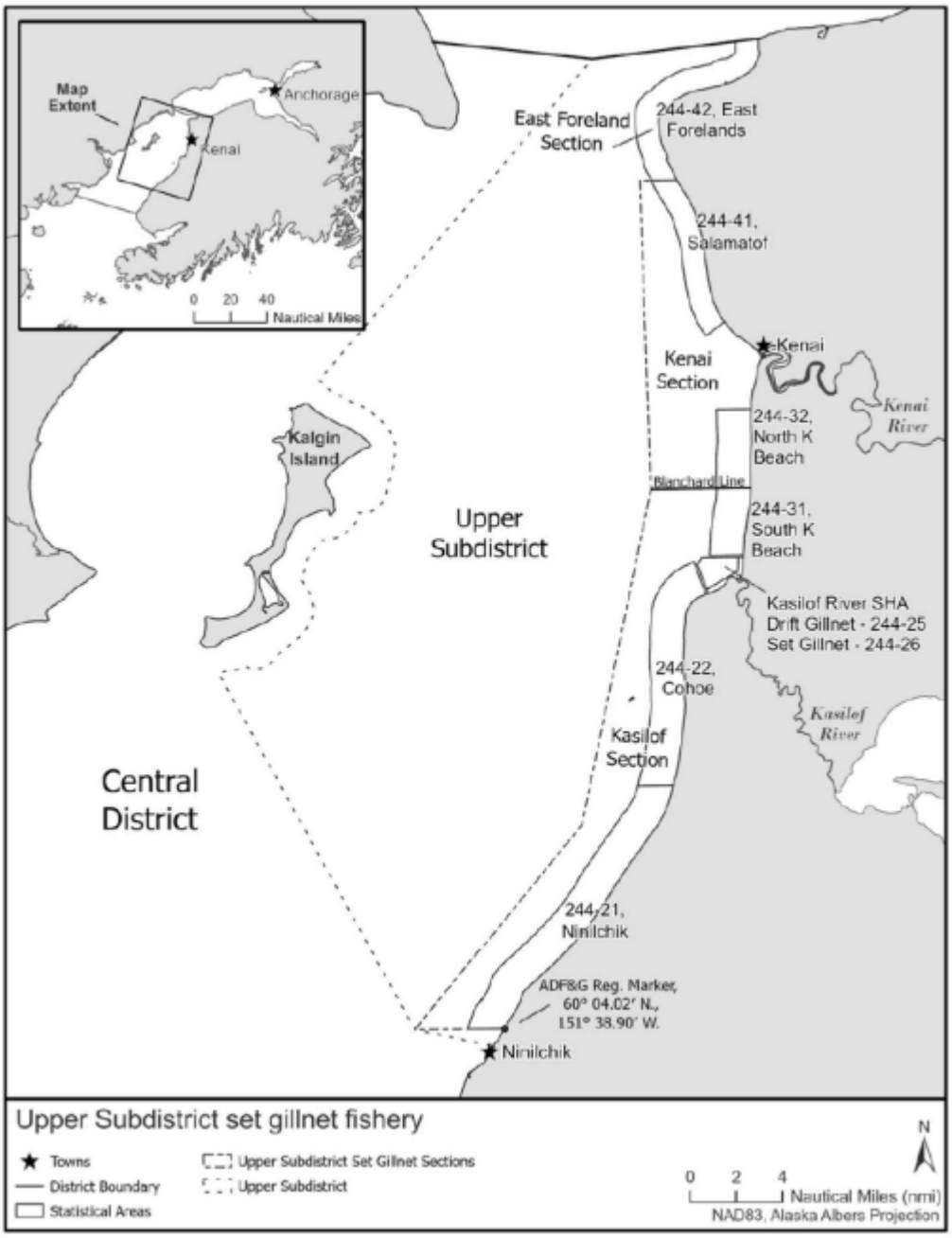
(i) the area includes waters of the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area;

(ii) the area described in this paragraph is open only to holders of an S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit operating dip nets in the Upper Subdistrict registration area;

(iii) no other commercial gear types may be operated within the area described in this paragraph;

(iv) fishing within this area is may be from a commercial vessel or fishing from shore;

(G)the number of king or coho salmon that are released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under the disposition code for live release.



What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal seeks to add an area and increase the efficiency of a harvest method currently in the Kenai River Stock of Concern plan for commercial dipnet alternative gear.

The current implementation of commercial dipnetting as an alternative gear type within the Kenai River King Salmon Stock of Management Concern is overly restrictive and does not provide a meaningful or equitable substitute for ESSN permit holders. By limiting participation to leased sites only, the Board has effectively excluded a portion of the fleet—particularly those who do not hold or have access to leased locations.

Additionally, the existing structure of the commercial dipnet fishery has not achieved the Board's stated intention to maintain harvest opportunity. At the same time, the Kasilof River has significantly exceeded its sockeye salmon escapement goals. This pattern of over-escapement, combined with limited commercial harvest opportunity, highlights an imbalance between conservation measures aimed at king salmon and the underutilization of abundant sockeye resources.

By establishing a commercial dipnet-only zone in the Kasilof River Special Harvest Management Area, which is currently unused by any user group after June 25th for the harvest of sockeye, it would likely increase participation, improve safety and accessibility, and enhance harvest efficiency. While this action will not fully restore historic harvest levels, it represents a practical and necessary step toward narrowing the gap between current and historic ESSN sockeye harvests.

Given that ESSN fishermen have borne a disproportionate share of conservation restrictions under the stock of management concern, this adjustment is warranted to improve meaningful access with alternative gear, and allow the program to function as a true and effective option for affected permit holders

If this regulation is not adopted, commercial harvesters participating in the ESSN commercial dipnet fishery will continue to rely on a less effective gear type outside of participation in the Kasilof River Special Harvest Management Area, resulting in reduced harvest efficiency and participation and a diminished ability to utilize abundant sockeye salmon runs.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed in coordination with Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Commercial Fisheries personnel in the Soldotna office. Their input helped ensure that the proposal is consistent with existing management frameworks, operational considerations, and enforceability within the Upper Cook Inlet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (EF-F27-218)
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PROPOSAL 126

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Establish a new commercial dip net fishing area near the Kenai River mouth, as follows:

Add an area in the mouth of the Kenai River from No Name Creek upriver to a regulatory marker located down river of the Kenai City Dock to allow for Commercial Dipnetting only in that area of the Kenai River as follows:

(F) notwithstanding (E) of this section, a new commercial fishing area is established for the use of commercial dip nets within the mouth of the Kenai River, as follows:

(i) the area includes waters of the Kenai River from **No Name Creek to a marker located down river of the Kenai City Dock;**

(ii) the area described in this paragraph is open only to holders of an S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit operating dip nets in the Upper Subdistrict registration area;

(iii) no other commercial gear types may be operated within the area described in this paragraph;

(iv) fishing within this area is limited to operation from a commercial vessel; fishing from shore is not allowed within the area described in this paragraph;

See attached map

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal seeks to add an area and increase the efficiency of a harvest method currently in the Kenai River Stock of Concern plan for commercial dipnet alternative gear..

When the board of fish adopted commercial dipnetting as an alternative gear at the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet finfish meeting, they limited participants to saltwater locations only, thereby displacing many Eastside Set Net (ESSN) permit holders who are physically unable to withstand the harsh elements of the open skiff saltwater fishery for limited or extended periods of time.

The current implementation of commercial dipnetting as an alternative gear type within the Kenai River King Salmon Stock of Management Concern is overly restrictive and does not provide a meaningful or equitable substitute for ESSN permit holders. By limiting participation to saltwater locations only, the Board has effectively excluded a portion of the fleet—particularly those who are physically unable to safely operate in an open skiff fishery under prolonged exposure to harsh marine conditions.

Additionally, the existing structure of the commercial dipnet fishery has not achieved the Board's stated intention to maintain harvest opportunity. At the same time, the Kenai River has significantly exceeded its sockeye salmon escapement goals. This pattern of over-escapement, combined with limited commercial harvest opportunity, highlights an imbalance between conservation measures aimed at king salmon and the underutilization of abundant sockeye resources.

By establishing a commercial dipnet-only zone in the mouth of the Kenai River, which is currently unused by any user group for the harvest of sockeye, it would likely increase participation, improve safety and accessibility, and enhance harvest efficiency. While this action will not fully restore historic harvest levels, it represents a practical and necessary step toward narrowing the gap between current and historic ESSN sockeye harvests.

Given that ESSN fishermen have borne a disproportionate share of conservation restrictions under the stock of management concern, this adjustment is warranted to improve equity, ensure meaningful access with alternative gear, and allow the program to function as a true and effective option for affected permit holders.

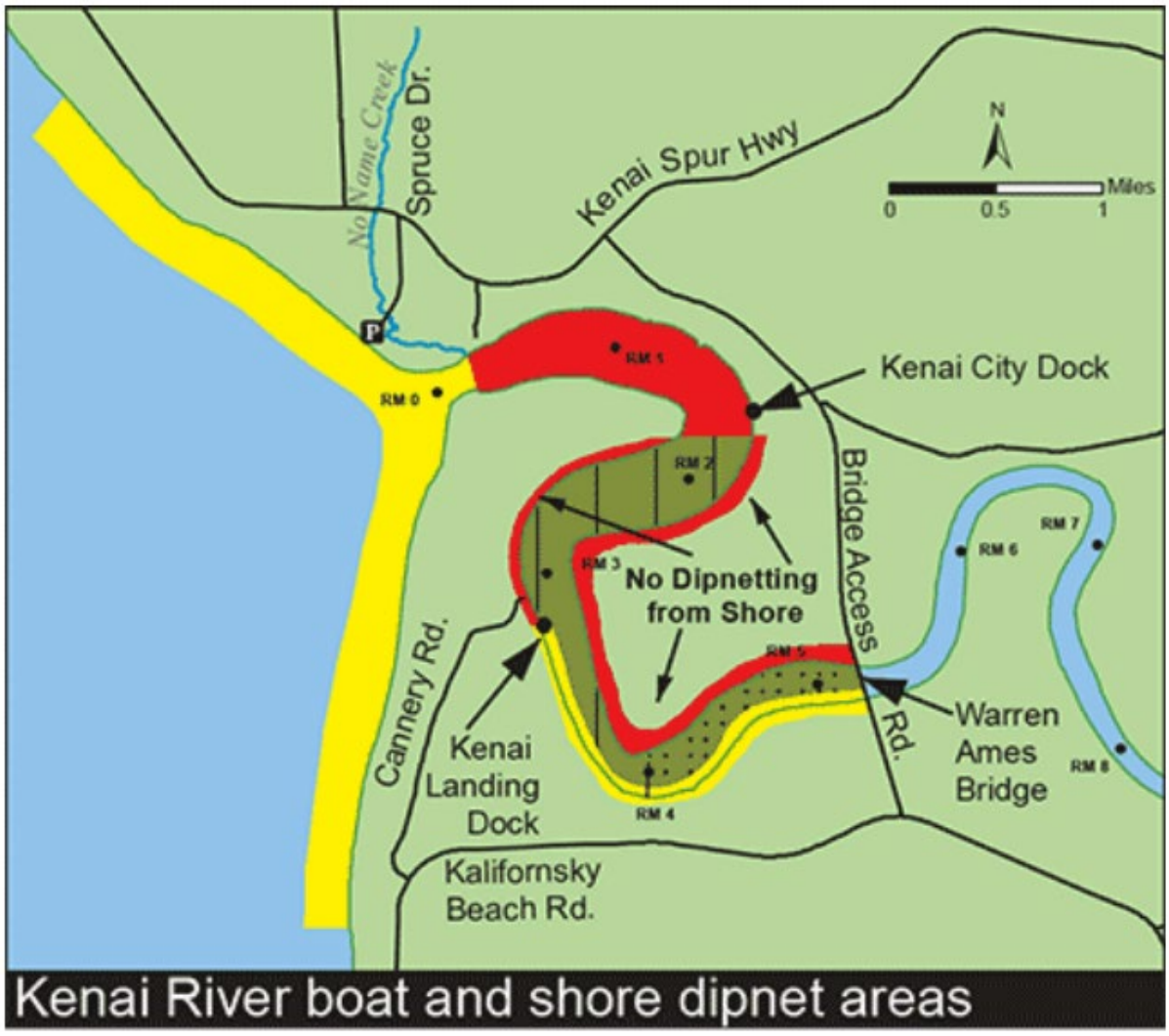
The existing commercial infrastructure in the Kenai River area supports the operation of a commercial fishery within the river. Multiple processors, along with established boat launches, cranes, ice availability, and restroom facilities, provide the necessary support for safe and efficient commercial operations. In addition, the availability of processor buoys for anchoring skiffs offers a practical option for fishermen traveling from other beach areas, further enhancing access and operational flexibility within the proposed fishery.

If this regulation is not adopted, commercial harvesters participating in the ESSN commercial dipnet fishery will continue to rely on a less effective gear type in saltwater conditions, resulting in reduced harvest efficiency and participation and a diminished ability to utilize abundant sockeye salmon runs.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed in coordination with Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries personnel in the Soldotna office. Their input helped ensure that the proposal is consistent with existing management frameworks, operational considerations, and enforceability within the Upper Cook Inlet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (EF-F27-219)

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Kenai River boat and shore dipnet areas

Open to dipnetting from shore

Closed to dipnetting

4 stroke or 2 stroke DFI motors only – no HP limitation

4 stroke or 2 stroke DFI motors only – 50 HP limitation

PROPOSAL 127

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Allow the use of an anchored lead in the commercial dipnet fishery, as follows:

Proposal: Allow the use of an anchored seine lead in the commercial dip net fishery.

Gear Specification:

1) Lead is to be constructed of seine webbing.
2) Lead is to be no greater in length than 35 fathoms nor greater than 12 feet in depth.
3) The net is to be anchored at both ends and may be fished in a perpendicular or a diagonal manner from shore as it is currently unknown which configuration might fish better due perhaps to salmon behavior or tidal influences.
4) Lead is part of an actively fished commercial dip net operation and must be removed from the water during periods closed to commercial fishing.
5) Leads held to all current regulations describing distance(s) between gear. They may not be used in additional configurations other than as a stand -alone lead into active dip net fishermen per this proposal.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Background: Utilization of a seine lead may have first been heard under the concept of "guarding" chinook from gillnets. An initial concept was that a lengthier seine lead may allow sockeye harvest by shorter gillnets positioned to its downstream side. It was hypothesized that larger chinook may be more likely to disperse into deeper water when impediments such as the seine lead or a larger school of sockeye proved irksome. Meanwhile, sockeye may more quickly realign on a river/beach trajectory due to schooling behavior and the sockeyes' targeted beeline approach to the river.

At this past regulatory meeting, BOF members introduced and passed a Board generated proposal introducing a dipnet as a commercial gear type. An effort was made to modify the initial lead proposal, as to allow a seine lead to be fished by commercial dip nets.

Proposals for two alternative gear types in times of low chinook productivity, the dip net and the beach seine, continued to be heard out of cycle. Discussion of a seine lead in the commercial dip net fishery was not deemed to hold merit requisite for an out of cycle deliberation and has yet to be considered by the Board.

It is thought that use of the lead may strengthen the economic viability of fishers utilizing dip net(s) as commercial gear as well as provide an opportunity to fish set net locations.

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

PROPOSED BY: Nathan Hoff (EF-F27-107)

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PROPOSAL 128

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Allow the use of leads in the Upper Subdistrict commercial dip net fishery, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.331 (Kenai River Late Run Chinook Stock of Concern Action Plan) by adding a new subsection

Amend 5 AAC 21.331 (Kenai River Late Run Chinook Stock of Concern Action Plan) by adding a new subsection to read:

(a) During commercial dip net openers in the East Side Set Gillnet fishery a lead is authorized in conjunction with a commercial dip net.

(b) Each permit is authorized to use one lead.

(c) A lead authorized under this section may only be used on an existing, permitted shore fishery lease, City of Kenai location or historical fished location, and may not extend beyond the lateral boundaries of that lease.

(d) Leads must be separated by 600 feet.

(e) A lead authorized under this section must be stationary, anchored, and designed solely to guide fish toward the mouth of a commercial dip net and may not be configured to gill, capture, or retain fish.

(f) A lead authorized under this section may not exceed 70 fathoms in length, 105 meshes in depth, and must have a mesh size no greater than 3.5 inches stretched measure.

(g) Leads must be removed from the water at closure of a fishing period.

(h) Each lead must have a buoy at each end, properly marked with the permit number.

What Will the Proposal Do?

This proposal would:

1. Authorize highly limited use of leads to improve the effectiveness of commercial dip nets.
2. Restrict use to existing shore fishery leases, preventing spatial expansion and maintain an orderly fishery.

What Is the Issue?

During Kenai River Chinook stock of concern periods, commercial dip nets have been used to harvest sockeye salmon and allow live release of Chinook salmon to reduce mortality. However, the lost harvest opportunity by trading 105 fathoms of gillnet for a 5 foot diameter hoop is significantly reduced.

Why This Gear Is Not a Fish Trap

The proposed lead:

- Functions solely as a behavioral guidance structure.
- Contains no heart, pot, tunnel, or retaining structure.
- Does not capture, confine, or retain fish.
- Allows unrestricted and voluntary escape of fish at all times.
- Requires active dip net operation for any harvest to occur.

Accordingly, the gear does not meet the functional or regulatory definition of a fish trap.

Consistency With Existing Regulations and Precedent

- Leads are legally recognized in Alaska commercial fisheries, including the Kodiak Area set gillnet fisheries.

- The proposal maintains the historical prohibition on fish traps while allowing conservation-driven gear innovation.

Conservation and Management Benefits

- Improves sockeye harvest efficiency during authorized periods.
- Preserves strict spatial and temporal controls.
- Supports adaptive management under the Kenai River Chinook Salmon Action Plan.

Summary

Restricting the use of clearly defined leads provide a tailored, conservation-focused tool that enhances dip net effectiveness while maintaining strong protections for Kenai River Chinook salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Amend regulations to authorize the use of stationary leads in conjunction with commercial dip nets on existing shore fishery leases in the East Side Set Gillnet fishery during periods when the Kenai River Chinook Salmon Stock of Concern Action Plan is in effect. During the 2024 meeting there were several comments from Board members about the desire for the ADF&G commissioner to issue commissioners permits for leads in conjunction with the commercial dip net fishery. The department rejected all experimental applications due to the Board rejecting the gear. We find ourselves in a big of a quagmire.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Colton Lipka and DNR.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-214)

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PROPOSAL 129

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Amend multiple elements of the commercial dip net fishery in the Upper Subdistrict, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 (Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan) to: (A) authorize the use of a lead in conjunction with commercial dipnets already authorized under that plan in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery; (B) define the lead as a straight or gently angled panel of net webbing, set anchored in the water in the manner of a Kachemak Bay or other Alaska setnet lead, configured solely to intercept migrating salmon and guide them along its face toward an attended dipnet, and explicitly prohibiting any configuration that captures, retains, entangles, or impounds fish; (C) remove the current shore lease site requirement for shore-based commercial dipnet operations during the stock of concern plan period; and (D) establish that lead-and-dipnet operations may occur from any accessible beach area or from a vessel in the Upper Subdistrict without permission of a DNR shore fishery lease holder, subject to minimum distance from active beach seines and prohibition of interference with other gear. All provisions are operative only when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect under 5 AAC 21.382.

PROPOSED REGULATORY LANGUAGE — Addition to 5 AAC 21.382, new subsection (r):

Proposed new subsection 5 AAC 21.382(r) — Leads for commercial dipnets; open access; removal of shore lease requirement:

(r) Leads for commercial dipnets; open access; removal of shore lease site requirement; Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery under stock of concern management plan.

(2) APPLICABILITY. The provisions of this subsection apply only when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect commercial dipnet fishing periods under that plan. Upon expiration, suspension, or delisting under the stock of concern plan, all provisions of this subsection are immediately inoperative and management reverts to 5 AAC 21.359.

(2) LEAD AUTHORIZED WITH COMMERCIAL DIPNET.

(A) A CFEC permit holder authorized to use commercial dipnets under 5 AAC 21.382 may deploy and use a lead in conjunction with each authorized dipnet during authorized dipnet fishing periods, subject to the specifications and requirements of this subsection.

(B) For purposes of this subsection, a 'lead' means a straight or gently angled panel of net webbing configured and deployed in the manner of a setnet lead as used in Kachemak Bay and other Alaska commercial and personal use set gillnet fisheries: the lead is set anchored at both ends in a substantially straight line, extending from or
near the shore or from a vessel into the water, to intercept migrating salmon and guide them along the face of the lead to an attended dipnet positioned at or near the terminal end of the lead.

(C) A lead authorized under this subsection is supplemental gear to the dipnet. The lead itself is not a fishing gear and may not be used to capture, retain, entangle, or impound fish. A lead is considered to be improperly configured if it forms, either alone or in combination with the beach, a vessel, another lead, or any other structure, a closed or substantially closed pocket, pound, or enclosure capable of retaining fish. The lead must be an open panel that allows fish to pass freely around either end.

(D) A lead may be deployed from shore into the water, entirely in the water offshore from a vessel, or in any combination of the two, provided the lead is configured and oriented to direct fish toward a dipnet and not to
capture or impound fish.

(3) LEAD SPECIFICATIONS.

(A) A lead authorized under this subsection:

(i) may not exceed 25 fathoms (150 feet) in length;

(ii) must be constructed of seine webbing with a mesh size not exceeding 3-1/2 inches stretched measure; the mesh size must be small enough to prevent entanglement of king salmon or coho salmon that contact the webbing;

(iii) must be set anchored at both ends in a substantially straight line, consistent with setnet lead configuration used in Alaska commercial and personal use set gillnet fisheries; the lead must not be configured in a curved, hooked, or enclosing shape;

(iv) must be attended at all times when in the water; the permit holder or a designated crew member must be present and actively fishing the dipnet associated with the lead;

(vii) must be removed from the water promptly upon cessation of active dipnet fishing; a lead may not be

left unattended in the water at any time, including between sets;

(vii) must be buoyed at both anchored ends and at any intermediate submerged point necessary to make the full extent of the lead visible to vessels and adjacent gear operators; and

(vii) must not obstruct navigation.

(B) No permit holder may deploy more than one lead per actively operated dipnet at any one time. A permit holder authorized to use up to four dipnets under 5 AAC 21.382 may use a lead with each actively operated dipnet, provided each lead-and-dipnet combination complies with all requirements of this subsection.

(C) The terminal end of the lead — the end toward which fish are directed — must be positioned at or immediately adjacent to the opening of the associated dipnet bag. The lead and dipnet must be configured so that fish guided along the face of the lead encounter the dipnet opening directly.

(4) KING AND COHO SALMON.

(A) Any king salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) or coho salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch) that contacts the face of the lead must be allowed to pass freely around either end of the lead without obstruction. The lead may not be manipulated to prevent a king or coho salmon from passing around either end.

(B) Any king or coho salmon that enters the dipnet must be released immediately with minimum air exposure and handling. Retention of king or coho salmon is prohibited except when specifically authorized by emergency order.

(C) King and coho salmon encounters and releases must be reported as required under 5 AAC 21.382(j).

(5) MINIMUM DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS.

(A) LEAD AND DIPNET vs. BEACH SEINE. No lead,

and no dipnet operated in conjunction with a lead, may be placed or operated within the minimum distance required between set gillnets under 5 AAC 21.331 from the nearest active component of any authorized beach seine operation, including the beach seine net web,

shore anchor point, skiff tow line, or haul lines under tension during an active set or haul.

(B) LEAD AND DIPNET vs. LEAD AND DIPNET.

No minimum distance is required between a lead-and-dipnet combination operated by one permit holder and a lead-and-dipnet combination operated by another permit holder, provided no lead physically interferes with, crosses, or entangles another permit holder's lead or dipnet.

(C) DIPNET WITHOUT LEAD vs. DIPNET WITHOUT LEAD. No minimum distance is required between dipnets operated without leads.

(D) For minimum distance purposes under (r)(5)(A), the lead and its associated dipnet are treated as a single gear unit; minimum distance is measured from the nearest point of either the lead or the dipnet to the nearest active component of the beach seine operation.

(6) OPEN ACCESS; NO DNR SHORE LEASE HOLDER PERMISSION REQUIRED.

(A) During any period when the stock of concern management plan is in effect and commercial dipnets are authorized under

5 AAC 21.382, a CFEC permit holder may operate a commercial dipnet, with or without a lead under this subsection, from any accessible beach area or from a vessel in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery, without permission of a DNR shore fishery lease holder, provided that:

(ii) the beach area is not currently being actively fished with an authorized beach seine;

(ii) minimum distance from active beach seines is maintained under (r)(5)(A); and

(iii) the permit holder complies with all other requirements of this subsection.

(B) Consistent with 11 AAC 64.020, no DNR shore fishery lease holder permission is required for a permit holder to fish a commercial dipnet or to deploy a lead under this subsection in beach areas within or adjacent to a DNR shore fishery lease tract when the lease holder is not personally present and actively fishing an authorized beach seine at that location. A permit holder operating under open access must immediately yield and remove all leads from the water if a DNR

shore lease holder commences actively fishing an authorized beach seine at the same location and

minimum gear spacing cannot be maintained.

(C) Open access under this subsection does not create any property interest, priority right, or future-season claim in any beach area.

(7) SHORE LEASE SITE REQUIREMENT REMOVED.

Notwithstanding any provision of 5 AAC 21.382 that requires commercial dipnet operations from shore to occur only at a DNR shore fishery lease site, that requirement does not apply during any period when this subsection is in effect. A CFEC permit holder may fish a commercial dipnet from shore at any accessible beach area in the Upper Subdistrict, subject to the open access and spacing requirements of this subsection.

(8) REPORTING. Each permit holder operating a lead and dipnet under this subsection shall report all harvests on ADF&G fish tickets, noting the statistical area,

beach location or vessel position, and CFEC permit number for each fishing period. King and coho salmon encounters and releases shall be reported as required under 5 AAC 21.382(j).

(9) ENFORCEMENT. ADF&G enforcement personnel may inspect leads at any time during active fishing to verify compliance with the straight-panel configuration requirement, attendance and removal requirements,

mesh size specifications, minimum distance from beach seines, and buoy-marking requirements. A lead found to be configured to capture, retain, or impound fish shall be treated as unlawful gear and is subject to seizure and forfeiture.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Commercial dipnets were authorized in the ESSN fishery under the stock of concern management plan beginning in 2024 as a gear type that can harvest sockeye salmon while allowing live release of king and coho salmon. The gear works as intended for conservation purposes. However, as Joseph Person — who fished the first season of the commercial dipnet fishery — reported directly to the Board at the October 2024 work session, the dipnet alone is “clearly very low efficacy” as a commercial gear. Without

a means of intercepting and directing migrating salmon toward the dipnet, catch rates are highly variable and often too low to make the fishery commercially viable.

This proposal addresses dipnet efficacy through the addition of a lead — a straight panel of net webbing anchored at both ends and set in the manner of a Kachemak Bay or Atka-Amlia Islands setnet lead — to intercept migrating salmon and guide them along its face to an attended dipnet. This is a well-established gear configuration in Alaska fisheries and does not introduce any new capture mechanism: the lead itself does not capture fish, and any fish that contacts the lead and does not enter the dipnet passes freely around either end.

The Kachemak Bay and Atka-Amlia Islands Lead Precedent

Leads used in conjunction with setnet gear are well-established in Alaska commercial and personal use fisheries. In Kachemak Bay personal use set gillnet fisheries, leads are routinely set as straight panels of webbing perpendicular or at a gentle angle to the shoreline to intercept and guide coho salmon toward the gillnet. Under 5 AAC 11.334, 25 fathoms of seine webbing may be used as a lead attached to the shoreward end of a set gillnet in the Atka-Amlia Islands commercial gillnet fishery — demonstrating that the BOF has previously authorized exactly this type of lead configuration in a commercial salmon fishery context. This proposal applies the same concept to commercial dipnets in the ESSN context, with the critical difference that the associated gear is a live-release dipnet rather than an entangling gillnet.

The Shore Lease Restriction

Current 5 AAC 21.382 language requires commercial dipnet operations from shore to occur only at a DNR shore fishery lease site. This restriction is more limiting than what 11 AAC 64.020 actually requires under DNR lease law — which simply provides that a fisherman must yield to a lease holder who personally begins fishing the site, and must maintain minimum distance from a lease holder's gear. No shore lease is required to fish in the vicinity of a lease tract when the lease holder is not actively fishing. The shore lease site restriction in the existing dipnet authorization is therefore more restrictive than DNR's own rules require and effectively excludes permit holders without shore leases from shore-based dipnetting, contrary to the open-beach principle established in companion proposals for beach seines. This proposal removes that restriction for the duration of the stock of concern plan.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

- The commercial dipnet fishery will continue to be commercially marginal, as documented by the first season of operation, with harvest rates too low to provide meaningful economic relief to permit holders during stock of concern closures

- The benefit of an already-authorized live-capture, live-release gear type will be largely unrealized because fish cannot be efficiently directed to the dipnet opening without a lead
- Permit holders who lack shore leases will remain excluded from shore-based commercial dipnetting, despite the open beach access framework being established for beach seines under companion proposals
- The Board will have made the effort to authorize commercial dipnets as a conservation-compatible gear alternative without providing the supplemental gear configuration that makes the fishery practically viable

4. SCIENTIFIC AND REGULATORY BASIS

A. How a Setnet-Style Lead Functions

A straight-panel setnet lead intercepts migrating salmon as they move parallel to the shoreline. Fish that contact the face of the lead are deflected along its length toward the terminal end, where the dipnet is positioned. Because the lead is an open panel — not a pound, enclosure, or funnel — fish that contact the lead and do not encounter the dipnet pass freely around either end of the panel and continue their migration. No fish are impounded, retained, or captured by the lead itself. This is meaningfully different from a funnel or enclosing configuration: the setnet lead is a straight deflection panel, not an entrapment device.

B. Small Mesh Size Prevents King and Coho Entanglement

The proposed maximum mesh size of 3-1/2 inches stretched measure is the same mesh size authorized for beach seines under 5 AAC 21.382 and is well below the mesh sizes at which adult king salmon or coho salmon become gill-entangled. A king or coho salmon that contacts the face of the lead at this mesh size will be deflected by the panel rather than entangled, allowing it to pass around either end freely. This is the same principle that makes beach seine webbing safe for live-
release of kings.

C. Attendance and Immediate Removal Requirements Prevent Abandonment

Unlike a setnet or setnet lead that is left in the water unattended between sets, the lead authorized under this proposal must be attended at all times and removed from the water promptly upon cessation of active dipnet fishing. This eliminates the risk of unattended gear entangling king or coho salmon in the absence of a permit holder who can effect immediate live release. The attendance requirement is more stringent than what is required for standard commercial setnets and is appropriate given the conservation context of the stock of concern plan.

D. Regulatory Precedent for Leads in Alaska Commercial Fisheries

The use of leads in conjunction with setnet gear is explicitly authorized in 5 AAC 11.334 for the Atka-Amlia Islands commercial gillnet fishery, where 25 fathoms of seine webbing may be attached to the shoreward end of a set gillnet as a lead. The same configuration is used informally but routinely in Kachemak Bay personal use setnet fisheries. This proposal applies an existing and well-understood Alaska fishing practice to a new conservation-compatible context: commercial dipnets under the ESSN stock of concern plan.

5. WHAT A DIPNET LEAD IS AND IS NOT

Authorized Lead Configuration	Prohibited Configuration
Straight panel of seine webbing anchored at both ends, set in a substantially straight line in the water	Curved, hooked, or enclosing shape that forms a closed or substantially closed pocket with the beach, vessel, or another panel
Panel oriented to deflect fish along it safe toward the terminal end where the dipnet is positioned	Configuration where the terminal end of the lead closes against the beach, a vessel, or another structure to impound fish
Open panel—fish can pass freely around either end if they do not encounter the dipnet	Funnel, pound, or trap shape that concentrates fish into an enclosed area from which they cannot escape
Attended at all times; removed from water promptly when not actively fishing	Left unattended in the water; used as a standing structure between dipnet sets
Seine webbing – maximum 3½ inch mesh – fish deflected, not entangled	Gillnet or entangling mesh that captures fish by gills or body

6. PRACTICAL SCENARIOS

Scenario	Outcome Under This Proposal
Permit holder on beach without a shore lease wants to fish a dipnet with a lead	Open access applies. Shore lease not required. Permit holder sets lead anchored at both ends as a straight panel,

	positions dipnet at terminal end, and actively fishes. Must maintain minimum distance from any active beach seine.
Lead if left in the water while permit holder takes a break between sets	Not permitted. Lead must be removed from the water promptly when not actively fishing. An unattended lead in the water is a violation subject to gear seizure.
King salmon contacts the face of the lead and does not enter the dipnet	The king passes freely around either end of the open panel and continues migration. The lead may not be manipulated to direct a king salmon into the dipnet. No mortality occurs.
King salmon enters the dipnet bag	Released immediately with minimum air exposure and handling. Encounter recorded on fish ticket as required under 5 AAC 21.382(j).
Two permit holders want to fish lead-and-dipnet combinations near each other	No minimum distance is required between lead-and-dipnet combinations. Both may operate in close proximity provided leads do not physically cross, tangle, or interfere with each other.
Lead-and-dipnet operation in the vicinity of an active beach seine	Minimum distance required under 5 AAC 21.331 must be maintained between the lead-and-dipnet unit (as a whole) and the nearest active component of the beach seine operation.
DNR shore lease holder activates a beach seine adjacent to a lead-and-dipnet operation	Dipnet and lead operator must maintain minimum distance from the beach seine. If minimum distance cannot be maintained, the lead must be removed from the water and the dipnet operation relocated.

7. WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Benefits:

•ESSN permit holders gain a meaningfully more effective commercial dipnet operation, with harvest rates that may approach commercial viability — directly addressing the low-efficacy problem documented in the first season of the commercial dipnet fishery

•King and coho salmon conservation is served: the lead-and-dipnet combination remains a live-release gear system, with fish that do not enter the dipnet able to pass freely around either end of the open panel

•Permit holders without shore leases gain the ability to fish from shore on open-access beaches on the same terms as beach seine operators under companion proposals

•ADF&G gains harvest data from a broader population of permit holders operating a more commercially viable gear configuration, improving the evidence base for future regulatory decisions

Potential adverse impacts:

- Sport and guided sport fishing advocates may object to any expansion of commercial gear capability in the ESSN context. This concern is addressed by the mandatory release requirements and the non-capturing nature of the lead configuration
- ADF&G enforcement personnel will need guidance on distinguishing compliant straight-panel lead configurations from prohibited enclosing or impounding configurations. Clear enforcement criteria are included in (r)(9) and should be supported by ADF&G guidance documents

8. RELATIONSHIP TO COMPANION PROPOSALS AND PRIOR CONSIDERATION

This proposal is a companion to Proposal 192 (May 2026) and the Beach Seine Site Priority, Skiff-Deployed Beach Seine, and Open Beach Access proposals. All proposals operate exclusively under 5 AAC 21.382 during the stock of concern plan period. This proposal does not alter, supersede, or conflict with any of the companion proposals. It extends the same open-beach-access principle to dipnet-and-lead operations and removes the shore lease site restriction that was inconsistent with that principle.

Joseph Person's 2024 agenda change request to the Board proposed authorizing leads for commercial dipnets in the ESSN fishery. That request was not formally considered as part of the 2025 meeting cycle. This proposal brings the concept forward in proper BOF proposal format for the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting, with the gear description refined to reflect the straight-panel setnet lead configuration used in Kachemak Bay and other Alaska fisheries rather than a funnel or enclosing configuration.

Key Limitation: *All provisions of this proposal are operative ONLY while the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan under 5 AAC 21.382 is in effect and ONLY during periods when commercial dipnets are authorized under that plan. Upon plan expiration, delisting, or suspension, all provisions immediately cease to apply and management reverts to 5 AAC 21.359.*

9. REQUESTED ADF&G ACTION

Upon adoption of this proposal, the Board requests that ADF&G:

1. Develop and publish enforcement guidance for field personnel distinguishing compliant straight-panel lead configurations from prohibited enclosing or impounding configurations, with photographs or diagrams illustrating the difference
2. Issue commissioner's experimental permits authorizing leads with commercial dipnets for a minimum of 20 permit holders during the 2027 season if the proposal has not yet taken effect through the regulatory process, to generate data on king and coho encounter rates and release outcomes under lead-and-dipnet operations
3. Include lead-and-dipnet encounter data in the comprehensive alternative gear report requested to be submitted to the Board prior to the next Cook Inlet Finfish regulatory cycle

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

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark (EF-F27-230)

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PROPOSAL 130

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Amend the Upper Subdistrict commercial beach seine fishery and establish commercial set gillnet fishing opportunity in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 21.382

In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through [JULY 31] **August 15**; when the **abundance** [FORECAST] of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is [GREATER] **less** than [14,250] **16,000** fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict fishery may open to S04H CFEC permit holders as follows:

(E) the use of a set beach seine, as described in 5 AAC 39.105(d)(6), is allowed as an alternative gear type for S04H CFEC permit holders;

(E) a S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than one set beach seine;

(E) the maximum legal limit for a set beach seine is 70 fathoms in length, 110 mesh depth, including border and chaffing strips, and three and one-half inch mesh size throughout; notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.332, a set beach seine has no minimum length, depth, or mesh size requirements;

(E) fishing with a set beach seine must occur from shore or waterline, with one end anchored on shore and the outside end set and retrieved back to the shore or waterline using a running line;

(E) openings will occur for **three** [TWO] 12-hour periods per week, established by emergency order; **with additional hours allowed by emergency order based on sockeye abundance;**

(F) retention of king **[**AND COHO] salmon is prohibited, except that a king [OR COHO] salmon that is mortally wounded or caught in a set beach seine is subject to (i) and (j) of this section; in this paragraph, "caught" has the meaning given in (j) of this section;

(i) the number of king [OR COHO] salmon released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under the disposition code for live release;

(ii) a commercial dip net may not be operated within 600 feet of any part of a commercial set beach seine, and no part of a commercial set beach seine may be operated within 600 feet of any part of another commercial set beach seine

(2) from June 20 through [JULY 31] **August 15,**

(i) the use of dip nets is allowed as an alternative gear type for holders of an S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit;

(ii) openings may occur outside of specified openings in this section based on abundance of sockeye salmon from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, unless closed by emergency order;

(iii) an S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than four dip nets at a time, and each dip net must be operated by either the permit holder or an ADF&G licensed crewmember;

(iv) retention of king and coho salmon is prohibited, except that a king salmon that is brought aboard the vessel or to shore is subject to (i) and (j) of this section;

(v) fishing with a dip net may occur from a vessel or from shore; fishing from shore must occur at the location of a shore fishery tract identified in the recorded plat for that lease under AS 38.05.082 or City of Kenai shore fishery lease; nothing in this subsection affects or changes the terms or conditions of a lease and its lessee under AS 38.05.082 or a City of Kenai shore fishery lease and its lessee;

(vi) the number of king or coho salmon that are released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under the disposition code for live release.

(3) from June 20 through August 15 when the abundance of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is more than 16,000 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict fishery may open to S04H CFEC permit holders as follows:

(A) each setnet permit may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than three 12 hour periods per week;

(C) one 48 hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00pm Thursday and 7:00 am Friday;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? For many in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fleet, this proposal reflects the reality of a fleet adapting to changing conservation needs while grieving the loss of historic gear and fishing opportunity that has existed since the inception of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery in the 1880s. Generations of fishing families built their livelihoods around set gillnets, and years of restrictions have created significant financial impacts through lost income, declining permit values, and stranded investments in gear and infrastructure.

Under 5 AAC 21.382, the Board of Fisheries already established clear biological criteria for recovery and eventual removal of the late-run Kenai River king salmon stock from Stock of Concern status. The regulation states that the stock may be considered for delisting when the escapement goal has:

1. "achieved or exceeded for three consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish, which is the estimated number of spawners needed for maximum sustained yield and is expected to achieve the goal established in (a) of this section in four years;" or
2. "achieved four of six consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish and is expected to achieve the goal established in (a) of this section in future years."

This proposal aligns with that framework by linking allowable gear types to king salmon abundance while maintaining conservation protections and harvest opportunity. When projected or in-season abundance is below 16,000 large king salmon, harvest opportunity would occur through selective alternative gear such as set beach seines and dip nets. These gear types allow harvest of abundant sockeye salmon while minimizing king salmon mortality through live release.

The proposal establishes 16,000 fish as a reasonable and precautionary transition point because it remains 1,000 fish above the lower bound of the Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) of 15,000 fish. Fishing within the OEG framework is specifically intended to allow harvest while protecting sustained yield and long-term stock productivity, recognizing that the stock can sustain carefully managed harvest without threatening future productivity or rebuilding objectives. By exceeding the lower bound of the OEG, the 16,000-fish threshold also represents measurable progress toward

the recovery goal and continued movement toward eventual exit from the Stock of Concern plan, while still maintaining precautionary conservation measures within the management framework.

Reinstituting limited gillnet opportunity within the Stock of Concern framework is further justified because king salmon impacts have already been substantially reduced through years of regulatory restrictions. The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fleet has operated under reduced fishing time, shortened openings, area restrictions, mesh limitations, and repeated closures specifically intended to minimize king salmon harvest. The active fleet itself has also been significantly reduced from historic participation levels.

The 2024 season demonstrates the effectiveness of this reduced-impact framework. During two eight-hour set gillnet openings, the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery harvested approximately 43,000 sockeye salmon while harvesting only six large king salmon. That level of impact demonstrates that limited, tightly controlled gillnet openings can provide meaningful sockeye harvest opportunity while maintaining extremely low king salmon mortality.

Rather than relying on a binary choice between full closure and unrestricted fishing, this proposal creates a graduated conservation structure tied directly to stock abundance. Below 16,000 fish, the fishery would operate with selective alternative gear to minimize king salmon mortality. Above 16,000 fish, limited gillnet opportunity becomes appropriate because abundance exceeds the lower OEG threshold and because the existing Stock of Concern restrictions already substantially limit king salmon impacts.

By aligning gear type with stock abundance, this proposal creates a practical, performance-based management structure that protects king salmon while maintaining opportunity for an already substantially reduced Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fleet. It preserves harvest of surplus sockeye salmon that would otherwise go unharvested, maintains participation for permit holders, and replaces unnecessary closures with adaptive management tied directly to conservation performance.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, this proposal was presented to the Soldotna ADFG staff for comments and regulatory language.

PROPOSED BY: Travis and Amber Every, Sarah and Jason Hudkins, Brian and Lisa Gabriel (EF-F27-232)

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PROPOSAL 131

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run stock of concern management plan.

Expand commercial beach seine fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District, as follows:

Beach seine shall be allowed to execute the fishery.

Seven days a week, 12 hours per day, from 20 June to 15 August.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Establish a season (for East Side Set Net Fishery that has been closed due to the Chinook stock of concern determination)(days and time) for the beach seine fishery

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

PROPOSED BY: Chris Every (EF-F27-128)

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PROPOSAL 132

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Amend commercial beach seine opportunity while in stock of concern for Kenai River late-run king salmon, as follows:

Revise to replace gillnets with beach seines by deleting the current section (g)(1) and replacing it as follows.

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through July 31, when the preseason forecast of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict fishery may open to S04H CFEC permits as follows:

(A) allow for the use set beach seine, as defined in 5 AAC 39.105(6), as an alternative gear type for holders of a SO4H CFEC permits;

(B) one set beach seine may be used per a commercial set gillnet shore fishery lease site;

(C) the maximum legal limit for a set beach seine is 70 fathoms in length, 110 mesh depth including border and chaffing strips, and three and one-half inch mesh size throughout; notwithstanding, 5 AAC 21.332 set beach seines shall have no minimum length, depth or mesh size requirements;

(D) fishing with a set beach seine must occur from shore or waterline with one end anchored on shore and the outside end must be set and retrieved back to the shore or waterline using a running line;

(E) fishing with a set beach seine from shore or waterline must occur at the location of a shore fishery tract identified in the recorded plat for that AS 38.05.082 lease, or City of Kenai Lease or historically fished locations; nothing in this subsection affects or changes the terms or conditions of AS 38.05.082 lease or City of Kenai leases and its lessee;

(F) openings will occur for two 12-hour periods per week, established by emergency order;

(G) retention of king and coho salmon is prohibited, except that a king or coho salmon that is mortally wounded or caught as defined in (j) in a set beach seine is subject to stipulations in (i) and (j) of this plan;

(H) the number of any king or coho salmon that are released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under disposition code for live release;

(I) a commercial dip net may not be operated within 600 ft of any part of a commercial set beach seine and no part of a commercial set beach seine may be operated within 600 ft of any part of another commercial set beach seine;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current ***Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan*** does not adequately share the conservation burden as prescribed by the ***Policy for Management of Mixed Stock Salmon Fisheries*** [5 AAC 39.220].

The current plan allows the set gillnet fishery to harvest Kenai late-run kings when the run is projected to exceed 14,250 large kings while continuing to prohibit sport fishery harvest of any

king in the Kenai River or any large king. The set gillnet fishery is allowed to harvest kings even when escapement is projected to be below the minimum 15,000 Optimum Escapement Goal.

Beach seines have now been demonstrated to be an effective alternative for selectively harvesting significant numbers of sockeye at upper subdistrict set gillnet sites while also allowing for live release of Kenai late-run kings.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (EF-F27-161)

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PROPOSAL 133

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan Amend multiple aspects of the commercial beach seine fishery in the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan, as follows:

5 AAC 21.382 New Section (6): Set Beach Seines, June 25 through August 15

A) Allow for the use of set beach seines as an alternative gear type for holders of a SO4H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit;

B) A SO4H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than one set beach seine per permit;

C) Only one set beach seine may be operated per commercial set gillnet shore fishery tract identified in the recorded plat for an AS 38.05.082 lease, City of Kenai lease, or a historically fished location.

D) Salmon may be taken as follows: Upper Subdistrict of the Central District as defined in 5 AAC 21.310(b)(C): for set beach seines:

   i) Kasilof Section: from June 25 through August 15, unless closed earlier by emergency order; however, if the department estimates that 30,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River before June 25, but on or after June 20, the commissioner may by emergency order open the fishery.

   ii) July 1 through August 15, portion of the Kenai Section north of the latitude of the Blanchard Line at 60 degrees 27.10 minutes N. lat., and south of the latitude of the ADF&G regulatory marker located south of the Kenai River mouth at 60 degrees 30.49 minutes N. lat., and from July 1 until the Kenai and East Foreland Sections commercial salmon fishery opens for the regular season with set beach seines.

   iii) Kenai and East Forelands Sections: from July 8 through August 15.

E) Is open for three 8-hour regular periods per week on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday;

F) with a 36-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Friday and 7:00 a.m. Saturday;

G) Area manager has authority to adjust fishing openers to account for weather and mitigate hazards of fishing in beach surf;

H) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

   i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), six hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

I) Additional periods may occur outside of regular weekly periods based on the abundance of sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, as announced by emergency order. Openings are coordinated with the run-tier management framework of the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.360) as follows:

Run Tier (5 AAC 21.360)	**UCI Sockeye Total Run**	**Set Beach Seine Period Authorization**
Low Tier (c)(1)	Less than 2,300,000 fish	Three 8-hour rolling tide openers per week, as announced by emergency order; commissioner may authorize additional 8-hour rolling tide openers not to exceed 24 total additional hours per week by emergency order
Middle Tier (c)(2)	2,300,000 to 4,600,000 fish	Three 8-hour rolling tide openers per week, plus additional 8-hour rolling tide openers not to exceed 51 total additional hours per week by emergency order; subject to applicable weekly closure periods under 5 AAC 21.360(c)(2)(C)
Upper Tier (c)(3)	Greater than 4,600,000 fish	Three 8-hour rolling tide openers per week, plus additional 8-hour rolling tide openers not to exceed 84 total additional hours per week by emergency order; subject to applicable weekly closure periods under 5 AAC 21.360(c)(3)(C)

J) Each opening period is a rolling tide period of 8 hours, with start and end times announced by emergency order to account for tidal variation. Additional openings consistent with 5 AAC 21.360(c)(1)(B), (c)(2)(B), and (c)(3)(B) are authorized by the run-tier structure above. The week definition of 5 AAC 21.360(i), beginning at 12:00:01 a.m. Sunday and ending at 12:00 midnight the following Saturday, applies to this subsection.

K) From August 1 through August 15, one additional 8-hour rolling tide regular opening period is authorized per week in even-numbered years to allow for the harvest of abundant pink salmon. The additional period shall be centered on high tide as described in H) above.

L) Chinook and coho retention is prohibited, except that a Chinook or coho that is mortally wounded or caught as defined in subsection (j) of this plan is subject to the stipulations in (i) and (j) of this plan.

M) Released Chinook and coho must be recorded on ADF&G fish tickets under live release disposition code.

N) The maximum legal limit for a set beach seine is 70 fathoms in length, 110 mesh depth including border and chaffing strips, and 3 and one-half inch mesh size throughout. Notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.332, set beach seines shall have no minimum length, depth, or mesh size requirements.

O) Fishing with a set beach seine must occur from shore or the waterline, with one end anchored on shore. The outside end must be set and retrieved back to the shore or waterline using a running line.

P) A commercial dip net may not be operated within 600 feet of any part of a commercial set beach seine. No part of a commercial set beach seine may be operated within 600 feet of any part of another commercial gear type.

Q) A beach seine is considered to have ceased fishing when all lead lines are above the waterline and on the beach.

R) Gear must be tended at all times while it is in the water.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This substitute language preserves the original intent of Proposal 313 (ACR 8) with RC 024: set beach seines proposed as an ALTERNATIVE gear type within the SOC plan, not a replacement for gillnets outside the plan. Key distinctions from prior board-generated proposals are as follows.

- Set beach seines operate as ALTERNATIVE gear. They do not categorically eliminate set gillnet access for permit holders who lack beach lease sites. Approximately 361 of 408 permit holders whose offshore lease sites make beach seining physically impossible retain their set gillnet privileges under all other applicable plan provisions.
- This language allows for sockeye harvest in August. Historically roughly 40% of the sockeye run has been counted after August 1. Since 2019, this number has been closer to 55% entering the river after August 1. The August component is also important for the harvest of abundant pink salmon. The existing pink salmon management plan allows extra fishing time in even years for the commercial harvest of pink salmon. Harvest of pink salmon in even years is an additional and significant data collection opportunity that should be incorporated into the 2026 season framework.
- The 14,250 Chinook projection trigger is noted as the threshold below which set gillnets are not opened under the plan with no in-season trigger to open the fishery. Set beach seines fished below the recovery goal provide selective harvest opportunity on abundant sockeye while live releasing Chinook and coho.

The geographical area of the eastside setnet fishery reaches from Ninilchik in the south to Boulder Point to the north, spanning more than 60 miles along Cook Inlet's eastside. The salmon harvested by the fishery originate almost exclusively in the Kasilof and Kenai River systems. Some 440 limited-entry permit holders, independent small businesspersons, fish for salmon in this area and are primarily Alaska residents (86% Alaska, 80% Kenai Peninsula residents). The season typically lasts from late June until August 15, although that period has been drastically reduced in recent years by regulation and in-season management actions.

The eastside setnet (ESSN) fishery has been declared a Federal Fisheries Disaster by the Governor of the State of Alaska, Michael J. Dunleavy, for seven of the past eight years. Six of those disaster years remain pending with the United States Department of Commerce, Secretary Harold Lutnick.

The SSP requires that action plans for stocks of concern include "fishery management actions needed to achieve rebuilding goals and objectives, in proportion to each fishery's use of, and hazards posed to, a salmon stock" (5 AAC 39.222(d)(4)(C)) and "performance measures appropriate for monitoring and gauging the effectiveness of the action plan" (5 AAC 39.222(d)(4)(E)). Authorizing set beach seines with mandatory data collection and support to ADF&G for additional studies directly generates the performance measures the SSP requires. This proposal is the action plan's own logic applied to its stated data need.

The 2024 commissioner's permit experiment generated 24 combined permit-fishing-days across two permits, documenting a Chinook capture rate of 0.0048%, or one large Chinook per 20,653 sockeye harvested. That interaction rate was established during a season in which the final escapement of the Kenai River late-run Chinook was 6,959 large fish. The 2026 preseason forecast of 12,718 large fish is 45% higher than the 2024 baseline, meaning proportionally more Chinook will be present in the water column, and the interaction rate should be adjusted upward accordingly. The 2026 fleet framework of 987 permit-fishing-days is based on 47 seines operating three 8-hour rolling tide periods per week over a seven-week season from June 25 through August 15, consistent with the rolling tide opener structure under subsection (F).

Adjusting the 2024 observed interaction rate of 0.0048% proportionally to reflect the 45% increase in forecast Chinook abundance yields a forecast-adjusted interaction rate of approximately 0.0070% for 2026. This is still an extraordinarily low rate of Chinook interaction relative to sockeye harvest. Scaling that adjusted rate to the proposed 2026 framework of 987 permit-fishing-days across 47 seines, operating three 8-hour rolling tide periods per week over a seven-week season from June 25 through August 15, yields a projected fleet-wide Chinook interaction total of approximately 96 large fish from all stocks for the entire season. Applying the 64% Kenai River stock composition factor, approximately 61 of those interactions would involve Kenai River-bound Chinook.

Applying a conservative 2% post-release mortality rate, reflective of the rapid identification and live release methodology documented in the 2024 commissioner's permit data where all encountered Chinook were released alive and unharmed, to the forecast-adjusted projection of 96 total large Chinook interactions across 987 permit-fishing-days yields an estimated post-release mortality of approximately 2 large Chinook for the entire 47-seine fleet for the entire season, of which fewer than 2 fish are projected to be Kenai River late-run bound.

Even applying the sport fishery catch-and-release mortality rate of 7%, a rate that substantially overstates the trauma associated with set beach seine capture and live release given the gear's shore-based operation, continuous tending requirement, and rapid retrieval methodology, the projected post-release mortality attributable to Kenai River late-run Chinook remains approximately 5 fish for the entire fleet across the entire season and all 987 permit-fishing-days.

To place that figure in context: the 2026 preseason Chinook forecast of 12,718 large fish is below the SOC recovery goal lower bound of 14,250, but is still 2,218 fish above the biological lower threshold as reflected in the Optimum Yield profile curve. A projected post-release mortality of 2 to 5 Kenai River late-run Chinook across the entire 47-seine fleet for the entire season represents an impact of 0.016% to 0.039% of the total forecast run, an order of magnitude smaller than any conservation threshold established within the Stock of Concern management plan, and smaller

than the documented annual Chinook harvest from both the personal use dip net fishery and the sport fishery.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-212)

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PROPOSAL 134

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Make multiple amendments to commercial beach seine opportunity within the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan*, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 (Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan) to add a new subsection establishing: (A) a DNR shore lease holder priority right to operate one beach seine at one designated net site per CFEC permit within their leased tract during stock of concern closures; (B) an open access framework allowing any CFEC ESSN permit holder to fish a beach seine at any vacant net site within a DNR shore lease tract — without consent of the lease holder— provided that minimum regulatory gear spacing distances are maintained, including distance from all operating running lines; and (C) beach seine gear profile requirements, including a 50-fathom maximum net length, ensuring all operations remain within existing approved setnet site footprints. These provisions are operative only when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect and only for beach seine operations authorized under that plan.

PROPOSED REGULATORY LANGUAGE — Addition to 5 AAC 21.382 (additions bold and underlined; deletions [BRACKETED AND CAPITALIZED]):

Proposed new subsection 5 AAC 21.382(p) — Beach seine site priority, open access, and gear profile:

(p) Beach seine site priority, open access, and gear profile; Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery under stock of concern management plan.

(2) APPLICABILITY. The provisions of this subsection apply only when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect pursuant to 5 AAC 21.382, and only to beach seine operations authorized under that plan. Nothing in this subsection modifies or supersedes the provisions of the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan set out in 5 AAC 21.359, or any beach seine authorization applicable when that plan is in effect. Upon expiration or suspension of the stock of concern management plan, all provisions of this subsection are immediately inoperative and the fishery reverts to management under 5 AAC 21.359.

(2) DNR SHORE LEASE HOLDER PRIORITY — ONE SITE PER PERMIT.

A CFEC permit holder who holds a valid shore fishery lease issued under AS 38.05.082 and 11 AAC 64 has first priority
to operate one (1) beach seine per CFEC permit at one (1) designated net site within their leased tract when:

(i) the stock of concern management plan is in effect;
(ii) beach seine gear is authorized under this plan;

(iii) the lease holder is personally present and actively prosecuting the beach seine fishery at that site; and

(iv) the beach seine operation has been approved by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Shore Fishery Leasing Program pursuant to (p)(5) of this section.

(B) The priority right established under this subsection applies to one (1) net site per CFEC permit only. A lease holder with a tract containing more than one net site retains priority at a single site of their choosing per season, to be designated at the time of DNR approval under (p)(5). The remaining net sites within the tract are subject to open access under (p)(3) of this section.

(C) The priority right is personal to the permit holder and may not be transferred, subleased, or assigned.

(D) When the lease holder is not personally present and actively fishing their designated priority site, that site is subject to open access under (p)(3) of this section on the same basis as all other net sites within the tract.

(3) OPEN ACCESS TO VACANT NET SITES.

(A) Net sites within a DNR shore fishery lease tract that are not the lease holder's designated priority site under(p)(2), or that are the designated priority site but are not being actively fished by the lease holder at the time, are open to any CFEC permit holder who holds a valid Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet entry or interim-use permit, without requirement of consent from the lease holder, provided that:

(i) all minimum gear spacing distances required under 5 AAC 21.331 and this subsection are maintained;

(ii) the accessing permit holder operates only within the footprint of a single net site as shown on the DNR shore fishery diagram for that tract;

(iii) the accessing permit holder complies with all beach seine gear specifications in (p)(4) of this section;

(iv) the accessing permit holder has obtained DNR Shore Fishery Program approval under (p)(5) of this section prior to commencing fishing; and

(v) no more than one (1) beach seine may be operated at any net site at any one time.

(B) A lease holder's priority right at their designated site under (p)(2) is superior to any open-access use of that site. If the lease holder commences fishing their designated priority site, any permit holder fishing that site under open access must immediately cease operations and vacate the site.

(C) Open access under this subsection does not create any property interest in the leased site, any right of return in future seasons, or any claim superior to the lease holder's rights under 11 AAC 64 and AS 38.05.082.

(D) A lease holder's obligations under 11 AAC 64 regarding utilization of leased sites shall be deemed satisfied for any site within the lease tract that is actively fished by another permit holder under open access during a season when the lease holder cannot fish that site due to the one-site-per-permit limitation in (p)(2)(B).

(4) MINIMUM DISTANCE BETWEEN BEACH SEINES; RUNNING LINES.

(A) No beach seine, including all associated gear, may be operated within the minimum distance required between set gillnets under 5 AAC 21.331 as measured from the nearest portion of any

other beach seine operation, including the web of the net, the shore anchor, the offshore anchor, and all associated running lines and pulley lines in use during active fishing operations.
(B) For purposes of this subsection, 'running lines' means all lines used to deploy, retrieve, or control the beach seine, including shore-side haul lines, offshore control lines, and any lines under tension during a set or haul. Running lines under tension are considered part of the active gear footprint for purposes of minimum distance calculations.

(C) Minimum distance shall be measured horizontally at the waterline between the nearest points of each gear operation's active footprint, including running lines, at the point in the tidal cycle when gear is most closely proximate.
(D) No anchor, buoy, line, or other beach seine component may be placed within the minimum distance of an adjacent beach seine site that is currently being actively fished, regardless of whether the adjacent site is the lease holder's priority site or an open-access site.

(5) BEACH SEINE GEAR PROFILE AND SPECIFICATIONS.
(B) All beach seines operated under this subsection must fit within the physical footprint of an existing approved net site as depicted on the shore fishery diagram on file with DNR for that lease tract.
(B) Beach seine length may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet), hung measure. In no case may a beach seine operated under this subsection extend beyond the seaward extent of the net site in which it is operated as approved in the shore fishery diagram.
(C) The tidal sweep arc of the beach seine, including all running lines under tension, may not extend beyond the lateral boundaries of the approved net site footprint.
(D) Beach seine operations must utilize existing setnet infrastructure where available, including established anchor points, lead lines, and running line routes, to minimize disruption to the lease site and adjacent sites.
(E) Shore-based mechanical retrieval systems, including tractor- or winch-driven pulley systems, are permitted provided all equipment operates landward of the mean high tide mark and does not encroach on adjacent sites.

(6) DNR SHORE FISHERY PROGRAM APPROVAL REQUIRED.
(A) No beach seine operation shall commence under (p)(2) or (p)(3) of this section without prior written approval from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Shore Fishery Leasing Program.
(B) DNR approval shall confirm:

(i) the applying permit holder holds a valid CFEC permit for the Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet fishery;
(ii) for lease holder priority sites under (p)(2), the shore fishery lease is valid and current and the designated priority site is identified by its site identifier in the shore fishery diagram;
(iii) for open-access sites under (p)(3), the specific net site proposed to be fished is located within a valid shore fishery lease tract and is not the lease holder's designated priority site for that season; and

(iv) the proposed beach seine gear profile complies with (p)(5) of this section.

(C) DNR shall develop a seasonal pre-approval process with applications available no later than April 1 of each year the stock of concern plan is projected to be operative. Approvals are site-specific and valid for one season only.
(D) DNR approval does not constitute ADF&G authorization to fish. ADF&G emergency order and management plan provisions govern when and whether the fishery is open.
(E) No consent from the shore fishery lease holder is required for an open-access application under (p)(3). DNR shall notify the lease holder of open-access approvals granted within their lease tract within five (5) business days of approval.

(7) REPORTING. Each permit holder operating a beach seine under this subsection shall record on all fish tickets the permit holder's CFEC permit number, the DNR lease tract number, and the specific net site identifier as shown on the shore fishery diagram, for each fishing period. King and coho salmon encounters and releases shall be reported as required under 5 AAC 21.382(j).

(8) SUSPENSION. The commissioner may, by emergency order, suspend beach seine operations under this subsection at any site or across the Upper Subdistrict if:
(A) king salmon mortality from beach seine operations is inconsistent with achieving the recovery goal under 5 AAC 21.382(a);
(B) gear conflicts, boundary violations, or minimum distance violations are creating management problems that cannot be resolved under this section; or
(C) DNR determines that beach seine operations are inconsistent with the terms of the applicable shore
fishery lease.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In May 2026, the Board approved Proposal 192, amending 5 AAC 21.382 to require beach seines in place of set gillnets when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect. This was a significant step toward enabling the ESSN fleet to harvest abundant sockeye salmon while protecting king salmon through live-release gear. However, Proposal 192 as adopted left three critical structural problems unresolved:

Problem 1: The DNR Lease Priority Paradox

DNR shore fishery leases in Cook Inlet authorize up to three net sites per permit holder (11 AAC 64.080). Under Proposal 192's one-seine-per-permit rule, a lease holder with a three-site tract can only actively fish one beach seine at a time. DNR lease law grants exclusion rights only when the lease holder is personally present and actively fishing. A lease holder running one seine at Site A is not "personally fishing" Sites B and C, meaning those sites may already be legally available to other permit holders under existing law — yet no ordered framework exists to make that access lawful and manageable. This proposal resolves the paradox by

formalizing priority at one site per permit while opening remaining sites to all qualified permit holders through open access.

Problem 2: The Beach Access Equity Gap

Of more than 400 ESSN permit holders, the majority lack suitable shore leases or beach infrastructure. Board member Mike Wood estimated at the May 2026 meeting that the shore-lease constraint effectively restricts beach seine participation to 35–45 permit holders. This proposal addresses this directly through an open-access framework: any qualified ESSN permit holder may fish a beach seine at any vacant net site within any DNR lease tract — without needing the lease holder's consent — provided minimum gear spacing is maintained and DNR approval is obtained. This eliminates the consent barrier that would otherwise require hundreds of individual negotiations between permit holders.

Problem 3: Running Lines as Unaddressed Gear Conflict

Beach seine operations require running lines — shore-side haul lines, offshore control lines, and tension lines used during each set and haul — that can extend well beyond the net itself and create conflicts with adjacent operations. Existing setnet minimum distance regulations address the distance between net webs but do not explicitly govern running line footprints. This proposal explicitly includes all running lines under tension as part of the active gear footprint for minimum distance calculations, preventing a category of gear conflict that has no clear resolution under current regulation.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

Without this proposal, the following conditions will persist:

- The majority of ESSN permit holders remain excluded from beach seine participation during stock of concern closures, despite available gear and abundant sockeye
- Productive leased net sites sit idle — not fished by the lease holder who cannot run multiple seines, and not accessible to other permit holders in any lawful ordered manner
- The legal ambiguity around open access to vacant lease sites will result in informal and potentially unlawful beach access, gear conflicts, and enforcement complications
- The absence of a running-line spacing rule will generate gear entanglement and adjacency disputes between permit holders operating adjacent beach seines, particularly on beaches with multiple sites
- Lease holders risk non-utilization findings under 11 AAC 64 for sites they cannot fish due to the one-seine-per-permit limitation — potentially jeopardizing their leases through no fault of their own
- The Board will face ongoing legal and political pressure from the majority of permit holders excluded by a geographic barrier unrelated to conservation

4. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

A. Shore Fishery Lease Exclusion Rights are Conditional, Not Absolute

DNR shore fishery leases grant first priority to the leaseholder to use a leased site for commercial salmon setnet fishing — but this priority applies only when the leaseholder is personally fishing the site. This is not a blanket or continuous exclusion right. When the lease holder is not actively fishing a site, the site is not exclusively protected under DNR lease law. The open-access framework in this proposal is consistent with this conditional structure: it formalizes access to sites that are already legally available when the lease holder is not fishing them, while preserving the lease holder's full priority right at their designated site.

B. Priority Limited to One Site Reflects Operational Reality

Under Proposal 192's one-seine-per-permit rule, a lease holder can never simultaneously be "personally fishing" more than one site. Extending priority to all sites within a lease tract would therefore create an exclusion right the lease holder can never simultaneously exercise — effectively converting the lease into a blanket exclusion that DNR's own regulations do not support. Limiting priority to one designated site per permit per season is both legally consistent with DNR lease law and operationally honest about what the one-seine-per-permit rule allows.

C. No Consent Required – Eliminating the Consent Barrier

The prior version of this proposal required lease holder consent for open-access fishing of vacant sites. This has been removed. Requiring consent would recreate the equity barrier in a different form: lease holders could withhold consent, negotiate access for compensation (creating a de facto sublease), or simply fail to respond, leaving non-lease permit holders with no remedy. Open access without consent, subject to DNR approval and minimum gear spacing, is more consistent with the public nature of the tidelands and the Board's authority to manage the fishery in the interest of the full permit holder population.

D. Running Lines as Active Gear Footprint

Current minimum distance regulations for set gillnets measure spacing from the net web. Beach seine running lines under tension during active sets and hauls extend the operational footprint of the gear significantly beyond the net itself. These lines can foul adjacent gear, interfere with retrievals, and create hazardous conditions on beach seine sites with multiple operations. Including running lines in the minimum distance calculation is consistent with the practical realities of beach seine operations and necessary for enforceable gear spacing rules.

5. HOW THE FRAMEWORK OPERATES – PRATICAL SCENARIOS

Scenario	Outcome Under This Proposal
Lease holder with 3-site tract, fishing 1 beach seine at designated Site A	Lease holder has first and exclusive priority at Site A. Sites B and C are open-access sites. Any qualified ESSN permit holder with DNR approval may fish Sites B and C without the lease holder's consent, provided minimum gear spacing – including running lines – is maintained.
Lease holder not actively fishing their designated priority site	The designated priority site is also open to open-access fishing while the least holder is absent. If the lease holder returns and commences fishing, the open-access user must immediately vacate.
Non-lease permit holder wants to fish a vacant site	Obtains DNR approval for the specific site. No lease holder consent required. DNR notifies the lease holder within 5 business days. Non-lease permit holder may fish during all authorized stock of concern openings at that site.
Two beach seines operating on adjacent sites—running lines conflict	Under (p)(4), all running lines under tension are part of the active gear footprint. Both operators must maintain minimum distance from the nearest running line, not just the net web. If spacing cannot be achieved, the later-arriving operator must adjust or stand down.
Beach seine that would exceed 50 fathoms or extend beyond site footprint	Not permitted under (p)(5). DNR approval will not be grated for gear exceeding 50 fathoms or whose tidal sweep arc—including running lines –extends beyond the site boundaries shown in the shore fishery diagram.
Stock of concern plan lifted; fishery opens under 5 AAC 21.359	All provisions of 5 AAC 21.382(p) immediately cease to apply. Normal setnet regulations under 5 AAC 21.359 govern, including the full DNR lease exclusion rights available when the lease holder is personally present and fishing.

6. WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Benefits:

- ESSN permit holders without shore leases or beach access gain a lawful, barrier-free pathway to fish vacant sites within existing lease tracts, extending meaningful commercial fishing opportunity to the full permit holder fleet during stock of concern closures

- Shore lease holders gain legal clarity that their priority right is preserved at their designated site, and are relieved of non-utilization risk for sites they cannot fish under the one-seine-per-permit rule
- All permit holders operating adjacent beach seines gain a clear, enforceable running-line spacing rule that prevents gear fouling and operational conflicts
- King and coho salmon conservation is served by broader participation in low-mortality beach seine gear rather than continued idling of permit holders during sockeye-abundant closures
- ADF&G and DNR gain an administratively straightforward framework with clear site-specific approval, reporting, and enforcement pathways

Potential adverse impacts:

- Shore lease holders who expected full exclusivity across all sites in their tract may object to open-access use of sites they are not fishing. This is addressed by the legal analysis in Section 4: their exclusion right under DNR lease law was never absolute for sites they are not personally fishing
- DNR will need to develop administrative procedures for open-access approvals and lease holder notifications. Given the limited geography and permit holder population of the ESSN fishery, this is a manageable administrative burden
- Permit holders seeking open-access sites may compete for the most productive or accessible vacant sites in a given area, potentially requiring ADF&G to address site-specific congestion by emergency order if needed

7. RELATIONSHIP TO PROPOSAL 192 AND COMPANION PROPOSALS

This proposal is a direct operational complement to Proposal 192 (adopted May 2026). It does not alter, limit, or supersede Proposal 192's authorization of beach seines as alternative gear under the stock of concern plan. It provides the site priority, open access, gear profile, and running line spacing framework needed to make that authorization work equitably and safely across the full ESSN permit holder fleet.

This proposal should be considered alongside the companion tangle net proposal, which provides an alternative gear type for permit holders who cannot access suitable beach sites even under the open-access framework — for example, permit holders whose local beaches have no DNR lease tracts with vacant sites within operational distance.

Key Limitation: *All provisions of this proposal are operative ONLY while the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan under 5 AAC 21.382 is in effect and ONLY for beach seine operations authorized under that plan. Upon plan expiration, delisting, or suspension, all open-access and priority provisions immediately cease to apply and full DNR lease exclusion rights are automatically restored.*

8. REQUESTED BOARD DIRECTION TO DNR

Upon adoption, the Board requests that ADF&G formally notify DNR Shore Fishery Leasing of the adopted regulation and request that DNR:

1. Develop and publish a seasonal pre-approval process for beach seine operations under 5 AAC 21.382(p), with application forms available no later than April 1 of each year the stock of concern plan is projected to be operative
2. Establish a system for identifying and communicating which net site within each lease tract the lease holder has designated as their priority site for the season, and publishing this information to other permit holders in a timely manner
3. Clarify in writing whether DNR shore fishery leases issued under AS 38.05.082 authorize beach seine operations within approved net site footprints when the BOF has authorized that gear type under 5 AAC 21.382, and publish that interpretation for public guidance
4. Confirm in regulation or written guidance that non-utilization of a leased site by the lease holder during a season when that site is actively fished by another permit holder under open access pursuant to 5 AAC 21.382(p)(3) satisfies the utilization requirement under 11 AAC 64
5. Work with ADF&G to develop a standardized open-access notification form sent to lease holders within 5 business days of any open-access approval granted within their lease tract

9. HAS THIS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE?

The site access and gear equity issues addressed by this proposal were identified but not resolved during the May 2026 BOF proceedings on Proposal 192. Board member Mike Wood explicitly raised the shore lease exclusion as the central equity problem. The Board removed shore lease language from Proposal 192 after legal counsel advised that shore lease authority belongs to DNR, and directed that the full Cook Inlet setnet framework be addressed at the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting. This proposal responds directly to that direction. The running-line spacing issue is new and has not been previously addressed by the Board.

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

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark (EF-F27-228)

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PROPOSAL 135

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan. And 5 AAC 21.332. Cook Inlet seine specifications and operations.

Amend multiple elements of the commercial beach seine fishery in the Upper Subdistrict, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 (Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan) and 5 AAC 21.332 (Cook Inlet Seine Specifications and Operations) to: (A) authorize a skiff-deployed beach seine configuration in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery under the stock of concern management plan, in which one end of the net is anchored to the beach and held stationary while the net is deployed seaward and around by a skiff carrying the active end, then both ends are retrieved to the beach; (B) establish that any beach area in the Upper Subdistrict not currently being actively fished is open to all qualified CFEC ESSN permit holders operating skiff-deployed beach seines and to commercial dipnet permit holders, without permission of any DNR shore fishery lease holder; and (C) prohibit DNR shore fishery lease holders from placing running lines, buoys, or other gear markers in the intertidal or subtidal zone to hold or reserve beach area beyond that necessary for one actively operating beach seine per CFEC permit. All provisions are operative only when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect under 5 AAC 21.382.

PROPOSED REGULATORY LANGUAGE — Addition to 5 AAC 21.382, new subsection (q) (additions bold and underlined; deletions [BRACKETED AND CAPITALIZED]):

Proposed new subsection 5 AAC 21.382(q) — Skiff-deployed beach seine; open beach access; running line reservation limit:

(q) Skiff-deployed beach seine; open beach access; running line reservation limit; Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery under stock of concern management plan.

(1) APPLICABILITY. The provisions of this subsection apply only when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect pursuant to 5 AAC 21.382(a), and only during periods when beach seine gear is authorized under that plan. Upon expiration, suspension, or delisting under the stock of concern plan, all provisions of this subsection are immediately inoperative and management reverts to 5 AAC 21.359.

(2) SKIFF-DEPLOYED BEACH SEINE CONFIGURATION AUTHORIZED.

(A) Notwithstanding any provision of 5 AAC 21.332 or AAC 39.260 that requires a beach seine to be set from and retrieved by a shore-based fixed infrastructure or pulley system, a CFEC permit holder authorized to use a beach seine under 5 AAC 21.382 may deploy and operate a skiff-deployed beach seine in the following manner:

(iii) one end of the beach seine, the anchor end, is secured to the beach above the mean high tide mark, or to a vehicle, fixed structure, or anchor point on the beach, and must remain secured to the beach throughout the set;

(iii) the active end of the beach seine, connected to a skiff by tow line or direct attachment, is deployed seaward from the beach by the skiff carrying the active end out into the water;

(iii) the skiff carries the active end of the net in an arc around the target area and returns toward the beach, with the net trailing and encircling the water column between the anchor end and the active end;

(iv) both ends of the seine are retrieved to the beach by hauling the active end by skiff, tractor, truck, or shore-based mechanical system, while the anchor end remains secured to the beach, closing the seine and sweeping fish onto the beach or into shallow water for sorting;

(v) the skiff must be attended by the permit holder or a designated crew member at all times during deployment and retrieval;

(vi) the beach seine is considered to have ceased fishing when all of the lead line is above the waterline on the beach.

(B) A skiff-deployed beach seine operated under this subsection may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet) in length, hung measure.

(C) Mesh size for a skiff-deployed beach seine operated under this subsection may not exceed 3-1/2 inches stretched measure, consistent with the beach seine mesh size authorized under 5 AAC 21.382.

(D) A skiff-deployed beach seine must be attended at all times during active fishing. The permit holder or a designated crew member must be present on the beach or in the skiff throughout the set and haul.

(E) No more than one skiff-deployed beach seine may be operated per CFEC permit at any one time.

(F) All king salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) and coho salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch) encountered in a skiff-deployed beach seine must be released immediately with minimum air exposure and handling. Retention of king or coho salmon is prohibited except when specifically authorized by emergency order. King and coho encounters must be reported as required under 5 AAC 21.382(j).

(G) A beach seine has not ceased fishing when it is in the water during a set or haul, regardless of whether fish are visible. Only when all lead line is above the waterline on the beach has the seine ceased fishing for purposes of this subsection.

(3) OPEN BEACH ACCESS — SKIFF-DEPLOYED BEACH SEINES AND COMMERCIAL DIPNETS.

(A) During any period when the stock of concern management plan is in effect and beach seines are authorized under 5 AAC 21.382, any beach area in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery that is not currently being actively fished with an authorized beach seine is open to use by any of the following, without permission of a DNR shore fishery lease holder:

(i) a skiff-deployed beach seine under (q)(2), operated by any CFEC permit holder holding a valid Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet entry or interim-use permit; and

(ii) a commercial dipnet, operated by a CFEC permit holder authorized to use commercial dipnets under 5 AAC 21.382 or applicable emergency order.

(B) For purposes of this subsection, a beach area is 'currently being actively fished' only when a beach seine is actually in the water in the course of a set or haul, or when a seine is

billowing with fish. A beach area is not actively fished by reason of the presence of buoys, running lines, anchor markers, vehicles, or other gear markers placed in the area while no seine is actually in the water. Placement of gear markers alone is not sufficient to close a beach area to open access under this subsection.
(C) A permit holder accessing beach area under open access under this subsection does not acquire any property interest, future-season claim, or priority right in the accessed area. A permit holder accessing beach under open access must immediately yield to a DNR shore lease holder who commences actively fishing a beach seine at the same location, subject to the running line reservation limit in (q)(5) of this section.
(D) Minimum gear spacing requirements in (q)(4) of this section apply to all permit holders operating under open access.

(4) MINIMUM DISTANCE BETWEEN BEACH SEINE OPERATIONS.
(A) No beach seine, including all associated active gear, may be set, retrieved, or operated within the minimum distance required between set gillnets under 5 AAC 21.331, as measured from the nearest active component of any other beach seine operation.
(B) Active components of a beach seine for purposes of minimum distance measurement include: the net web; the shore anchor end and its attachment point on the beach; the skiff tow line or attachment line connecting the skiff to the active end of the net; any haul lines or retrieval lines under tension during an active set or haul; and the skiff itself while it is deploying or retrieving the net.
(C) Minimum distance shall be measured horizontally at the waterline between the nearest active components of each operation at the point in
the tidal cycle when operations are most closely proximate.
(D) A permit holder who arrives at a beach area second in time must maintain minimum distance from the operation already in progress. In the event of a dispute over arrival order, ADF&G or AWT personnel on scene may make a determination; absent such personnel, the permit holder whose anchor end was first secured to the beach has priority for minimum distance purposes.

(5) DNR SHORE LEASE RUNNING LINE RESERVATION LIMIT.
(A) During any period when this subsection is in effect, a DNR shore fishery lease holder may not place or maintain running lines, buoys, anchor markers, lead nets, cables, or any other gear
or physical markers in or on the intertidal or subtidal zone of their shore fishery lease tract for the purpose of reserving or claiming beach area beyond that necessary for one (1) actively operating beach seine per CFEC permit.
(B) Running lines, skiff tow lines, buoys, and associated gear may only be placed in the water or the intertidal zone during the specific set or haul that is actively in progress. Upon completion of each haul, all running lines, buoys, and active gear components must be removed from the water and intertidal zone promptly. Gear left in place between sets
does not constitute active fishing and does not reserve the beach area to the lease holder.
(C) A DNR shore lease holder may not use pre-set running lines, standing buoys, lead nets, or other stationary intertidal or subtidal gear to effectively close beach area to open-access skiff-deployed beach seines or commercial dipnets that would otherwise be accessible under (q)(3).

(D) This subsection does not prohibit a DNR shore lease holder from maintaining infrastructure entirely above the mean high tide mark, including shore-side anchor points, winches, tractor lanes, and fixed upland structures, provided those structures do not extend into the intertidal or subtidal zone in a manner that impedes access.
(E) Violation of the running line reservation limit under this subsection may be grounds for ADF&G to require immediate removal of gear from the intertidal or subtidal area by emergency order, and may be reported to DNR Shore Fishery Leasing for potential lease non-compliance action.

(6) REPORTING AND FISH TICKETS. Each permit holder operating a skiff-deployed beach seine under this subsection shall report all harvests on ADF&G fish tickets, noting the statistical area, beach location, and CFEC permit number for each fishing period.
King and coho salmon encounters, handling data, and releases shall be reported as required under
5 AAC 21.382(j).

Proposed conforming amendment to 5 AAC 21.332 — Cook Inlet Seine Specifications and Operations:

Add new subsection: Notwithstanding any other provision of this section or 5 AAC 39.260, a beach seine not exceeding 50 fathoms in length operated under 5 AAC 21.382(q) in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District during a period when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is in effect may be deployed in the following manner: the anchor end of the seine is secured to the beach above the mean high tide mark; the active end of the seine is deployed seaward by a skiff carrying the active end out and around the target area; and both ends are retrieved to the beach to complete the haul. Requirements in this section that a beach seine be set from and hauled exclusively by a shore-based fixed pulley system do not apply to operations conducted under 5 AAC 21.382(q). All other applicable beach seine specifications remain in effect.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Proposal 192 (adopted May 2026) authorized beach seines as alternative gear under the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan. This was a meaningful step forward. The Gabriel experimental fishery (2024–2025) demonstrated that beach seines can harvest abundant sockeye while releasing king salmon alive. However, the authorized method — a shore-based pulley system operated by a tractor or winch on a fixed beach lease site — is accessible only to permit holders with a suitable DNR shore lease, the right beach geography, and significant capital equipment. This proposal addresses three related problems.

Problem 1: Pulley-System Deployment Excludes the Majority of the Fleet

Of more than 400 ESSN permit holders, the vast majority lack a DNR shore lease with a suitable beach for fixed pulley infrastructure. Board member Mike Wood estimated at the May 2026 meeting that the shore-lease constraint effectively limits beach seine participation to 35–45 permit holders. A skiff-deployed configuration, in which the anchor end of the seine is simply secured to any point on the beach and a skiff carries the active end seaward and around, requires

no fixed infrastructure, no tractor, and no shore lease. Any permit holder with a skiff and a beach seine can prosecute this fishery on any accessible beach area, dramatically extending participation to the full fleet.

Problem 2: No Open Beach Access Framework Exists

Even with mobile deployment, permit holders without shore leases currently have no clear regulatory authority to access beach areas within DNR lease tracts without the lease holder's consent. DNR lease law grants exclusion rights only when the lease holder is personally fishing the site. This proposal formalizes what is already implicit in DNR lease law: beach areas not being actively fished are open to qualified permit holders without requiring the lease holder's permission. This eliminates the consent barrier that would otherwise require hundreds of individual negotiations between permit holders.

Problem 3: Running Lines Used to Reserve Beach Without Active Fishing

Without a specific prohibition, DNR shore fishery lease holders could place pre-set running lines, standing buoys, lead nets, or other gear markers across large sections of beach to effectively hold those areas closed to open-access skiff-deployed seines and commercial dipnets — even when no beach seine is actually in the water. This would allow a small number of lease holders to occupy far more beach than one active beach seine per permit requires, defeating the open access framework. The running line reservation limit in this proposal ensures that only the area necessary for one actively operating seine per permit may be held at any one time, with all gear removed from the intertidal zone between sets.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

- The majority of ESSN permit holders will remain unable to participate in beach seine operations during stock of concern closures, despite abundant sockeye and an available low-mortality gear type
- Productive beach areas will remain effectively inaccessible due to shore lease exclusivity claims that DNR lease law does not actually support when the lease holder is not fishing
- Lease holders could place running lines and buoys across extensive beach sections between sets, closing large areas to open-access users with no regulatory remedy
- The economic collapse of the ESSN fishery for the majority of permit holders will continue, generating further disaster declarations and political pressure to eliminate setnets entirely
- The Board will lack comparative data on skiff-deployed beach seine king salmon mortality from a broad population of permit holder sites, limiting its ability to make evidence-based decisions in future regulatory cycles

4. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

A. Deployment Method – Conformance with Existing Seine Law

Under existing statewide seine regulations (5 AAC 39.260(h) and 5 AAC 18.332(h)), a beach seine must be set from and hauled to a beach, with one end remaining on the beach at all times during the set. The skiff-deployed configuration described in this proposal is consistent with this requirement: the anchor end remains secured to the beach throughout the set, and the active end is carried seaward by skiff. This is a classical beach seine swing set method used in traditional Alaska beach seine fisheries. The proposed conforming amendment to 5 AAC 21.332 clarifies that the specific requirement for a fixed shore-based pulley system does not apply to operations under 5 AAC 21.382(q), while all other beach seine specifications remain in effect.

B. Shore Lease Exclusion Rights Are Conditional

DNR shore fishery leases grant first priority to the leaseholder to use a leased site for commercial salmon setnet fishing only when the leaseholder is personally present and fishing the site (11 AAC 64). This is not a blanket or standing exclusion right. When the lease holder is not actively fishing, the beach area is not exclusively protected under DNR lease law. The open access framework in this proposal formalizes this conditional structure: it makes explicit that beach areas not currently being actively fished are available to other qualified permit holders, consistent with the actual legal character of DNR shore fishery lease exclusion rights.

C. Running Line Reservation – Preventing De Factor Closure

The running line reservation limit addresses a potential abuse of the open access framework. Without this provision, lease holders could pre-set running lines and buoys across their entire lease tract between active sets, asserting that the area is 'reserved' even when no seine is in the water. This would effectively convert a conditional exclusion right into a permanent standing exclusion — contrary to DNR lease law. The provision that gear must be removed from the intertidal zone promptly after each haul, and that the presence of gear markers alone does not close a beach area, closes this potential loophole.

D. Commercial Dipnets – Parallel Access

Commercial dipnets are already authorized under 5 AAC 21.382 and applicable emergency orders as a low-mortality gear type in the ESSN fishery. Extending open beach access to commercial dipnet operators on the same terms as skiff-deployed beach seines is consistent with the authorization those permit holders already hold. Excluding dipnet operators from the open access framework while allowing skiff-deployed beach seines would create an unjustified distinction between two authorized low-mortality gear types operating in the same fishery.

5. HOW THE SKIFF-DEPLOYED CONFIGURATION OPERATES – STEP BY STEP

For clarity, the following describes the authorized skiff-deployed beach seine operation:

Step	Operation
1. Anchor End	The anchor end of the beach seine is secured to the beach above the mean high tide mark—to a stake, vehicle,

	tractor, truck, fixed structure, or beach anchor. This end remains on the beach throughout the entire set and haul.
2. Skiff Deployment	The active end of the beach seine is attached to a skiff by tow line or direct connection. The skiff carries the active end seaward, paying out the net from the beach as it goes. The net deploys in an arc behind the skiff.
3. Arc and Return	The skiff carries the active end seaward and around the target area, encircling a section of water column with the net. The skiff then returns toward the beach, closing the arc.
4. Retrieval	The active end is brought to the beach by the skiff or hauled in by a tractor, truck, or shore-based mechanical system. Both ends of the seine are hauled to the beach simultaneously, sweeping fish onto the beach or into shallow water for sorting.
5. Sorting and Release	Sockeye salmon are retained. All king and coho salmon are released immediately with minimum air exposure. Encounter data is recorded for fish ticket reporting.
6. Gear Clearance	All lead line is above the waterline—the seine has ceased fishing. All running lines, tow lines, and active gear components are removed from the intertidal and subtidal zone. The beach area is open to other permit holders until the next set begins.

6. PRACTICAL SCENARIOS

Scenario	Outcome Under This Proposal
Non-lease permit holder wants to fish a beach area within a DNR lease tract while no seine is in the water	Open access applies. No consent required. Permit holder secures anchor end of seine to beach and deploys active end by skiff. Must maintain minimum gear spacing from any adjacent operation.
DNR lease holder places running lines and buoys across their entire beach tract between sets	Not permitted under (q)(5). Running lines and buoys must be removed from the intertidal zone promptly after each haul. Placement of gear markers between sets does not close the area to open access.

Lease holder commences a set while an open-access permit holder is already fishing at the same location	Open-access permit holder must immediately yield and vacate the area. The least holder's priority right is superior when actively fishing, subject to the minimum distance requirement and the one-active-seine-per-permit limit.
Two permit holders arrive simultaneously at the same beach area	The permit holder whose anchor end was first secured to the beach has priority for minimum distance purposes. ADF&G or AWT personnel may make a determination if on scene.
Commercial dipnet operator wants to fish adjacent to a skiff-deployed beach seine.	Open beach access applies to commercial dipnet operators on the same terms as skiff-deployed beach seines. Minimum gear spacing under 5 AAC 21.331 must be maintained.
Stock of concern plan lifted; fishery opens under 5 AAC 21.359	All provisions of (q) immediately cease to apply. Normal setnet law and full DNR lease exclusion rights are restored. Skiff-deployed beach seine authorization under this subsection expires.

7. WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Benefits:

- The full ESSN permit holder fleet gains a commercially viable, infrastructure-independent beach seine option during stock of concern closures — any permit holder with a skiff and a beach seine can participate on any accessible beach
- King and coho salmon conservation is served by broader use of live-release gear across more permit holders and more beach locations than the pulley-system configuration alone can achieve
- ADF&G gains comparative king salmon encounter and release data from a much wider geographic and operational sample than the Gabriel experimental fishery provided
- Commercial dipnet permit holders gain clear open beach access on the same terms as beach seine operators, eliminating ambiguity about their access rights on leased beach areas
- The Kenai Peninsula community economy benefits from broader commercial fishing participation during stock of concern closures

Potential adverse impacts:

- DNR shore fishery lease holders who have relied on pre-set running lines and buoys to hold beach area between sets will need to adjust their operations to remove gear from the intertidal zone after each haul. This is an operational change but is consistent with the conditional nature of DNR lease exclusion rights
- Beaches that are currently lightly used may see increased use by open-access skiff-deployed seine operators, requiring ADF&G to monitor for congestion or gear conflict and address by emergency order if needed

- Lease holders who invested in shore-based pulley infrastructure may perceive the mobile configuration as competitive. Both methods remain authorized; this proposal adds a method, it does not eliminate any

8. RELATIONSHIP TO PROPOSAL 192 AND COMPANION PROPOSALS

This proposal is a companion to, and does not supersede, Proposal 192 (May 2026) or the Beach Seine Site Priority and Open Access Proposal. Together, the three proposals create a comprehensive beach seine framework for the ESSN fishery under the stock of concern plan:

- Proposal 192: Authorizes beach seines as alternative gear under the stock of concern plan in place of setnets
- Beach Seine Site Priority and Open Access Proposal: Establishes DNR lease holder priority for one site per permit, open access to remaining sites, and minimum distance rules including running lines
- This Proposal: Authorizes the skiff-deployed configuration as an alternative to pulley-system deployment; establishes fleet-wide open beach access for mobile beach seines and dipnets; prohibits use of running lines to reserve beach area between sets

Key Limitation: *All provisions of this proposal are operative ONLY while the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan under 5 AAC 21.382 is in effect and ONLY during periods when beach seine gear is authorized under that plan. Upon plan expiration, delisting, or suspension, all provisions immediately cease to apply and normal setnet regulations under 5 AAC 21.359 resume without modification.*

9. HAS THIS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE?

A skiff-deployed beach seine configuration has not been formally proposed or studied in the Upper Cook Inlet ESSN fishery. The Gabriel experimental fisheries (2024–2025) used only the shore-based pulley configuration. The Board at the May 2026 proceedings on Proposal 192 did not consider alternative deployment methods. The open beach access and running line reservation limit provisions are new and have not been previously addressed by the Board. This proposal responds to the Board's explicit direction at the May 2026 meeting to develop comprehensive gear and access solutions for the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting cycle.

10. REQUESTED ADF&G ACTION

Upon adoption of this proposal, the Board requests that ADF&G:

1. Issue commissioner's experimental permits for skiff-deployed beach seine operations to a minimum of 20 ESSN permit holders for the 2027 season, with observer coverage on a statistically representative sample of sites, to gather post-release survival data on king and coho salmon released from skiff-deployed seine operations
2. Develop and publish guidance on open beach access under 5 AAC 21.382(q), including maps of beach areas open to skiff-deployed beach seines and commercial dipnets, AWT enforcement protocols for minimum distance disputes, and procedures for documenting running line reservation violations

3. Notify DNR Shore Fishery Leasing of the adopted regulation and request that DNR issue guidance to lease holders on the running line reservation limit and removal requirements under 5 AAC 21.382(q)(5)
4. Report to the Board prior to the next Cook Inlet Finfish regulatory cycle on skiff-deployed beach seine king and coho encounter rates, post-release survival data, gear conflict incidents, and the geographic distribution of operations across leased and non-leased beach areas

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

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark (EF-F27-229)

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PROPOSAL 136

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan. Condition implementation of the Upper Subdistrict commercial beach seine fishery, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 (Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan) to add a new subsection conditioning the commercial authorization of beach seines in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery upon ADF&G completion of scientifically adequate post-release mortality studies for both king salmon and coho salmon released from beach seine operations in Upper Cook Inlet. The subsection shall establish minimum study design standards, require reporting of study results to the Board prior to any full commercial authorization, and provide that the Board shall not authorize full commercial beach seine operations under the stock of concern management plan until it has received, reviewed, and accepted study results that meet the minimum standards. Commissioner's permit experimental operations may continue pending study completion.

PROPOSED REGULATORY LANGUAGE — Addition to 5 AAC 21.382, new subsection (s):

Proposed new subsection 5 AAC 21.382(s) — Post-release mortality study requirement; condition on commercial beach seine authorization:

(s) Post-release mortality study requirement; condition on commercial beach seine authorization; Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery under stock of concern management plan.

(1) FINDING. The board finds that beach seine gear has been demonstrated to release king salmon and coho salmon alive at the time of haul completion in Upper Cook Inlet experimental fisheries conducted under commissioner's permits in 2024 and 2025. However, no post-release survival study using telemetry, acoustic tags, radio tags, or other scientifically accepted tagging methodology has been conducted to determine whether king salmon or coho salmon released from beach seine operations in Upper Cook Inlet survive to reach spawning grounds. The difference between a fish observed swimming away at the time of release and a fish that survives to spawn is the critical conservation question that must be answered before commercial beach seine operations can be credited with meaningful king and coho salmon mortality reduction.

(2) CONDITION ON COMMERCIAL AUTHORIZATION. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section or any board action taken prior to the 2027 Cook Inlet Area Finfish regulatory meeting, commercial beach seine operations in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery under the stock of concern management plan may not be authorized on a full commercial basis until:

(A) ADF&G has completed post-release mortality studies meeting the minimum standards in (s)(3) of this section for both:

(i) king salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) released from commercial or experimental beach seine operations in the Upper Subdistrict of Upper Cook Inlet; and

(ii) coho salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch) released from commercial or experimental beach seine operations in the Upper Subdistrict of Upper Cook Inlet;

(B) ADF&G has submitted a written report of study results to the board meeting at which commercial beach seine authorization will be considered, no later than 60 days before the start of that meeting; and

(C) the board has reviewed the study results and determined, based on those results,that post-release mortality of king and coho salmon from beach seine operations is consistent with the conservation objectives of the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan.

(3) MINIMUM POST-RELEASE MORTALITY STUDY STANDARDS.

(A) Study methodology. A post-release mortality study under this subsection must use acoustic telemetry, radio telemetry, individually identifying

electronic tags, or another scientifically accepted tagging methodology capable of tracking individual fish to determine whether released fish:

(v) survive in Cook Inlet following release;

(v) enter the Kenai River or Kasilof River, as appropriate based on the fish's origin; and

(v) are detected at upstream monitoring points consistent with survival to spawning habitat.

(B) Detection infrastructure. The study must use receiver arrays or detection stations capable of identifying tagged fish at the Kenai River mouth, the Kenai River sonar site at river mile 14, and at least one additional upstream station, or equivalent infrastructure on the Kasilof River. ADF&G may use existing sonar and telemetry infrastructure where available and shall deploy supplemental receivers as necessary to achieve statistically adequate detection probability.

(C) Sample size. The study must tag and track a minimum sample size for each species sufficient to estimate post-release survival with a confidence interval of 90 percent or greater. ADF&G shall determine the required minimum sample size in consultation with a qualified statistician prior to commencing the study, and shall include the minimum sample size determination in the study design report required under (s)(3)(F).

(D) Control groups. The study must include a control group of unhandled fish of each species tagged and released from the same general area during the same period, to allow estimation of background mortality rates independent of beach seine capture stress.

(E) Monitoring duration. Post-release monitoring must continue for a minimum of ten (10) days following each release event. Survival estimates based on observations of fewer than five days are insufficient for purposes of this subsection.

(F) Study design and peer review. ADF&G shall prepare and publish a written study design report prior to commencing each study season, describing the methodology, tagging approach, sample size targets, detection infrastructure, and analysis plan. ADF&G shall solicit peer review of the study design from at least two independent fisheries scientists with documented experience in salmonid post-release mortality research and shall incorporate peer reviewer comments or provide written justification for not doing so.

(G) Results reporting. ADF&G shall prepare and submit to the board a written results report for each species containing:

(i) estimated post-release survival rates for each species with confidence intervals;

(ii) comparison of survival rates between beach seine-released fish and control groups;

(iii) analysis of factors affecting post-release survival, including water temperature at time of capture and release, air exposure duration, handling duration, and visible injury;

(v) a description of any detected ifferences in post-release survival between fish released from pulley-system beach seines versus skiff-deployed beach seines, if both methods were tested; and

(v) the peer review comments received on the study design and the department's response to those comments.

(4) CONTINUED EXPERIMENTAL OPERATIONS PERMITTED PENDING STUDY COMPLETION.

Nothing in this subsection prohibits the commissioner from issuing experimental commissioner's permits for beach seine operations in the Upper Subdistrict during the period in which post-release mortality studies are being conducted. Experimental permit operations conducted for the purpose of generating study data under this subsection are encouraged. Experimental permit operations that do not include a post-release mortality study component meeting the standards in (s)(3) shall not be credited as satisfying the study requirement of this subsection.

(5) BOARD REVIEW AND AUTHORIZATION.

Upon receipt of ADF&G study results reports for both king salmon and coho salmon meeting the standards in (s)(3), the board shall:

(A) consider the study results at the next scheduled Cook Inlet Area Finfish meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose;

(B) determine whether the study results demonstrate that post-release mortality of king and coho salmon from beach seine operations is consistent with king salmon stock of concern conservation objectives;

and

(C) if the board determines that post-release mortality is consistent with conservation objectives, adopt appropriate regulations authorizing commercial beach seine operations; or if the board determines that post-release mortality is not consistent with conservation objectives, amend or rescind any existing beach seine authorizations accordingly.

(6) EFFECTIVE DATE OF CONDITION. This subsection is effective upon adoption and applies to any commercial beach seine authorization under 5 AAC 21.382 that has not taken effect as a fully operational commercial fishery season

prior to the date of adoption.

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

Central Scientific Finding: *No post-release survival study using telemetry, acoustic tags, radio tags, or any other scientifically accepted tracking methodology has ever been conducted*

on king salmon or coho salmon released from beach seine operations in Upper Cook Inlet. The only data that exists are counts of fish observed swimming away at the time of release. Whether those fish survived to spawn is entirely unknown.

In May 2026, the Board approved Proposal 192 amending 5 AAC 21.382 to substitute beach seines for set gillnets when the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan is triggered. The decision was grounded in Gabriel experimental fishery data showing that 16 king salmon and 31 coho salmon encountered across two seasons were released alive at the time of the haul. The Board, ADF&G, and the Gabriels deserve credit for generating this information. However, "released alive" and "survived to spawn" are not the same thing, and the gap between them is the most consequential question in the entire beach seine debate.

What the Existing Data Actually Shows

The Gabriel experimental data demonstrates only immediate survival — that released fish were alive and swimming at the moment they left the haul area. It does not demonstrate:

- Whether those fish survived the physiological stress of capture, air exposure, and beaching over the subsequent hours or days
- Whether those fish successfully entered the Kenai River or Kasilof River
- Whether those fish survived to spawning grounds
- What proportion of fish released from beach seines under operational commercial conditions — with multiple permit holders on multiple sites across variable weather and tidal conditions — would survive versus the controlled experimental conditions of the Gabriel fishery

What the Published Science Says About This Gap

The published literature on post-release mortality of Pacific salmon in commercial fisheries makes clear that this gap is not theoretical:

- Studies of Pacific salmon capture and release consistently find that short-term observations of 24 hours or less substantially underestimate actual mortality rates. A minimum of five to ten days of monitoring is required for adequate assessment.
- Research on coho salmon released from purse seine fisheries in the Salish Sea found 20% to 36% short-term mortality using acoustic telemetry — mortality that would not have been detected by simple observation of fish swimming away at the time of release.
- Studies of beach seine capture of sockeye salmon in freshwater found that three minutes of air exposure following seine capture resulted in severe impairment of reflexes including loss of orientation and ventilation ability.
- Estuarine environments, where Cook Inlet beach seines operate, pose elevated post-release mortality risk due to osmotic, maturation, and temperature stressors on fish that are in physiological transition between saltwater and freshwater.
- Cook Inlet's extreme tidal dynamics, turbidity, and surface water temperatures during the July-August peak season may create additional post-release stress not captured in studies conducted in calmer, colder, or fresher water environments.

The Regulatory and Ethical Problem

The Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan exists specifically because the king salmon run has been at or near historic lows for nearly a decade. The entire premise of beach seine authorization under that plan is that beach seines provide meaningful king salmon mortality reduction compared to set gillnets. If beach seine post-release mortality is substantial — as the published literature on analogous gear types suggests it may be — that premise is undermined. The Board would have substituted one form of king salmon mortality for another without knowing whether the substitution actually helps the stock.

As independent fisheries journalist Craig Medred summarized the situation plainly in a 2025 review of the beach seine evidence: "As to beach seine mortality, all mortality remains unknown. It might be saving all Chinook. It might be saving no Chinook. And it is most likely saving some Chinook." This is not an adequate scientific foundation for a management decision affecting a stock that the Board itself has designated a stock of concern requiring active rebuilding.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

- Commercial beach seine operations will be authorized under the stock of concern management plan without any knowledge of whether released king and coho salmon survive to spawn, leaving the conservation foundation of the beach seine authorization entirely untested
- King salmon mortality from beach seine operations will be credited as zero based solely on the observation that fish were alive at the moment of release, an assumption that published science indicates may substantially underestimate actual delayed mortality
- The stock of concern management plan, which is built on the goal of rebuilding Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement, may be undermined by a gear authorization that produces unknown but potentially significant post-release mortality
- By the time adequate post-release survival data is eventually collected — if it ever is — full-scale commercial beach seine operations will be established and the political and economic barriers to revising the authorization will be substantially higher
- The Board will have made a consequential conservation decision without the scientific information that should precede it, contrary to Alaska's Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy

4. SCIENTIFIC JUSTIFICATION FOR MINIMUM STUDY STANDARDS

A. Why Telemetry or Equivalent Tagging Is Required

The only way to determine whether a fish that swam away from a haul site actually survived is to follow it. Short-term net pen holding studies provide some information but are known to underestimate delayed mortality because confinement stress differs from the experience of a wild fish attempting to complete its spawning migration after capture stress. Radio or acoustic telemetry allows researchers to track individual fish to specific detection points — the river

mouth, sonar station, and upstream monitoring points — providing direct evidence of migration success as a proxy for spawning survival. This is the methodology used in Columbia River fish trap post-release survival studies that produced the near-100% survival estimates cited in support of that gear type. The same standard should apply to beach seines in Cook Inlet.

B. Why Both King Salmon AND Coho Salmon Must Be Studied

The stock of concern management plan protects both king and coho salmon from retention. Published research indicates that coho salmon may be less resilient to capture and release stress than Chinook salmon. Purse seine studies in the Salish Sea found 20% to 36% short-term coho mortality using telemetry. A beach seine authorization premised on live release of both species requires post-release survival data for both species. Studying only kings while leaving coho survival unknown is not adequate given that coho are also a protected species under the stock of concern plan.

C. Why Ten-Day Monitoring is Required

Published research consistently demonstrates that mortality following salmon capture and release often occurs between days three and ten post-release rather than in the first few hours. Studies that observe survival for only 24 hours or 48 hours typically underestimate final mortality by a substantial margin. The ten-day minimum monitoring requirement in this proposal is consistent with the monitoring durations used in Columbia River fish trap survival studies, which are the closest regulatory analog to the Cook Inlet beach seine situation.

D. Why Control Groups Are Required

Without a control group of unhandled fish of the same species released in the same area and period, it is impossible to distinguish mortality caused by beach seine capture stress from background mortality that would have occurred regardless. Cook Inlet in July and August presents warm surface temperatures, active predators, and other stressors that affect survival of all migrating salmon. Control groups allow researchers to isolate the effect of seine capture from background mortality, producing a defensible estimate of capture-attributable post-release mortality.

E. Why Peer Review of Study Design Is Required

The regulatory stakes of this study are substantial: its results will determine whether commercial beach seine operations are authorized or restricted under a king salmon stock of concern plan. Studies of this consequence should be designed with independent peer review before data collection begins, not reviewed for methodological adequacy after results are already in hand. Peer review of study design is standard practice in consequential fisheries research and is explicitly required in analogous contexts, including the Columbia River alternative gear research program funded by NOAA’s Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program.

5. PROPOSED STUDY TIMELINE

The following timeline is proposed for ADF&G to conduct the required studies and report results to the Board in time for the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting:

Timeframe	Required Action
By January 2027	ADF&G publishes written study design report for both king and coho salmon post-release mortality studies, including methodology, tagging approach, minimum sample size determination, detection infrastructure plan, and analysis approach. Study design submitted for independent peer review.
By April 1, 2027	ADF&G incorporates peer reviewer comments into study design or provides written justification for not doing so. Study design finalized and study initiation approved.
Summer 2027 (June—August)	Post-release mortality studies conducted during authorized beach seine experimental permit operations. King and coho salmon tagged and tracked through Kenai River and Kasilof River sonar sites and upstream detection arrays. Control groups tagged and released concurrently.
By September 30, 2027	Minimum ten-day post-release monitoring completed for all tagged fish from summer 2027 operations. Data analysis completed.
By November 1, 2027	ADF&G submits written results reports for both king and coho salmon to the Board at least 60 days before the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting.
2027 Cook Inlet Finfish Meeting	Board reviews study results for both species. Determines whether post-release mortality is consistent with stock of concern conservation objectives. Adopts, amends, or rescinds commercial beach seine authorization based on study results.

6. WHAT THE BOARD SHOULD LOOK FOR IN STUDY RESULTS

This proposal does not prescribe a specific survival rate that must be achieved before commercial authorization is permitted. That determination is appropriately left to the Board after reviewing the evidence. However, the Board should consider:

- Whether survival rates for beach seine-released fish are statistically distinguishable from control group survival rates; if there is no detectable difference, capture stress appears not to be causing meaningful additional mortality
- Whether survival rates are consistent across the range of water temperatures, tidal conditions, and handling durations likely to occur in a full commercial fishery across 400-plus permit holders and dozens of beach sites
- Whether any detected mortality is concentrated in identifiable conditions — such as high water temperature, long air exposure, or particular times of the tide — that could be managed through operational restrictions rather than prohibition
- Whether coho salmon survival rates differ meaningfully from king salmon survival rates, given the existing published evidence that coho may be less resilient to seine capture stress
- Whether the study results are consistent with, or diverge from, results from analogous gear types in other Pacific salmon fisheries

7. WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Benefits:

- King and coho salmon, which are protected species under the stock of concern plan, benefit from ensuring that beach seine authorization is grounded in actual post-release survival evidence rather than the assumption that observed alive-at-release equals survival to spawn
- The Board benefits from having the scientific information it needs to make a defensible, evidence-based regulatory decision on beach seine authorization, rather than acting on incomplete data and potentially needing to revise the authorization later
- Beach seine proponents benefit because if post-release survival is high, the study results will provide strong scientific justification for full commercial authorization that is difficult for opponents to challenge
- All users of Cook Inlet salmon, including commercial, sport, guided sport, and personal use, benefit from management decisions grounded in adequate science
- Alaska's reputation for science-based fisheries management is protected

Potential adverse impacts:

- ESSN permit holders seeking immediate full commercial beach seine authorization will experience a delay until study results are available. This delay is mitigated by the provision allowing continued experimental commissioner's permit operations pending study completion
- ADF&G will incur costs to design and conduct the studies. These costs should be weighed against the conservation risk of authorizing a gear type without knowing its actual mortality impact on a stock that is already designated a stock of concern at historic low abundance

8. PRIOR CONSIDERATION AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROPOSALS

The need for post-release survival data was identified by multiple Board members, ADF&G, and commenters during the 2025 and 2026 proceedings on beach seine proposals. Board member Olivia Henaayee Irwin stated at the May 2026 meeting that she did not want to see progress on king salmon recovery undermined by an immediate reversal based on one year of good escapement numbers. ADF&G Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang said he was "cautiously

optimistic" about beach seine results but agreed more data was needed. The Board explicitly requested that additional data be generated in advance of the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting.

This proposal formalizes that data requirement as a regulatory condition rather than a recommendation. It ensures that the Board will have the post-release survival information it asked for before taking final action on commercial beach seine authorization at the 2027 meeting, and prevents the regulatory situation from getting ahead of the science on a question that directly affects the recovery of a stock of concern.

Key Limitation: *This proposal does not oppose beach seines. If post-release survival studies demonstrate that king and coho salmon released from Cook Inlet beach seines survive at rates consistent with conservation objectives, this proposal actively supports full commercial authorization based on that evidence. The proposal requires only that authorization be preceded by the science, not that it be denied.*

9. REQUESTED BOARD DIRECTION TO ADF&G

Upon adoption of this proposal, the Board requests that ADF&G:

1. Immediately begin design of post-release mortality studies for king salmon and coho salmon released from beach seine operations in the Upper Subdistrict, targeting initiation of field work in the summer 2027 season
2. Contact Kintama Research Services, Wild Fish Conservancy, the University of British Columbia Pacific Salmon Ecology and Conservation Laboratory, or other organizations with documented experience in Pacific salmonid post-release mortality telemetry studies to explore collaboration, technical assistance, or peer review partnerships
3. Coordinate with NOAA Fisheries to determine whether NOAA's Bycatch Reduction Engineering
   Program or other federal funding mechanisms are available to support study costs
4. Publish the study design report by January 2027 and make it available for public comment before finalization
5. Report study results to the Board no later than 60 days before the 2027 Cook Inlet Finfish meeting with sufficient time for Board member review and preparation of written questions to ADF&G staff

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

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark (EF-F27-231)

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PROPOSAL 137

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Reduce the maximum length of commercial beach seines in the Upper Subdistrict, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 (Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan) and 5 AAC 21.332 (Cook Inlet Seine Specifications and Operations) to reduce the maximum authorized length of beach seines operated under the stock of concern management plan in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery from 70 fathoms to 35 fathoms (210 feet), hung measure. This maximum length applies to all beach seine configurations authorized under the stock of concern management plan, including shore-based pulley system seines and skiff-deployed mobile beach seines. All other existing beach seine specifications remain in effect.

PROPOSED REGULATORY LANGUAGE:

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 — wherever beach seine maximum length is specified:

Current text:

...a beach seine may not exceed 70 fathoms (420 feet)...

Proposed amended text:

...a beach seine may not exceed 35 fathoms (210 feet), hung measure...

Amend 5 AAC 21.332 (Cook Inlet Seine Specifications) conforming amendment:

Current text (where applicable):
...beach seine maximum length 70 fathoms...

Proposed amended text:

...beach seine maximum length 35 fathoms (210 feet), hung measure, for all operations under 5 AAC 21.382...

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

Proposal 192 (adopted May 2026) and the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan authorize beach seines up to 70 fathoms in length as alternative gear during stock of concern closures. This proposal argues that a 35-fathom maximum is more appropriate for five distinct and mutually reinforcing reasons, all supported by the Hollier experimental data and the operational realities of the ESSN fishery.

Reason 1: A 50-Fathom Seine Fits the DNR Shore Lease Site Footprint

DNR shore fishery leases in Cook Inlet authorize net sites of specific dimensions as shown in the shore fishery diagram on file with DNR for each lease. A 70-fathom (420-foot) beach seine, when deployed at a 45-degree angle from shore and allowed to billow and sweep through its tidal arc, creates an active gear footprint that in many cases exceeds the lateral and offshore boundaries of

a single approved net site. A 35-fathom (210-foot) seine, deployed at the same angle, fits within the footprint of the vast majority of approved Upper Subdistrict net sites without encroaching on adjacent sites or exceeding the seaward boundary of the lease. This is a critical compliance and enforcement advantage: a 35-fathom limit makes it geometrically possible for nearly all permit holders to remain within their approved site boundaries, while a 70-fathom limit creates routine boundary encroachment on typical Cook Inlet net sites.

Reason 2: Shorter Nets Reduce the Probability of Multiple King Salmon Encounters

A beach seine captures fish by sweeping a section of the water column to the beach. The larger the sweep area, the greater the number of fish of all species encountered on any given set. A 70-fathom seine sweeps a 100% larger area than a 35-fathom seine, meaning twice the probability of encountering a king salmon on any given set, all else being equal. In a fishery operating under a king salmon stock of concern management plan where the conservation objective is minimizing king mortality, reducing the net length that determines the sweep area is a direct and proportional conservation measure. The Hollier data, while limited, supports this direction: fewer king encounters per set on the 35-fathom configuration.

Reason 3: A 50-Fathom Limit Allows More Permit Holders to Participate

A 70-fathom beach seine requires substantially more seine webbing, a larger trailer or storage system, a more powerful retrieval system, and more beach area than a 35-fathom seine. These capital requirements effectively create a participation barrier that excludes permit holders with smaller sites, less equipment, or limited capital from entering the beach seine fishery. A 35-fathom maximum reduces capital requirements across the board and opens participation to a broader segment of the 400-plus permit holder fleet. The Hollier data demonstrates that a 35-fathom seine is fully commercially viable — 849 sockeye per average day is a productive commercial rate — so the reduction in net length does not sacrifice commercial viability.

Reason 4: A Shorter Beach Seine Keeps Commercial Dipnet Operations Closer to Shore

Commercial dipnets and beach seines operate under the same minimum gear spacing requirements. A 70-fathom beach seine deployed at a 45-degree angle from shore places the active end of the net substantially farther offshore than a 35-fathom seine, pushing the minimum distance boundary for dipnet operations farther offshore as well. This forces dipnet operators — who by the nature of their gear work best in shallow, nearshore water — to either move farther offshore than is optimal for their gear, or to concentrate in a narrower strip of nearshore water that is not occupied by beach seines. A 35-fathom maximum keeps beach seines closer to shore, preserves more nearshore water for dipnet operations, and reduces gear conflict between the two authorized alternative gear types.

Reason 5: A 50-Fathom Seine Can Be Retrieved with a Truck, Eliminating the Tractor Requirement

The Gabriel pulley system requires a tractor to haul a 70-fathom seine from the outside end back to shore. A tractor is a significant capital item and a meaningful operational barrier for permit

holders who have never needed one for setnet operations. A 50-fathom seine, because it is 40% shorter and proportionally lighter, can in many configurations be retrieved using a truck — equipment that many permit holders already own and use for beach access. This dramatically reduces the equipment barrier to beach seine entry and extends the gear's practical accessibility to a much larger portion of the fleet. The Hollier experimental data was generated using a 45-degree angle configuration specifically because it reduces the mechanical demand of retrieval compared to a perpendicular set — a 50-fathom net at 45 degrees is retrievable with equipment that most setnetters already have on the beach.

2. SCIENTIFIC BASIS—THE HOLLIER 2024 EXPERIMENTAL DATA

The primary scientific basis for this proposal is the catch data generated by Gary Hollier under Commissioner's Permit UCI-2024-03, operated at North Kalifornsky Beach from July 20 through July 31, 2024, observed by retired ADF&G Research Biologist Robert Begich. Hollier's experimental fishery is the only dataset in existence that directly compares catch performance between a 35-fathom and a 50-fathom beach seine configuration in Upper Cook Inlet, using the same operator, the same site, and the same 45-degree angle deployment method on consecutive fishing days.

The Hollier Deployment Configuration

Hollier fished the beach seine at a 45-degree angle from the shore, with one end of the net anchored to the beach and the active outside end of the seine fished at a 45-degree angle from the shoreline. This deployment method differs from the Gabriel pulley configuration and represents a distinct and highly relevant operational approach for permit holders considering skiff-deployed or angle-set beach seine methods. The 45-degree angle configuration is directly applicable to the broader fleet because it requires less beach infrastructure than a perpendicular pulley system and can be adapted to a wider range of site geometries.

Daily Catch Summary—UCL-2024-03 (Hollier)

Table 9 of the Begich report provides the following daily catch totals for North Kalifornsky Beach:

Date	Net Configuration	Net Length	Sockeye Caught	Kings Released	# Sets
Jul 20	35 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	262	1	11
Jul 23	35 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	1,052	0	19
Jul 25	35 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	1,234	0	19

Jul 27	50 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	832	0	17
Jul 28	50 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	976	2	18
Jul 30	50 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	548	0	20
Jul 31	50 Fathom — 45° angle from shore	35 fm	324	0	11
3-Day Total	**35 Fathom Net (Jul 20–25)**	**35 fm**	**2,548 sockeye**	**1 king**	**49 sets**
4-Day Total	**50 Fathom Net (Jul 27–31)**	**35 fm**	**2,680 sockeye**	**2 kings**	**66 sets**
Per-Day Average	**35 fm: 849 sockeye/day — 50 fm: 670 sockeye/day**	—	**+27% advantage for 35 fm**	**35 fm: 0.33/day — 100 fm: 0.50/day**	—

Key Finding: *The 35-fathom net (3 fishing days, July 20–25) produced an average of 849 sockeye per day and 1 king encounter across 49 sets. The 50-fathom net (4 fishing days, July 27–31) produced an average of 670 sockeye per day and 2 king encounters across 66 sets. The 35-fathom net outperformed the 50-fathom net by 27% on a per-day basis while generating fewer king encounters.*

What the Data Shows About Net Length and King Encounters

The Hollier dataset is small but directionally consistent on the king salmon encounter question. The 35-fathom net produced 1 king encounter across 49 sets (0.020 kings per set). The 50-fathom net produced 2 king encounters across 66 sets (0.030 kings per set). While the sample sizes are too small to draw statistically significant conclusions, the directional finding is consistent with the hypothesis that a shorter net sweeps a smaller portion of the water column and reduces the probability of a king salmon encounter on any given set. This is also consistent with the depth stratification research showing that king salmon migrate on average 3 meters deeper than sockeye— a shorter, shallower-sweeping net is less likely to reach king salmon depth on any given set.

4. COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE: 50-FATHOM VS. 70-FATHOM BEACH SEINES

Factor	35 Fathom (Proposed)	70 Fathom (Current Maximum)
Commercial Viability	849 sockeye/day avg (Hollier data)	670 sockeye/day avg on 100 fm (Hollier data); no 70 fm UCI data exists
King Salmon Encounter Rate	0.020 kings per set (Hollier data)	0.030 kings per set on 100 fm (Hollier data); 40% larger sweep area than 50 fm
DNR Lease Site Fit	Fits within most Upper Subdistrict net site footprints at 45° deployment	Exceeds boundaries of many typical net sites at 45° or perpendicular deployment
Retrieval Equipment Required	Truck or tractor; accessible to most permit holders	Tractor typically required; significant capital barrier
Storage and Transport	Standard utility trailer; manageable for most operators	Custom large trailer required (as used by Gabriel operation)
Estimated Fleet Participation	Broader — lower equipment threshold opens access to more permit holders	Narrower — capital requirements limit participation to well-equipped sites
Dipnet Nearshore Space	More nearshore water available to dipnet operators; less gear conflict	Active end farther offshore; compresses dipnet operating space
Experimental Data Available	Yes – Hollier UCI-2024-03 (3 days, 2,548 sockeye, 1 king, 35 fm)	No UCI data at 70fm; Hollier 50 fm data (4 days, 2,680 sockeye, 2 kings) serves as baseline

5. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

- Beach seines of up to 70 fathoms will be authorized without any Cook Inlet data demonstrating that this length is commercially superior to a 35-fathom seine — the Hollier data demonstrates it is not

- A 70-fathom maximum will routinely cause active gear footprints to exceed DNR net site boundaries when deployed at a 45-degree angle, creating enforcement ambiguity and adjacency conflicts
- Participation in the beach seine fishery will remain concentrated among the small number of permit holders with the tractor infrastructure and beach area necessary to manage a 70-fathom net, while a 35-fathom limit would open access to permit holders with only a truck
- Dipnet operators will be pushed farther offshore by the minimum distance requirement from 70-fathom seines, reducing the effectiveness of an already marginal gear type; a 35-fathom limit would keep seines closer to shore and preserve nearshore space for dipnets
- The opportunity to use the Hollier 2024 dataset as the basis for a data-driven, science-grounded net length standard will be missed, leaving the 70-fathom limit as an essentially arbitrary number unsupported by Upper Cook Inlet catch data

6. THE HOLLIER 45-DEGREE ANGLE CONFIGURATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE 50-FATHOM LIMIT

Gary Hollier's experimental beach seine was fished in a configuration distinct from the Gabriel pulley system: one end of the net was anchored to the beach, and the outside active end of the seine was deployed at a 45-degree angle from the shoreline. This creates a diagonal net wall that intercepts migrating salmon as they move parallel to shore without requiring the net to be perpendicular to the beach or to sweep a full tidal arc.

This configuration has several operational advantages that are directly relevant to the 35-fathom limit argument:

- A 45-degree angle set reduces the effective offshore penetration of the net compared to a perpendicular set of the same length. A 35-fathom net at 45 degrees reaches approximately 25 fathoms offshore — covering the nearshore sockeye migration corridor where depth stratification research confirms sockeye predominate over kings. This means a 35-fathom angled seine effectively targets the sockeye migration zone while using 50% less webbing than the current 70-fathom maximum.
- The 45-degree configuration can be retrieved by hauling the active end toward the shore anchor point, creating a natural closing motion that concentrates fish near the beach without requiring the full perpendicular sweep. This reduces the mechanical power required for retrieval, making truck-based retrieval fully viable for a 35-fathom net — a significant advantage over the tractor-dependent 70-fathom configuration.
- The angled configuration naturally limits the lateral footprint of the gear within the net site boundaries, making compliance with DNR site boundary requirements more practical than a perpendicular set of equal length.

The Hollier data is the only UCI dataset that directly tests commercial viability at 35 fathoms: *Three fishing days at 35 fathoms produced 2,548 sockeye at an average of 849 per day, with 1 king encountered and released. Four fishing days at 50 fathoms by the same operator at the same site produced 2,680 sockeye at an average of 670 per day with 2 kings encountered. The 35-fathom seine was 27% more productive per day with fewer king encounters—a compelling evidence base for a 35-fathom standard.*

7. WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Benefits:

1. King salmon conservation: a shorter maximum net length reduces per-set sweep area and, directionally, reduces the probability of king salmon encounters on each set
2. The majority of ESSN permit holders gain meaningful access to beach seine operations because the 35-fathom maximum reduces equipment requirements to a level achievable with a truck rather than a tractor
3. Commercial dipnet permit holders gain more nearshore operating space because 35-fathom seines keep the minimum distance boundary significantly closer to shore than 70-fathom or even 50-fathom seines
4. ADF&G and DNR gain a more enforceable net length standard that is more compatible with existing DNR shore fishery lease site footprints
5. The Board gains a net length standard grounded in actual Upper Cook Inlet experimental data from the Hollier UCI-2024-03 permit, rather than an arbitrary or industry-driven number

Potential adverse impacts:

6. Permit holders who have already invested in 70-fathom seine gear will need to shorten or replace their nets to comply with a 35-fathom limit. Shortening an existing seine is a relatively minor modification compared to the cost of the seine itself, and the Hollier data demonstrates that the shorter net is the higher-performing configuration
7. Some permit holders with very large beach sites may argue that a longer seine better fills their available beach. The Hollier data is direct and unambiguous on this point: the 35-fathom configuration outperformed the 50-fathom configuration at the same site by 27% per day, making the shorter net the better choice even on a large beach

8. HAS THIS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE?

The maximum beach seine length has not been specifically proposed as a standalone topic before the Board. The 70-fathom limit was incorporated into Proposal 192 (May 2026) and related regulatory language without a formal comparative analysis of catch performance at different net lengths. The Hollier UCI-2024-03 data comparing 35-fathom and 50-fathom net performance at the same site under the same operator is the first Upper Cook Inlet dataset that enables an evidence-based argument for a specific net length. This proposal is the first to bring that evidence to the Board as the basis for a specific length reduction to 35 fathoms.

9. REQUESTED ADF&G ACTION

Upon adoption of this proposal, the Board requests that ADF&G:

1. Include the Hollier UCI-2024-03 daily catch data (Table 9 of the Begich report) in all future beach seine regulatory documents and staff analyses as the primary Upper Cook Inlet dataset comparing 35-fathom and 50-fathom beach seine performance
2. Ensure that any experimental commissioner's permits for beach seine operations issued for the 2027
   season specify a 50-fathom maximum net length, consistent with this proposal
3. In post-release mortality studies requested under companion proposals, record whether tagged fish were captured from 35-fathom or longer seine operations, to allow future analysis of the relationship between net length and king salmon post-release survival
4. Work with DNR Shore Fishery Leasing to determine what percentage of existing Upper Subdistrict net site footprints can accommodate a 35-fathom beach seine deployed at a 45-degree angle without exceeding site boundaries, and include that analysis in the pre-meeting report to the Board

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

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark (EF-F27-238)

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PROPOSAL 138

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern action plan .

Repeal the commercial beach seine fishery in the Upper Subdistrict and allow commercial set gillnet fishing as described in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

2. **What solution do you prefer? In other words, how would the regulation read?**

Repeal the beach seine authorization for the ESSN fishery established on May 1, 2026, and restrict legal gear in the Upper Sub-District to stationary set gillnets and dipnets.

Proposed Language:

"In the Upper Sub-District, salmon may be taken by set gillnets and dipnets only, as defined in 5 AAC 39.105. The use of beach seines—including those authorized under Proposal 192—is prohibited. Because retention of Chinook salmon is not allowed, this repeal is necessary to minimize post-encounter mortality, uphold the conservation intent of 5 AAC 21.359, improve harvester safety, and maintain a monitoring framework that is practical and cost-effective."

1. What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Board's adoption of Proposal 192 (May 1, 2026) disproportionately targets the East Side Setnet (ESSN) fleet by mandating the use of beach seines—an active gear type that functions similarly to a "beach trawl." This requirement is physically and biologically incompatible with the recovery of Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon, currently designated as a Stock of Concern.

Critically, **retention of King salmon is not allowed**, meaning all Chinook encountered in this fishery must be released. Under this management standard, conservation depends not on capture-and-release, but on **avoiding interaction entirely or ensuring near-zero mortality upon release.**

Beach seines fundamentally conflict with the intent of the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.359), which prioritized minimizing mortality. ADF&G experimental data (2024) shows that beach seines drag fish through abrasive sand and glacial silt. In the turbid waters of the Upper Sub-District (USD), Chinook cannot be identified or released until after they have already experienced significant stress, including drag trauma, scale loss, and gill hypoxia.

Because retention is prohibited, this creates a critical biological problem:
fish must be released, but are first subjected to unavoidable stress and injury.

This results in elevated **post-encounter mortality**—mortality that occurs after release and cannot be directly measured in a marine environment. These losses are functionally equivalent to harvest from a conservation standpoint and undermine recovery of a stock of concern.

In contrast, selective harvest using dipnets from skiffs operating outside the surf zone allows for **near 100% clean recovery**:

- Fish are individually visible
- Non-target species can be immediately released
- No dragging, herding, or substrate contact occurs
- Post-encounter mortality is minimized to the greatest extent possible

Additionally, stationary set gillnets – defined in 5 AAC 39.105—reduce interaction rates with Chinook altogether through passive avoidance:

- ADF&G data indicates Chinook salmon tend to travel deeper in the water column, while set gillnets in the USD are limited to **29 meshes in depth**, fishing the upper portion of the water column.
- This creates vertical separation, allowing Chinook to **swim beneath the gear**.
- Mesh size is designed to target sockeye, making large Chinook less susceptible to gilling.
- Chinook are stronger swimmers and are more capable of **deflecting off or maneuvering around stationary webbing**.
- Because the gear is passive, fish are not herded or forced into contact—they can detect and avoid the net entirely.

This distinction is fundamental:

- **Active gear forces interaction, then attempt release after injury**
- **Passive gear allows avoidance, reducing interaction altogether**

Finally, requiring in-water sorting and release in low-visibility surf conditions in inherently difficult to verify and significantly more costly and complex to monitor than traditional stationary gear fisheries.

3. What will happen if this problem is not solved?

- **Continued Unaccounted Mortality:** Chinook will continue to be captured, stressed, and released under conditions that lead to delayed mortality that cannot be measured.
- **Violation of Conservation Intent:** A fishery with zero retention will still produce effective mortality through gear-induced injury.
- **Forced Interaction Model:** Active gear will continue to force encounters rather than minimize them.
- **Loss of True Selectivity:** Apparent selectivity will mask real biological impacts through post-release mortality.
- **Higher Monitoring Burden**: Oversight will remain more complex and costly than stationary gear management.

4. What specific actions will the board take to solve the problem?

The Board will recognize that, under a **no-retention standard for Chinook**, the only defensible approach is to **minimize interaction and maximize survival upon release**.

By restoring:

- **Stationary set gillnets**, which allow natural avoidance
- **Dipnets**, which allow immediate, visible, clean release

…the Board establishes a framework that aligns with conservation biology, reduces post-encounter mortality, and supports recovery of this stock of concern.

5. Who is likely to benefit from this proposal?

- **Kenai River Late-Run Chinook**: Reduced forced interactions and significantly improved survival outcomes.

- **ESSN Fleet**: A return to gear that is operationally practical and biologically defensible.

- **Fishery Management**: A system based on measurable avoidance and clean release rather than unquantifiable delayed mortality.

6. Who is likely to suffer from this proposal?

No identifiable group. Continuing the current approach imposes greater biological risk without conservation benefit.

7. Other solutions considered and rejected

- **Mandatory Observers:** Rejected due to high cost, logistical impracticality, and inability to account for post-encounter mortality.
- **Modified Seine Designs:** Rejected because any active gear that herds fish necessarily creates stress and delayed mortality, which cannot be eliminated through design.

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

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

PROPOSED BY: Erik Anderson (EF-F27-241)
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PROPOSAL 139

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan Amend the amount of commercial gear allowed to be used in the Upper Subdistrict in the Kenai River king salmon late-run stock of concern management plan, as follows:

Add language to make it even more clear that a holder of two SO4H permits can legally operate both permits in all SO4H fisheries in the stock of concern management plan.

5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

…

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1)(A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet **per permit** that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

…

(2)(A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet **per permit** that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

…

(3)(A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet **per permit** that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

…

(5) (C)a S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than four dip nets **per permit** at a time, each dip net must be operated by either the permit holder or an ADFG licensed crewmember;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern plan as currently written has caused some confusion regarding dual permit holders of limited entry Cook Inlet Setnet Permits (SO4H). Dual Permit use is long established in this fishery and is still in regulation. In fact, a majority of permits on the East Side are held by dual permit holders. The reasons for this are obvious and straightforward. This fishery is in a state of greatly reduced opportunity and has been for some time. Unsurprisingly this has contracted the fishery and substantially reduced the number of participants in basically all operations. Furthermore, repeated legislation introduced by the state legislature has made the transfer or permits risky and uncertain. In two places within the stock of concern plan there are reference of gear limitations "per permit holder". While everywhere else I have found in regulation "permit holder" is treated the same as "permit" there has surprisingly been some interpretation of this in the stock of concern plan as "per individual". I do not believe that is legally what the regulation states, because in the case of a legal dual permit holder the individual is simultaneously the "permit holder" of permit 1 and "permit holder" of permit 2, and there is certainly no legitimate reason a person should be unable to fish the legal gear for their legally held second permit.

For comparison the legal gear in the regulatory setnet fishery is defined as follows.

5 AAC 21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.

…

(d) A set gillnet may not be more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. South of the latitude of Anchor Point, 30 fathoms of seine webbing may be used on the shore between high and

low water levels. A person may not operate more than four set gillnets with more than 105 fathoms of set gillnet in the aggregate, except that

(1) on Fire Island a person may operate more than four set gillnets, but the aggregate length of the nets may not exceed 105 fathoms;

….

(i) A CFEC permit holder who holds two Cook Inlet set gillnet CFEC permits may operate an aggregate length of set gillnets not to exceed 210 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth, except that in the Upper Subdistrict no more than 105 fathoms in length may be more than 29 meshes in depth. A single set gillnet may not exceed 35 fathoms in length. Notwithstanding 5 AAC 39.280, in order to identify the gillnet as a dual permit set gillnet, the permit holder shall mark the buoys as specified in 5 AAC 21.334 with both of the permit holder's five-digit CFEC permit serial numbers followed by the letter "D" on the identification buoy. In addition, each set gillnet operated under this subsection that is not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at one end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter. All identifiers must be displayed in a manner that is plainly visible, unobscured, and in a color that contrasts with the background.

…

Clearly nothing about “A person may not operate more than four set gillnets with more than 105 fathoms of set gillnet in the aggregate” in (d) invalidates the rights of the permit holder to fish their second permit. As in this case there is some precedent for restrictions on the second permit of a dual permit holder, but I am unaware of any situations where a dual permit holder is somehow unable to use the second permit at all.

A second example of regulatory language that restricted setnet gear but clearly did not infringe on the rights of dual permit holders.

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

…

(e)(3)(G) if commercial fishing is limited under (e)(3) of this section, the operation of setnets operated by a CFEC permit holder shall be restricted to:

(i) up to four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length, 105 fathoms in aggregate length, and 29 meshes in depth, or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter; or

(ii) (ii) up to two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth or one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter.

…

Many openings were prosecuted under the above management plan and never was the phrase "permit holder" used to claim that a legal dual permit could not be utilized.

I could continue to list similar regulations, but it hardly seems like it should be necessary.

Quite simply it would contradict holding two permits and invalidates a significant number of limited entry permits from being used in the fishery which is an extremely prejudicial interpretation and clearly is just another attempted persecution of the East Side Setnet Fishery. The entire thing is ridiculous but since this inane interpretation has gone so far as to have been put into fisheries announcements by the department, here we are.

In the case of the stock of concern plan the permit holder is already severely restricted and I am a bit unsure of what further restrictions on a dual permit would be appropriate however I would be happy to put some blue tape on the second permit's dipnets.

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

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person (EF-F27-210)

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PROPOSAL 140

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Allow for commercial set gillnet fishing in the Upper Subdistrict in the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan, as follows:

Remove the restriction of one permit per person and implement the ability to use the second permit and gear that accompanies that permit in the Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Plan.

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Plan

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through June 30, when the preseason forecast of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit holder may use one set gillnet or dipnet per permit owned that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Area 244-31), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables

(2) from July 15 through July 27, when the in-season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and projection error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit holder may use one set gillnet or dipnet per permit ownedthat is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than four eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), five hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

(3) From July 28 through August 15, when the in season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, accounting for anticipated harvest, projection error and in season run strength, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit holder may use one set gillnet or dipnet per permit owned that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D)fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), five hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Dual permits were removed from the Kenai River Stock of Concern plan at the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet Finfish Meeting through board action at that meeting. That action removes the ability for a permit owner to utilize the dual permit within the plan.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed in coordination with Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries personnel in the Soldotna office. Their input helped ensure that the proposal is consistent with existing management frameworks, operational considerations, and enforceability within the Upper Cook Inlet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (EF-F27-220)

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PROPOSAL 141

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Allow for commercial set gillnet fishing in the Upper Subdistrict in the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan, as follows:

Reinstate paragraph (g). Give the 47 beach lease holders their seine option. Give the 361 offshore lease holders their set gillnet. Build the data record the Board says it needs. And let the r`ecovery trajectory that began in 2025 — achieved with setnets fishing — continue toward the three consecutive years that will bring this fishery out of the Stock of Concern plan.

5 AAC 21.382(g) — Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet Commercial Fishery

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through June 30, when the preseason forecast of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit ~~holder~~ may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Area 244-31), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

(2) from July 15 through **(JULY 31)** ~~July 27~~, when the ~~inseason~~ projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and projection error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit ~~holder~~ may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than four eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. **(FRIDAY)** ~~Thursday~~ and 7:00 a.m. **(SATURDAY)** ~~Friday~~;

(D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), **(SIX)** ~~five~~ hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

(3) from **(AUGUST 1)** ~~July 28~~ through August 15, when the ~~inseason~~ projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, accounting for anticipated harvest, projection error and inseason run strength, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit ~~holder~~ may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. **(FRIDAY)** ~~Thursday~~ and 7:00 a.m. **(SATURDAY)** ~~Friday~~;

(D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), **(SIX)** ~~five~~ hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

(4) in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery, notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.365, and 5 AAC 21.360(c)(1)(B), (2)(B), and (3)(B), commercial fishing periods will be based on the abundance of sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers;

(5) ONE ADDITIONAL 8 HOUR PERIOD IS AUTHORIZED PER WEEK WHEN THE PROJECTION OF KING SALMON 75 CM MID EYE TO TAIL FORK AND LONGER IS GREATER THAN 18,000 FISH, ACCOUNTING FOR ANTICIPATED HARVEST, PROJECTION ERROR AND INSEASON RUN STRENGTH;

(6) ONE ADDITIONAL 8 HOUR PERIOD IS AUTHORIZED PER WEEK ON EVEN YEARS TO HARVEST SURPLUS PINK SALMON;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I respectfully submit this proposal seeking the reinstatement of paragraph (g) of 5 AAC 21.382 — the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan — exactly as it was codified prior to the Board's action at the 2026 Special Meeting. The Board removed paragraph (g), which governed the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery's conditional access provisions, from the SOC plan at that meeting.

I support beach seines as an alternative gear type and have actively participated in the research and regulatory development of that gear method, including as crew during the 2024 Commissioner's Permit experiments. This proposal is not opposition to beach seining. It is a request to restore the set gillnet as a *co-equal and complementary* gear option within the SOC plan — the *only* option available to the 361 of 408 SO4H permit holders whose offshore lease sites make beach seining physically impossible regardless of willingness, capital investment, or operational expertise. For

those 361 permit holders, the board's action at the 2026 Special Meeting was not a gear substitution. It was a complete closure.

The ESSN fishery has been subject to continuous, incremental regulatory restriction since 1976. Each step was accepted by the permit holder community in good faith, with the understanding that restrictions were proportional to documented conservation need and that reasonable fishing opportunity would be preserved. The following timeline documents every significant gear and access reduction this Board has imposed:

Before presenting the Chinook harvest data, this Board should consider the record of who brought this issue forward and what that user group has demonstrated. During the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet meeting, members of this permit holder community — the people with the most to lose from any outcome — spent two weeks working collaboratively with ADF&G staff to develop the operational conditions now found in the SOC management plan. This was not a perfunctory stakeholder process. It was a substantive, two-week technical collaboration that produced specific, practical recommendations grounded in decades of operational local and traditional knowledge of these beaches, these tides, and these fish.

Among the key recommendations brought forward by the user group and adopted by ADF&G into the Commissioner's Permit conditions:

Rolling tide openers. Fishing periods timed to coincide with tidal movement rather than fixed clock windows, to maximize sockeye passage through the gear while reducing the likelihood of Chinook encounters at slack and low water.

Leadlines off the bottom. Knowing that Chinook salmon run in deeper waters, this community adopted the operational practice of keeping lead lines above the substrate during sets — directly consistent with the depth stratification data produced by the Kintama Research Services net depth studies, which showed Chinook migrate lower in the water column than sockeye.

Preservation of access for all 408 permit holders. The user group identified that beach setnets historically catch lower rates of Chinook and had the option to advocate for a beach-only setnet fishery. They did not. They affirmatively argued for preserving reasonable opportunity for all 408 permit holders, including the 361 who cannot fish seines, because eliminating 88.5% of fishing families from opportunity was not acceptable regardless of the gear efficiency argument. We know less chinook are caught on the beaches. This data point is shown time and again when the 600 ft set net fishery was implemented. Instead of going to a pure beach set net fishery, the industry wanted equal access and protection under the law for limited fishery before that was stripped away in an out of cycle online only meeting.

ADF&G adopted these recommendations into the SOC action plan. The 2025 ESSN openers on August 5 and 6 were timed around high tide with prescribed gear restrictions consistent with these recommendations. The result: 7 Chinook in 42,992 sockeye across two openers, with the SOC recovery goal achieved for the first time. Only 4 of those 7 were likely large Kenai River-bound Chinook based on ADF&G genetic stock composition estimates (64% Kenai River stock composition applied to the 6 large fish ≥75 cm).

This user group has participated in good faith at every step of this process. We accepted a decade of progressive gear reduction — from six nets at 45 meshes deep to one net at 29 meshes deep, with stacking prohibited. We spent two weeks at the 2024 UCI meeting working collaboratively with ADF&G to develop operational conditions that produced an orderly fishery and single-digit Chinook harvest. We supported the 2024 Commissioner's Permit beach seine experiments. We accepted the results and came back to this Board asking for the alternative-gear framework those results support — beach seines for the 47 shore lease holders, set gillnets conditionally for the 361 offshore lease holders.

The 2025 data validated everything this community predicted. The SOC recovery goal was achieved with setnets fishing. The effective large Kenai River Chinook harvest of the ESSN setnet fleet was approximately 4 fish — 0.026% of escapement. A fully prosecuted setnet season would have produced approximately 15 large Kenai River Chinook. That number is less than the personal use dip net fishery averages annually as prohibited-species incidental bycatch ad unknown post release mortality in the same waters, and less than the inriver sport fishery's estimated Chinook contribution.

Paragraph (g) of 5 AAC 21.382 is the foundational commercial equal access provision for 361 of 408 SO4H permit holders during the SOC plan period. It was carefully constructed, peer-reviewed by ADF&G staff, adopted through public process, and validated by the 2025 season results. It achieved its conservation purpose while preserving conditional access for permit holders when stock projections supported it. This proposal asks the Board to restore what was working so that the ESSN setnet fishery retains its traditional method and management pathway alongside the beach seine program while the stock continues the three-consecutive-year recovery trajectory that began in 2025.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Norman (EF-F27-213)

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PROPOSAL 142

5 AAC5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Allow for commercial set gillnet fishing in the Upper Subdistrict in the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan, as follows:

Add set gill nets as a gear type into the Kenai River Stock of Concern Plan language as a legal gear type. Creating a fixed 12 hour opener between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm removes any bias towards statistical areas from ADFG, which is tasked with creating the openers. All fishermen from each statistical area have an equal opportunity to harvest fish without any allocative concerns from the department. The department still determines the harvest days based on available windows and abundance. Add the following language:

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Plan

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through June 30, when the preseason forecast of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery **Kasilof Section** may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than **four** twelve hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will be from **7:00 am until 7:00 pm**

(2) from July 1 through July 14, when the in-season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and projection error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than four **twelve** hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will be from **7:00 am until 7:00 pm.**

(3) from July 15 through July 27, when the in-season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and projection error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than four **twelve hour** periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will be from **7:00 am until 7:00 pm.**

(4) From July 28 through August 15, when the in season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish,accounting for anticipated harvest, projection error and in season run strength, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35

fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;
(B) is open for not more than four **twelve** hour periods;
(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;
(D)fishery openings will be from **7:00 am until 7:00 pm.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The creation of an eight hour majority flood fishery has reduced the harvest capacity of sockeye salmon on Salamatof and East Forelands beaches by 70-80% of what would be otherwise achievable on a traditional 12 hour opener. Additionally, it reduces the harvest capacity of all statistical areas, which is unjustified when fishing in abundance

Due to the extreme currents in the Cook Inlet, offshore nets need to be pulled at high slack water due to the inability to remove them before a closure. This eliminates the majority of gear from harvesting sockeye when the nets are most effective. No parity between statistical areas and gear types is achieved if the time allocated to fishermen is not able to be fished.

Historically, on twelve hour openers there are lulls in the fishery which allow for fish delivery. Under the current regulations no lulls in the fishery exist when fish have been harvested. This necessitates holding fish until the end of the opener, reducing the overall quality of product.

No studies have been performed that show king harvest increases when fishing at low slack water for the East Side Setnet fishery. This is partly due to the pattern that the fish swim. Salmon move offshore at low slack water, making beach nets ineffective in comparison to outside gear.

It has been observed that large kings are more likely to be caught on the flood tide. It is assumed that this is their inability for net avoidance during strong flood currents.

When fishing on abundance some king mortality is acceptable. Allowing fishermen to fish when sockeye are moving allows for harvest opportunities when fish are present.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (EF-F27-215)
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PROPOSAL 143

5 AAC5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

Allow for commercial set gillnet fishing in the Upper Subdistrict in the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan, as follows:

Add set gill nets as a gear type into the Kenai River Stock of Concern Plan language as adopted at the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting. The plan will be under review at the full 2027 Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting and will be available for discussion and changes throughout that meeting. This language will be subject to stakeholder recommended language changes at that meeting.

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Plan

(g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through June 30, when the preseason forecast of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Area 244-31), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

(2) from July 15 through July 27, when the in-season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and projection error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than four eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), five hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables;

(3) From July 28 through August 15, when the in season projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, accounting for anticipated harvest, projection error and in season run strength, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows:

(A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods;

(C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D)fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows:

(i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), five hours later than the Seldovia District low tide;

(iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Gillnets were removed from the Kenai River Stock of Concern plan at the Special meeting on May 1, 2026 through board action at that meeting. That action removes gill nets as an available gear type that denies access to the fishery resource if the recovery goal is projected to be met during the season with set beach seines or with dipnets outside of the projection. There was no biological or harvest data that supported removing gill nets from the SOC Plan.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (EF-F27-216)

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PROPOSAL 144

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Allow for commercial set gillnet fishing in the Kasilof Special Harvest Area, as follows:

REQUEST: Amend Section (h) of the Stock of Concern Action Plan to authorize limited commercial fishing in the KRSHA under the following conditions:

(1) KRSHA openings are permitted only when the Upper Subdistrict east side set gillnet fishery is closed or restricted due to Kenai River late-run Chinook Stock of Concern triggers;

(2) KRSHA openings are subject to a maximum net depth of 29 meshes (shallow gear, consistent with ADF&G selective gear research findings);

(3) KRSHA openings are limited to no more than three 8-hour tidal periods per week, by Emergency Order only, conditioned on Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement meeting or exceeding the minimum SEG;

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

What Is the KRSHA and Why Is It Currently Closed

The Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) is a defined commercial set gillnet area adjacent to the mouth of the Kasilof River in Upper Cook Inlet. Historically, the KRSHA has been used by set gillnet permit holders to harvest Kasilof River sockeye salmon during the June–July season. The area lies approximately 10 miles south of the Kenai River mouth, is bounded near the shoreline, and operates in relatively shallow nearshore water distinct from the offshore drift gillnet fishery corridor.

The Stock of Concern Action Plan adopted by the Board in March 2024 includes a blanket provision — Section (h) — that closes the KRSHA entirely to commercial fishing for the duration of the Stock of Concern period. This closure was adopted as a precautionary measure to reduce the total Chinook mortality footprint across all Cook Inlet commercial fisheries during the recovery period. The intent was sound. However, the effect of the complete KRSHA closure — combined with parallel restrictions on east side set gillnet openings and drift gillnet fishing periods — has been to eliminate a significant portion of commercial harvest opportunity without a corresponding, demonstrated reduction in Kenai Chinook mortality specifically attributable to the KRSHA.

The Economic Impact of the Blanket KRSHA Closure

Upper Cook Inlet commercial set gillnet permit holders have experienced severe consecutive seasons of restricted or eliminated harvest opportunity since the Stock of Concern designation. In 2024, the east side set gillnet fishery was closed for extended periods, the KRSHA was entirely closed, and drift openings in state waters were severely curtailed while the EEZ transition to federal management reduced fleet flexibility further. The cumulative economic impact on the 408 set gillnet permit holders in the Upper Subdistrict — many of them small family operations — has been substantial.

Critically, the harm falls disproportionately on permit holders whose primary harvest opportunity is the KRSHA and Kasilof section — those fishing closest to shore in the lower-bycatch portion

of the fishery — rather than on the operators of offshore gear whose interactions with Kenai Chinook are demonstrably higher. A blanket KRSHA closure imposes its greatest cost on the segment of the fleet least responsible for Kenai Chinook bycatch.

THE CASE FOR THE KRSHA AS A LOWER CATCH ALTERNATIVE

Geographic Separation From Peak Kenai Chinook Migration Corridor

The Kasilof River Special Harvest Area is geographically distinct from the primary Kenai River Chinook migration corridor. Kenai River-bound Chinook migrate through the deeper, more offshore water column of central Cook Inlet before turning toward the Kenai River mouth. The KRSHA, by contrast, is a nearshore area targeting sockeye salmon staging at and entering the Kasilof River — a separate river system with its own distinct salmon population.

The spatial separation between Kasilof-bound sockeye schools and Kenai-bound Chinook is not complete — there is overlap in the marine corridor. However, the KRSHA's proximity to the Kasilof River mouth means that fish present in the KRSHA are predominantly Kasilof-origin sockeye rather than Kenai-origin Chinook in transit. This geographic distinction is the foundation of the argument for targeted KRSHA openings as an alternative to openings in areas with higher Kenai Chinook exposure.

Shallow Gear Reduces Chinook Encounter Rate

ADF&G's 2023 selective gear study examined the relationship between net depth and Chinook bycatch in the Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet fishery. The research was motivated by the finding that Chinook salmon are believed to travel more deeply in the water column than sockeye, which are surface-oriented. The study evaluated shallow nets of 15, 22, and 29 meshes against the traditional 45-mesh net at various water depths and distances from shore.

The research conclusion was that shallower nets operated near shore could selectively harvest surface-oriented sockeye while reducing encounters with deeper-traveling Chinook. The proposed 29-mesh maximum for KRSHA openings during Stock of Concern periods directly incorporates this finding, applying the most Chinook-protective gear configuration available within the set gillnet framework.

The KRSHA, as a nearshore area with relatively shallow water over much of its extent, is particularly well-suited to the application of shallow gear. The combination of nearshore geography and shallow net depth makes the KRSHA the most defensible commercial harvest location available in Upper Cook Inlet during Stock of Concern periods.

Kasilof Sockeye as a Distinct Harvestable Surplus

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run is one of the most productive in Upper Cook Inlet, supported in part by the Tustumena Lake hatchery stocking program that has produced a robust, self-sustaining run. The Kasilof River sockeye OEG is 300,000 fish. In most years the run significantly exceeds this goal, creating a genuine harvestable surplus that — under the blanket KRSHA closure — is left in the river or harvested only by personal use dipnet and set gillnet permit holders.

Opening the KRSHA for limited commercial harvest of Kasilof sockeye surplus during Stock of Concern periods is not a conservation risk to the Kasilof system — it is a targeted harvest of fish

that exceed the escapement goal — conditioned on the sonar data confirming that the Kasilof SEG is met or on track to be met before any KRSHA opening is authorized.

THE ALLOCATION AND EQUITY ARGUMENT

The Blanket Closure Imposes Costs Inequitably

The Stock of Concern Action Plan's overriding conservation objective — protecting Kenai Chinook during a period of record-low abundance — is legitimate and appropriate. However, the method of achieving that objective through a blanket KRSHA closure raises a fundamental fairness question: why should permit holders operating in the lower catch nearshore fishery bear the same complete exclusion from the resource as operators whose gear and geography create the higher Chinook encounter rates?

ADF&G's own genetic stock analysis of the east side set gillnet fishery found that Kenai River mainstem Chinook constituted an average of 64% of all Chinook caught commercially in Upper Cook Inlet — a figure derived specifically from the east side set gillnet fishery. No comparable genetic stock composition analysis has been conducted specifically for the KRSHA. The blanket closure of the KRSHA is therefore not founded on equivalent evidence of Kenai Chinook impact from that area.

A Proportionate Response Preserves Both Conservation and Economic Viability

Alaska's sustained yield obligation under Article VIII of the Constitution requires not just protection of fish stocks but their utilization for maximum benefit of Alaskans. A regulatory structure that provides no commercial harvest opportunity for sockeye salmon that exceed escapement goals — simply because the entire fishery is shut down to address a problem primarily associated with a different gear type and location — fails to maximize the benefit of the Kasilof River sockeye resource for the Alaskan public.

The conditioned KRSHA opening framework proposed here is proportionate. It imposes the strictest gear restrictions available within the set gillnet framework, limits openings to the shortest practical periods, prohibits Chinook retention, requires Chinook reporting for ADF&G monitoring, and conditions any opening on confirmed Kasilof sockeye surplus. It allows the fleet segment least responsible for Kenai Chinook bycatch to participate in a harvest that does not meaningfully increase the total mortality on the Stock of Concern.

POLICY SUPPORT

Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.365)

The existing Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan provides a management framework within which the KRSHA has historically operated. The Stock of Concern Action Plan's Section (h) overrides that plan with a blanket closure. This proposal does not eliminate Section (h) — it amends it to allow limited, conditioned openings that are consistent with the Kasilof River plan's management objectives while incorporating the Chinook-protective conditions required by the Stock of Concern context.

ADF&G Selective Gear Research (2023)

The Board directed ADF&G to conduct a selective gear study as part of the Stock of Concern response. That study identified shallow nets as a viable mechanism for reducing Chinook bycatch in set gillnet operations. The KRSHA shallow-gear conditioned opening proposed here is the first regulatory application of those research findings — it converts the Department's own science into

a management rule rather than leaving the research result unused on a shelf while the fleet is simply closed out of the fishery.

Alaska Sustainable Salmon Policy (5 AAC 39.222)

The Sustainable Salmon Policy directs the Board to maintain harvest opportunities for harvestable surplus while meeting escapement goals. Kasilof River sockeye in excess of the minimum SEG are a harvestable surplus. The Policy does not contemplate leaving such surplus unharvested as a precautionary measure when a lower catch, conditioned harvest framework is available. This proposal operationalizes the Policy's dual mandate of conservation and sustained utilization.

DATA NEEDS — MAKING THE KRSHA A MONITORING PLATFORM

One of the most significant deficiencies in current Upper Cook Inlet management is the absence of Chinook bycatch data specific to the KRSHA and Kasilof nearshore area. The blanket closure prevents collection of the very data that would allow the Board to make evidence-based decisions about the KRSHA's impact on Kenai Chinook.

The proposed conditioned opening framework — with mandatory Chinook reporting on fish tickets and 20% observer coverage — would generate the KRSHA-specific bycatch data currently lacking. Within two to three seasons of limited openings, ADF&G would have empirical KRSHA Chinook encounter rates, size composition data, and genetic stock composition samples that would allow the Board to evaluate the program's conservation performance and adjust the framework accordingly.

In this sense, the proposal does not just request commercial access — it requests the creation of a monitored, data-generating program that improves the evidentiary basis for all future KRSHA management decisions under the Stock of Concern framework.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-223)

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PROPOSAL 145

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Establish commercial set gillnet fishery opportunity in the *Kenai River late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan*, as follows:

I would like to have BGP 192, deleted from regulation, and replaced with the original SOC, 5 AAC 21.382., as written up in the Cook Inlet Commercial Salmon Statewide Regulations, 2024-2027.

In essence eliminate set beach seines and put back set gillnets in the plan.

This SOC plan was implemented , in cycle, at the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet meeting. Much time and effort, by all user groups, committee of the whole process and much discussion in the hallways, was put into the SOC plan that was passed at the 2024 meeting.

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

On May 1,2026, the Board of Fish passed BGP 192. 192 eliminated set gillnets in the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan (SOC).

BGP 192 replaced set gillnets and would allow for the use set beach seine, as defined in 5 AAC 39.105(6), as an alternative gear type for holders of a SO4H CFEC permit.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No I developed this proposal myself.

PROPOSED BY: Gary L Hollier (EF-F27-226)

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PROPOSAL 146

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Establish commercial set gillnet opportunity in the Upper Subdistrict on Mondays and Thursdays beginning July 10, as follows:

Open setnetting for beach nets on July 10th 7am-7pm Mondays + Thursdays.

All users should benefit in times of abundance.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Closure of the set net fishery.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have served on the Central Peninsula Advisory Committee since 1984.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs (EF-F27-247)

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PROPOSAL 147

5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan
5 AAC 77.540 Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Close the personal use dipnet fishery on the Kenai River when Kenai River late-run king salmon are designated as a stock of concern, as follows:

REQUEST: Amend the Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan and the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Action Plan to automatically suspend all personal use dipnet fishing in the Kenai River whenever the late-run Kenai River Chinook salmon stock is designated a Stock of Concern.

The suspension shall remain in effect until the department can project that the recovery goal of 14,250 large king salmon (>75 cm mid eye to tail fork), including harvest and forecast error, will be achieved — the same threshold that governs whether the East Side Set Gillnet fishery may open under the SOC Action Plan.

CORE ARGUMENT: The Stock of Concern Action Plan holds the commercial east side set gillnet (ESSN) fishery to a strict Chinook harvest accountability standard: ESSN openings are prohibited unless the recovery goal is projected to be met. In 2025, the ESSN opened for just two 8-hour periods and reported 7 Chinook on fish tickets. 6 were large and 64% of the chinook in the ESSN fishery are Kenai bound. An entire gar type was eliminated for 4 large chinook.

The personal use dipnet fishery operates under no equivalent accountability. ADF&G's own harvest records show the dipnet fishery reported retaining as many as 1,509 Chinook in a single season — a documented harvest rate that, when adjusted for post-release mortality of incidentally caught fish, certainly exceeds the total Chinook impact of the ESSN in restricted years. Yet the ESSN is closed while the dipnet fishery continues to operate.

The Board's constitutional obligation under Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution and the Sustainable Salmon Policy (5 AAC 39.222) requires that conservation burdens be distributed on the basis of biological necessity, not administrative convenience. The dipnet fishery's Chinook impact is not measured, not managed, and not accountable. That must change.

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

DOCUMENTED CHINOOK HARVEST RECORD – PERSONAL USE DIPNET FISHERY

ADF&G Report Harvest Data: 2006-2025

The following table is compiled directly from ADF&G annual harvest reports and emergency

order records. It presents the reported retained Chinook harvest from the Kenai River personal use dipnet fishery alongside the late-run escapement and the calculated exploitation rate for each year. Post-release mortality from incidentally encountered fish — which ADF&G has never measured — is not included and represents additional unaccounted mortality above these figures.

Season	Retention Status	Reported Chinook Retained (ADF&G)	Late-Run Escapement	Dip net Exploitation Rate (retained)	ESSN Status Same Year
2006	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	1,034	40,911	2.5%	Open
2007	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	1,509	31,276	4.8%	Open
2008	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	1,362	30,001	4.5%	Open
2009	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	1,189	13,425	8.8%	Restricted
2010	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	865	16,541	5.2%	Restricted
2011	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	1,234	23,427	5.2%	Open
2012	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	40	23,427	0.17%	Restricted
2013	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	11	12,719	0.09%	Restricted

2014	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	0	11,548	0%	Closed
2015	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	66	16,857	0.39%	Restricted
2016	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	638	15,652	4.0%	Restricted
2017	Retention permitted — 1 king per household	1,194	20,583	5.8%	Restricted
2018	PROHIBITED by EO — mandatory release	7 (unreported illegal retention)	17,405	0.04% (retained only)	Closed
2019	PROHIBITED by EO — mandatory release	30 (unreported illegal retention)	11,709	0.26%	Closed
2020	PROHIBITED by EO — mandatory release	23 (unreported illegal retention)	11,854	0.19%	Closed
2021	PROHIBITED by EO — mandatory release	50 (unreported illegal retention)	12,238	0.41%	Closed
2022	PROHIBITED by EO — mandatory release	13 (unreported illegal retention)	13,911	0.09%	Closed
2023	PROHIBITED by EO — mandatory release	29 (unreported illegal retention)	14,502	0.20%	Closed
2024	PROHIBITED — Stock	10 (unreported	6,959	0.14%	Closed

	of Concern	illegal retention)			
2025	PROHIBITED — Stock of Concern	Unknown — dept. did not publish	15,641	Unknown	Open — 2 periods; 7 Chinook on fish tickets

Note: Retained Chinook reported during EO-prohibited years (2018–2024) represent **known, documented non-compliance with the mandatory release requirement**. These fish were retained illegally. The actual number of Chinook incidentally encountered, stressed, and released — with unknown post-release survival — is a separate and entirely unquantified figure. These reported illegal retentions represent only the subset of non-compliance that was recorded; total non-compliant interactions are likely far higher.

The Peak Harvest Exploitation Context – What 1,189 Chinook Means

In 2009, 1,189 Chinook salmon were retained by personal use dipnet permit holders. In that same year, the late-run escapement was 13,425 fish. The **dipnet exploitation rate was 8.8%** of the run with an unknown mortality rate of released fish.

The average exploitation rate from 2006-2011 is 5.17%. Meaning, we know for a fact, the dip net fishery has an interaction rate of at least 5.17% of the total escapement. If we apply that exploitation rate to 2024 run of 6,959 fish then we can project 359 chinook were catch. But what is the post release mortality? It's an unknown amount, but likely on par with purse seine mortality. This illustrates why the mandatory release requirement is not sufficient protection when incidental encounter rates remain unquantified: the fishery's historical demonstrated capacity to harvest Chinook when retention is permitted is large relative to the current run size.

THE CENTRAL DISPARITY – DIPNET VS. ESSN UNDER THE SOC PLAN

What the SOC Plan Requires of the East Side Set Gillnet Fleet

The Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Action Plan holds the commercial East Side Set Gillnet (ESSN) fishery to a rigorous, quantified Chinook accountability standard:

- The ESSN fishery is closed unless ADF&G can project that the Chinook recovery goal of 14,250 large fish, including harvest and forecast error, will be achieved.

- When openings are allowed, each permit holder is limited to one set gillnet per permit, no more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth.
- Openings are limited to specific 8-hour tidal windows with mandatory 48-hour separation between periods.
- All Chinook salmon incidentally caught in the ESSN must be reported on fish tickets and retained for ADF&G sampling — creating a documented, verifiable record of every Chinook the fishery contacts.
- In 2025 — the first year the recovery goal was achieved since the SOC designation — the ESSN was permitted only two 8-hour openings, during which 7 Chinook were reported on fish tickets, but only 6 were large and an unknown number were Kenai bound. Based on the genetics of the ESSN mixed stock fishery, we know that 64% of chinook caught in the ESSN fishery are Kenai bound. We can apply this percentage to the 6 total large fish and determine that only 4 of those large fish were Kenai bound.

What the SOC Plan Requires of the Personal Use Dipnet Fleet

- Chinook retention is prohibited by Emergency Order.
- Incidentally caught Chinook must be immediately released.
- No monitoring of incidental encounter rates.
- No reporting of incidental encounters on harvest reports.
- No observer coverage or verification of compliance with mandatory release.
- No fish ticket equivalent — Chinook contacts are entirely undocumented.
- No threshold requirement — the dipnet fishery opens July 10 regardless of Chinook run strength or recovery goal status.

Total documented 2025 personal use dipnet Chinook impact: **Unknown.** As of 7 May 2026, ADF&G did not publish a 2025 dipnet Chinook incidental harvest report. The number of Chinook incidentally encountered, stressed, and released — with unknown post-release survival — across 26,000+ permit holders fishing 22 days at the river mouth was not measured, estimated, or reported.

Accountability Element	ESSN Commercial Fishery (SOC Plan)	Personal Use Dipnet Fishery (SOC Plan)
Chinook retention prohibited	YES — mandatory release or retention for ADF&G sampling	YES — mandatory release by EO
Opening threshold linked to Chinook recovery goal	YES — closed unless 14,250 large fish projected	NO — opens July 10 regardless of run strength

Chinook contacts recorded and reported	YES — all Chinook reported on fish tickets; retained for ADF&G sampling	NO — no reporting requirement for incidental encounters
Post-release mortality monitored	N/A — retained Chinook = verified harvest	NO — never studied; estimated at 15–45% based on comparable gear literature
Observer coverage	Available for ADF&G inspection	None — 26,000+ dispersed households across tidal zone
Documented 2025 Chinook impact	8 fish (7 ESSN fish tickets + 1 commercial dip net)	Unknown — not measured or published
Maximum documented single-season Chinook retention	Not applicable under SOC closure	1,509 fish (2007) — ADF&G harvest records
Gear depth restriction	YES — 29 meshes maximum under SOC	None
Operating period restriction	YES — maximum 8-hour tidal windows with 48-hr separation	None — continuous July 10–31

THE DISPARITY IN ONE SENTENCE:

The SOC Plan restricts the ESSN to a maximum of 8 fish documented on fish tickets in 2025—and only because the recovery goal was projected to be met for the first time since the designation. The personal use dipnet fishery operated for 22 days across 26,000+ households with zero documentation of Chinook encounters, zero post-release mortality data, and no threshold condition tied to Chinook recovery.

This is not equitable conservation management. It is selective burden-sharing that holds one fishery to a standard of near-zero documented Chinook impact while leaving another fishery's Chinook impact entirely unmeasured.

THE UNACCOUNTED MORTALITY – POST-RELEASE CHINOOK IN THE DIPNET FISHERY

Why Mandatory Release Is Not Equivalent to Zero Chinook Mortality

The SOC Plan's mandatory release requirement for dipnet Chinook is presented as a conservation measure equivalent in effect to the ESSN's closed status. It is not. The ESSN, when closed, produces zero Chinook contact and zero Chinook mortality. The mandatory release requirement for the dipnet fishery produces an unknown number of Chinook contacts and an unknown number of Chinook deaths through post-release mortality — neither of which is measured. What we do know is the dip net fishery has a historical 5.17% capture rate.

The dipnet capture mechanism imposes substantial physiological stress: net mesh entanglement causing scale loss and mucus removal; crowding stress in the bag net with oxygen depletion and cortisol surge; air exposure during identification and release — which requires the fish to be lifted from the water or dragged to shore in mud and gravel for identification; warm tidal zone water temperatures (15–18°C) during July, near or above the threshold where post-release mortality sharply accelerates; and predation vulnerability during the recovery window in a tidal zone with high harbor seal density.

Applying Literature-Based Mortality Rates to the Known Encounter Range

Scientific literature on comparable gear interactions, purse seine of adult Pacific salmon during spawning migration — documents post-release mortality of 26–45%, with the highest rates occurring when scale loss, air exposure, and warm water temperatures combine. Dipnet conditions during July in the lower Kenai River meet all three criteria.

Specific to 2025 we have a baseline minimum of 5.17% capture rate. We also know the final escapement was 15, 641. If we apply the capture rate we get 808 chinook. The question now becomes how to apply mortality. **Even a modest mortality estimate of 15% would result in 121 chinook killed after release.** The burden of conservation has fallen on the shoulder of one user group. With a documented harvest of 4 fish or .05% of the dip net fishery. The ESSN fishery hasn't harvested anywhere near 121 chinook in over a decade, yet the dip net fishery has operated with impunity and in fact been liberalized.

Scenario	Est. Chinook Encounters (26,000 permits, 22 days)	15% Post-Release Mortality	30% Post-Release Mortality	45% Post-Release Mortality	Comparable ESSN Chinook Impact
Conservative (1 per 200	~500	75 fish	150 fish	225 fish	2025 ESSN: 8 fish

active households)					(documented)
Moderate (1 per 75 active households)	~1,500	225 fish	450 fish	675 fish	2025 ESSN: 8 fish (documented)
High (1 per 35 active households)	~3,000	450 fish	900 fish	1,350 fish	2025 ESSN: 8 fish (documented)
Historical Peak (peak participation year)	5,000+	750 fish	1,500 fish	2,250 fish	ESSN 2007 (open): est. 400–800 fish

Under every plausible encounter scenario, estimated dipnet post-release Chinook mortality **substantially exceeds the documented ESSN Chinook impact under SOC plan restrictions**. The ESSN's 7 documented Chinook contacts in 2025 represent the most conservative possible estimate of its impact. The dipnet fishery's Chinook impact cannot be compared because it has never been measured — which is itself the problem this proposal addresses.

THE NON-COMPLIANCE BASELINE – WHAT THE KNOWN ILLEGAL RETENTION REVEALS

ADF&G harvest records document Chinook salmon retained during EO-prohibited years (2018–2024) as follows: 7 fish (2018), 30 fish (2019), 23 fish (2020), 50 fish (2021), 13 fish (2022), 29 fish (2023), and 10 fish (2024). These are Chinook that permit holders retained and reported despite a mandatory release requirement. They are the observed, self-reported floor of non-compliance with an unobservable behavioral requirement.

The Alaska Public Records Act request for exact permit issuance vs. return data is recommended to quantify the non-reporting rate precisely. Based on available ADF&G and City of Kenai annual reports, non-reporting rates of 10–20% annually — representing 2,600–6,400 households — have been documented in the fishery. If permit holders do not comply with a simple online reporting requirement carrying a $200 fine and loss of future access, there is no scientific or administrative basis to assume compliance with a mandatory immediate-release requirement that is **unobservable, unverifiable, and carries no enforcement mechanism at the scale of 26,000+ households.**

Why the ESSN Threshold Is the Correct Standard for the Dipnet Fishery

The SOC Action Plan already established that 14,250 large Chinook — with harvest and

forecast error — is the minimum projection required before any fishery interacting with Chinook may open. The Board applied this threshold to the commercial fleet because below this level, any Chinook mortality is perceived as inconsistent with recovery. That rationale applies with equal force to the personal use dipnet fishery.

Using the same threshold creates a consistent, defensible, and equitable management standard: no fishery that generates unquantified Chinook mortality may operate until the run is projected to exceed the recovery goal. The ESSN is held to this standard. The dipnet fishery should be held to the same standard.

PRECENT – THE SOC PLAN'S OWN INTERNAL STANDARD

The Board member who authored the SOC Action Plan stated explicitly that Chinook harvest in the commercial fishery **"will not be zero" unless the river is entirely closed to commercial fishing** — and that therefore commercial fishing should not be permitted until recovery goals are achieved. That same logic — that unquantified Chinook mortality is unacceptable during recovery — applies to the personal use dipnet fishery with greater force, not less.

The commercial fleet's Chinook impact — though also incompletely measured — is at least documented through fish tickets, mandatory retention for ADF&G sampling, and reporting requirements. The dipnet fleet's Chinook impact is entirely undocumented. If the Board concluded that documented commercial Chinook catch was sufficient grounds to close the ESSN until recovery goals are projected to be met, the complete absence of documentation for dipnet Chinook mortality is an even stronger basis for applying the same standard.

REFERENCES

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Alaska Board of Fisheries (2024). Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Action Plan (RC183). March 2024 Board Meeting Record.

Raby, G.D. et al. (2025). *Release mortality in Pacific salmon fisheries along the homing migration and recommended best practices to maximize welfare and survival.* Fisheries Research.

Gargan, P. et al. (2018). *Capture severity, infectious disease processes and sex influence post-release mortality of sockeye salmon bycatch.* PMC5569998.

5 AAC 39.222. Sustainable Salmon Policy. Alaska Administrative Code.

Alaska Constitution, Article VIII, Sections 4 and 15. Sustained yield obligation and common use principles.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-237)

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PROPOSAL 148

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Amend the Kenai River late-run King salmon stock of concern management plan by reducing the sport fish bag limit for sockeye salmon, as follows:

Remove the following language form the Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan as follows:

(3) [from the mouth of the Kenai river upstream to an ADF&G marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, the bag limit for sockeye salmon is six per day, 12 in possession]

5 AAC 21.382. **Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan** (a) The department shall manage the late run of Kenai River king salmon to achieve a recovery goal of 14,250 - 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer as described in this section. Achieving the lower end of the Kenai River late-run king salmon recovery goal shall take priority over not exceeding the upper end of the escapement and inriver goal ranges for Kenai and Kasilof River sockeye salmon. (b) The purposes of this management plan are to rebuild the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock to levels that consistently achieve management targets established by the board and to provide sustainable harvest opportunities. The Kenai River late-run king salmon will remain a stock of concern until the department recommends delisting to the board at a Board of Fisheries meeting and the board adopts the delisting recommendation. The provisions of this management plan are in effect from June 20 through August 15 and supersede the provisions in 5 AAC 21.359 until the recovery goal is either (1) achieved or exceeded for three consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish, which is the estimated number of spawners needed for maximum sustained yield and is expected to achieve the goal established in (a) of this section in future years; or (2) achieved four of six consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish and is expected to achieve the goal established in (a) of this section in future years. (c) If the recovery goal is projected to be achieved, the commissioner may establish by emergency order fishing seasons as follows in the Kenai River sport fishery: (1) retention of king salmon 34 inches or greater in length, as defined in 5 AAC 75.995(a) is prohibited; or (2) retention of king salmon is prohibited. (d) In the Kenai River sport fishery, (1) If the recovery goal is not projected to be achieved, the Kenai River is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; a king salmon that is caught must be released immediately and a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; (2) from July 1 through August 15, a person may not use more than one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure in the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake; (3) **repealed** [from the mouth of the Kenai river upstream to an ADF&G marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, the bag limit for sockeye salmon is six per day, 12 in possession];; and (4) that portion of the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake is open to unguided sport fishing from a nonmotorized vessel on Mondays in July; for purposes of this paragraph, a 'nonmotorized vessel' is one that does not have a motor on board. (e) The sport fisheries in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point at 59° 40.00' N. lat., are closed to the taking of king salmon. (f) In the Central District, the commercial drift gillnet fishery is closed within two miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline. (g) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery, (1) from June 20 through June 30, when the preseason forecast of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows: (A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth; (B) is open

for not more than two eight-hour periods; (C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday; (D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows: (i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Area 244-31), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (iii) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables; (2) from July 15 through July 27, when the inseason projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, including harvest and projection error, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows: (A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth; (B) is open for not more than four eight-hour periods; (C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday; (D) fishery openings will based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows: (i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), five hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables; (3) From July 28 through August 15, when the inseason projection of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 fish, accounting for anticipated harvest, projection error and inseason run strength, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery may be opened as follows: (A) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth; (B) is open for not more than two eight-hour periods; (C) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday; (D) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows: (i) Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), three hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (ii) Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), four hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (iii) Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42), five hours later than the Seldovia District low tide; (iv) opening times will be based on NOAA certified tide tables; (4) in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery, notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.365, and 5 AAC 21.360(c)(1)(B), (2)(B), and (3)(B), commercial fishing periods will be based on the abundance of sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers; (5) From June 20 through July 31; (A) allow for the use of dip nets as an alternative gear type for holders of a S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit; (B) openings may occur outside of specified openings in this section based on abundance of sockeye salmon from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, unless closed by emergency order; (C) a S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than four dip nets at a time, each dip net must be operated by either the permit holder or an ADFG licensed crewmember; (D) retention of king and coho salmon is prohibited, except that a king salmon that is brought aboard the vessel or to shore is subject to (i) - (j) of this section; (E) fishing with a dip net may occur from a vessel or from shore; fishing from shore must occur at the location of a shore fishery tract identified in the recorded plat for that lease under AS 38.05.082 or City of Kenai shore fishery lease; nothing in this subsection affects or changes the terms or conditions of a lease and its lessee under AS 38.05.082 or a City of Kenai shore fishery lease and its lessee; (F) the number of king or coho salmon that are released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under the disposition code for live release. (h) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.365, the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) is closed to commercial fishing.

(i) Commercially harvested king salmon (1) may only be delivered to a licensed shore-based processor or floating processor as defined in 5 AAC 39.130(o) that is required to be licensed under AS 43.75.020; and (2) must be retained and made available to the department for sampling. (j) Salmon caught by a CFEC permit holder must be retained, and each CFEC permit holder must report the number of salmon caught on an ADF&G fish ticket. For the purposes of this subsection, "caught" means brought on board a vessel or removed from the water if fishing from shore with a dip net. (k) In the Kenai and Kasilof River personal use fisheries, (1) retention of king salmon is prohibited in the Kenai and Kasilof River personal use dip net fisheries; and (2) a Kasilof River personal use set gillnet may not exceed 10 fathoms in length, four and three-quarter inches in mesh size, and 29 meshes in depth. (l) The department will conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries' triennial meeting cycle, to the extent practicable. The department will report habitat assessment findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan. (m) For purposes of this section, statistical areas in the Central District are defined as follows: (1) Statistical Area 244-21 (Ninilchik): waters of the Kasilof Section, as described in 5 AAC 21.200(b)(2)(D), between the latitude of 60° 14.37' N. lat., to the latitude of the North Ninilchik River ADF&G regulatory marker located at 60° 04.02' N. lat., and within one and one-half nautical miles of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline; (2) Statistical Area 244-22 (Cohoe): waters of the Kasilof Section, as described in 5 AAC 21.200(b)(2)(D), between the latitude of 60° 14.37' N. lat., to the latitude of the South Kasilof River ADF&G regulatory marker located at 60° 22.56' N. lat., and within one and one-half nautical miles of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline; (3) Statistical Area 244-31 (South K Beach): waters of the Kasilof Section, as described in 5 AAC 21.200(b)(2)(D), between the North Kasilof River ADF&G regulatory marker located at 60° 24.23' N. lat., to 60° 27.10' N. lat., and within one and one-half nautical miles of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline. (4) Statistical Area 244-32 (North K Beach): waters of the Kenai Section, as described in 5 AAC 21.200(b)(2)(B), between the latitude of the Blanchard line at 60° 27.10' N. lat., to the latitude of South Kenai River ADF&G regulatory marker located 60° 30.49' N. lat., and within one and one-half nautical miles of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline; (5) Statistical Area 244-41 (Salamantof): waters of the Kenai Section, as described in 5 AAC 21.200(b)(2)(B), between the latitude of North Kenai River ADF&G regulatory marker of 60° 34.24' N. lat., to the latitude of the base of Colliers Dock at 60° 40.35' N. lat., representing the southernmost of the pile-supported docks at Nikiski, and within one nautical mile of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline; (6) Statistical Area 244-42 (East Foreland): waters of the East Foreland Section, as described in 5 AAC 21.200(b)(2)(A), all waters from the northern boundary of the Upper Subdistrict at the latitude of Boulder Point at 60° 40.35' N. lat., to the latitude of the base of Colliers Dock at 60° 40.35' N. lat., representing the southernmost of the pile-supported docks at Nikiski, and within one nautical mile of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There are a multitude of reasons why this regulation should be changed.
Perhaps most obviously reason is that the bag and possession limit for sockeye salmon does not belong in the king salmon management plan. This regulation is in direct conflict with 5 AAC 21.360 Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan which states: (2) the bag and possession limit for sockeye salmon is three per day, with six in possession, in the sport fishery, unless the department determines that the abundance of late-run sockeye salmon exceeds

2,300,000 fish, at which time the commissioner may, by emergency order, increase the bag and possession limit as the commissioner determines to be appropriate;

Other reasons for changing this regulation include:

The current regulation benefits lower river users to the detriment of upper river users. This is allocative in nature and should be corrected. The current regulations allocate twice as many fish to lower river users as to upper river users. Furthermore lower river users have first access to the fish and by harvesting twice as many fish they have the ability to reduce the opportunity for upper river harvest by twice as much. Many of the fish entering the system at the beginning of the run are traveling further; many of these fish are bound for the upper Kenai. In the past half as many of these fish could be harvested per person, providing opportunity for more anglers and allowing more fish to make it to the upper Kenai. This management practice provided opportunity for upper Kenai users and allowed for escapement to upper watershed spawning grounds. The current regulation does not account for the necessity of upper Kenai river escapement.

The increase in sockeye limits currently included in the king salmon stock of concern management plan seems to rely on commercial fishing closures to allow additional sockeye to enter the river, however the management plan does allow for additional commercial fishing openers based on king salmon abundance. In effect an increased abundance of kings will result in increased pressure on sockeye from the commercial fishing fleet. The current regulations will allow for double the sockeye harvest on the lower Kenai river even while allowing the commercial fleet to fish more liberalized openers.

There is a significant financial impact to upper Kenai area communities like Cooper Landing and Moose Pass. When fishermen can harvest twice as many fish on the lower river they choose to stay there, to fish there and to spend their money there.

The Kenai is currently facing a time of critically low king salmon returns and coho returns have been concerning for the last 3 years. We should learn from this and manage for sustainability. Fisheries managers have the ability to liberalize limits based on run strength and composition. Beginning the season with a limit of 3 fish will allow better in season and real time management while still providing ample opportunity.

Bag and possession limits on the upper Kenai and lower Kenai have historically mirrored one another. Aligning the regulations will provide clarity and simplify enforcement.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed through collaboration with fellow fishermen consultation with members of the Cooper Landing Advisory Committee and conversations and data gathered from ADF&G area biologists.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Adams (EF-F27-024)

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PROPOSAL 149

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Amend the Kenai River late-run King salmon stock of concern management plan by reducing the sport fish bag limit for sockeye salmon, as follows:

CURRENT RULE: Section (c)(3) of the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Action Plan establishes as a standing regulatory provision:

"The bag limit for Kenai River sockeye salmon is six per day, 12 in possession."

This provision applies automatically from June 20 through August 15 each year the Stock of Concern designation is in effect, without regard to the size, strength, or escapement status of the Kenai River sockeye salmon run.

REQUEST: Amend Section (c)(3) of the Stock of Concern Action Plan to:

(1) DELETE the fixed 6-per-day / 12-in-possession sockeye bag limit from the Action Plan; and

(2) RESTORE the standard Kenai River sockeye salmon bag limit of 3 fish per day / 6 in possession as the baseline regulation during Stock of Concern periods; and

(3) PRESERVE the Commissioner's existing Emergency Order authority under the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.360) to increase sockeye bag limits to 6 per day / 12 in possession when the sockeye run exceeds 2.3 million fish and escapement goals are projected to be achieved — exactly as that authority operates today.

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

BACKGROUND — WHAT THE CURRENT RULE DOES AND WHY IT IS PROBLEMATIC

The SOC Plan Creates a Fixed, Unconditional Sockeye Bag Limit

When the Board adopted the Stock of Concern Action Plan in March 2024, it embedded a doubled sockeye bag limit — 6 per day, 12 in possession — directly into the text of the plan as a standing provision. This limit applies **automatically and unconditionally** from June 20 through August 15 in every year that the Chinook Stock of Concern designation is in effect. The plan contains no trigger based on sockeye run size, no escapement condition, and no mechanism for ADF&G to reduce the limit if the sockeye return is weak. The 6/12 limit fires every year the SOC plan is active — regardless of whether 5 million sockeye are returning or 500,000.

This is not an adaptive management provision. It is a fixed, unconditional allocation of a doubled sport harvest limit that was written into the plan to provide political compensation for the commercial restrictions simultaneously imposed on east side set gillnet and drift gillnet fisheries. The record of the March 2024 Board proceedings confirms this: the doubling of the sockeye bag limit was explicitly framed as an offset to the commercial closure — a way to distribute the economic impact of Chinook conservation across user groups by giving sport anglers more sockeye in exchange for losing access to Chinook.

The Commissioner Already Has EO Authority to Increase Limits on Strong Runs

The existing Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.360) already provides the Commissioner with Emergency Order authority to increase sockeye bag limits above the standard 3/day / 6 in possession. That authority is conditioned on objective criteria:

- The Kenai River sockeye salmon run must exceed 2.3 million fish, and
- ADF&G must project that the inriver escapement goal will be achieved.

When those conditions are met, the Commissioner may issue an EO increasing limits to 6 per day and 12 in possession. ADF&G exercised exactly this authority in August 2025, when the Kenai River run exceeded 2.3 million fish and the escapement goal was surpassed. **This EO authority already does everything the fixed plan provision does — but only when the run is strong enough to support it.**

The SOC plan's fixed 6/12 limit therefore accomplishes nothing that the Commissioner's EO authority does not already accomplish on strong-run years — and on weak-run years, it does something the Commissioner's EO authority was never designed to do: it mandates a doubled harvest regardless of run strength.

THE CORE PROBLEM — ALLOCATION MASQUERADING AS CONSERVATION

The Fixed 6/12 Limit Has No Conservation Basis

The doubling of the sockeye bag limit has no relationship to Chinook salmon conservation. The Board's mandate under the Stock of Concern designation is to rebuild the Kenai River late-run Chinook population. Sockeye salmon are a separate stock managed under a separate escapement goal framework. The sockeye bag limit is not a Chinook conservation tool — it does not reduce Chinook mortality, does not increase Chinook escapement, and does not advance any objective of the Stock of Concern recovery plan.

What the fixed 6/12 limit does is **allocate a larger share of the Kenai River sockeye salmon resource to sport anglers** during the period the SOC plan is in effect. That is a pure allocation decision. It is not conservation. Embedding an allocation measure in a conservation plan — without any condition tied to the resource being allocated — conflates two entirely different management objectives and creates a regulatory structure that cannot be justified under the sustained yield framework of the Alaska Constitution or the Sustainable Salmon Policy.

The Fixed Limit Creates Sockeye Overharvest Risk in Weak-Return Years

The Kenai River sockeye salmon resource is not immune to weak returns. The Kenai River sockeye Sustainable Escapement Goal range (SEG: 700,000–1.2 million fish; OEG: 700,000–1.4 million fish) represents the range within which ADF&G manages the fishery for long-term productivity. In years when the run is at the lower end of the projected range, the standard management framework — with a 3/day baseline limit and Commissioner EO authority for increases on strong runs — provides appropriate flexibility.

The SOC plan's fixed 6/12 limit removes that flexibility on the downside. In a year when the Chinook Stock of Concern is active — meaning the plan is in effect — but the sockeye return is projected at, say, 1.5 million fish, the standard approach would be 3/day with no EO increase. Under the SOC plan, that same year automatically produces 6/day — a doubled sport harvest of

sockeye regardless of whether the run supports it. The plan has no provision for ADF&G to reduce the limit to 3/day based on sockeye run weakness while the SOC plan is active.

This is a structural gap that creates **simultaneous conservation risk for two species**: Chinook at record-low abundance, and sockeye in a year where the run may not support doubled sport harvest. The SOC plan was written to protect Chinook — it inadvertently created a scenario where it could harm sockeye in a weak-return year.

The Limit Was a Political Compromise — Not a Science-Based Management Decision

The March 2024 Board proceedings are clear on this point. The 6/12 sockeye limit was adopted as part of a package of trade-offs: commercial fisheries lost significant harvest opportunity through restrictions on the east side set gillnet fishery; sport anglers received a doubled sockeye limit in partial compensation. The Peninsula Clarion reported directly that the bag limit doubling was characterized as a 'consolation' for sport interests affected by the commercial closure.

An allocation decision embedded in a conservation plan — and insulated from the run-strength conditions that govern all other allocation decisions for the same species — is not consistent with adaptive management principles or the Sustainable Salmon Policy's mandate to base harvest on the best available information.

WHAT THIS PROPOSAL CHANGES — AND WHAT IT DOES NOT

What Changes

- Section (c)(3) of the SOC Action Plan — the fixed 6/day / 12 in possession sockeye bag limit — is deleted from the plan text.
- The standard Kenai River sockeye salmon bag limit of 3 fish per day / 6 in possession becomes the baseline during SOC periods, as it was before the March 2024 plan was adopted.
- The Commissioner's Emergency Order authority under 5 AAC 21.360 to increase limits to 6/12 on strong runs (>2.3 million fish, SEG on track) is fully restored and operates as before.

What Does NOT Change

- Every Chinook-related provision of the SOC Action Plan remains entirely intact — the proposal touches only the sockeye bag limit provision.
- The Chinook recovery goal of 14,250–30,000 large fish is unchanged.
- Commercial set gillnet restrictions are unchanged.
- Personal use dipnet Chinook retention prohibition is unchanged.
- Bait restrictions and single-hook gear requirements are unchanged.
- The Stock of Concern designation itself is unchanged.
- In strong sockeye years (>2.3 million fish), the Commissioner retains full authority to issue an EO restoring the 6/12 limit — so anglers on strong-run years lose nothing compared to the current plan.

In practical terms: on a strong sockeye year, **nothing changes for sport anglers** — the Commissioner issues the same EO increasing limits to 6/12 as before. On a weak-return sockeye

year, the 3/6 baseline applies — which is exactly what the standard management framework would provide without the SOC plan provision. The only losers under this proposal are anglers who expected to take 6/12 sockeye in a year when the run cannot support it.

POLICY AND LEGAL SUPPORT

Alaska Constitution — Sustained Yield Obligation

Article VIII, Section 4 of the Alaska Constitution requires management of fisheries on the basis of sustained yield. A fixed bag limit that applies regardless of run strength does not constitute sustained yield management — it constitutes a fixed allocation commitment that prioritizes harvest certainty over biological sustainability. The standard management framework, with its run-conditioned EO authority, is the constitutionally appropriate mechanism for managing harvest on a variable resource.

Sustainable Salmon Policy (5 AAC 39.222)

The Sustainable Salmon Policy directs ADF&G and the Board to base management decisions on the best available information including current run strength data. A fixed bag limit that fires annually without regard to run strength is structurally inconsistent with this directive. The EO authority framework — which requires a documented threshold exceedance before increased limits apply — is precisely the kind of information-based management the Policy contemplates. Restoring that framework restores Policy compliance.

The Stock of Concern Plan's Own Internal Logic

The Stock of Concern Action Plan's stated purpose is to rebuild the Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon stock. Section (a) of the plan explicitly provides that achieving the lower end of the Chinook recovery goal takes priority over not exceeding the upper end of the sockeye escapement goals. This internal priority structure — Chinook recovery first, sockeye escapement management second — is sound and appropriate. But it has no bearing on the sockeye bag limit provision, which neither advances Chinook recovery nor serves any sockeye conservation purpose. The bag limit provision is an allocation rider attached to a conservation plan, and its presence undermines the plan's internal coherence.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-224)

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PROPOSAL 150

5 AAC 57.140 Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area and **5 AAC 57.160 Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan** and **5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.**

Modify guided fishing hours on the Kenai River as follows:

Amend **5 AAC 57.140(c)** to repeal the fixed guided sport fishing hour restriction downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake. Amend the **Kenai River early-run and late-run king salmon management plans** so the commissioner may, by emergency order, restrict daily sport fishing hours **for all sport anglers equally** downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake when the department determines that hourly restrictions are necessary to conserve king salmon or achieve escapement objectives. This would allow the department to use hourly restrictions as a fishery-wide conservation tool during the entire Kenai River king salmon season, rather than applying a standing hourly restriction only to anglers fishing from registered guide vessels.

5 AAC 57.140(c)
Repeal.

Amend 5 AAC 57.160 to add language stating:
In the Kenai River sport fishery, downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish daily sport fishing hours for all sport anglers when the department determines such restrictions are necessary to conserve early-run king salmon or achieve escapement objectives.

Amend 5 AAC 21.382 to add language stating:
In the Kenai River sport fishery, downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish daily sport fishing hours for all sport anglers when the department determines such restrictions are necessary to conserve late-run king salmon or achieve escapement objectives.

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

Remove Guide-Only Hour Restrictions and Authorize Equal Hour Restrictions for All Sport Anglers During the Kenai River King Salmon Season

Current regulation 5 AAC 57.140(c) limits sport fishing from a registered sport fishing guide vessel downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. from May 1 through July 31. ADF&G staff comments prepared for the Board of Fisheries explain that these restrictions were originally intended to reduce king salmon harvest by reducing guided angling effort, and note that the daily guided hour restriction has existed since 1985 during June and July and was extended to include May in 2000.

The Kenai River Professional Guide Association supports hour restrictions during periods when Kenai River king salmon fishing is open. However, if restrictions are necessary for conservation, those restrictions should be based on biological need and stock abundance and should be shared equally by all anglers. If the Kenai River opened next year to King Salmon Fishing the private

angler would be allowed again to fish 24 hours 7 days a week. If a stock is a true conservation concern, restricting only guided anglers does not fully address total fishing effort. In practice, many anglers who would otherwise hire a guide will still fish on those days from a private boat or with friends. A restriction shared across all anglers would provide a broader and more consistent conservation benefit than a restriction applied only to one user group. That approach is also consistent with the governors Administrative Order 360, which directs agencies and boards to improve regulatory quality, reduce unnecessary burdens, and engage stakeholders in identifying regulations that should be simplified or reformed.

This restriction was originally adopted in 1985 to reduce king salmon harvest, but it was also adopted roughly 20 years before the first YouTube video was ever posted. The sport fishery on the Kenai River has changed dramatically since then. Fishing techniques, boat control, rigging methods, and river knowledge that were once learned primarily through years on the water or through professional guides are now widely available through YouTube, social media, online forums, and modern digital mapping. The historical separation in knowledge and efficiency between guided and unguided anglers is not what it once was. Today, private anglers often have access to the same information and techniques as guided anglers, and that change should be recognized when evaluating whether a guide-only hourly restriction, especially when king salmon fishing is closed, still serves the purpose for which it was originally adopted.

The Kenai River fishery has also changed substantially. Since 2023, ADF&G has closed the Kenai River early-run and late-run king salmon sport fisheries by preseason emergency order each year. ADF&G's 2023 notice says the early-run fishery was closed through June 30 and the late-run fishery from July 1 through July 31. ADF&G's 2024 notice states that Emergency Orders 2-KS-1-08-24 and 2-KS-1-09-24 closed the early-run and late-run king salmon sport fisheries in the Kenai River. ADF&G's 2025 and 2026 emergency orders again closed the late-run fishery from June 20 through August 15, and the 2026 early-run fishery from May 1 through June 19.

When king salmon fishing is closed, continuing to separate anglers based on whether they are fishing from a private boat or a registered guide vessel no longer fits the original purpose of the regulation. The current 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. restriction compresses guided effort into the same limited part of the day, forces guides to operate in the same window, and reduces flexibility for lawful non-king trips that remain open. Allowing guides to fish outside those hours when king salmon fishing is closed would better reflect current conditions on the river. If Kenai River king salmon fishing reopens, the existing hour restriction should remain in effect, but to all users for further King Salmon conservational efforts.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed with input from multiple members of the Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee and was reviewed by multiple Alaska Department of Fish and Game representatives for peer review and technical feedback.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts, Kenai River Professional Guide Association (EF-F27-155)
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PROPOSAL 151

5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan
5 AAC 57.121 Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area
5 AAC 57.140 Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Remove the Sunday and Monday prohibition on guided fishing on the Kenai River and allow these days to be closed for all anglers, as follows:

Remove Guide-Only Sunday and Monday Restrictions and Authorize Equal Sunday and Monday Restrictions for All Sport Anglers on the Kenai River

ALASKA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE NUMBER:

5 AAC 57.140(b)
5 AAC 57.121(3)(A)
5 AAC 57.121(3)(F)
5 AAC 21.359(c)(3)
5 AAC 21.382(d)(4)
and any other conforming sections as necessary.

Amend 5 AAC 57.140(b), 5 AAC 57.121(3)(A), 5 AAC 57.121(3)(F), 5 AAC 21.359(c)(3), 5 AAC 21.382(d)(4), and any other necessary sections to remove the standing Sunday and Monday restrictions that apply only to guided anglers and unguided vessel distinctions, and instead authorize the department to restrict Sunday and Monday sport fishing for all anglers equally when needed as a management tool.

Proposed concept language:

5 AAC 57.140(b)
Repeal the current standing Sunday and Monday restrictions that apply only to registered guide vessels.

5 AAC 57.121(3)(A) and (F)
Amend the current Monday vessel restrictions so they do not distinguish between guided and unguided anglers as a standing regulation.

5 AAC 21.359(c)(3), 5 AAC 21.382(d)(4), and other applicable management plan sections
Add language authorizing the commissioner, by emergency order, to prohibit sport fishing or sport fishing from a vessel on Sundays and/or Mondays for all sport anglers equally in the Kenai River when the department determines such restrictions are necessary based on preseason forecast, in-season run strength, escapement objectives, or other conservation needs.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current Kenai River regulations restrict guided fishing on Sundays and Mondays during the same seasonal period these restrictions were originally intended to address king salmon harvest. Under 5 AAC 57.140(b), downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake, a person may not sport fish from a registered guide vessel on any

Sunday from May 1 through July 31, and on any Monday in July. In addition, 5 AAC 57.121(3)(A) and (F) prohibit sport fishing from a boat on Mondays in May, June, and July in large portions of the river, while continuing to allow unguided vessel opportunity on those same days when guided opportunity is restricted. Related provisions in 5 AAC 21.359(c)(3) and 5 AAC 21.382(d)(4) specifically recognize Monday unguided nonmotorized vessel fishing in July.

ADF&G staff comments explain that these guide-related restrictions were originally adopted in 1985 to reduce king salmon harvest by reducing guided angling effort. KRPGA believes that restrictions should be based on conservation need and stock abundance, not on whether an angler is fishing from a private boat or a registered guide vessel. Guided and unguided anglers are participating in the same sport fishery under the same licensing requirements and the same bag, possession, and annual limits. If restrictions are necessary to protect the resource, they should be applied equally to all anglers.

This proposal is not intended to create additional fishing opportunity. It is intended to remove the current separation between guided and unguided anglers and give the department a more effective management tool. If Sunday or Monday restrictions are needed for conservation, escapement, applying those restrictions across the full sport fishery would be more effective than applying them only to one user group. In practice, many anglers who would otherwise hire a guide will still fish on those days from a private boat or with friends on days guided anglers are restricted to fish. A fishery-wide restriction would better reduce total effort, would be simpler for the public to understand, and would be easier for enforcement and in-season management.

The current structure also weakens the effectiveness of Sunday and Monday restrictions as a conservation tool. When only guided anglers are restricted, total fishing effort is not reduced to the same degree as it would be under a fishery-wide closure, because private anglers may continue to fish on those same days. If reduced effort is necessary based on forecasted abundance, in-season assessment, or escapement needs, applying those restrictions equally to all sport anglers would create a stronger and more direct conservation benefit, improve clarity for the public, and streamline enforcement. Any burden imposed for conservation should be shared equally across the fishery, not placed only on one group of anglers.

This proposal is also consistent with Administrative Order 360, which states that Alaska regulations should be reevaluated for demonstrated need, should reduce unnecessary burdens where possible, and should be clearly written and efficiently administered. A standing guide-only restriction is a less effective conservation tool than a management tool that allows the department to restrict Sundays and Mondays for all anglers when biological conditions warrant.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee?
Yes. This proposal was developed with input from some members of the Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee and was reviewed by multiple Alaska Department of Fish and Game representatives for peer review and technical feedback.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts, Kenai River Professional Guide Association (EF-F27-157)
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PROPOSAL 152

5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan

5 AAC 57.140 Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Insert lead-in language here ("more fish, as follows:")

Remove the Monday prohibition on guided fishing on the Kenai River and allow Mondays to be closed for all anglers, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 57.140(i) to remove the standing Monday restriction that applies only to registered guide vessels and replace it with language authorizing the commissioner, by emergency order, to restrict Monday sport fishing for all sport anglers equally during the late summer and fall period on the Kenai River when necessary as a management tool.

Proposed concept language:

5 AAC 57.140(i)

From July 31, or the end of the king salmon season, whichever is later, through November 30, sport fishing on Mondays shall be allowed as otherwise provided by law; however, the commissioner may, by emergency order, prohibit sport fishing on Mondays downstream of the Moose River confluence, and may prohibit sport fishing for coho salmon on Mondays upstream of the Moose River confluence, when the department determines such restrictions are necessary based on preseason forecast, in-season run strength, escapement objectives, or other conservation needs. Any Monday restriction adopted under this subsection shall apply equally to all sport anglers.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Remove Guide-Only Monday Restrictions and Authorize Equal Monday Restrictions for All Sport Anglers During the Kenai River Coho Season

Current regulation 5 AAC 57.140(i) restricts guided fishing on Mondays from July 31, or the end of the king salmon season, whichever is later, through November 30. During that period, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel is prohibited on Mondays downstream of the Moose River confluence, except Labor Day. Upstream of the Moose River confluence, sport fishing for coho salmon from a registered guide vessel is prohibited on Mondays, except Labor Day, and any coho salmon caught must be released immediately.

This proposal is intended to strengthen conservation and improve the department's management tools. It is intended to replace a standing guide-only restriction with a stronger and more transparent management tool. If Monday restrictions are necessary to conserve coho salmon or manage the fishery based on preseason forecast, in-season assessment, or escapement needs, those restrictions should apply equally to all sport anglers rather than only to anglers fishing from registered guide vessels.

Over time, these regulations have created a separation between guided and unguided anglers even though both are participating in the same sport fishery and are subject to the same licensing requirements, bag limits, possession limits, and annual limits. Conservation measures should be

driven by biological need and stock abundance, and when restrictions are necessary, they should be shared equally by all anglers. If abundance is low enough to require reduced effort or closed days, that burden should apply evenly across the fishery. Applying day restrictions only to guided anglers is difficult to justify as a conservation measure, creates unequal opportunity, and adds unnecessary complexity for the public and for enforcement.

The current structure also weakens the effectiveness of Monday restrictions as a conservation tool. When only guided anglers are restricted, total fishing effort is not reduced to the same degree as it would be under a fishery-wide closure, because private anglers may continue to fish on those same days. In practice, an angler who cannot book a guide on Monday may still fish with a neighbor, friend, or private boat operator and then simply book the guide on Tuesday. In that situation, the regulation changes who is operating the boat more than it changes total effort. A Monday restriction applied equally to all anglers would more directly reduce fishing pressure, would be easier for the public to understand, and would be simpler for enforcement to apply.

The Board should also recognize that guide-only restrictions are a weaker harvest-control tool today than they were when these regulations were first adopted. The public now has far greater access to fishing knowledge, techniques, and river information, and the gap between guided and unguided anglers is not what it once was. For that reason, comparing guides to private anglers as a harvest-control proxy is a less effective management approach than it may have been in the past. If Monday restrictions are needed for conservation, a fishery-wide restriction applied equally to all anglers would be a stronger and more effective tool than the current guide-only rule.

This proposal is also consistent with Administrative Order 360, which states that Alaska's regulatory system should be reviewed to improve quality, transparency, and efficiency, reduce unnecessary burdens, and ensure regulations are clearly written and supported by demonstrated need. Replacing a standing guide-only Monday restriction with a regulation that allows fishery-wide Monday restrictions when needed would better align this section with those goals.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed with input from some members of the Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee and was reviewed by multiple Alaska Department of Fish and Game representatives for peer review and technical feedback.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts, Kenai River Professional Guide Association (EF-F27-162)
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PROPOSAL 153

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Extend the active dates of the Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. (a) The purposes of this management plan are to ensure an adequate escapement of late-run king salmon into the Kenai River system and to provide management guidelines to the department **to the extent practicable.** The department shall manage the late-run Kenai River king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses in order to provide the sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The provisions of this management plan are in effect from June 20 through August **25** [15].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The proposed changes to the wording will streamline this management plan, return to flexible management and reduce management burdens. King salmon spawn up to 6 weeks after entering the Kenai River. This proposal provides additional protection and time for these fish to spawn without being targeted.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Proposal discussed with members of the general public, processors, industry groups and commercial fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: United Cook Inlet Drift Association (EF-F27-067)

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PROPOSAL 154

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Make multiple amendments to commercial fisheries in the Kenai River late-run king salmon management plan, as follows:

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.)

Proposed revisions include:

1. Replace set gillnets with beach seines under paired restrictions whenever the sport fishery to restricted to no bait, no retention of kings 34 inches or greater, or no retention with corresponding weekly hour limits and no exceptions outside commissioner authority as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).
2. Allow commercial dipnets up to five days per week, 12 hours per day thru July 31 when the commercial fishery is closed to the use of set gillnets.
3. Close the commercial set gillnet/beach seine/dipnet fishery Aug 1 when July 31 ends with paired restrictions.
4. Close the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area under paired restrictions.
5. Close drift gillnet fishery within 2 miles of Kenai Peninsula shore.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* does not currently include new management tools that have been incorporated into the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan* in order to provide commercial set gillnet fishing opportunity during periods of low king salmon abundance and share the conservation burden between commercial, sport and personal use fisheries as prescribed by the *Policy for Management of Mixed Stock Salmon Fisheries* [5 AAC 39.220].

Commercial fishery management tools include use of beach seines and dipnets both of which have now been demonstrated to be effective alternatives for selectively harvesting significant numbers of sockeye at upper subdistrict set gillnet sites while also allowing for live release of Kenai late-run kings.

At such time that Kenai late-run king salmon recover to levels sufficient for delisting, these alternative fishing gears will be effective tools for managing periodic low run sizes of Kenai kings based on Commissioner authority to continue to provide significant commercial fishing opportunity for abundant sockeye, equitably sharing the conservation burden among commercial, sport and personal use fisheries, and avoiding low escapements which to avoid falling back into stock of concern status.

In addition, closure of the set gillnet/beach seine fishery beginning August 1 will protect king salmon after the peak of the Kenai and Kasilof sockeye runs have passed when the Kenai sport fishery ends with paired restrictions. Commercial openers after July 31 will provide marginal sockeye harvest benefits eroding king savings from July restrictions.

Closure of the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area to drift and set gillnets will provide precautionary reductions in harvest of Kasilof kings during a prolonged period of low abundance.

Closure of the drift gillnet fishery within 2 miles of the Kenai Peninsula is a housekeeping revision for consistency with recent changes to the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan [5 AAC 21.353].

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (EF-F27-163)

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PROPOSAL 155

5 AAC 56.XXX. New section

Establish a Kasilof River early-run king salmon management plan as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 57.160 to add the following provisions for early-run king salmon in the Kasilof River.

5 AAC 57.160

Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure sustainable escapement of early-run king salmon while providing reasonable sport fishing opportunity.

(b) The early-run king salmon fishery in the Kasilof River is open January 1 through June 30.

(c) The department shall manage the early run of king salmon to achieve the department's sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of approximately 500–1,100 king salmon 71 cm or greater in length measured from mid-eye to tail fork, including both hatchery-origin and naturally produced fish.

(d) Hatchery-origin king salmon identified by a healed adipose fin clip shall be included in the escapement count used to determine whether the escapement goal has been achieved.

(e) When necessary to achieve escapement objectives, hatchery-origin king salmon may contribute to natural spawning escapement and be utilized for broodstock collection.

(f) Because escapement cannot be monitored in season, management shall rely on preseason forecasts, run timing, and postseason escapement estimates from the Crooked Creek weir or other department-approved methods.

(g) In the early-run king salmon sport fishery:

1. the bag and possession limit is one king salmon;
2. a person who retains a naturally produced king salmon may not sportfish for the remainder of that day in the waters of the Kasilof River drainage downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge;
3. a person who retains a hatchery-origin king salmon identified by a healed adipose fin clip may continue to fish, except that no additional king salmon may be retained;
4. only one baited single-hook or artificial lure or fly may be used.

(h) If the department determines the run is expected to fall below the escapement goal, the commissioner may reduce harvest through emergency order, including prohibiting the use of bait, restricting retention of king salmon, or closing the fishery.

(i) If the department determines the run is expected to achieve or exceed the escapement goal, the commissioner may liberalize the sport fishery by emergency order to provide additional harvest opportunity.

(j) The department shall manage the Crooked Creek Hatchery Chinook salmon program to provide harvest opportunity and, when broodstock availability allows, increase smolt releases toward historical production levels of approximately 200,000–250,000 smolt annually.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The early-run king salmon fishery on the Kasilof River includes both hatchery-produced fish from the Crooked Creek Hatchery program and naturally produced king salmon.

Unlike the nearby Kenai River, which operates under a structured early-run management plan, the Kasilof River fishery relies heavily on emergency orders rather than a consistent regulatory framework tailored to the Kasilof stock and hatchery program.

In addition, escapement cannot be monitored in season. The river does not have a sonar counter and early-run king salmon do not enter the Crooked Creek weir until early July, after the early-run sport fishery ends. Because of this timing, in-season management tiers like those used on the Kenai River are not practical.

A management plan that recognizes the mixed hatchery and naturally produced nature of the Kasilof stock and uses a combined escapement objective would better reflect the biological structure of the run and the purpose of the Crooked Creek Hatchery program.

Concerns regarding genetic risks from hatchery-origin fish contributing to natural spawning are minimal because hatchery and naturally produced fish have intermixed in the Crooked Creek system for many life cycles. In several years of hatchery operation, hatchery-origin fish were also allowed to pass above the weir and spawn naturally.

Allowing bait while requiring a single hook provides a balanced approach that maintains angler opportunity while reducing hooking injury and post-release mortality.

The Kasilof early-run king salmon fishery is currently the only king salmon fishery in Upper Cook Inlet consistently capable of providing harvest opportunity while many other king salmon fisheries remain restricted or closed. Establishing a clear management plan will help maintain that opportunity while ensuring adequate spawning escapement.

Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed to provide a consistent management framework for the early-run king salmon fishery in the Kasilof River that reflects the mixed hatchery and naturally produced nature of the stock while maintaining conservation protections and harvest opportunity.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts, Kenai River Professional Guide Association (EF-F27-151)
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PROPOSAL 156

5 AAC 56.XXX. New section

Establish guidance for the use of natural origin king salmon as broodstock at Crooked Creek as follows:

Given the lack of even a current ADFG operational plan for the Crooked Creek Enhancement program, I would suggest that the BOF amend or establish a regulation, or instruct the department to utilize an operating standard requiring that no egg take of naturally-produced King salmon be conducted at the Crooked Creek Enhancement Facility on the Kasilof River in any year until the Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 700–1,400 naturally-produced king salmon is projected to be achieved.

The purpose of this proposal is to establish a clear, enforceable conservation threshold protecting the naturally-produced Crooked Creek king salmon stock during a period of historically low abundance. This proposal intends to:

- Prevent the removal of adult spawners from an already-depleted natural population to supply an enhancement program that is, by definition, secondary to the conservation of the wild stock it depends upon.
- Restore a standard of practice that ADF&G previously followed and that represents sound fisheries management. This is increasingly important given that King salmon runs across Upper Cook Inlet are at record low levels.
- Provide a clear, transparent, and predictable management standard for both the public and ADF&G staff.

This proposal is not intended to eliminate the Crooked Creek enhancement program. Rather, it ensures the enhancement program does not come at the expense of the very wild stock on which it depends in years when natural spawning needs are not first satisfied.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal seeks to bring the Crooked Creek King Salmon Enhancement program in line with AS 16.05.730, which clearly states that enhanced fish stocks shall be managed consistent with sustained yield of wild fish stocks by preventing the taking of natural fish for eggs when escapement is not expected to be achieved.

Kasilof River naturally-produced king salmon are in a state of severe and prolonged decline. ADF&G's own regulatory announcements confirm that in 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025—four of the last five years—the Crooked Creek SEG was not achieved despite significant management restrictions in place each year. The only year the SEG was met in this period was 2022, when final escapement reached approximately 735 fish, just above the 700 fish minimum.

The data reveal a stock in serious and sustained decline. In 2025, final escapement reached only 305 naturally-produced fish - just 44% of the minimum SEG, and the lowest escapement on record for this stock. ADF&G has publicly acknowledged this trend in its 2026 regulatory announcement, stating that from 2018 through 2025, restrictions were necessary every year to attempt to meet the SEG, and that in four of those years the SEG was not met despite those restrictions.

Critically, egg takes for the enhancement program have reportedly continued in each of the four years when the SEG was not achieved. This means that in years when the wild population could not sustain itself to its minimum biological escapement goal, the department nonetheless removed additional adult spawners from the population to supply the hatchery enhancement program for a fishery that itself takes a toll on natural King salmon due to incidental catch and undocumented harvest.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I developed this proposal in coordination with father, the son, and the holy spirit.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith (EF-F27-108)

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PROPOSAL 157

5 AAC 56.XXX. New section

Establish a management plan for Kasilof River king salmon sport fishery as follows:

Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan: Management of this fishery shall prioritize achieving escapement goals for naturally produced Chinook salmon. When conservation concerns for natural-origin fish are present, the department shall manage the fishery to restrict harvest, methods, and means as necessary, regardless of the presence of hatchery-produced fish. Regulations and in-season management actions should clearly reflect this priority in a manner that is consistent and understandable to the public.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kasilof River supports a Chinook salmon fishery that includes both naturally produced and hatchery-produced fish, with hatchery production occurring at Crooked Creek. This creates a mixed-stock fishery where conservation of natural-origin fish is an important management priority.

Recent emergency orders and restrictions indicate that conservation of natural-origin Chinook salmon is the primary driver of management decisions in this fishery. In a mixed-stock system, this is appropriate; however, it also highlights the need for management to clearly reflect that priority and ensure that hatchery production does not complicate or conflict with conservation objectives.

Despite this, the role of hatchery production within the fishery is not always clear in how regulations are structured. The fishery continues to operate under restrictions similar to wild-stock systems while still incorporating hatchery production, which can make the overall management approach difficult to interpret. These patterns raise questions about how the existing management plan reflects the role of conservation and hatchery production in this fishery.

A separate proposal has been submitted addressing the Ninilchik River to better align management with hatchery supported fishery. Together, these proposals highlight the need for consistent alignment between hatchery-supported and mixed-stock Chinook fisheries.

If no change is made, the Kasilof River will continue to experience restrictions without a clearly defined management approach that reflects the role of conservation in a mixed-stock fishery.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed based on recent management actions, including emergency orders, and observation of how mixed-stock fisheries are currently managed on the lower Kenai Peninsula.

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee (EF-F27-046)

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PROPOSAL 158

5 AAC 57.160. Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan.

Establish an optimal escapement goal and guidance for controlling hatchery influence for Crooked Creek king salmon, as follows:

Boost natural production in Crooked Creek by modifying escapement goals and hatchery practices. See below.

Establish a large fish goal for king salmon 28" or greater. Allow F1 hatchery-origin females to contribute to the natural-spawning escapement at a PNI of 0.7 or greater. See below.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? King salmon productivity in Upper Cook Inlet continues to languish because of a chinook-hostile ocean. Returns to Crooked Creek have been so poor that adult recruitment fails to adequately replace the parental spawners that produced them in the first place. Ocean conditions currently favor younger, smaller, and "maler" salmon. Sex ratios have been so skewed that modern-day sex composition hovers at roughly 20% females of progressively diminishing fecundity.

The undeniable fact is that each hen must recruit FIVE returning spawners to replace itself in the next generation. And the unfortunate reality is that current poor ocean productivity means that on average, the "replacement" hen coming back will be younger, smaller and less fecund than her mother.

Recovery of wild stocks fundamentally starts with eggs in the gravel. No huevos, NO POLLO! Escaping sufficient numbers of large fecund hens is paramount to meaningful stock rebuilding. The current paradigm of an escapement goal based simply on quantity will NOT provide sufficient eggs to jump start recovery. Quantity is NOT enough. Me must shoot for a target escapement that emphasizes QUALITY. In a perfect world, we should be striving for a fecundity-based goal that emphasizes eggs in the gravel. But from a pragmatic perspective, specifically achieving that would be extremely challenging.

The closest and most achievable surrogate to a fecundity-based goal is a large fish goal that favors a greater proportion of female salmon in the escapement. The current goal counts any king salmon over 20 inches as part of the escapement. I propose a large fish goal based on adults measuring 28 inches or greater.

Crooked Creek management is further complicated by a hatchery program intended to support recreational harvest opportunity. Brood stock for this integrated hatchery program is derived entirely from natural-origin salmon to maintain genetic integrity and to reduce the genetic risks of hatchery-origin strays spawning naturally on the gravel. Obtaining broodstock becomes particularly problematic when there aren't even enough wild salmon to meet current escapement goals. A major paradigm shift in hatchery management practices is proposed.

Hatchery-origin F1 recruits can be optimally used to serve a dual purpose for this integrated stock. 1) Providing harvest opportunity in the recreational fishery, and 2) providing a source of additional fecundity on the gravel to fuel natural production. In this second role, instead of using the F1 hens

to provide brood for assorted out-of-basin hatchery programs, they would play an important part in boosting large spawners on the gravel when while Crooked Creek returns are faltering.

Such a strategy is NOT without its inherent risks. It would be imprudent and irresponsible to simply swamp the gravel with hatchery origin spawners, effectively replacing natural-origin spawners with hatchery fish. To safeguard the genetic integrity of the wild stock, the proportion of natural origin brood (pNOB) for the hatchery program should remain at 100%. Additionally, appropriate limits must be placed on the proportion of hatchery-origin spawners (pHOS) allowed on the gravel to maintain a proportionate natural influence (PNI) of 0.7 or greater, where PNI = pNOB / pNOB + pHOS. Said another way, pHOS must be managed such that no more than 43% of the total escapement may be of hatchery-origin.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Discussed with various ADFG staff and encouraged to submit the proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Francis V Estalilla, MD (EF-F27-200)
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PROPOSAL 159

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Close sport fishing in the back channel of the Kasilof River as follows:

The Board of Fisheries should codify the existing emergency order closure of the Kasilof River back channel downstream of Crooked Creek into permanent regulation.

Proposed regulatory language:

Amend 5 AAC 56.122. Special Provisions for the Kasilof River Drainage by adding a new subsection to read:

5 AAC 56.122 (xx). Kasilof River Back Channel Closure

Sport fishing is prohibited in the Kasilof River back channel located downstream of Crooked Creek. For the purposes of this section, the closed waters include the side channel of the Kasilof River beginning at its upstream confluence with the mainstem Kasilof River approximately 300 yards downstream of the mouth of Crooked Creek and extending downstream to its reconnection with the mainstem Kasilof River.

This regulatory change mirrors existing management actions intended to protect staging salmon in this confined area, ensure adequate broodstock availability for the Crooked Creek Hatchery, and reduce concentrated fishing pressure on both hatchery and naturally produced stocks.

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

Kasilof River Back Channel Closure

The Kasilof River back channel located downstream of Crooked Creek has been closed in recent years through emergency orders issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game due to concerns related to fish concentration and harvest efficiency. This small side channel provides a staging area for salmon migrating to Crooked Creek, including hatchery-produced Chinook salmon returning to the Crooked Creek Hatchery as well as naturally produced stocks bound for upstream spawning areas.

During portions of the season, hatchery and naturally produced king salmon congregate in this confined back channel prior to entering Crooked Creek. Because of the small size of the channel and the tendency for fish to hold there, anglers can encounter unusually high catch efficiency compared to the mainstem river. This creates the potential for disproportionate harvest and repeated handling of staging fish in a location where they are particularly vulnerable.

The Crooked Creek Hatchery program relies on consistent broodstock returns to meet egg take objectives and sustain hatchery production. In recent years, Chinook salmon returns throughout Cook Inlet have been variable and often below historical levels. Targeting staging fish in this

confined area increases the risk that sufficient broodstock may not be available to meet hatchery production goals.

Because these concerns occur annually, the department has repeatedly issued emergency orders closing this area. Codifying the closure in regulation would provide a clear and consistent management framework that protects both hatchery broodstock and naturally produced salmon while eliminating the need for repeated in-season emergency action.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed to mirror the language and intent of recent emergency orders issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game that closed the Kasilof River back channel downstream of Crooked Creek. Those emergency orders were implemented to address fish concentration and harvest efficiency concerns and to protect staging salmon near the Crooked Creek Hatchery.

Because the department has already determined that closing this area is necessary to protect staging fish and ensure adequate broodstock returns, this proposal places that management action into permanent regulation so it does not need to be implemented repeatedly through emergency order.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts, Kenai River Professional Guide Association (EF-F27-150)
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PROPOSAL 160

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula.

Prohibit sport fishing on the Kasilof River after a bag limit of king salmon has been retained, as follows:

5 AAC 56.122(a)(8)(A) is amended to read:

(A) king salmon may be taken from January 1 - June 30, upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge, and from January 1 - July 31, downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge; bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is one fish; **after retaining the bag limit of king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, a person may not sport fish for any species for the rest of that day in the waters of the Kasilof River drainage downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge;** annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, except as provided in (b) of this section; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; from January 1 - June 30,

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal would prohibit sport fishing downstream of the Sterling Highway bridge after the angler has reached their bag limit of king salmon 20 inches or greater. Since 2018, restrictive action has been taken in the Kasilof River sport fishery to protect natural origin king salmon, while providing limited harvest opportunity for hatchery produced king salmon returning to this system. Currently, anglers may only harvest a hatchery produced king salmon, indicated by a missing adipose fin, but must release all natural origin king salmon. Prohibiting an angler from sport fishing downstream of the Sterling Highway bridge after their bag limit of king salmon has been reached is expected to reduce incidental hooking mortality on natural origin king salmon by prohibiting anglers' ability to continue catch and release fishing.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EF-F27-266)

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PROPOSAL 161

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area

Establish a youth only fishery on the Kasilof River as follows:

Kid's Day for the Kasilof River King Salmon:

- Open to only youth anglers 15 years of age or younger
- Open to fishing at 6 AM to 10 PM
- Will be open on the third Saturday of June
- Bag limit of (1) king salmon any size
- Single hook & bait allowed
- When an angler lands & retains a king salmon, they are done for the day on the Kasilof River and may not fish for any species of fish on the Kasilof River for the rest of the day.
- A king salmon of 20" or greater must be immediately recorded on their harvest record card for king salmon.
- Kasilof River youth-only king salmon fishery will open from the marker at the upstream marker on the Kasilof River downstream to the marker at the bottom of the People Hole on the Kasilof River.
- Kasilof King Salmon Kid's Day will occur on the 3rd Saturday of June

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Ninilchik, Homer, & Seward all have very successful Kid's Day fisheries, and the Kasilof River is another that would be a great location. For bank fishers, the Kasilof River "People's Hole" would be a great location to fish for kings. The People's Hole would have the water column of the Kasilof River closed to boat fishermen on that day. The west bank of the People's Hole would be reserved for these young anglers.

This is also a safety issue, as young anglers fishing a crowded bank can be dangerous due to flying hooks and weights. Many fishermen are focused on a small section of water and are not aware of anyone around or behind them when they cast, which can create a dangerous situation. Safety first is key to a Kid's Day fishery.

One of the guiding principles for ADF&G sport fishing is to provide fisheries to bring in new anglers and for them to have fun. This may be the first and only opportunity to find new young anglers. If they don't come and enjoy themselves and have fun, we will not have new anglers to replace those that are aging out.

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

PROPOSED BY: James Stubbs (EF-F27-169)

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PROPOSAL 162

5 AAC 21.360 Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

Modify Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon allocation priority, establish an optimal escapement goal, and increase inriver run goal ranges, as follows:

Adjust the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan as follows;
5 AAC 21.360 Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.
(a) The department shall manage the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks **[**primarily**]** for **sport, personal use, guided sport fishermen and** commercial uses based on abundance. The department shall also manage the commercial fisheries to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho, late-run Kenai River king, and Kenai River coho salmon stocks to provide personal use, sport, and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources. (b) The Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries shall be managed to (1) meet the **optimal** [sustainable] escapement goal (**O**[S]EG) range of **1,200,000 – 1,600,000 [**750,000 - 1,300,000**]** late-run sockeye salmon; (2) achieve inriver goals as established by the board and measured at the Kenai River sonar counter located at river mile 19; and (3) distribute the escapement of sockeye salmon evenly within the (SEG) range, in proportion to the size of the run. (c) Based on preseason forecasts and inseason evaluations of the total Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon return during the fishing season, the run will be managed as follows: (1) at run strengths of less than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon, (A) the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of **1,200,000 – 1,600,000 [**1,000,000 - 1,200,000**]** sockeye salmon past the sonar counter at river mile 19; and (B) subject to the provisions of other management plans, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will fish regular weekly fishing periods, as specified in 5 AAC 21.320, through July 20, unless the department determines that the minimum inriver goal will not be met, at which time the fishery shall be closed or restricted as necessary; the commissioner may, by emergency order, allow extra fishing periods of no more than 24 hours per week, except as provided in 5 AAC 21.365; (2) at run strengths of 2,300,000 - 4,600,000 sockeye salmon, (A) the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of **1,200,000 – 1,600,000 [**1,100,000 - 1,400,000**]** sockeye salmon past the sonar counter at river mile 19; (B) subject to the provisions of other management plans, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will fish regular weekly fishing periods, as specified in 5 AAC 21.320, through July 20, or until the department makes a determination of run strength, whichever occurs first; if the department determines that the minimum inriver goal will not be met, the fishery shall be closed or restricted as necessary; the commissioner may, by emergency order, allow extra fishing periods of no more than **24 [**51**]** hours per week, except as provided in 5 AAC 21.365; and (C) the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will be closed for one continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday and for one continuous 24-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Monday and 7:00 a.m. Wednesday; (3) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon, (A) the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of 1,200,000 - 1,600,000 sockeye salmon past the sonar counter at river mile 19; (B) subject to the provisions of other management plans, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will fish regular weekly fishing periods, as specified in 5 AAC 21.320, through July 20, or until the department makes a determination of run strength, whichever occurs first; if the department determines that the minimum inriver goal will not be met, the fishery shall be closed or restricted as necessary; the commissioner may, by emergency order, allow extra fishing periods of no more than **51 [**84**]** hours per week, except as provided in 5 AAC 21.365; and (C) the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery

will be closed for one continuous 36-hour period per week, beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday **and for one continuous 24-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Monday and 7:00 a.m. Wednesday**. (d) The sonar count levels established in this section may be lowered by the board if noncommercial fishing, after consideration of mitigation efforts, results in a net loss of riparian habitat on the Kenai River. The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon inriver goal. (e) Repealed 6/11/2005. (f) Repealed 6/11/2005. (g) Subject to the requirement of achieving the lower end of the **optimal** [sustainable] escapement goal, the department shall provide for a personal use dip net fishery in the lower Kenai River as specified in 5 AAC 77.540. (h) Subject to the requirement of achieving the lower end of the **optimal** [sustainable] escapement goal, the department shall manage the sport fishery on the Kenai River, except that portion of the Kenai River from its confluence with the Russian River to an ADF&G regulatory marker located 1,800 yards downstream, as follows: (1) fishing will occur seven days per week, 24 hours per day; (2) the bag and possession limit for sockeye salmon is three per day, with six in possession, in the sport fishery, unless **the projected inriver run of sockeye salmon above the Kenai River sonar counter located at river mile 19 exceeds 1,200,000 [**the department determines that the abundance of late-run sockeye salmon exceeds 2,300,000 fish**]**, at which time the commissioner may, by emergency order, increase the bag and possession limit as the commissioner determines to be appropriate; and (3) if the projected inriver run of sockeye salmon above the Kenai River sonar counter located at river mile 19 is less than **1,200,000** [1,000,000] fish and the inriver sport fishery harvest is projected to result in an escapement below the lower end of the **optimal** [sustainable] escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, decrease the bag and possession limit, as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, for sockeye salmon in the sport fishery above the Kenai River sonar counter located at river mile 19. (i) For the purposes of this section, "week" means a calendar week, a period of time beginning at 12:00:01 a.m. Sunday and ending at 12:00 midnight the following Saturday. (j) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current management plan prioritizes commercial use. The Kenai River is the primary source for salmon for south central Alaska, the states most populated area by far. The economy of the Kenai River valley is also directly linked to salmon fishing opportunity and is being hard hit by the lack of opportunity. Inriver salmon contribute vastly more revenue to the state than commercially caught fish and the Kenai River can no longer support the demands of so many user groups. Priority exists for commercial fishermen to target sockeye salmon destined for a vast number of Cook Inlet rivers, many of which are not accessible by sport, guided sport, subsistence and personal use fishermen and none of which are so critically vital as a food source, a cultural identity and a way of life for so many Alaskans.

In recent years king salmon have been managed as a stock of critical concern. When king salmon numbers rebound sufficiently it will be imperative that we do not go back to the same management

plan that failed to effectively protect our kings to begin with. This proposal was developed with that in mind.

As a result of low king salmon abundance and recent years of smaller Coho returns all users have become more dependent on sockeye salmon. A significant amount of in river fishing occurs upstream from the sonar and there is no reporting requirement for sport fish harvest of sockeye salmon. This means that there is not a reliable means to actually determine how many sockeye are truly making it beyond fishermen on the lower Kenai River and eventually to their spawning grounds. Escapement goals should be modified to reflect the increased and increasing fishing pressure and harvest on sockeye salmon upstream of the sonar.

Furthermore fish count data and the limited harvest data provided by fish and game survey data over the last several years demonstrates that larger returns of sockeye above current escapement goals and within the proposed escapement goals have resulted in stronger returns 4, 5 and 6 years later. This data demonstrates that a higher escapement is in fact resulting in higher returns which is beneficial to all users.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Yes. This proposal was developed through collaboration with fellow fishermen consultation with the Cooper Landing Advisory Committee and discussions with ADF&G area biologists.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Adams (EF-F27-025)

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PROPOSAL 163

5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

Make numerous amendments to the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon management plan, as follows:

5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

(a) The department shall manage the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses based on abundance.

(b) The Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries shall be managed to

(1) meet the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 750,000 - 1,300,000 late-run sockeye salmon;

(2) distribute the escapement of sockeye salmon evenly within the (SEG) range, in proportion to the size of the run.

(c) The sonar count levels established in this section may be lowered by the board if noncommercial fishing, after consideration of mitigation efforts, results in a net loss of riparian habitat on the Kenai River. The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon management plan.

(d) Subject to the requirement of achieving the lower end of the sustainable escapement goal, the department shall provide for a personal use dip net fishery in the lower Kenai River as specified in 5 AAC 77.540.

(e) Subject to the requirement of achieving the lower end of the sustainable escapement goal, the department shall manage the sport fishery on the Kenai River, except that portion of the Kenai River from its confluence with the Russian River to an ADF&G regulatory marker located 1,800 yards downstream, as follows:

(1) fishing will occur seven days per week, 24 hours per day;

(2) the bag and possession limit for sockeye salmon is three per day, with six in possession, in the sport fishery, unless the department determines that the abundance of late-run sockeye salmon exceeds 2,300,000 fish, at which time the commissioner may, by emergency order, increase the bag and possession limit as the commissioner determines to be appropriate; and

(3) if the projected run of sockeye salmon above the Kenai River sonar counter located at river mile 19 is less than 1,000,000 fish and the sport fishery harvest is projected to result in an escapement below the lower end of the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, decrease the bag and possession limit, as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, for sockeye salmon in the sport fishery above the Kenai River sonar counter located at river mile 19.

(f) For the purposes of this section, "week" means a calendar week, a period of time beginning at 12:00:01 a.m. Sunday and ending at 12:00 midnight the following Saturday.

(g) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Repeal/Replace 5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Proposal discussed with members of the general public, processors, industry groups and commercial fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Roland Maw (EF-F27-072)

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PROPOSAL 164

5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

Amend Kenai River sockeye salmon inriver run goals and restrict commercial set gillnet opportunity, as follows:

Proposed revisions include:

1. Update escapement goal consistent with current estimates of MSY.
2. Increase lower end inriver goal ranges to reflect updated escapement goals and current sport harvest rates above the sonar.
3. Eliminate upper bounds of inriver goal ranges to remove artificial management targets.
4. Eliminate upper sockeye tier which allows 108 hours per week including regular periods.
5. Increase Tuesday window from 24 to 36 hours.
6. Restrict set gillnets to shallow nets.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* is not consistent with new information on high returns from high escapements which were previously believed to reduce returns per spawner.

No Kenai late-run sockeye escapement has ever failed to replace itself and the true production capacity of the system was historically untested due to the lack of data on returns from large escapements. More recent data has shown sockeye productivity to be much higher than previously believed. Escapements substantially greater than the current 750,000-1,200,000 range increase rather than decrease returns and yield. Kenai sockeye may also have benefited from higher productivity in Kenai and Skilak Lakes as a result of warming conditions.

A current escapement goal analysis is not available from ADFG as of the deadline for proposals. Identification of an appropriate goal range will be contingent on an updated escapement goal analysis expected prior to the Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting. However, an escapement goal analysis by Hasbrouck et al. (2022) for brood years 1979-2012 found that escapements in the range of 774,000 and 1,735,000 produce 90% of MSY but did not update the SEG accordingly. More recent data suggests that the corresponding goal range is likely to be higher still.

Current inriver goal ranges are also artificially narrow and practically impossible for fishery managers to meet given the inherent variability in sockeye forecast accuracy and run timing. Inriver goal ranges have not been updated for increases in escapement goals and in sport fishery harvest upstream from the sockeye sonar since current inriver goal ranges were established.

Sockeye run strength management tiers are also inconsistent with updated goal ranges and effective mixed stock management objectives for Kenai late-run sockeye and Kenai late-run kings. Both sockeye and kings may be overfished relative to the updated escapement targets by intensive fishing in the current upper management tier which allows 108 hours per week for the set gillnet fishery for sockeye run strengths of 4.6 million or greater. Corresponding high harvest rates are inconsistent with direction to minimize the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon and Kenai River coho salmon stocks as directed by section (a) of the management plan.

Increasing the Tuesday set gillnet closure window from 24 hours to 36 hours ensures that sockeye and king returns are distributed throughout the run and share harvest opportunity with inriver fisheries.

Obligatory use of shallow 29-mesh set gillnets will maximize sockeye harvest relative to that of kings.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (EF-F27-164)
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PROPOSAL 165

5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

5 AAC 21.365 Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan.

Establish sockeye salmon escapement goals for the Kenai and Kasilof rivers based on plankton levels, as follows:

I propose the sockeye salmon escapement goals in the Kenai and Kasilof rivers be limited to the available plankton in those systems for adequate smolt development of all species.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Recent sampling of outgoing smolt are... undersized and starving (confirmed by ADFG) due to the limited food source and likely higher mortality. Biology would assume there is an optimum carrying capacity of the river systems that could produce healthy salmon smolt of all species and it appears the higher escapement levels are exhausting the available food resources. Understanding the supply and demand for the plankton resource are key to properly manage the fishery. The simple and basic concept of providing adequate plankton to a growing smolt population is very important and needs to be included in the escapement goal calculation.

Yearly over-escapement is unhealthy to the future salmon resources and recovering salmon species, as well as lost opportunities to the commercial fleet. Please consider this proposal as an important management tool in determining the optimum escapement levels, based on science and biology.

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

PROPOSED BY: David Scheer (EF-F27-099)

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PROPOSAL 166

5 AAC21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations and 5 AAC 21.359 Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan.

Establish small mesh set gillnet "tangle net" commercial fishing opportunity in the Upper Subdistrict within the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.331 (Gillnet Specifications and Operations) to add a new subsection authorizing the use of tangle nets by holders of valid Upper Cook Inlet East Side Set Net (ESSN) limited entry permits, and amend 5 AAC 21.359 (Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan) to incorporate tangle nets as an authorized alternative gear type operable under the stock of concern management trigger, subject to the specifications, monitoring, and reporting requirements set out below.

Proposed addition to 5 AAC 21.331 — new subsection (x):

(x) Tangle net gear; Upper Cook Inlet East Side Set Net fishery.

(1) A holder of a valid limited entry permit for the Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet fishery (Upper Subdistrict, Central District) may fish with tangle net gear as defined in 5 AAC 39.105 in lieu of, or in addition to, authorized set gillnet gear, subject to the following conditions:

(A) tangle net mesh size may not exceed 2-1/4 inches (57 mm) stretched measure, measured from inside knot to inside knot;

(B) tangle net depth may not exceed 60 meshes;

(C) tangle net length may not exceed 50 fathoms (300 feet), hung measure;

(D) no more than one tangle net may be operated per permit holder at any one time;

(E) tangle nets must be anchored at both ends and operated substantially perpendicular to the shoreline in the same manner as set gillnet gear under this section, unless otherwise specified by emergency order;

(F) tangle nets must be attended at all times during fishing operations; a permit holder or designated crew member must be present and capable of immediately retrieving the net;

(G) all king salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) and coho salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch) encountered in tangle net gear must be released immediately, with minimum air exposure and handling; retention of king or coho salmon in tangle net gear is prohibited except during periods when retention is specifically authorized by emergency order;

(H) the permit holder must record and report to ADF&G, within 24 hours of each fishing period, the number, estimated size, and condition of each king and coho salmon encountered, handled, and released, on forms supplied by the department;

(I) the department may require an on-site monitor or electronic monitoring as a condition of tangle net operation;

(J) the commissioner may, by emergency order, suspend tangle net operations if observed king or coho mortality exceeds thresholds established in the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan or the Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan.

(2) For purposes of this section, a 'tangle net' means a small-mesh gillnet designed and configured to capture fish by the snout, lips, or jaw rather than by the gills or body, constructed of monofilament or multifilament netting with a mesh size at or below 2-1/4 inches stretched measure, consistent with 5 AAC 39.105.

Proposed amendment to 5 AAC 21.359(d) — Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan:
(d) When the projected Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapement is less than 14,250 fish, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed to fishing with set gillnet gear. During such closures, a permit holder may operate [beach seine gear as provided in subsection (e)] TANGLE NET GEAR AS PROVIDED IN 5 AAC 21.331(x), OR BEACH SEINE GEAR AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (e), subject to all conditions and monitoring requirements applicable to that gear type.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?
The East Side Set Net (ESSN) fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of Cook Inlet has been effectively closed since 2023 due to critically low Kenai River late-run king salmon escapements. More than 400 limited entry permit holders — the vast majority Alaska residents living on the Kenai Peninsula — have been unable to prosecute the sockeye salmon fishery for which their permits were issued, despite abundant sockeye returns to both the Kenai and Kasilof river systems. The fishery has been declared an economic disaster in six of the last seven seasons.

In May 2026, the Board approved Proposal 192, which amended the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan to substitute beach seine gear for set gillnet gear when the king salmon management threshold is not met. While this was a meaningful step forward, beach seine operations as currently authorized are limited to permit holders whose fish sites include a DNR shore lease with suitable beach access and infrastructure (tractors, pulley systems, adequate beach gradient). Board member Mike Wood estimated that this restricts beach seine access to approximately 35–45 permit holders, leaving more than 300 permit holders with no viable commercial fishing option other than dipnets, which have proven commercially marginal in practice.

Tangle nets — small-mesh nets that capture fish by the snout and jaw rather than by the gills — offer a biologically sound, operationally proven, and equitable alternative gear type that:

- Can be operated from existing setnet infrastructure with no shore lease, tractor, or major capital investment required
- Has demonstrated post-release survival rates of 87% or higher for adult Chinook salmon in formal Columbia River studies, compared to near-zero survival in standard gillnets
- Has been used successfully in selective commercial salmon fisheries in Washington State, enabling live release of non-target species while harvesting abundant target stocks
- Is enforceable and definable under existing gear definition frameworks in 5 AAC 39.105
- Extends meaningful commercial fishing opportunity to the majority of ESSN permit holders who lack beach access, addressing the equity gap created by Proposal 192

Authorizing tangle nets in the ESSN fishery, with appropriate specifications, monitoring requirements, and mandatory king and coho release protocols, would advance both the conservation and development mandates of the Board under AS 16.05.221, and would provide an equitable complement to beach seines for permit holders across diverse site geographies.

If no action is taken, more than 300 ESSN permit holders will continue to have no viable commercial fishing option during periods of low king salmon abundance. The fishery's economic collapse will continue, further devastating Kenai Peninsula fishing families and local economies. Additionally:

- The scientific data needed to evaluate alternative gear mortality on Cook Inlet kings and coho will not be collected, leaving the Board without the comparative evidence base it explicitly requested before the 2027 meeting cycle
- The equity disparity between beach-lease-holding and non-beach permit holders will persist and likely generate legal and political challenges to the beach seine framework
- The Board will face increasing pressure from advocates seeking to eliminate set gillnets from the ESSN fishery entirely, without a documented alternative gear pathway for the majority of permit holders
- Permit holders who cannot participate in any alternative fishery will face ongoing economic hardship, permit devaluation, and potential loss of generational fishing operations

The Board has correctly identified post-release survival data as a critical gap in the ESSN alternative gear evidence base. This proposal requires permit holders operating tangle nets to participate in a structured monitoring program, including standardized encounter reporting. The proposal further requests that ADF&G conduct or contract acoustic telemetry studies on king salmon released from tangle net operations in the Upper Subdistrict during the 2027 season, tracking released fish through Kenai and Kasilof River sonar stations to estimate river entry rates as a proxy for survival to spawning. Results should be reported to the Board prior to the next Cook Inlet Finfish regulatory cycle.

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

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark (EF-F27-227)

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PROPOSAL 167

5 AAC 21.365 Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan.

Increase the Kasilof River sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal and restrict commercial set gillnet fishing, as follows:

Proposed revisions include:

1. Increase Kasilof sockeye OEG consistent with updated estimates of MSY.
2. Restrict set gillnets to shallow 29-mesh nets to maximize sockeye harvest relative to that of kings.
3. Add a 36-hr Tuesday window in addition to the 36-hr Friday window to protect Kasilof king returns escapements throughout the duration of the run.
4. Eliminate Kasilof River Special Harvest Area to provide precautionary protection of Kasilof kings for which no inseason run size assessments are available.

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

The current ***Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan*** is not consistent with new information on high returns from high escapements which were previously believed to reduce returns per spawner. More recent data has shown sockeye productivity to be much higher than previously believed. Kasilof sockeye have also benefited from higher productivity in Tustumena Lake as a result of warming conditions. An updated escapement goal analysis is not available from ADFG as of the deadline for proposals. Identification of an appropriate goal range will be contingent on an updated escapement goal analysis expected prior to the Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting.

The Kasilof River supports a significant run of late-timed king salmon which is not subject to escapement-based inseason management as the run size is not formally assessed. Precautionary management measures are needed for Kasilof late-run kings in light of the widespread decline of Alaska king stocks and the lack of inseason assessment.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (EF-F27-165)

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PROPOSAL 168

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Amend the preamble of the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

This is a complex issue with many parts, but the first step is rewrite the paragraph describing the balance of allocation in Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan to properly account for the historical, economic and social value of all user groups, as required by 5 AAC 39.205. I propose the following language:

"The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement and a harvestable surplus of salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery [TO MINIMIZE THE] harvest of Northern District salmon and Kenai River coho salmon in order to provide all users with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency **and scope** of **both saltwater and** inriver restrictions. **When it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest.** The department shall manage the Central District commercial drift gillnet fishery as described in this section."

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Given recent concerns expressed by the Board of Fish about the health of coho runs in Upper Cook Inlet, coho management needs to be improved to ensure the long-term health and viability of the populations and the user-groups who harvest them.

Any conservation burden must be shared proportionally across all user groups, in alignment with Alaska Constitution Article 8 § 15 states that "No exclusive right or special privilege of fishery shall be created or authorized in the natural waters of the State," and Article 8 § 17, "Laws and regulations governing the use or disposal of natural resources shall apply equally to all persons similarly situated with reference to the subject matter and purpose to be served by the law or regulation," and AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisherie, which states, "…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest on the stock of concern."

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-116)

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PROPOSAL 169

5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Amend several elements of the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

Here are the basics of what the new management plan would look like:

1. Regular openings two days per week beginning the third week of June or June 19th. No set ending date for the season.

2. Regular openings will be in all State waters of Area H. No defined areas (like Area 1,2,3,4), except for the Expanded Kenai Section, the Expanded Kasilof Section, and Chinitna Bay Subdistrict.

3. Regular openings will not coincide with the scheduled Federal EEZ openings unless the Federal rules change to allow same-day fishing in both jurisdictions.

4. Managers have E/O authority to close regular periods and/or open additional periods in any of the following: Area H (state waters), the Expanded Kenai Section, and the Expanded Kasilof Section. The primary task of management is to use this authority to meet escapement goals.

5. Escapement goals will be the same each year regardless of the run size (no tiers) and will be determined by tracking escapement numbers and comparing them to resulting harvests for the respective brood years, all the way back to as far as there is available data. Escapement goals will be set based on what has produced the highest harvest. (I think it would be even better to use a rolling 5-year average escapement compared to a rolling 5-year average harvest. This could show the cumulative effects of high or low escapements.)

I have not written this as a plan with proper regulatory language, however I feel that the intent is clear and can be implemented.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the board to repeal the remaining part of the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishing Management Plan and replace it with a more simple plan that allows for flexibility by area bioligists and managers to do their best to meet escapement goals while providing reasonable opportunity for commercial harvest.

There is actually not much left to repeal. At the March 2026 Statewide Finfish meeting, the BOF, out of cycle, repealed most of the management plan. I'm suggesting that the board just repeal the rest and start over with a more reasonable and basic plan with the intent that area managers will have much more leeway for in-season management.

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

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek (EF-F27-021)

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PROPOSAL 170

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Make multiple amendments to the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

(b) The regular weekly fishing periods are as described in 5 AAC 21.320(b). The fishing season will open the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.

(c) From July 9 through July 15,

(1) fishing during the first regular fishing period and second regular fishing period is restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(2) at run strengths greater than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open one additional 12-hour fishing period in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1; (3) additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict.

(d) From July 16 through July 31,

(1) at run strengths of less than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during all regular 12-hour fishing periods will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;

(2) at run strengths of 2,300,000 - 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River,

(A) fishing during one regular 12-hour fishing period per week will be restricted to one or more of the following sections and areas:

(i) Expanded Kenai Section of the Upper Subdistrict;

(ii) Expanded Kasilof Section of the Upper Subdistrict;

(iii) Anchor Point Section of the Lower Subdistrict;

(iv) Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(B) the remaining weekly 12-hour regular fishing period will be restricted to one or more of the following sections:

(i) Expanded Kenai Section;

(ii) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(iii) Anchor Point Section;

(3) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, one regular 12-hour fishing period per week will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections;

(4) additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed only in one or more of the following sections:

(A) Expanded Kenai Section;

(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(C) Anchor Point Section.

(e) From August 1 through August 15

(1) fishing during both regular 12-hour fishing periods per week will be restricted to one or more of the following:

(A) Expanded Kenai Section;

(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(C) Anchor Point Section;

(D) Drift Gillnet Area 1;
(E) Drift Gillnet Area 3;
(2) additional fishing periods are allowed in one or more of the following:
(A) Expanded Kenai Section;
(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;
(C) Anchor Point Section;
(3) regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 if
(A) the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed under 5 AAC 21.310(b)(2)(C)(iii); or
(B) the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two

[(C)FISHING IS RESTRICTED TO ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED IN SECTIONS (E) OR (F) BELOW;
(1)THE EXPANDED KENAI SECTION OF THE UPPER SUBDISTRICT;
(2)STATE OF ALASKA WATERS OF THE EXPANDED KASILOF SECTION OF THE UPPERSUBDISTRICT;
(D)THE COMMISSIONER MAY, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, OPEN REGULAR AND ADDITIONAL FISHINGPERIODS AS FOLLOWS:
(1)REGULAR FISHING PERIODS ARE FROM 7:00 A.M. MONDAY UNTIL 11:00 P.M. MONDAY AND FROM 7:00 A.M. THURSDAY UNTIL 11:00 P.M. THURSDAY;
(2)ADDITIONAL FISHING PERIODS MAY BE OPENED ONLY AT RUN STRENGTHS OF GREATER THAN2,300,000 SOCKEYE SALMON TO THE KENAI RIVER;
(3)FISHING PERIODS, INCLUDING REGULAR AND ADDITIONAL PERIODS, MAY NOT BE OPEN FOR MORE THAN 16 HOURS PER DAY;
(4)FISHING PERIODS, INCLUDING REGULAR AND ADDITIONAL PERIODS, MAY NOT OCCUR ON MORE THAN FIVE DAYS PER WEEK AND THE DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY WILL BE CLOSED FOR TWO CONTINUOUS 32- HOUR PERIODS PER WEEK FROM 11:00 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH 7:00 A.M. WEDNESDAY AND 11:00 P.M. THURSDAY THROUGH 7:00 A.M. SATURDAY.
(E) FROM AUGUST 1 THROUGH AUGUST 15, FISHING WILL BE RESTRICTED TO TWO REGULAR PERIODS PER WEEK IN DRIFT GILLNET AREAS 3 AND 4 IF;
(1) THE UPPER SUBDISTRICT SET GILLNET FISHERY IS CLOSED UNDER 5 AAC 21.310(B)(2)(C)(III); OR
(2) THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT LESS THAN THREE PERCENT OF THE SEASON'S TOTAL DRIFT GILLNET SOCKEYE SALMON HARVEST HAS BEEN TAKEN PER FISHING PERIOD FOR TWO CONSECUTIVE FISHING PERIODS IN THE DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY INCLUDING STATE OF ALASKA AND FEDERAL WATERS OF UPPER COOK INLET].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The long-standing week-by-week schedule for the Upper Cook Inlet drift fishery that was eliminated by the Board of Fish in 2026 should be reinstated to ensure the use of the best available information to support the long-term health and viability of coho and sockeye stocks. I am proposing a return to the fishing schedule from 2025/26 Management Plan. This schedule does not mandate fishing time, but simply allows for harvest when there is a harvestable surplus. This is how the Department of Fish and Game should manage stocks, per the Alaska Constitution Article 8, section 4: “Fish, forests,

wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belong to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle…" and 5 AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries, which states, "(b)…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest…"

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-118)

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PROPOSAL 171

5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Add definitions for Drift Gillnet Areas 1 and 2, as follows:

Reinstate Drift Gillnet Areas 1 and 2, as follows:

For the purposes of this section,

(1) "Drift Gillnet Area 1" means those waters of the Central District south of Kalgin Island at 60° 20.43' N. lat.;

(2) "Drift Gillnet Area 2" means those waters of the Central District enclosed by a line from 60° 20.43' N. lat., 151° 54.83' W. long. to a point at 60° 41.08' N. lat., 151° 39.00' W. long. to a point at 60° 41.08' N. lat., 151° 24.00' W. long. to a point at 60° 27.10' N. lat., 151° 25.70' W. long. to a point at 60° 20.43' N. lat., 151° 28.55' W. long.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Areas 1 and 2 are important historical areas for sockeye harvest for the Upper Cook Inlet Drift gillnet fleet and should be available for harvest, when sockeye and coho stock abundance allows. These areas were closed by the Board of Fish in 20026, but should be reinstated. The existence of the fishing areas does not require that they be open, but simply allows for harvest when stock abundance allows, based on inseason data and management tools. This is how the Department of Fish and Game should manage stocks, per the Alaska Constitution Article 8, section 4: "Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belong to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle…"

The elimination of areas 1 and 2 represents the elimination of 70% of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial gill net fishing grounds, based on estimates using the Google Earth Polygon tool. The board eliminated these areas while making zero changes to the fishing regulations for Northern District Sport harvest regulations. That's not right. If there is an issue with the health of coho stocks, all user groups should have proportional restriction., per 5 AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries, which states, "(b)…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest on the stock of concern."

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-117)

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PROPOSAL 172

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Establish criteria for opening drift gillnet Area 1 and Area 2 based on inriver passage of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon, as follows:

Drift gillnetting opens in Area 1 + Area 2 Mondays + Thursdays 7am to 7pm after the Kenai River has reached an in river escapement of 900,000 sockeyes.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Gross reduction of time + area H for Upper Cook Inlet Drift Fishery

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have served on the Central Peninsula Advisory Committee since 1984.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs (EF-F27-248)

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PROPOSAL 173

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan

Repeal the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

Repeal 5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan. The following regulations and management practices are expected to continue:

- Fishing Season dates are in regulation, 5AAC 21.310
- Gear specifications are in existing regulations, 5AAC 21.331, 5AAC 21.333
- Weekly fishing periods are in existing regulations, 5AAC 21.320
- Escapement goals are established for the major and minor sockeye systems
- Outlook management documents will continue
- Preseason forecasts will continue to be published
- Apply Abundance-Based Management, as described in the 2005 ADF&G 'Alaska's Salmon Management - A Story of Success' publication

The existing Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan is a collection of reactive, prescriptive management measures without regard to migratory, temporal or spatial run patterns that have occurred over the last 50+ years.

There are 5 distinct Migratory Pattern(s) (MP). These patterns are:

1. Counter-clockwise North Pacific near coastal
    - UCI sockeye are often detected passing west ofIcy Cape, Cape St. Elias, Prince William Sound, then SW along the Kenai Peninsula coast, passing the Chugach Islands prior to entering into Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) and Kachemak Bay.

In 2024 and 2025, the salmon runs into UCI had a pronounced East Side orientation. Sockeye salmon had a coastal, Kachemak Bay, entry pattern prior to entering UCL

Discussion:

- Sockeye that display MPl have the following characteristics:
    I. Arrive in UCI approximately July 4- 8.
    II. Have highly time-compressed run pattern. Vast majority (90%) ofthe run will have entered UCI by July 22-25.
    III. Are larger in both weight and length.
    IV. Display at least 15-20 nm, tide-neutral NE daily movements.
    V. Tidal movements- one tide, 12 hours, can move salmon 15-20 nm to NE.
    VI. Easily pass thru EEZ in 12-24 hours, one 12-hour flood tide.
    VII. Salmon pass thru state waters entering the Kenai and KasilofRivers within one 12-hour tide cycle.
    VIII. Total run sizes are above forecast, as was the case in 2024 and 2025.

2. Counter-clockwise North Pacific near the coast, similar to MPl, but pass thru the Kennedy Entrance moving into the Middle Rip
    - Enter UCI east ofthe middle rip, north ofthe Barren Islands prior to entering UCI
    -

Discussion:

- Sockeye that display MP2 have the following characteristics:
    I. Arrive in UCI approximately July 8-10.

II. Somewhat relaxed run timing.
III. 90% of the run will have entered UCI between July 8-10 and July 31, later run timing than MP1.
IV. Nothing notable about size (length or weight).
V. Tide-neutral movement is less, 15-18 nm per 24-hour period.
VI. Combined tide-neutral and tides combined salmon will go thru the EEZ in one 24-hour period.
VII. Pass thru state waters into rivers in one 12-hour tide cycle.

3. Stevenson Entrance

- Salmon enter thru the Stevenson Entrance, south of the Barren Islands but north of Shuyak Island into the Shelikof Strait and move SW in the making a U-Tum to the NE near Cape Igvak and Chignik then moving along to the Middle Rip, NE into UCL

Discussion:

- Sockeye that display MP3 have the following characteristics:

I. Arrive in UCI approximately July 8-10 or later.
II. Protracted run timing into early August
III. Tide-neutral daily movement is less than 10- 15 nm per 24-hour period. These sockeye tend to school in the EEZ or state waters for one to five days.
IV. They remain in the EEZ for a few days prior to moving into state waters.
V. Definitely new individuals arrive in UCI EEZ waters in August. Often as late as August 15 or later.
VI. These sockeye have added up to 200 nm ofadditional ocean movement SW, U-turning NE thru the Shelikof Strait prior to entering UCL
VII. This ShelikofU-turn migratory pattern delays, or protracts, run entry pattern.
VIII. These salmon runs tend to be below pre-forecast numbers.
IX. These salmon are often harvested in the Kodiak region.

4. East Side Kodiak Island

- Moving SW along the east side seaward of Kodiak Island turning west entering the Shelikof Strait, then turning NE into LCI along the middle rip entering UCL

Discussion:

- Sockeye that display MP4 have the following characteristics:

I. Much the same as MP3.
II. These salmon are often harvested by commercial fishermen along the east side of Kodiak Island and in the Shelikof and Mainland District of the Shelikof Strait.
III. Salmon runs are below pre-season forecast by 500,000 to several million.
IV. Protracted UCI entry pattern, 50% of the run may enter UCI in August.

5. Combinations of MP 1-4

- In any given year, there may be combinations of the migratory patterns. Some portion of the sockeye salmon run may use one or more of these migratory patterns.

Discussion:

I. Portions of run used combinations of MPl-4
II. Run times expanded temporally and spatially
III. Run displays pulses of sockeye entering UCI

General Discussion

Currently, there are no considerations for migratory patterns in either the Central District Gillet Fishery Management Plan or the annual harvests. There are no considerations for the salmon migratory patterns.

The failure ofoversight to include these Kodiak harvests does change the stock assessments, population sizes, run timing and harvests allowed.

The migratory patterns for Chinook, chum, coho and pinks are not known. However, we do know that there are some larger harvests, over one million ofthese four species, that are harvested in the EEZ and in state waters. By not including migratory patterns, the basic scientific and biological populations sizes or return per spawner introduces errors and deficiencies in the management plan. Various models, such as Ricker and others, and harvest rates are all suspect. Validity, reliability and annual catch limit estimates are invalid, in our opinion.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Repeal 5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

This will reduce the costs to the fishing industry. Economic benefits will be for the nation, state taxes by streamlining the management complexity and reducing costs. The more the fishery management plans contain prescriptive measures, the more likely they will fail. Reason being, the salmon just try to survive and spawn without regard to human contrived, predetermined, prescriptive management plans.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Proposal discussed with members of the general public, processors, industry groups and commercial fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: United Cook Inlet Drift Association (EF-F27-066)

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PROPOSAL 174

5 AAC 5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Allow additional drift gillnet commercial fishing opportunity, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 21.353 to expressly authorize the commissioner, by emergency order, to open all or part of the Central District to additional regular or expanded drift gillnet fishing periods when preseason forecasts and inseason information show that Kenai River and Kasilof River sockeye abundance is sufficient to allow additional harvest while maintaining applicable escapement and inriver goals.

Draft working language:
In 5 AAC 21.353, add a subsection providing that when the commissioner determines, based on preseason forecasts and inseason assessment information, that Kenai River and Kasilof River sockeye salmon abundance is sufficient to allow additional harvest while maintaining applicable escapement and inriver goals, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open all or part of the Central District to additional regular or expanded drift gillnet fishing periods. Before authorizing such periods, the commissioner shall consider (A) current and projected Kenai and Kasilof sockeye escapement; (B) sockeye escapement performance in other affected Upper Cook Inlet systems; (C) current coho indicators in Northern District systems; and (D) whether additional harvest can be structured without creating likely additional conservation risk. Nothing in this subsection limits the commissioner's authority to restrict time or area inseason when conservation needs require narrower management.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current 5 AAC 21.353 does not clearly preserve a biologically conditioned inseason tool for broader Central District drift openings during very large Kenai and Kasilof sockeye returns. That lack of clarity narrows the department's management toolbox, reduces transparency about when broader openings may be used, and can force managers into a more rigid structure than the biological record supports.

This proposal is intended to meet AO 360 by clarifying existing regulatory obligations and decision criteria, improving transparency in decision-making, and reducing administrative burden created by ad hoc management responses. Instead of relying on a static restrictive framework, the regulation would clearly state when the commissioner may use broader drift flexibility during large runs while still preserving authority to narrow time and area when coho or other conservation concerns require it.

If nothing is changed, the department remains less able to use the drift fleet as a precise inseason management tool for harvesting surplus sockeye and the public remains without a clear, written standard for when broader flexibility can be used.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Developed from prior draft proposal work, the uploaded Cook Inlet Coho Data Review, the proposal 186 / RC161 record, and conversations reflected in this organizing effort. No formal Advisory Committee vote has been recorded yet

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson (EF-F27-078)

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PROPOSAL 175

5 AAC21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Remove closed commercial fishing windows from the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

Remove the mandatory no fishing windows from the upper cook inlet management plan

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In March of 2026 at the statewide finfish meeting the board adopted mandatory no fishing windows. No fishing on Tuesday or on Friday. This regulation will make the area biologist's job to manage Upper Cook Inlet Sockeye escapements extremely prone to failure. In the past the commissioner had Emergency Order authority to open and or close a fishery which is a form of adapted management. With this authority the biologist had a very important tool to manage the sockeye return to be within the escapement goals. This tool holds particular significance for biologists who manage sockeye returns. Historically the set net harvest of sockeye in Upper Cook Inlet harvested in the range of 40 to 60% of the sockeye's returning to the inlet. With the removal of the set net harvest because of conservation for King salmon, making it intrinsically important for the biologist to have the ability to have the flexibility of adding hours, days of fishing when managing towards an in-river goal. The biologist at the meeting was questioned by a board member what this rule would do to the sockeye harvest. His reply was that 1 million sockeyes go unharvested. My quick math indicates the following

1,000,000 x 6lbs =6,000,000lbs x $1.80 per lb.=$10,800,000 loss of potential revenue to the fleet. That same $10,800,000 loss of potential revenue has a landing tax associated with it. It is a 3% tax on landed value. Half of that tax goes to the state's general fund the other half gets directed towards the community where the fish was landed in. What department in the state or community couldn't utilize their half or the landing tax? That's $162,000 added both to states and community's budget. Not to mention the loss to the processors, crew, and vessel owners for spending in the communities. All on this under the guise of saving Coho salmon. Coho's are very unpredictable in their productivity. Jeff Mount, a senior fellow at the public policy institute of California's water policy center and an emeritus professor of earth and planetary sciences at UC Davis is quoted "Keep in mind, Coho Salmon, in particular go through boom-and-bust cycles".

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson (EF-F27-052)

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PROPOSAL 176

5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Repeal weekly closed commercial fishing windows from the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

Eliminate (d)(4) from the Central District Gillnet Fishery Management Plan

~~**[Fishing periods, including regular and additional periods, may not occur on more than five days per week and the drift gillnet fishery will be closed for two continuous 32 hour periods per week from 11:00 pm Monday through 7:00 am Wednesday and 11:00 pm Thursday through 7:00 am Saturday.]**~~

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Mandatory closures in the Expanded Kasilof and Expanded Kenai Sections, regardless of sockeye escapements into the Kenai and/or Kasilof River.

Allow the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game to manage these sections by emergency order based on inseason escapements and run size projections.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Myself and other local Cook Inlet commercial fishery participants.

PROPOSED BY: Revelle Russell (EF-F27-147)

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PROPOSAL 177

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Establish paired restrictions for coho salmon between the commercial drift gillnet fishery and select Northern Cook Inlet sport fisheries, as follows:

Close all sport fishing in the Little Susitna River, the Deshka River, and that portion of the Susitna River downstream from the Deshka River, during the time that there may be coho salmon present (I would suggest from July 15 through Dec. 31). For parity, this closure will remain in place until such time that the commercia drift fleet is open area-wide in the Central District for two 12-hour periods per week during the salmon season. Any lifting of the sport restrictions through board action or with E/O authority will automatically reinstate the district-wide commercial drift fishery to two days per week during the salmon season in perpetuity.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? At the March 2026 BOF statewide meeting, the board took action that permanently closed a very large portion of the commercial drift fleet's best fishing area. This heavy conservation burden needs to be shared among the users groups and not rest soley on the commercial sector and the fish-buying public. The conservation measures restrictiong the drift fleet that have occurred over the years, and especially at the March 2026 meeting, have been implemented mostly in response to low escapements (or perceived low escapements) into the Deshka and Little Susitna Rivers. These restrictions are not just temporary measures for low abundance events, but are permanent closures of highly productive areas long used by the drift fleet. Equivalent permanent restrictions and closures need to be in place for other user groups for parity in sharing the burden of conservation.

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

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek (EF-F27-144)

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PROPOSAL 178

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Establish paired restrictions between the commercial drift gillnet fishery and freshwater sport fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet, as follows:

If the drift gillnet fishery is closed by area or time due to coho conservation concerns, the time and area allowed sport fisherman in in the freshwater of Upper Cook Inlet will be closed for an equal frequency, period of time, and proportional area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Given recent concerns around the health of coho runs in the Northern District, management of northern-bound and Kenai-bound coho needs to be improved ensure the long-term viability of the populations and to provide equal protection under the law for all user-groups who harvest them.

In 2026, the Board eliminated 70% of the Cook Inlet drift fishing grounds and instituted mandatory 32-hour closures for drift fishery twice a week, and mandated closure when we hit 3% of peak harvest, while making zero changes to freshwater harvest regulations. That's not right, especially when voluntary reports of Upper Cook Inlet sport harvest are generally greater than the commercial coho harvest. If there is an issue with the health of coho stocks, all user groups should have proportional restrictions.

Any conservation burden must be shared proportionally across all user groups, in alignment with Alaska Constitution Article 8 § 15. No Exclusive Right of Fishery "No exclusive right or special privilege of fishery shall be created or authorized in the natural waters of the State," Article 8 § 17, which states, "Laws and regulations governing the use or disposal of natural resources shall apply equally to all persons similarly situated with reference to the subject matter and purpose to be served by the law or regulation," and 5 AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries, which states, "(b)…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest.."

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-119)

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PROPOSAL 179

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Establish paired restrictions between the commercial drift gillnet fishery and sport fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet, as follows:

If the Cook Inlet drift fishery, including regular and additional periods, do not occur on more than five days per week and the drift gillnet fishery is closed for two continuous 32-hour periods per week from 11:00 p.m. Monday through 7:00 a.m. Wednesday and 11:00 p.m. Thursday through 7:00 a.m. Saturday, than the Upper Cook Inlet sport harvest will be closed for two continuous 32- hour periods per week from 11:00 p.m. Monday through 7:00 a.m. Wednesday and 11:00 p.m. Thursday through 7:00 a.m. Saturday.

[(4)FISHING PERIODS, INCLUDING REGULAR AND ADDITIONAL PERIODS, MAY NOT OCCUR ON MORETHAN FIVE DAYS PER WEEK AND THE DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY WILL BE CLOSED FOR TWO CONTINUOUS 32- HOUR PERIODS PER WEEK FROM 11:00 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH 7:00 A.M. WEDNESDAY AND 11:00 P.M. THURSDAY THROUGH 7:00 A.M. SATURDAY.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Given recent concerns expressed by the Board of Fish about the health of coho runs in Upper Cook Inlet, coho management needs to be improved to ensure the long-term health and viability of the populations and the user-groups who harvest them.

In 2026, the Board eliminated 70% of the Cook Inlet drift fishing grounds and instituted mandatory 32-hour closures for drift fishery twice a week, and mandated closure when we hit 3% of peak harvest, while making zero changes to freshwater harvest regulations. That's not right, especially when voluntary reports of freshwater sport coho harvest in Upper Cook Inlet are generally greater than the commercial coho harvest. If there is an issue with the health of coho stocks, all user groups should have proportional restrictions

Any conservation burden must be shared proportionally across all user groups, in alignment with Alaska Constitution Article 8 § 15. No Exclusive Right of Fishery "No exclusive right or special privilege of fishery shall be created or authorized in the natural waters of the State," Article 8 § 17, which states, "Laws and regulations governing the use or disposal of natural resources shall apply equally to all persons similarly situated with reference to the subject matter and purpose to be served by the law or regulation," and 5 AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries, which states, "(b)…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest.."

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-120)

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PROPOSAL 180

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Establish paired area closures between the commercial drift gillnet fishery and sport fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet, as follows:

If the Anchor Point Section, Drift Gillnet Area 1, Drift Gillnet Area 2 are eliminated for coho conservation, then a proportional 70 percent of the coho salmon freshwater sport fishing areas in Upper Cook Inlet will be closed to sport fishing.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Given recent concerns around the health of coho runs in the Northern District, management of northern-bound and Kenai-bound coho needs to be improved ensure the long-term viability of the populations and to provide equal protection under the law for all user-groups who harvest them.

In 2026, the Board eliminated 70% of the Cook Inlet drift fishing grounds and instituted mandatory 32-hour closures for drift fishery twice a week, and mandated closure when we hit 3% of peak harvest, while making zero changes to freshwater harvest regulations. That's not right, especially when voluntary reports of freshwater coho harvest in Upper Cook Inlet are generally greater than the commercial coho harvest. If there is an issue with the health of coho stocks, all user groups should have proportional restrictions.

Any conservation burden must be shared proportionally across all user groups, in alignment with Alaska Constitution Article 8 § 15. No Exclusive Right of Fishery "No exclusive right or special privilege of fishery shall be created or authorized in the natural waters of the State," Article 8 § 17, which states, "Laws and regulations governing the use or disposal of natural resources shall apply equally to all persons similarly situated with reference to the subject matter and purpose to be served by the law or regulation," and 5 AAC 39.220 - Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries, which states, "(b)…when it is necessary to restrict fisheries on stocks where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall be shared among all fisheries in close proportion to their respective harvest.."

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-121)

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PROPOSAL 181

5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan

Add language clarifying the commissioner's authority to manage the drift gillnet fishery in Upper Cook Inlet, as follows:

(h) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reinstate language in the Management Plan to allow the commissioner to use Emergency Openers to manage the gill net fishery, as required by 5 AAC 21.363(e): "Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, it is the intent of the board that, while in most circumstances the department will adhere to the management plans in this chapter, no provision within a specific management plan is intended to limit the commissioner's use of emergency order authority under AS 16.05.060 to achieve established escapement goals for the management plans as the primary management objective…"

The success of Alaska fishery management is grounded in its ability to use and adapt to real time data; it is both common-sense to use this information, and it is mandated by law that the Commissioner be allowed to use it achieve established escapement goals for the management plans as the primary management objective. This is how the Department of Fish and Game should manage stocks, per the Alaska Constitution Article 8, section 4: "Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belong to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle…"

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

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-122)

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PROPOSAL 182

5 AAC 5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Amend the areas commercial drift gillnet fishing may occur from August 7 through August 15, as follows:

(e) From August 7 through August 15,

(1) fishing during both regular 12-hour fishing periods per week will be restricted to one or more of the following:

(A) Expanded Kenai Section;

(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(C) Anchor Point Section;

(D) Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(E) Drift Gillnet Area 3;

(2) additional fishing periods are allowed in one or more of the following:

(A) Expanded Kenai Section;

(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(C) Anchor Point Section;

(3) regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 if

(A) the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed under 5 AAC 21.310(b)(2)(C)(iii); or

(B) the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two. If Kenai River sockeye escapement has met the upper goal, the one percent rule does not apply.

[THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT LESS THAN THREE PERCENT OF THE SEASON'S TOTAL DRIFT GILLNET SOCKEYE SALMON HARVEST HAS BEEN TAKEN PER FISHING PERIOD FOR TWO CONSECUTIVE FISHING PERIODS IN THE DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY INCLUDING STATE OF ALASKA AND FEDERAL WATERS OF UPPER COOK INLET].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The long-standing week-by-week schedule for the Upper Cook Inlet drift fishery that was eliminated by the Board of Fish in 2026 should be reinstated to ensure the use of the best available information to support the long-term health and viability of coho and sockeye stocks, and the 1 percent rule should be pushed back from August 1 to August 7. If there is a harvestable surplus of sockeye available, the drift fleet should be able to access them, and those runs are generally pretty well done by August 7. The primary reason this rule is triggered is due to reduced participation, not diminished stocks.

The Department of Fish and Game should manage stocks on the maximum sustained yield principle, per the Alaska Constitution Article 8, section 4: “Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belong to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle…”

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with a number of Cook Inlet drift fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas (EF-F27-123)

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PROPOSAL 183

5 AAC 39.107 (D) Operation of gear. (21.331 Gillnet specifications and operations.)

Amend the definition of fishing site for stationary commercial fishing gear, as follows:

My solution would be to add that fishing facilities at the mouth of the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers that provide structure, shelter and support of the fishing operation be added to the definition of fishing site. In 5AAC 39.107 (E) the two exceptions are defined as to when you can be away from your fishing site. The term "reasonable distance" is used meaning a distance that ensures that the CFEC permit holder retains competent supervision of the gear. I think common sense would be that if your point of sale is deemed "reasonable distance to ensure competent supervision of gear, than certainly the same location would be adequate to be deemed a "fishing site".

My draft regulatory change would change the last sentence of 5 AAC 39.107 (D) to read: For purposes of this subsection "fishing site" includes any structure used for providing shelter in support of the operation of net gear or other stationary gear and includes fishing buying stations in the mouth of the Kenai and Kasilof River and locations that are a reasonable distance that CFEC permit holders would have to travel to deliver their fish at a point of sale. Being within sight of your net gear site is not generally possible so is NOT a requirement of being at the "fishing site".

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Definition of "Fishing Site" stated in the regulation 5 AAC 39.107 (D) is extremely vague, does not define distance requirements from "Net Gear Site", (as defined in 5AAC 39.975 (32), and leaves fisherman uncertain of where their legally allowed "fishing site" is. Law enforcement is suddenly conflating "net gear site" which means the in water location of stationary net gear and "fishing site".

For decades setnetters have set their nets and then left the "net gear site" to legally get out of harms way and go to their "fishing site" until slack water when they can safely pick their nets and then leave to go sell the fish. Fishing sites for over a century included structure and support available in the mouth of the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. Setnetters can fish out as far as 1.5 miles offshore and fishing multiple nets can place them a few miles from their nets once they get back to the beach. Then they still need to get to their "fishing site", wherever that may be. Understanding this reality of the fishery is critical and therefore the "fishing site" definition needs updated.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? NO

PROPOSED BY: Philip Sheridan (EF-F27-004)

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PROPOSAL 184

5 AAC 21.320. Weekly fishing periods.

Allow for alternative regular drift gillnet commercial fishing weekly periods, as follows:

5 AAC 21.320. Weekly fishing periods.

…(b) In the drift gillnet fishery,
(1) salmon may be taken in the Central District from 7:00 a.m. Monday **or Tuesday** until 7:00 p.m. Monday **or Tuesday** and from 7:00 a.m. Thursday **or Friday** until 7:00 p.m. Thursday **or Friday,** except salmon may be taken…

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Provide for the flexibility to change the fishing schedule as appropriate to maintain a mixed stock fishery and achieve escapement goals.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Proposal discussed with members of the general public, processors, industry groups and commercial fishermen.

PROPOSED BY: United Cook Inlet Drift Association (EF-F27-070)

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PROPOSAL 185

5 AAC 21.350 Closed waters.

Modify closed waters to commercial fishing in Upper Cook Inlet, as follows:

Bring closed waters regulation along the west side of Cook Inlet in line with the standard definition of closed waters in the state of Alaska in 5 AAC 39.290 and 5 AAC 39.975 (14), with respect to the terminus of rivers being measured at mean lower low water. 5 AAC 21.350 Closed waters (b) Central District:

(6) on the west side of the Central District from the northern boundary of the district south to Harriet Point (60° 23.75' N. lat., 152° 14.00' W. long.),

(A) within one statute mile of the terminus, at mean [HIGH TIDE] lower low water, of the Kustatan River and the Drift River;

(B) within one statute mile of the terminus, at mean lower low water, of Cannery Creek;

(C) within one statute mile of the Big River;

(D) within 500 yards of the terminus, at mean [HIGH TIDE] lower low water, of any anadromous fish stream;

(E) within 900 feet of the streambed or channel of any anadromous fish stream throughout the intertidal portion of that stream out to the lower low water mark;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? On the west side of Cook Inlet, commercial fishers regularly fish in or near the mouths of rivers where they can significantly impact local escapements. Current regulations fail to provide adequate river mouth sanctuaries due to the slope and bottom contour are the area. Enforcement of existing regulations is reportedly challenging under the current regulation due to the difficulty in identifying the terminus of many rivers.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Kristine Ogonowski (EF-F27-073)

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PROPOSAL 186

5 AAC 21.350 Closed Waters.

Reduce commercial fishing closed waters near Shelter and Silver Salmon Creek, as follows:

Rescind the ruling from the last BOF Cook Inlet meeting which changed the closed areas around Shelter Creek and Silver Salmon Creek from 500 yards to 1 mile.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? At the 2024 Cook Inlet board cycle, the BOF changed the long-standing closed areas around Shelter Creek and Silver Salmon Creek from 500 yards to 1 mile. This was done without any conservation concern from the department and was proposed by a single person with anti-commercial fishing intentions.

This area has been a long-standing part of our fishery that has helped sustain our industry. Increasing the closed waters around these creeks has essentially eliminated access to this abundant resource. Most of the area outside of the newly closed area is treacherous with rocks and strong tidal currents making it less usable to the fishery and therefore much less productive. This fishery is open for only two 12-hour periods each week. That means that open fishing time is only 14% of each week, leaving 86% of the time closed to allow for escapement, and that doesn't even account for times when the whole area is unfishable during bad weather events. These fish stocks aren't, and never have been, over fished. Commercial fishing has occurred in this area for decades. Closing it down was a very poor decision that has been detrimental to the fishery for no conservation reason.

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

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek (EF-F27-056)

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PROPOSAL 187

5 AAC 21.330. Gear.

Amend open waters to commercial set gillnet fishing in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict, as follows:

Amend the regulations 5 AAC 21.330 (3)(A)(vii) governing the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict set gillnet fishing area to expand the open area to include the south shore of Chinitna Bay, from the Crane on South Shore marker (59° 49.91' N, 153° 05.47' W) eastward along the south shore to Sea Otter Point (59° 50.04' N, 153° 01.25' W).

Proposed regulatory language: Set gillnets may be used in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict in those waters along the north shore, as currently defined, and additionally along the south shore from the Crane on South Shore marker at 59° 49.91' N, 153° 05.47' W eastward to Sea Otter Point at 59° 50.04' N, 153° 01.25' W.

This change would restore historic fishing access along the south shore while maintaining all existing regulations regarding gear type, mesh size, fishing periods, and other provisions applicable to the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict.

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

The set gillnet fishing area within the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict (Statistical Area 245-10) is currently restricted to the north shore of the bay. This regulation excludes the south shore, where the proposer holds a private landholding of 160-acre Department of Interior BIA Land Trust Native Allotment. The proposer is a commercial set gillnet permit holder who historically fished the south shore prior to a regulatory change restricting set netting to the north shore and drifting to the south. The south shore closure requires the proposer to cross approximately five miles of open water to reach the legal fishing area on the north shore, creating significant economic hardship and safety risks. Additionally, the south shore is shallow where the drift nets lay on the bottom creating a drift fishery that is essentially stationary with the lead line on the Bay floor and corks that can't drift.

Commercial set gillnet fishing has been conducted from both shores of Chinitna Bay for generations, with fishermen historically delivering catch to the Snug Harbor Cannery on nearby Chisik Island. Participation in the Chinitna Bay set gillnet fishery has been minimal, with only one or two permits recording harvest since 2008. Expanding the open area to include a portion of the south shore would not increase overall fishing pressure; it would simply allow existing permit holders to fish safely from established shore-based operations near their residences, as was historically permitted.

This proposal does not seek to restrict, relocate, or otherwise adversely affect any permit holder currently fishing the north shore; the north shore set gillnet area would remain fully open under existing regulations.

If the regulation is not changed, the proposer and other south shore residents will continue to be unable to fish commercially near their property despite holding valid permits and maintaining established shore-based infrastructure.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No.

PROPOSED BY: Susan E. Wells (EF-F27-152)

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PROPOSAL 188

5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage.

Modify guided fishing hours and days on the Kenai River when king salmon fishing is closed as follows:

5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area. (a) In addition to the requirements of 5 AAC 75.075 - 5 AAC 75.077, and before providing sport fishing guide services on the Kenai River, a sport fishing guide and vessel must be registered at the Soldotna office of the Department of Natural Resources, division of parks and outdoor recreation. Once registered, a vessel registration remains valid for the remainder of the calendar year, unless the vessel is de-registered with the Department of Natural Resources, division of parks and outdoor recreation. (b) Downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, a person may not sport fish from a registered guide vessel on any Sunday from May 1 through July 31, and on any Monday in July, **when open for King Salmon**, except that a person may fish from a registered sport fishing guide vessel during the last two Sundays in May and the first Sunday in June under the terms of a permit issued by the commissioner, for approved charitable nonprofit organizations or for educational public service activities.

(c) From May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered sport fishing guide vessel is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Kenai River downstream from the ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake **when open to King Salmon fishing.**

(d) On the Kenai River, a person may not engage in guided sport fishing from a vessel unless the vessel has a current Alaska Department of Natural Resources, division of parks and outdoor recreation, guide sticker prominently attached to the exterior of the vessel. (e) On the Kenai River, a client may not engage in guided sport fishing unless the person guiding the client is in compliance with the provisions of (a) and (d) of this section. (f) A person may not book, contract, or arrange for guided sport fishing from a vessel, unless that person is in compliance with the provisions of (a) and (d) of this section. (g) During July, a person aboard a vessel used for guided sport fishing on the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake may not sport fish from that vessel if more than five persons, including the sport fishing guide, clients, and other passengers are present on that vessel. (h) On the Kenai River, from January 1 through December 31, (1) a sport fishing guide may not sport fish from a vessel while a client is present or is within the sport fishing guide's control or responsibility, except that a sport fishing guide may provide assistance to a client with a disability in order to enable the client to engage in sport fishing; in this paragraph, "disability" has the same meaning given in 42 U.S.C. 12102(2)(A) and (C), as amended as of February 8, 1994; (2) the maximum number of fishing rods that may be operated may not exceed the number of clients on board the vessel. (i) From July 31 or the end of the king salmon season, whichever is later, through November 30, sport fishing from a vessel that is registered with the Department of Natural Resources, division of parks and outdoor recreation, as a sport fishing guide vessel is restricted as follows: (1) downstream from the confluence of the Moose River and Kenai River, sport fishing on Mondays, except Labor Day, is prohibited; (2) upstream from the confluence of the Moose River and Kenai River, sport fishing for coho salmon on Mondays, except Labor Day, is prohibited; any coho salmon caught must be released immediately without further harm.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I seek to remove the hourly limitations to guided fishing from a vessel from 6 am – 6 pm May 31st- July 1st and also remove the Sunday and Monday closures to fishing from a guided sport vessel May 31st- July 1st on the Kenai River when fishing is closed to King Salmon. These restrictions were put into place to limit the sport fishing guide's impact on King Salmon fisheries. These restrictions are no longer relevant when King Salmon fishing is closed. The Kenai River has other viable fisheries including fishing for Rainbow trout and dolly varden and trolling for Sockeye Salmon around the Skilak Lake outlet that both require a boat to facilitate. These hour and day restrictions don't allow guided anglers the option to fish for alternative species such as trout and sockeye from vessels. Removing these restrictions would facilitate the reduction of bank angling pressure and also allow anglers no able to wade access fisheries in June and July.

There is no reason to continue to adhere to these rules in times of closure for King Salmon as they were only implemented to affect fishing for King Salmon. With so many closures recently we should be looking for ways to expand opportunities and access to our fishery especially if we can do so without impact to King Salmon management plans.

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

PROPOSED BY: Kylie Nienhuis (EF-F27-062)

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PROPOSAL 189

5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit guided shore-based fishing during the time and area where guided vessel-based fishing is currently prohibited in the Kenai River, as follows:

Modify 5 AAC 57.140 to read:

(b) Downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, a person may not **engage in guided sport fishing** [SPORT FISH FROM A REGISTERED GUIDE VESSEL] on any Sunday from May 1 through July 31, and on any Monday in July, except that a person may fish from a registered sport fishing guide vessel during the last two Sundays in May and the First Sunday in June under the terms of a permit issued by the commissioner, for approved charitable nonprofit organizations or for educational public service activities.

(c) From May 1 through July 31, **guided sport fishing** [SPORT FISHING FROM A REGISTERED SPORT FISHING GUIDE VESSEL] downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? 5 AAC 57.140 was a highly supported conservation move to allow Fish, Habitat, and private fishermen a break from industry activity on the Kenai River. It was written when the primary guided activity on the Kenai was King Salmon fishing from boat. Due to multiple years of King Salmon closures, guided activity has now transitioned to guided Sockeye fishing from shore, typically still utilizing powerboat to access fishing locations, and that activity is higher than ever and currently operating all hours. The intent of this proposal is to modify the regulation to include guided angling from shore in order to restore the original intent of this regulation.

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

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith (EF-F27-111)

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PROPOSAL 190

5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit guided fishing on the Kenai River during Sunday's in July as follows:

Since King salmon fishing has been closed, the changing fishery dynamics have resulted in a significant increase in guided effort targeting sockeye salmon. This redistribution of pressure has created crowding, resource strain, and social conflict between guided and unguided anglers.

The guided regulations have not changed during this time, and these regulations are now outdated based on the fishing pressure shifting solely to shore-based sockeyes.

The Kenai River has long had closures to guided fishing from vessels on Sundays and Mondays during the king salmon season. These restrictions were implemented not only to give king salmon a break from harvest pressure but also to provide the river habitat and its users a respite. A key goal was to allow Alaskan families and their friends the opportunity to enjoy a summer day of fishing without competing against a large fleet of guide boats.

With king salmon opportunity now severely limited or closed in many years, the conservation break for kings is less relevant, but the need for a break for the river habitat and for equitable public access remains critical—especially during the peak sockeye season in July.

Some guides are now doing 2 to 3 trips per day with 4 anglers per trip. Guides catch their limits and then call other guides to come take their spot leaving unguided Alaskan families, young anglers, and independent anglers struggling to find unoccupied space. I have personally witnessed 7-8 guide boats deep on a 50 yard stretch of gravel bar. In addition, some guides are arriving at 3-4 am in the morning to secure their spot.

The river is being "loved to death." What was once a shared public resource for summer recreation has become dominated by commercial guiding activity, creating social conflicts and frustration among resident anglers who expect fair access.

The spirit of the Sunday & Monday guided closures was to give the kings a break, give the river habitat a break, and also to let Alaskan families and their friends enjoy a summer day of fishing without competing with guide boats. The shore-based sockeye fishery is effectively circumventing the current regulations for no guided vessel fishing on Sundays.

It is a reasonable and prudent solution to restrict guided fishing for just one day a week from July 1-31.

I urge the Board of Fisheries to adopt this proposal to restore balance, reduce conflicts, protect habitat and promote the long-term quality and accessibility of the Kenai River sockeye fishery.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? From Skilak Lake to the confluence of Cook Inlet, no guided fishing on the Kenai River on Sundays from July 1-July 31 to

reduce user conflicts, overcrowding, and excessive pressure on limited gravel bar fishing areas for sockeye salmon.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Discussions with lifelong Alaskans, and visiting family and friends.

PROPOSED BY: Rob Boyer (EF-F27-197)

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PROPOSAL 191

5 AAC 57.140 Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit guided fishing on the Kenai River between 6PM and 8AM from July 1 through August 15, as follows:

From Skilak Lake to the confluence of Cook Inlet, restrict guided fishing activity from 8 AM to 6 PM, from July 1 to Aug 15.

With more and more guides targeting sockeye and the fishery becoming more popular, it is becoming increasingly difficult for unguided anglers and Alaskan families to access fishing spots on the Kenai River. Guides show up in the dark before 4 AM to secure a spot before daylight. It is not feasible for Alaskans families to do this.

Guides would still have economic viability with a 10 hr fishing window allowing them to run full day trips or multiple half day trips. This slight 2-hour difference from the current regulations would provide unguided anglers and Alaskan families with more opportunities for a pleasurable experience.

The proposal simply improves accessibility for Alaskan families, spreads pressure and restores balance.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce user conflicts, overcrowding, and excessive pressure on limited gravel bar fishing areas on the Kenai River from July 1 to Aug 15.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Conversations with lifelong Alaskans and visitors.

PROPOSED BY: Rob Boyer (EF-F27-207)

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PROPOSAL 192

5 AAC 56.140 Kasilof River guiding and guided fishing requirements and **5 AAC 57.140 Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.** Prohibit guides from operating on both the Kenai River and Kasilof River as follows:

If a persona guides on the Kenai River, they will be prohibited from guiding on the Kasilof River. There is too much pressure on the remaining wild stocks.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?Preservation of wild king salmon.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have served on the Central Peninsula Advisory Committee since 1984.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs (EF-F27-246)

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PROPOSAL 193

5 AAC 56.140 Kasilof River guiding and guided fishing requirements.

Prohibit guided sport fishing on the Kasilof River on select days as follows:

On any Sunday in June and July, a person may not sport fish with a registered sport fishing guide vessel on the Kasilof River.

Guides may fish the Kasilof River on Monday, Wednesday and Friday with licenses that end with odd numbers. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday are limited to guides with licenses ending in even numbers.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The unprecedented increase in popularity of the Kasilof River in recent years has resulted in a situation in which it is nearly impossible for residents to fish for Sockeye Salmon on the main stem river from private boats. This year, they paved paradise and put up a parking lot. In late June and early July, said parking lot was completely filled and overflowed onto Spetz and Terrace Drive creating a single lane roadway. At one point, there were so many people that a mobile food truck also parked on the road, selling coffee. The boat ramp was a complete zoo with people attempting to both launch and take out. This situation is a classic case of a limited (although extremely abundant) resource meeting with a nearly unlimited and increasing demand. The vast majority of users are guides who are attempting to maximize their earning potential during the limited summer season. To say that tension is high would be an understatement. It is past time to address the issue.

I propose the following:

First, no guide boats on the river on Sunday. This would give residents with boats one day of the week to have a chance to enjoy the river without fighting for a spot to fish, and then fighting to take out. This is congruent to the precedent previously set by "Drift Boat Sunday" on the Kasilof and "Drift Boat Monday" on the Kenai.

Second, guides will be able to fish the Kasilof on Monday, Wednesday and Friday with licenses that end with odd numbers. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday would be limited to guides with licenses ending in even numbers.

The Alaska State Constitution, Article 8 clearly states:

§ 3. Common Use
Wherever occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.

§ 4. Sustained Yield
Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.

The current dynamic of "Jungle Rules" for managing our river is not working. It primarily benefits guides and tourists, many of whom are non-residents. This regulation change would benefit all user groups and provide a more pleasant experience for everyone.

*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.)

On any Sunday in June and July, a person may not sport fish with a registered sport fishing guide vessel on the Kasilof River.

Guides may fish the Kasiof River on Monday, Wednesday and Friday with licenses that end with odd numbers. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday are limited to guides with licenses ending in even numbers.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal will be vehemently opposed by guides, as well as the "Advisory" committees which consist primarily of guides. The extent to which they influence policy should be considered in light of their economic interests. The Board of Fisheries is tasked with a much higher calling than to benefit one user group. You are responsible for the stewardship of a priceless resource.

PROPOSED BY: Charles McCrone Kasilof River Conservation Alliance (EF-F27-145)
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PROPOSAL 194

5 AAC 00.000. Regulatory Language here.

Require logbooks for sport fishing guides on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers, as follows:

PROPOSED REGULATORY LANGUAGE (Draft for Board Consideration):

A person who provides sport fishing guide services on the Kenai River or Kasilof River, and the registered sport fishing business employing that person, shall obtain, maintain, and submit a logbook as required under this section.

(a) LOGBOOK REQUIRED. Each licensed sport fishing guide conducting a guided trip on the Kenai River or Kasilof River shall obtain a logbook from ADF&G Sport Fish Division prior to operating for the season. A logbook may not be transferred between businesses.

(b) TRIP ENTRY REQUIRED. For each guided trip on the Kenai River or Kasilof River, the guide shall record the following information in the logbook before the trip concludes:

(1) date of trip;
(2) name and ADF&G license number of the guide;
(3) vessel registration number, if operating from a motorized vessel;
(4) river and specific reach or section fished (by ADF&G statistical area or river mile range);
(5) start time and end time of the guided trip;
(6) number of paying clients and total angler-hours;
(7) Alaska sport fishing license number for each client angler;
(8) target species;
(9) catch and harvest by species, recorded per angler;
(10) for Chinook salmon: number encountered, number retained (if permitted), number released, and estimated condition at release (upright / on side / belly up); and
(11) gear type used (bait, lure, fly, roe, etc.).

(c) SUBMISSION SCHEDULE. The business operator shall submit completed logbook pages to ADF&G Sport Fish Division on a weekly basis during the active guided season, no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Monday following the week reported. Electronic submission via ADF&G's eLogbook system satisfies this requirement.

(d) RETENTION. The guide shall retain a copy of each completed logbook entry for a minimum of three years. A copy shall be available for inspection by ADF&G or Alaska Wildlife Troopers upon request.

(e) LOGBOOK AVAILABLE ON TRIP. The guide shall have the current logbook available for inspection during any guided trip.

(f) FALSE ENTRY PROHIBITED. A person may not make a false or incomplete entry

in a logbook required under this section.

(g) CONFIDENTIALITY. Logbook data is confidential as to individual business identity. ADF&G may release aggregated data for management and research purposes. Individual logbook data may be provided to Alaska Wildlife Troopers for enforcement purposes.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kenai River and Kasilof River are among the most intensively guided freshwater fisheries in North America. Hundreds of licensed sport fishing guides operate on these rivers each season, collectively putting thousands of guided angler-days on the water and generating harvest of Chinook, sockeye, coho, and pink salmon as well as rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, and other species. Yet ADF&G currently collects no systematic, trip-level data from the guided freshwater sport fishing industry operating on these rivers.

This proposal fills that gap. It is grounded in the Board's established interest in data-driven fisheries management, the explicit data-collection mandate of the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Policy (5 AAC 39.222), the precedent established by the statewide saltwater charter logbook program (5 AAC 75.076), and the plain need — particularly acute in the context of the Kenai River late-run Chinook Stock of Concern — for accurate, timely harvest and effort data from the guided sport sector.

This proposal requests that the Alaska Board of Fisheries amend the Cook Inlet area sport fishing regulations to require that all licensed sport fishing guides and registered sport fishing businesses operating on the Kenai River and Kasilof River maintain and submit mandatory trip logbooks for every guided fishing trip capturing data on effort, participation, catch by species, harvest by species guided angler license numbers, and gear and location information.

The logbook requirement shall apply to all guided trips regardless of whether the target species is salmon, trout, Dolly Varden, or any other species, and shall extend to shore-based, wade, and drift-boat guided operations in addition to motor-vessel operations.

Logbooks shall be submitted to ADF&G on a weekly basis during the active guided season, consistent with the existing saltwater charter logbook program administered under 5 AAC 75.076.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-221)
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PROPOSAL 195

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit the use of motors on the Kenai River during the time period when king salmon are returning.

Make the Kenai River drift only, during return of 1st and 2nd run spawning king salmon.

There have been too many failed recovery strategies for king salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Habitat – Kenai River

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I have served on the Central Peninsula Advisory Committee since 1984

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs (EF-F27-075)

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PROPOSAL 196

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit the use of motors and limit shore based fishing in the Kenai River as follows:

Create a new Upper Cook Inlet sport-fishing section, 5 AAC 56.XXX, providing that above the Warren Ames Memorial Bridge a person may not engage in sport fishing from a vessel while that vessel is being propelled by an operating motor, and that shore-based sport fishing may occur only from designated access sites, boardwalks, platforms, or other hardened areas identified by regulation or emergency order.

Draft working language:

In the Kenai River upstream of the Warren Ames Memorial Bridge, a person may not engage in sport fishing from a vessel while that vessel is propelled by an operating motor. A sport-fishing guide or operator may not provide guided sport-fishing services from a motorpropelled vessel upstream of the Warren Ames Memorial Bridge; nonmotorized vessels remain lawful. The commissioner may identify designated shore-fishing access sites or close sensitive shoreline reaches, side channels, or spawning-adjacent areas by emergency order when necessary to protect habitat, spawning activity, or fish passage.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current sport-fishing regulations for the Kenai River above the Warren Ames Memorial Bridge do not clearly separate nonmotorized conservation-oriented fishing from motorized fishing activity in a reach repeatedly described as important habitat for spawning and rearing salmon. They also do not provide a clear designated-access framework for concentrating shore effort away from sensitive banks and spawning-adjacent areas.

This proposal is intended to meet AO 360 by clarifying existing regulatory obligations, improving communication and enforceability, and providing greater transparency about how upstream habitat-protection rules apply. A single upstream rule would be easier for anglers, guides, and enforcement to understand than a patchwork of informal expectations.

If nothing is changed, motorized fishing pressure and diffuse bank use remain harder to manage and the conservation burden continues to fall more heavily on downstream commercial restrictions than on direct upstream habitat-protection tools.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Developed from prior draft proposal work and public conservation arguments discussed in this effort. No formal Advisory Committee action has yet been obtained.

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson (EF-F27-079)

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PROPOSAL 197

5 AAC 56.122 Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limtis, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Prohibit the use of motors on the Kasilof River as follows:

DRIFT AREAS, MOTOR USE PROHIBITED

The main stem Kasilof River is a drift boat only fishery.

Motorized watercraft may not be used as transportation for sport or subsistence fishing from Silver Salmon Rapids, at the end of the Tustumena slack water, to the furthest upstream mooring buoy at the river mouth.

[FROM ITS MOUTH UPSTREAM TO THE STERLING HIGHWAY BRIDGE:JANUARY I-JULY 31: SPORT FISHING FROM A MOTORIZED BOAT IS PROHIBITED. MOTORS 10 HP OR LESS MAY BE USED ONLY DOWNSTREAM OF ADF&G MARKERS LOCATED AT APPROXIMATELY RIVER MILE 4, AND ONLY AFTER FISHING FROM THE BOAT HAS STOPPED FOR THE DAY.

MOTOR USE ON THE KASILOF RIVER:[FROM THE MOUTH OF THE KASILOF RIVER TO THE OUTLET OF TUSTUMENA LAKE:• IF YOU ARE NOT ENGAGED IN SPORT FISHING ACTIVITIES ON THE SAME DAY, THERE ARE NO MOTOR USE RESTRICTIONS UPSTREAM.• IF YOU ARE ENGAGED IN SPORT FISHING ACTIVITIES ON THE SAME DAY, SEE SPECIAL
REGULATIONS ON THE LEFT.]

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

Motorized watercraft on the Kasilof River.

Whose river is it?

"It's not your river; what gives you the right to tell us that we can't use motors?" is the response from many to this proposal. If the 1iver belongs to an individual, then the person who owns it can do whatever they want. If the liver belongs to us collectively, then it is imperative that it is managed to provide the most benefit to all user groups.

The Alaska State Constitution, Article 8 clearly states:

§ 3. Common Use

Wherever occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.

§ 4. Sustained Yield

Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.

We have lived on a high bluff overlooking the upper Kasilof River continuously since 2009. The changes we have seen with the increased and increasing number of motor propelled boats is at a point that the regulations must be changed to protect the liver. The Kasilof, especially the upper river, is very similar to the upper Kenai River, in the area around Cooper Landing. The river size and flow of the water are similar, the smaller size of the Sockeye, the number of fish in the run,

and, unfortunately, the overcrowding resulting in Combat Fishing are now nearly identical. Motors have been prohibited on the upper Kenai for many years, and it is now time to protect the Kasilof as well.
Objections to the implementation of this restriction come primarily from guides and remote property owners. Drift boats on the lower river will be able to take out at the new drift boat retrieval site coming online this year; it will not be necessary to row to the Cabins takeout. Motors can still be used for fishermen who remain in the slack water area above the start of the main stem river at Silver Salmon Rapids. Landowners who have traditionally used motors to reach remote properties that are not on the road system will still be able to do so.

There are three compelling reasons why this restriction is necessary.
The number and size of the motorized boats is not compatible with the other watercraft using the river for safety reasons. We see entire families, including young children, going by in canoes, kayaks, small rowboats and even standup paddle boards in a steady procession. These users are endangered by the wakes from motorboats, and collisions or swampings are inevitable. Large power boats launching from the bridge and racing downstream on step for miles to dip net at the river mouth are especially dangerous in this regard. There are also 50 horsepower and larger boats ferrying fishermen up and downstream on the upper river. Many of the operators are either talking or scrolling on their cell phones while driving, as well.

The second reason that motors should be eliminated is the adverse effect of the motors on spawning King Salmon and Steelhead. The tragic decline in the population of King Salmon on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers has resulted in radical restrictions. There is presently no legal harvest for native Kings in rivers on the entire Kenai Peninsula. Kings spawn in the main stem river, unlike Sockeye which spawn in Tustumena Lake, and the Silvers that spawn in the tributary streams of Tustumena. Imagine, if you will, the delicate spawning ceremony in light of approximately thirty or more ten hp motors running downstream at full throttle every day. Add in a few fifty hp, or larger, motors shuttling anglers up and downstream, and the potential for successful reproduction is greatly reduced if not eliminated. In addition, the following study concludes that fertilized salmon eggs are suffocated from silt created by jet boats:
Effect of jet boats on salmon eggs

Finally, the natural beauty of the river is compromised by motors. The Kasilof has an innate magic that casts its spell over residents and visitors alike. That magic dissipates with the roar of a motor. The experience of silently floating and rowing is much more pleasant for everyone, and the opportunity to see and appreciate the wildlife and natural beauty increases exponentially.
The benefits from enacting this regulation far outweigh the negative consequences. Guides who use motors on their drift boats to transit the upper Kasilof would have to row through the slack water and add approximately a half hour to their transit time to the bridge takeout. The large power boats that shuttle fishermen upstream from the bridge would be eliminated, along with their dangerous, disruptive and damaging wakes. The fifty hp and larger boats on the lower river that run for miles to the mouth and back again to dip net would also be prohibited.

This regulation will improve safety for all boaters, help to improve the chances of sustainability for the King Salmon and Steelhead fisheries and restore tranquility to the river, to the benefit of all user groups.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed as the result of a meeting held at the Gallery Lodge. Eighteen Alaska residents from the Kasilof area, who are concerned about the effects of motors on the river, gathered to brainstorm what could be done. This is one of the suggested courses of action.

The draft proposal was presented to the Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District Association, which passed a resolution of support at their meeting on March 3 of this year.

Submissions for suggestions and support have been made to several other organizations and are pending review.

David Martin, chair of the ADFG Central Peninsula Advisory Committee, expressed optimism that their group will support this measure.

The chair of the Kenai Soldotna Advisory Committee and Kenai River Guide's Association, Monte Roberts, expressed his personal support, and said that "it is a question of when, not if" a motor ban will be enacted on the Kasilof. However, he was not optimistic about support from either group because motors reduce the effort and increase the profits for many of the guide members.

Other organizations which were contacted include the Kenai River Sportfishing Association, the Kenai Watershed Forum and the Cook Inletkeeper. We anticipate support from the ADFG Kenai Area Management Biologist, as well.

A straw poll on the Kasilof Community Facebook page elicited an impressive participation of 62 comments, with a large majority supporting a ban.

PROPOSED BY: Charles McCrone Kasilof River Conservation Alliance (EF-F27-061)

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PROPOSAL 198

5 AAC 56.122 Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Clarify the use of motors on the Kasilof River when multiple fishing trips in the same vessel occur on the same day as follows:

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Amend the Kasilof River motor provision to read:

(v) from January 1 - July 31, a motor may only be used between the mouth of the Kasilof River and an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately four miles upstream, and only after fishing from the vessel has ceased for the day; a person may not deploy sport fishing gear from a vessel after a motor has been used to propel that vessel on the same day; **for purposes of this paragraph, "the same day" means the calendar day from 12:01 a.m. through midnight, and this restriction applies to all persons and all uses of that vessel for the remainder of that calendar day regardless of whether the persons present change between uses of the vessel;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Address the non-enforcement of repeat use of boat/outboard motors on the Kasilof for multiple trips per day.

The motor restriction in 5 AAC 56.122(v) prohibits the deployment of sport fishing gear from a vessel after a motor has been used to propel that vessel "on the same day." The plain meaning of this language, consistent with the statewide definition framework in 5 AAC 75.995, is that the restriction applies to the vessel for the remainder of the calendar day. In practice, sport fishing guides on the Kasilof River routinely operate two or more client groups per day from the same motor-equipped vessel. The vessel is motored to the takeout for an early trip, and then motored again later in the day for a second trip with a different group of clients. Under the plain text of 5 AAC 56.122(v), sport fishing gear may not be deployed from that vessel for the remainder of the calendar day after the motor is first used. No exception exists in the current regulation for guided trips, multiple client groups, or vessel operators conducting separate trips.

The one guided trip per day limit that formerly existed in 5 AAC 56.140(2) was repealed in 2011, but the motor restriction in 5 AAC 56.122 was not amended at that time and remains in full effect.

The purpose of this proposal is not to create a new restriction, but to clarify the existing restriction so that it can be consistently understood and enforced. The current ambiguity creates unequal treatment: unguided anglers and guides who comply with the plain text are disadvantaged relative to those who do not. This proposal resolves that ambiguity by making explicit that the same-day motor restriction applies to the vessel for the entire calendar day, regardless of changes in the persons aboard between trips.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? High levels of coordination went into this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith (EF-F27-110)

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PROPOSAL 199

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Prohibit the use of motors in the guided sport fishery on the Kasilof River downstream of Tustumena Lake as follows:

(8) Kasilof River drainage, excluding Crooked Creek and Tustumena Lake and its tributaries: (A) king salmon may be taken from January 1 - June 30, upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge, and from January 1 - July 31, downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge; bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is one fish; annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, except as provided in (b) of this section; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; from January 1 - June 30, (i) the bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is two fish, of which only one fish may be a naturally-produced king salmon; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; (ii) a naturally-produced king salmon may be retained on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays only; a naturally-produced king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; the commissioner may, by emergency order, increase the days for retention of naturally-produced king salmon; (iii) a person may not possess a king salmon that has been filleted, mutilated, or otherwise disfigured in a manner that prevents the determination that the fish is a hatchery king salmon, until the fish is permanently offloaded from the vessel, if the fish was taken from a vessel, or permanently transported away from the fishing site, if the fish was taken from the riverbank, and in all cases moved more than 100 yards away from waters open to sport fishing for king salmon in the Kasilof River drainage; (B) the following special provisions apply in that portion downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge: (i) from July 1 - July 31, the bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is one fish; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; (ii) in flowing waters, from September 16 - May 15, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; (iii) on any Sunday in July, a person may not sport fish from a registered sport fishing guide vessel; (iv) from January 1 - July 31, a person may not sport fish from a vessel that has on board a motor that is more than 10 horsepower; (v) from January 1 - July 31, a motor may only be used between the mouth of the Kasilof River and an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately four miles upstream, and only after fishing from the vessel has ceased for the day; a person may not deploy sport fishing gear from a vessel after a motor has been used to propel that vessel on the same day; (vi) from January 1 - June 30, a person may not sport fish from an anchored vessel from an ADF&G regulatory marker located near the confluence of Crooked Creek, downstream approximately 2,700 feet to an ADF&G regulatory marker located near the cutbank; (vii) repealed 6/8/2017; (C) from August 1 - August 15, fishing from a boat is prohibited in the flowing waters of the Kasilof River upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge;

(viii) from January 1 - July 31, a sport fishing guide may not use a motor while guiding sport fishing from the ADFG Marker located at the start of flowing water of the outlet of Tustumena Lake (Lat: 60.2748647; Long: -151.2058594) to the Sterling Highway Bridge.

(D) rainbow/steelhead trout may not be possessed or retained; rainbow/steelhead trout caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a rainbow/steelhead trout from the water before releasing the fish; (E) from January 1 - August 15, in the Kasilof River from the boat launch at Tustamena Lake Campground downstream to the Sterling Highway bridge, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I seek to establish an ADFG marker at the start of flowing water at the outlet of Tustumena Lake (Lat:60.2748647; Long: -151.2058594) and restrict motor use for sport fishing guide vessels while guiding from the GPS Location at the start of the flowing waters (Lat: 60.2748647; Long: -151.2058594) to the Sterling Highway Bridge January 1st- July 31st.

This regulation change would prevent the upper section of the Kasilof River from turning into an unsafe area with power-driven vessels mixing with drift boats navigating down river creating a dangerous boating environment for all users.

Recent closures on the Kenai River in May and June due to low abundance of King Salmon have caused a massive shift in pressure to the Kasilof River in June and early July. Most of this pressure is utilizing the area from the outlet of Tustumena Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge.

Traditionally small horsepower motors were only used to navigate downstream through the slack water at the outlet of Tustumena Lake until reaching the flowing waters of the Kasilof River. After reaching the flowing waters motors were no longer utilized and boats were rowed. Other than some minimal use from private boaters, mostly cabin owners with river access only, most of the users utilized drift boats that were rowed. Now almost all users are continuing to motor downstream of the slack water which creates a dangerous dynamic, especially during low water early season. The competition has driven people to take aggressive measures, pushing the boundaries of safety and common sense to remain competitive in finding a spot to fish.

In this traditional drift boat fishery, motors are not necessary to navigate downstream to fishing areas. At this time there is no regulation in place that prohibits sport fishing guides from using motorized vessels to access the fishery and it is very likely this will escalate to the use of larger motorized vessels to stay competitive. It would be incredibly dangerous to allow motorized vessels to navigate up and downriver with a large amount of drift boat traffic. While rowing, drift boats cannot maneuver quickly, and motorized vessels are confined to specific boat lanes due to draft constraints. It is inevitable that this circumstance would cause unsafe boating incidents with high risk of collision. Unlike the Kenai, the Kasilof is much smaller with several boulder gardens and areas of limited safe navigating lanes. This proposal would preserve the quality of experience and safety of this rowboat fishery and prevent it from shifting to a mixed boat fishery with power driven vessels mixed with drift boats during times of heavy use.

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

PROPOSED BY: Kylie Nienhuis (EF-F27-063)

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PROPOSAL 200

5 AAC 56.140. Kasilof River guiding and guided fishing requirements.

Restrict the use of motors in the guided sport fishery on the Kasilof River to 10hp or less as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 56.140 by adding a new subsection (4)

(4) **a sport fishing guide may not use a motorized vessel with a motor exceeding 10 horsepower on the Kasilof River while transporting a client to or from any sport fishing location, including a shore-based or bank-based fishing location, at any time that a client is present or is within the sport fishing guide's control or responsibility. This subsection applies to all motorized vessels used by a sport fishing guide in connection with the guided sport fishery on the Kasilof River, regardless of whether the vessel is used for active fishing or solely for client transport.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kasilof River has historically been managed as a drift-only river for sport fishing, with motorized vessel use limited to motors of 10 horsepower or less. This 10-horsepower restriction reflects a longstanding understanding among anglers, guides, and fishery managers that the Kasilof's character, fish habitat, and multi-user experience are best preserved by limiting vessel speed and motorized disturbance.

In recent seasons, a practice has emerged in which licensed sport fishing guides use high-horsepower jet boats to rapidly transport clients to shore-based or bank-based fishing locations along the Kasilof River. Because these guides are not actively fishing from the vessel during transport, and because the existing regulation at 5 AAC 56.140 does not explicitly address client transport as a distinct regulated activity, the 10-horsepower limit is being interpreted as inapplicable during those transport legs. This has resulted in large, powerful jet boats — some with motors well in excess of 10 horsepower — operating on a river traditionally managed for low-impact, drift-style access.

Unlike the nearby Kenai River there are no horsepower or two-stroke restrictions for boats on the Kasilof.

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

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith (EF-F27-109)

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PROPOSAL 201

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Sockeye salmon caught in the Kenai River sport fishery must be retained regardless of hook placement.

All sockeye salmon hooked and landed in this fishery must be retained regardless of hook placement. No catch and release fishing is allowed. Single hook - sinker or weight must be 18 inches away from hook.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To minimize catch and release mortality and crowding when sockeye salmon limits are increased to more than three sockeye salmon per person.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Hanes (EF-F27-040)

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PROPOSAL 202

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area and 5 AAC 57.120. and **General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area**

Require the use of circle hooks when sport fishing for sockeye on the Kenai and Kasilof River as follows:

The use of circle hooks for sockeye salmon would significantly reduce foul-hooking, decrease post-release mortality, and promote more ethical and sustainable angling practices.

Circle hooks, by design, hook fish in the mouth rather than elsewhere on the body. Due to their curved shape and inward-pointing tip, it is very difficult—nearly impossible—to intentionally or unintentionally snag fish using these hooks.

In contrast, traditional J hooks are far more prone to foul-hooking, especially among inexperienced anglers. Additionally, "some" guiding practices exacerbate this issue. Techniques such as aggressive sweeping or ripping motions—when combined with J hooks—can result in anglers snagging many more fish than those that are legally hooked in the mouth. This creates a "numbers game" mentality – hook as many as possible and hope that one is in the mouth - that undermines conservation goals and fair-chase fishing ethics.

Last year, my group had 4 legally hooked sockeye on at one time when a guide pulled up to show his group how to fish. The guide promptly snagged a sockeye in the back on his first cast.

Experienced anglers who have transitioned to circle hooks report clear improvements. Many have successfully converted others, demonstrating that the learning curve is minimal and the benefits are immediate.

Do a simple Google search of "Circle hooks for sockeye" and you will find there is a movement on the Kenai River from both sports fisherman and some guides.

Requiring circle hooks is a simple, enforceable, and highly effective conservation measure.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?
While fishing from the shore on the Kenai or Kasilof Rivers or any of their tributaries, require the exclusive use of circle hooks for sockeye salmon fishing. Possession of shore caught sockeye salmon is prohibited while fishing with a J-hook.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Conversations with converted Circle Hook fisherman, and online research.

PROPOSED BY: Rob Boyer (EF-F27-196)

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PROPOSAL 203

5 AAC 57.150. Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

Modify preamble of Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

Modify the Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan as follows;

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement, as determined by the department, of sockeye salmon into the Russian River system and to provide management guidelines to the department to reduce conflicts between various users of this resource. Because early and late Russian River system sockeye salmon are discrete stocks with established escapement goals, these stocks shall be managed by the department as a separate entity without regard to Kenai River system sockeye salmon run size, except as specified in this section. (b) Early Russian River sockeye salmon stocks have been harvested primarily by the sport fishery since 1974. **Early Russian River sockeye salmon stocks shall not be targeted for commercial harvest or for cost recovery harvest. Every effort shall be made to avoid harvesting early Russian River sockeye salmon by those means.** Since the bulk of the early Kenai River sockeye salmon run (those salmon passing the department sonar counter located near Soldotna before June 21) is comprised of Russian River sockeye salmon stocks, the department shall manage the early sockeye salmon stocks to achieve the escapement goals for the Kenai and Russian Rivers. (c) Late Russian River sockeye salmon stocks are harvested in the Cook Inlet commercial salmon gillnet and the Kenai and Russian Rivers sport fisheries. The department shall manage the fisheries to achieve the escapement goal of sockeye salmon into the Russian River upstream of the department's counting weir at the outlet of Lower Russian Lake. If inseason restrictions are necessary to meet the escapement goal, the department shall restrict Kenai River drainage sport fisheries as described in (d) of this section. Since, at present, it is not possible to separate the harvest of late Russian River sockeye salmon from other sockeye salmon stocks in Cook Inlet, restrictions on the commercial fishery to conserve Russian River sockeye salmon and meet the escapement goal shall be limited to meeting the inriver goals for the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon, as specified in 5 AAC 21.360. (d) If the department is not able to project that the escapement goal of late-run Russian River sockeye salmon will be achieved the commissioner shall, by emergency order, modify the Kenai River drainage sport and personal use fisheries to achieve the escapement goal by using the following options, selected at the discretion of the commissioner: (1) a reduction of bag and possession limit to two or one sockeye salmon in all waters of the Kenai and Russian Rivers fly-fishing-only waters; (2) a prohibition on sockeye salmon fishing in the Kenai and Russian Rivers fly-fishing-only waters upstream from the ferry crossing on the Kenai River; (3) a prohibition on sockeye salmon fishing in all waters of the Kenai and Russian Rivers fly-fishing-only waters; (4) a prohibition on sockeye salmon fishing from the confluence of the Kenai and Russian Rivers downstream to, and including, Skilak Lake. (e) It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries (board) that the department use, to the extent practicable, the least restrictive of the individual or combined options under (d) of this section to achieve the late-run Russian River sockeye salmon escapement goal. The department shall, to the extent practicable, use the options under (d) of this section, to avoid the necessity for complete closures by initiating early, less restrictive options, as opposed to later, more restrictive actions. (f) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the board's triennial meeting cycle. If assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the

board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of this plan. (g) If the department projects that the Russian River sockeye salmon escapement goal will be achieved the commissioner may by emergency order increase the bag and possession limit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current management plan does not include language to prevent commercial harvest and cost recovery harvest on early run Russian River sockeye salmon. This run can not sustainably handle commercial or cost recovery harvest and this proposal seeks to ensure that such harvest does not occur.

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

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Advisory Committee (EF-F27-032)

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PROPOSAL 204

5 AAC 57.150. Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

Establish an optimal escapement goal for Russian River early run sockeye salmon.

Modify the Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan as follows;

Develop an Optimal Escapement Goal

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement, as determined by the department, of sockeye salmon into the Russian River system and to provide management guidelines to the department to reduce conflicts between various users of this resource. Because early and late Russian River system sockeye salmon are discrete stocks with established escapement goals, these stocks shall be managed by the department as a separate entity without regard to Kenai River system sockeye salmon run size, except as specified in this section. (b) Early Russian River sockeye salmon stocks have been harvested primarily by the sport fishery since 1974. Since the bulk of the early Kenai River sockeye salmon run (those salmon passing the department sonar counter located near Soldotna before June 21) is comprised of Russian River sockeye salmon stocks, the department shall manage the early sockeye salmon stocks to achieve the escapement goals for the Kenai and Russian Rivers. (c) Late Russian River sockeye salmon stocks are harvested in the Cook Inlet commercial salmon gillnet and the Kenai and Russian Rivers sport fisheries. The department shall manage the fisheries to achieve the escapement goal of sockeye salmon into the Russian River upstream of the department's counting weir at the outlet of Lower Russian Lake. If inseason restrictions are necessary to meet the escapement goal, the department shall restrict Kenai River drainage sport fisheries as described in (d) of this section. Since, at present, it is not possible to separate the harvest of late Russian River sockeye salmon from other sockeye salmon stocks in Cook Inlet, restrictions on the commercial fishery to conserve Russian River sockeye salmon and meet the escapement goal shall be limited to meeting the inriver goals for the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon, as specified in 5 AAC 21.360. (d) If the department is not able to project that the escapement goal of late-run Russian River sockeye salmon will be achieved the commissioner shall, by emergency order, modify the Kenai River drainage sport and personal use fisheries to achieve the escapement goal by using the following options, selected at the discretion of the commissioner: (1) a reduction of bag and possession limit to two or one sockeye salmon in all waters of the Kenai and Russian Rivers fly-fishing-only waters; (2) a prohibition on sockeye salmon fishing in the Kenai and Russian Rivers fly-fishing-only waters upstream from the ferry crossing on the Kenai River; (3) a prohibition on sockeye salmon fishing in all waters of the Kenai and Russian Rivers fly-fishing-only waters; (4) a prohibition on sockeye salmon fishing from the confluence of the Kenai and Russian Rivers downstream to, and including, Skilak Lake. (e) It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries (board) that the department use, to the extent practicable, the least restrictive of the individual or combined options under (d) of this section to achieve the late-run Russian River sockeye salmon escapement goal. The department shall, to the extent practicable, use the options under (d) of this section, to avoid the necessity for complete closures by initiating early, less restrictive options, as opposed to later, more restrictive actions. (f) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the board's triennial meeting cycle. If assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification

of this plan. (g) If the department projects that the Russian River sockeye salmon escapement goal will be achieved the commissioner may by emergency order increase the bag and possession limit **(h) Russian River early run sockeye will be managed for an optimal escapement goal of 22,000 – 70,000 fish**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current plan does not include a OEG. In recent years the department has managed this run for 22,000 – 44,000 fish. However the data does not seem to support a reduction in yield at run strengths above 44,000. In fact high return recruitment is evidenced at run strengths above 44,000 fish. Ocean and river conditions as well as a large variety of unmanageable factors can impact returns, managing with a higher upper escapement goal that will provide high recruitment and also allow for these factors is a sustainable approach. Additionally there is more downstream pressure on these stocks from the fishery on the lower Kenai river that has developed as a result of the decline of king salmon stocks.
Even the enormous 120,000 fish return of 2019 did not result in a population collapse and the Russian River exceeded the lower escapement goal in both 2024 and 2025.

Raising the higher end of the escapement goal will enable fisheries managers to better manage the run in real time. The current management plan has led fish and game to adjust the bag limit as high 9 fish per person in years of abundant returns. These very high bag limits resulted in an enormous increase in angler effort all directed in a very limited area of the watershed. The result was a much diminished user experience due to crowded boat ramps, roadsides and riverbanks, and more importantly a massive increase in potential habitat degradation due to increased foot traffic on riparian habitat.

Managing for abundant returns benefits all users and most importantly it benefits the fish.

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

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Advisory Committee (EF-F27-033)
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PROPOSAL 205

5 AAC 57.150 Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan._

Sport fish regulations for sockeye salmon will not be liberalized until the Russian River sockeye salmon escapement goal range is projected to be exceeded.

The department SHALL NOT liberalize fishery until upper end of escapement goal is Projected

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Early run sockeye fishery shall not be liberalized until upper end of escapement goal is projected currently the fishery is liberalized when lower end of escapement goal is projected. When managing to the lower end of the goals poor returns and fishery performance has been experienced from those parent years.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? no

PROPOSED BY: Joe Hanes (EF-F27-039)

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PROPOSAL 206

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Allow sport fishing for sockeye salmon in Tustumena Lake, as follows:

With the large Kasilof River sockeye salmon returns, there is a harvestable surplus that should be made available to anglers that would like to fish in Tustumena Lake.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently Tustumena Lake is closed to the retention of sockeye salmon. Open retention of sockeye salmon on Tustumena Lake.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Hanes (EF-F27-043)

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PROPOSAL 207

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area

5 AAC 57.170 Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan

Reduce the sport fish bag and possession limit for coho salmon in the Kenai River after September 1 as follows:

5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan.
(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of coho salmon into the Kenai River drainage and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the Kenai River coho salmon stocks primarily to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run. (b) Notwithstanding any other provisions in this chapter, for the conservation of coho salmon stocks, the department shall manage sport fishing in the Kenai River drainage as follows: (1) coho salmon fishing is closed in the Middle and Upper Sections from November 1 through June 30, and in the Lower Section from December 1 through June 30; any coho salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately without further harm; (2) repealed 6/4/2008; (3) coho salmon may be taken as follows: (A) from July 1 through October 31, in the Middle and Upper Sections; (B) from July 1 through November 30, in the Lower Section; (C) from July 1 through August 31, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish;

[(D) FROM SEPTEMBER 1 THROUGH NOVEMBER 30, THE DAILY BAG AND POSSESION LIMIT FOR COHO SALMON 16 INCHES OF GREATER IS LENGTH IS THREE FISH**]**

(c) If the commissioner determines that additional conservation measures are necessary for the inriver sport or personal use fisheries, the commissioner may close, by emergency order, the season and immediately reopen a season during which any or a combination of the following restrictions may be applied: (1) the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon is one fish; (2) only unbaited artificial lures may be used; (3) fishing time may be reduced; (4) fishing areas may be reduced. (d) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of this management plan.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Over the past decade, Coho salmon numbers during September have declined dramatically on the Kenai River. These "second run," late-arriving fish have always been far less
abundant than the primary August run.

The daily bag limit automatically increases from 2 to 3 Coho per day on September 1 and remains in effect through Nov. 30th. This higher limit was originally implemented because angling pressure—both guided and unguided—historically dropped significantly in September. However,

in recent years, September fishing efforts have increased substantially while the late-running Coho population continues to decline.

With Coho salmon numbers continuing to decline in September, the current increase in bag limits from September 1 through November 30 is no longer justified. There is no need to harvest an additional Coho salmon with such abundant runs of Sockeye salmon on Kenai River in July and August.

These late-run Coho salmon are extremely valuable to the sport fishing community. If the population returns to stable levels, the opportunity for a higher bag limit should be restored by Emergency Order before other uses are liberalized. The intent of this proposal is to allow more Coho salmon to reach the spawning grounds, not to reallocate fish to another user group.

It's time to take a conservative approach to late-season Coho harvest on the Kenai River now, before we find ourselves in the same critical situation we are experiencing with King salmon.

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

PROPOSED BY: Kylie Nienhuis (EF-F27-064)

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PROPOSAL 208

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area

5 AAC 57.170 Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan.

Reduce the sport fish bag and possession limits for coho salmon in the Kenai River after September 1.

Modify the Kenai River Cho salmon season and bag limits as follows:

South Central Alaska 2026Sport Fishing Reg. Booklet Pg. 45

COHO SALMON

July 1- [AUGUST 31] **NOVEMBER 30:**

2 per day, 2 in possession, in combination with chum and sockeye salmon.

Delete [SEPTEMBER 1 - NOVEMBER 30
3 PER DAY, 3 IN POSSESSION IN COMBINATION WITH CHUM AND SOCKEYE SALMON, ALL 3 MAY BE COHO SALMON]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current daily bag limit for Coho salmon on the Lower Kenai River begins at two fish from July 1 through August 31. The limit then changes to three fish from September 1 through November 30.

Modify the Kenai River Coho (Silver) salmon late run (September-November) daily bag and possession limits to allow more Coho salmon to reach the spawning beds and thus increase the future sustainability of Coho salmon in the Kenai River.

I propose to keep the limit of Coho salmon on the Kenai River at 2 fish per day throughout the entire open season (July 1 – November 30) instead of raising the limit to 3 fish per day after September 1; as the regulations currently do.

Over the last several years, fishing pressure on the Kenai River has increased after September l; relative to previous years. The local human population has dramatically increased in the Kenai River area. This human population increase, along with continued steady resident/non-resident fishing pressure, coupled with warming September temperatures, has resulted in consistent increased fishing pressure on the late run Coho salmon population. This increased fishing pressure continues to take a toll on the future sustainability of the late run Coho salmon population.

In addition, over the last few years, the Fish & Game Commissioner has frequently had to modify the late run Coho regulations by reducing the daily bag limit from 3 fish down to 1 or 2 fish per day and eliminate the use of bait. All of this, being caused by very poor September Coho salmon runs.

There appears to be NO biological basis to increase the daily bag limit of Coho salmon from 2 fish per day to 3 fish per day on September 1. As a matter of fact, these "2nd run" September fish consistently weigh 2/3 lbs. more than the earlier August run fish. Most anglers are thrilled to catch 2 large late-run Coho salmon and agree there is no need for the daily bag limit to be increased on September 1. There is currently no in-river enumeration of Coho salmon in the Kenai River. This needs to change. Log books used to be required of all guides which would depict the number and species of fish being caught daily on their boat. This is no longer required.

Conservation is the wise use of our natural resources. A daily bag limit of 3 late run September Coho salmon on the Kenai River is not the wise use of our natural resources. This late run Coho population is under increasing heavy pressure and we must err on the side of conservation if we are to maintain the sustainability of this valuable population.

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

PROPOSED BY: Bob Standish (EF-F27-036)

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PROPOSAL 209

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area

5 AAC 57.170 Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan.

Reduce the sport fish bag and possession limits for coho salmon in the Kenai River after September 1.

Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan

Change the bag and possession limit for late run Coho salmon on the Kenai River. Under current regulation the Coho salmon bag and possession limit increases from 2 per day, 2 in possession to 3 per day 3 in possession on September 1 for all areas of the Kenai River except special areas A and B.

This proposal seeks to change the regulation to the following language:

Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of coho salmon into the Kenai River drainage and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the Kenai River coho salmon stocks primarily to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run. (b) Notwithstanding any other provisions in this chapter, for the conservation of coho salmon stocks, the department shall manage sport fishing in the Kenai River drainage as follows: (1) coho salmon fishing is closed in the Middle and Upper Sections from November 1 through June 30, and in the Lower Section from December 1 through June 30; any coho salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately without further harm; (2) repealed 6/4/2008; (3) coho salmon may be taken as follows: (A) from July 1 through October 31, in the Middle and Upper Sections; (B) from July 1 through November 30, in the Lower Section; (C) from July 1 through August 31, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish; (D) from September 1 through November 30, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is **two** **[**three**]** fish. (c) If the commissioner determines that additional conservation measures are necessary for the inriver sport or personal use fisheries, the commissioner may close, by emergency order, the season and immediately reopen a season during which any or a combination of the following restrictions may be applied: (1) the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon is one fish; (2) only unbaited artificial lures may be used; (3) fishing time may be reduced; (4) fishing areas may be reduced. (d) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of this management plan.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kenai has been experiencing a substantial decline in Coho returns in recent years. This decline coincides with a long period of poor statewide Chinook returns. Some of the same factors affecting Chinook returns may be responsible for declining Coho returns. This decline is concerning.

Decreased and decreasing opportunity to target Chinooks has led to observed increases in fishing pressure on other Kenai River fish stocks including Coho salmon. Additional increased winter fishing pressure has also resulted in increased incidental catch and probable increased mortality on spawning and pre-spawn Coho. A more conservative bag and possession limit is warranted at this time. This proposal is submitted with the expectation that there will NOT be a subsequent increase in opportunity for commercial harvest.

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

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Advisory Committee (EF-F27-030)

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PROPOSAL 210

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area

5 AAC 57.170 Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan.

Reduce the sport fish bag and possession limit for coho salmon in the Kenai River after September 1 as follows:

5 AAC 57.170(b)(3)(D)

from September 1 through November 30, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is **two** [three] fish.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the board to address the decline in late-run Kenai River coho returns. Years of anecdotal angler reports and the department's own data from a 2022-24 radiotelemetry and assessment study indicate the total number of returning late-run Kenai River coho has declined to the point that it is now smaller than the total early-run Kenai River coho stock. This is at odds with current regulation that sets the early-run Kenai coho bag/possession limits at 2/2 fish per day in July and August, while the late-run limits are 3/3 fish per day, respectively, Sept - Nov 30.

Lowering the late-run Kenai coho daily bag limit to two fish will help additional fish escape to spawn in a declining stock.

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

PROPOSED BY: Elwood Brehmer (EF-F27-053)

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PROPOSAL 211

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Reduce the coho salmon bag and possession limit to one fish and prohibit the use of bait in the Kenai River from July 1 through August 31 as follows:

Reduce the bag limit of Coho Salmon July 1-August 31 to 1 per day 1 in possession and to not allow bait while fishing for Coho Salmon. Prohibit the practice of catch and release fishing for Coho Salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The participation in the Kenia River drainage targeting Coho salmon continues to grow. With the somewhat limited knowledge of the Coho population in the Kenia drainage I believe it's time to take the precautionary approach to in river extractions of Coho Salmon in the Kenia drainage. With productivity being unknown in the drainage and participation expected to increase the time is ripe to go forward with caution. We have numerous examples of Salmon stocks in distress, on heavily fished river drainages.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson, Paragon Fish Corporation (EF-F27-090)

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PROPOSAL 212

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Reduce the coho salmon bag and possession limit to one fish and prohibit the use of bait in the Kenai River from September 1 through November 30 as follows:
Reduce the bag limit of Coho Salmon September 1-November 30 to 1 per day 1 in possession and to not allow bait while fishing for Coho Salmon. Prohibit the practice of catch and release fishing for Coho Salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The participation in the Kenia River drainage targeting Coho salmon continues to grow. With the somewhat limited knowledge of the Coho population in the Kenia drainage I believe it's time to take the precautionary approach to in river extractions of Coho Salmon in the Kenai drainage. With productivity being unknown in the drainage and participation expected to increase the time is ripe to go forward with caution. We have numerous examples of Salmon stocks in distress, on heavily fished river drainages.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson, Paragon Fish Corporation (EF-F27-091)
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PROPOSAL 213

5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area..

Close sport fishing from December 1 through March 1 in sections of the Kenai River as follows: The Kenai River is closed to angling Dec. 1 – March 1 from the upstream edge of the Sterling Highway Bridge at the outlet of Kenai Lake downstream to a regulatory marker located at Princess Rapid.

The Kenai River is closed to angling Dec. 1 – March 1 from regulatory markers at the outlet of Skilak Lake downstream to the confluence with the Upper Killey River.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? It is time the Board of Fisheries address the decline in late-run Kenai River coho abundance, as indicated by both anecdotal angler reports and the department's own data collected from a 2022-24 Kenai coho radiotelemetry and stock assessment study.

The combined factors of warmer generally winters in Southcentral Alaska and ever-improving cold weather clothing and angling gear are resulting in increased fishing pressure from anglers targeting rainbow trout and Dolly Varden in the Kenai River during the winter months. Winter angling on the Kenai predominantly occurs in the first couple river miles downstream of the outlets of Kenai and Skilak lakes, where coho salmon also stage and spawn throughout the winter.
This increased angling pressure is leading to more incidental/out-of-season coho catches and more disruption of spawning activity and damage to spawning redds by wading anglers.
The timing and location of the spawn (low water, easily road/boat accessible) makes the late-run Kenai River coho stock one of the most vulnerable stocks of salmon on the Kenai Peninsula during the spawning period.

The board should move to protect the late-run coho stock by enacting targeted winter closures of the Kenai River immediately below the outlet of Kenai Lake downstream to a regulatory marker at Princess Rapid and immediately below the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Upper Killey River. These closures would protect spawning late-run coho and their redds while maintaining fishing opportunity in the rest of the Kenai River.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? No

PROPOSED BY: Elwood Brehmer (EF-F27-154)

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PROPOSAL 214

5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Reduce the time and areas in the Kenai River where anglers are limited to using only a single, unbaited artificial lure, as follows:

Repeal 5AAC 57.121

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? A restriction to eliminate bait fishing on the Kenai River from Moose River to Skilak Lake was passed in the last BOF proposal cycle. This regulation should be repealed for the following reasons.

First, neither Rainbow Trout nor Coho Salmon are Species of Concern in this section of the river. If they were, the restriction would be a logical response.

Second, the proposal was submitted without the knowledge of the community affected, and without any input from them. Lifetime residents who have traditionally fished this section of the river with bait were blindsided by its passage.

Third, the proposal was officially opposed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, who wrote in their comments to the board that it would "add further restrictions to methods and means without biological justification."

Finally, the Alaska State Constitution, Article 8 clearly states:

§ 3. Common Use

Wherever occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.

§ 4. Sustained Yield

Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.

This restriction transfers the priority of allocation from "the people"- resident sport and subsistence fishermen- to a self-serving group of guides who benefit economically from the change. The proposal proponents offered no hard data that "high grading" exists, or that fishing with bait adversely affects the Kenai River King Salmon or Silver Salmon fishery. They have effectively stolen the rights of residents for their own selfish interests. Twelve of the seventeen members of the Cooper Landing Advisory Committee are guides or lodge owners. This is what I hope will compel the Board to reconsider and reverse the injustice imposed by Proposal 167.

I am attaching a link to a newspaper article which articulates the negative impact this regulation has on the residents.

https://www.homernews.com/news/sterling-fishers-seek-reversal-of-new-kenai-river-bait-restrictions/

I believe that the Board of Fisheries vote for this restriction was motivated by a sincere concern for the health of the fishery without questioning the motives of the proponents.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. I am thankful that we live in a society where we can protest when we see an injustice and take steps to rectify it. Thank you for your time!

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I don't believe that the Cooper Landing Guides Advocacy Lobby will endorse this proposal. It is being submitted with the approval of Sterling Sportfish Support.

PROPOSED BY: Charles McCrone (EF-F27-094)

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PROPOSAL 215

AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Reduce the time and areas in the Kenai River where anglers are limited to using only a single, unbaited artificial lure, as follows:

1. Alaska Administrative Code Number: 5 AAC 56.121
2. I would like the Board to address Proposal 167 of the last proposal cycle which eliminated bait fishing on the Kenai River from Skilak Lake to the Moose River. We feel it should be repealed, or perhaps amended, for the following reasons:
    1. The final statement of Prop. 167 states, "This measure would limit opportunity for some user groups therefore it is NOT VIABLE." This would disenfranchise the handicapped, elderly, and disabled veterans. When the BOF discussed 167 in Anchorage prior to it's approval, one member said something to the effect that "they will just have to find another way to fish." Believe us when we say we know the other ways to fish for coho, but our physical limitations prevent them now. We have fished the Middle Kenai for decades.
    2. Justification statements in 167 contain no verifiable data, relevant studies, or facts that can be validated. 167 states that, "As the practice of bobber/float fishing with bait in the areas has increased exponentially, an increase in bait caught resident species has also increased." Kenai Fish and Game biologists told us they were in year 2 of a 3 year study on coho. I there were any surveys or counts done on the number of bait fishers and mortality rates, we as residents of Kenai Keys, Sterling, Dot's Fish Camp, and other local residents most assuredly would have known. Many believe this a blatant attempt by commercial guides to open up areas where sport and subsistence bait fishers sit. After exhaustive online research and conferring with Kenai biologists we could not find any relevant "studies" on mortality rates nor numbers of bait fishers. We asked at a Cooper Landing AC meeting what public notice of 167 was given. The answer I heard was, "I posted a flyer on the bulletin board at Wildman's." in Cooper Landing. No local businesses or locals we contacted were aware of 167.
    3. Our solution would be to repeal 167 entirely due to admittingly disenfranchising against handicapped, elderly, and disabled veterans, lack of relevant, factual, and accurate data and studies, and inadequate public notice. Much of the statements made in 167 could be considered unsubstantiated hearsay, in our opinions.

A possible alternative could be allowing bait fishing for coho from 15 August to October 31. Previous restrictions and limits would apply to trout and dollies. After Labor Day, there is hardly any bait fishers on the water. As good stewards of the Middle River, we would respect the restrictions on king fishing.

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

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? My proposal has been in coordination with Sterling Sportsfishers Support headed by Donna Anderson and Sue Stephenson. We worked together to fact check 167 and talk to Kenai Fish and Games biologists about it. Also with locals in Kenai Keys, Sterling, Kenai

Soldotna Advisory Council, and Dot's Fish Camp which is the major boat launch for the affected area. I believe KSAC also voted against 167. The link I am providing here helps explain: https://www.homernews.com/news/sterling-fishers-seek-reversal-of-new-kenai-restrictions/

PROPOSED BY: Eddie Thomas and Sterling Sportfishing Support (Donna Anderson and Sue Stephenson) (EF-F27-115)

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PROPOSAL 216

AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Reduce the time and areas in the Kenai River where anglers are limited to using only a single, unbaited artificial lure, as follows:

Repeal or revise 5 AAC 57.121 to allow bait fishing from August 15 to Oct 31.

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

§ 3. Common Use

Wherever occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.

§ 4. Sustained Yield

Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.

This restriction transfers the priority of allocation from "the people"- resident sport and subsistence fishermen- to a self-serving group of guides who benefit economically from the change. The proposal proponents offered no hard data that "high grading" exists, or that fishing with bait adversely affects the Kenai River King Salmon or Silver Salmon fishery. They have effectively stolen the rights of residents for their own selfish interests. Twelve of the seventeen members of the Cooper Landing Advisory Committee are guides or lodge owners. This is what I hope will compel the Board to reconsider and reverse the injustice imposed by Proposal 167.

I am attaching a link to a newspaper article which articulates the negative impact this regulation has on the residents.

https://www.homernews.com/news/sterling-fishers-seek-reversal-of-new-kenai-river-baitrestrictions/

I believe that the Board of Fisheries vote for this restriction was motivated by a sincere concern for the health of the fishery without questioning the motives of the proponents. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. I am thankful that we live in a society where we can protest when we see an injustice and take steps to rectify it. Thank you for your time!

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I don't believe that the Cooper Landing Guides Advocacy Lobby will endorse this proposal. It is being submitted with the approval of Sterling Sportfish Support.

PROPOSED BY: Clayton Tanaka (EF-F27-127)

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PROPOSAL 217

5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Modify the language used to describe the inlet streams of Kenai Lake as follows:

In the flowing waters of Kenai Lake drainage, including waters of Kenai lake within a one-quarter mile radius of **Quartz Creek, Ship Creek, Meadow Creek, Porcupine/Primrose Creek, Snow River, Victor Creek, Ptarmigan Creek, Trail River, Schilter Creek** [OF ALL INLET STREAMS], only one unabated, single hook, artificial lure, etc…

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Inconsistent and confusing wording in the Regulation Summary regarding Kenai Lake and Tributaries. The General Regulations, Methods and Means and Special Regulations sections all alternate between the use of "Tributaries" and "all inlet streams."

Further, the Regulation Summary map shows "Kenai Lake Tributaries." The actual AAC make no mention of "tributaries" yet it is very prominent, and presumably important, in the Summary. This proposal seeks to align 5 AAC 57.123(4)(C) with the Regulations Summary.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? I explained it to the Cooper Landing AC and seemed to meet with general approved. ADFG staff and AWT provided me the actual statue.

PROPOSED BY: Tom Lessard (EF-F27-175)

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PROPOSAL 218

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area

Close sport fishing for coho salmon in the tributaries of Tustumena Lake as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 56.122 – Special Provisions for the Kasilof River Drainage to add protections for coho salmon in Tustumena Lake, in waters adjacent to tributary mouths, and within tributaries.

Proposed Regulatory Language

TUSTUMENA LAKE AND TRIBUTARIES:
• Coho salmon may not be targeted or retained in Tustumena Lake within 300 yards of the mouth of any tributary stream entering the lake.
• Coho salmon may not be targeted or retained in tributaries entering Tustumena Lake.

Alternative combined version:
In Tustumena Lake, within 300 yards of the mouth of any tributary stream entering the lake, and in all tributaries entering Tustumena Lake, coho salmon may not be targeted or retained.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Protect Coho Salmon in Tustumena Lake and Tributaries

Current regulations protect king salmon in tributaries entering Tustumena Lake, but they do not provide similar protection for coho salmon in Tustumena Lake itself, in the waters immediately outside tributary mouths, or within the tributaries.

Many tributaries entering Tustumena Lake are small systems that support spawning populations of coho salmon. During late summer and fall, coho salmon stage in the lake outside tributary mouths before moving into these streams to spawn. Because these fish often concentrate in predictable nearshore areas and then move into confined tributaries, they are particularly vulnerable to harvest and repeated catch-and-release handling both in the lake immediately adjacent to tributary mouths and within the tributaries themselves.

Protecting only the tributaries does not fully protect these fish if anglers can continue targeting them in Tustumena Lake directly outside the mouths of those streams where staging fish are concentrated. Extending protections to include coho salmon in Tustumena Lake itself, in the waters outside tributary mouths, and within tributaries would provide more complete protection for spawning fish and would be consistent with the conservation purpose of existing tributary protections.

If nothing is changed, coho salmon will continue to be vulnerable to harvest and handling while staging in the lake outside tributary mouths and after entering tributaries to spawn.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed to extend protections for spawning salmon

in the Tustumena Lake system by addressing coho salmon staging in the lake outside tributary mouths as well as coho salmon entering and spawning within tributaries.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts, Kenai River Professional Guide Association (EF-F27-148)

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PROPOSAL 219

5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Increase harvest opportunity for rainbow trout and Dolly Varden in the Kenai River as follows:

REQUEST: Amend 5 AAC 56.360 for the Kenai River downstream of the outlet of Skilak Lake to:

(1) Increase the daily bag and possession limit for rainbow trout and Dolly Varden from 1 fish/day / 1 in possession to 2 fish/day / 2 in possession.

(2) Replace the current 16-inch maximum size restriction with the following:
No minimum size restriction. Of the 2 fish retained per day, no more than 1 fish may exceed 30 inches in length.

EFFECT: Any fish of any size may be retained up to the daily bag limit of 2. Fish under 30 inches are entirely unrestricted — a guide and client may keep 2 such fish per day. Only 1 fish exceeding 30 inches may be retained per day, protecting the true trophy class while eliminating all restrictions on the mid-size predator cohort that accounts for the greatest egg and fry predation.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current Kenai River regulation prohibits retention of any rainbow trout or Dolly Varden exceeding 16 inches. In practice this means the most biologically active predators in the system — fish in the 16 to 30+ inch range — are fully protected from angler harvest regardless of their ecological impact on salmon eggs and fry. The current rule was designed solely as a trophy conservation measure. It was never analyzed through a predation control lens, and its effect on Chinook salmon egg and fry survival during a Stock of Concern emergency was not a consideration at the time of adoption.

The ecological consequence of protecting all fish over 16 inches is significant. A rainbow trout in the 18–25 inch range is in the most aggressive phase of its foraging life — large enough to dominate prime redd-adjacent holding water, fast enough to intercept dislodged eggs efficiently, and numerous enough on the lower Kenai to represent a substantial collective predation pressure on spawning Chinook. Under the current rule, an angler who hooks such a fish is legally required to release it, regardless of the stock emergency unfolding on the spawning beds upstream.

The proposed 30-inch trophy cap corrects this without sacrificing the objective that justified the original size restriction. Fish exceeding 30 inches are the rarest, most celebrated individuals in the system — the true world-class trophies that put the Kenai River on the global fly fishing map. One such fish per day may still be retained. All fish between 16 and 30 inches — the primary predator cohort — are now legally retainable. This is the regulatory change that simultaneously advances predation control and preserves the spirit of the trophy fishery.

THE DUAL MANAGEMENT CASE

Chinook Stock of Concern — The Urgency

The Board designated Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon a Stock of Concern in March 2024. The 2024 late-run escapement of 6,959 large fish is the lowest ever recorded — 46% of the minimum recovery threshold of 15,000 fish. The stock has not met its Optimal Escapement Goal since 2018. The 2024 age composition data show that ocean-age-2 fish now constitute the dominant cohort at 39.5%, reflecting poor production from 2017–2019 parent years and indicating a structurally weakened stock.

At these escapement levels, the relationship between egg survival and recovery is not linear. When fewer than 7,000 large fish are producing all the eggs on which rebuilding depends, predation

losses that would be statistically insignificant during a strong return year carry measurable consequences for recovery. Every additional egg that survives incubation, and every additional fry that survives outmigration, represents a larger proportional contribution to future returns than at any time in the recent history of this fishery.

Rainbow Trout: Active Redd-Associated Egg Predators
Rainbow trout on the lower Kenai River are year-round residents that actively associate with salmon spawning redds during the Chinook spawning period. ADF&G's own publications acknowledge that the exceptional size of Kenai River rainbow trout is a direct product of their access to salmon eggs and carcasses as a protein source. During Chinook spawning (July–August), rainbow trout hold immediately downstream of active redds, intercepting eggs dislodged by spawning activity and foraging within the redd substrate. Fish in the 16–30 inch range are the most effective individual predators: large enough to dominate prime redd-adjacent positions and consume eggs at high rates, but numerous enough in the population that their collective impact is significant.
Liberalizing harvest of fish in this size range — while retaining the 30-inch cap to protect the rarest trophy individuals — is the most targeted predation control tool available to the Board without requiring active agency intervention.

Dolly Varden: Fry Predation Under Stock of Concern Conditions
ADF&G's literature characterizes Dolly Varden as primarily scavengers of non-viable salmon eggs under normal abundance conditions, and the Board should weigh this finding. The predation control case for Dolly Varden rests primarily on fry predation during Chinook outmigration. ADF&G acknowledges that Dolly Varden do consume outmigrating salmon fry. Under Stock of Concern conditions, where the fry cohort emerging from fewer than 7,000 spawners is already reduced, any incremental reduction in fry predation pressure carries conservation value. Larger Dolly Varden are more effective fry predators, and the proposed rule — no restriction below 30 inches, one fish per day above 30 inches — applies the same predation-control logic to the Dolly Varden population.

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

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman (EF-F27-222)
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PROPOSAL 220

5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Close sport fishing between January 1 and April 1 in a portion of the Kenai River immediately downstream of the outlet of Kenai Lake.

Close additional waters to sport fishing in the upper Kenai River as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 57.123 (9) to read as follows:

5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, the following are special provisions and localized exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means set out in 5 AAC 57.120 and 5 AAC 75 for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area: (1) Kenai Lake from the Sterling Highway Bridge at the outlet, upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately one-quarter mile upstream, is open to sport fishing only from June 11 - April 30; (2) in Kenai Lake within one-quarter mile of the Sterling Highway Bridge at the outlet (A) only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; (B) the bag and possession limit for rainbow/steelhead trout is one fish less than 16 inches in length; rainbow/steelhead trout 16 inches or greater in length may not be retained; rainbow/steelhead trout caught that are 16 inches or greater in length must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; (3) repealed 6/8/2017; (4) from January 1 - December 31, (A) waters of the Kenai Lake drainage are closed to fishing for salmon; (B) in stocked lakes of the Kenai Lake drainage, including Jerome, Carter, Vagt, Long, Rainbow, and Meridian Lakes, the bag and possession limit for rainbow/steelhead trout is five fish, of which only one may be 20 inches or greater in length; (C) in the flowing waters of the Kenai Lake drainage, including waters of Kenai Lake within a one-quarter mile radius of all inlet streams, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure, with a gap between the point and shank of three-eighths inch or less, may be used; (5) in waters of Kenai Lake within a one-quarter mile radius of all inlet streams, the bag and possession limit for rainbow/steelhead trout is one fish less than 16 inches in length; rainbow/steelhead trout 16 inches or greater in length may not be retained; rainbow/steelhead trout caught that are 16 inches or greater in length must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; (6) repealed 6/8/2017; (7) repealed 6/8/2017; (8) repealed 6/8/2017;(9) the following waters of the Upper Section are closed to sport fishing, as follows: (A) from May 1 - June 10, all flowing waters of the Upper Section;(9) the following waters of the Upper Section are closed to sport fishing, as follows: (A)from May 1 - June 10, all flowing waters of the Upper Section; (B) from May 1 - June 10, and from September 15 - October 31, the Quartz Creek drainage upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge, including Devils Creek, Johns Creek, Jerome Creek, Summit Creek, Slate Creek, and the South Fork of the Snow River. **(C)from January 1- April 1, the flowing waters of the Upper Section from the Sterling Hwy bridge at the outlet of Kenai Lake, downstream to Mile 53 bridge**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue to be addressed is providing a closed period to protect spawning Coho on the upper Kenai River when they are most vulnerable to incidental catch.

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

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Advisory Committee (EF-F27-031)

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PROPOSAL 221

5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit use of bait in Hidden Lake from December 1 through April 30.

5 AAC 57.122 is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

Hidden Lake (Kenai Peninsula): From December 1 through April 30, sport fishing is closed to the use of bait; only unbaited, single-hook artificial lures may be used. In this paragraph, "bait" includes any substance or material used to attract fish by scent or taste, including fish or fish parts used whole or in pieces.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Hidden Lake currently has a restrictive lake trout harvest regulation (only lake trout **under 16 inches** may be kept), which strongly indicates the intent is to protect the larger, mature lake trout that are most important for reproduction and long-term population stability.

However, there is a growing practice of catching kokanee and using them as bait in winter. Even when anglers intend to release lake trout, the use of bait increases the likelihood of deep hook penetration, gill hooking, and excessive bleeding. Bait also increases handling time because hooks are harder to remove, and fish are more likely to be injured during release.

During winter months, these impacts are amplified because fish are more vulnerable to stress and physical damage. Extended exposure to cold air can freeze or damage protective slime, and bleeding injuries are more likely to result in delayed mortality after release. This results in unintentional waste of lake trout that are meant to be released under the current regulations.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? no

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee (EF-F27-037)

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PROPOSAL 222

5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit use of bait in Hidden Lake year round.

5 AAC 57.122 is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

Hidden Lake (Kenai Peninsula): Sport fishing is closed to the use of bait. Only unbaited, single-hook artificial lures may be used. "Bait" means any substance or material used to attract fish by scent or taste, including fish or fish parts used whole or in pieces.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Hidden Lake currently has a protective lake trout harvest regulation (only lake trout under 16 inches may be kept), which reflects a protective measure intended to conserve larger, mature lake trout that are critical for reproduction and long-term population stability.

The use of bait increases the likelihood of deep hooking, gill injury, and bleeding, even when anglers intend to release fish. These injuries significantly increase post-release mortality. Because lake trout over 16 inches must be released under current regulations, the use of bait results in unintentional waste of fish that the regulation is designed to conserve.

This issue affects lake trout throughout the year. During winter, factors such as freezing air exposure and increased handling time can elevate stress and mortality in released fish. During summer, warmer water temperatures can increase physiological stress and reduce post-release survival. In both seasons, deep hooking and delayed mortality associated with bait use contribute to avoidable losses of fish that are required to be released.

Other fisheries in Alaska with catch-and-release or size-protective regulations restrict bait use to reduce release mortality and improve conservation outcomes. Applying a year-round bait restriction in Hidden Lake would better align angler practices with the existing protective measure and reduce unnecessary mortality of protected lake trout.

If no change is made, the continued use of bait will undermine the effectiveness of the current size restriction by causing avoidable mortality in fish that are required to be released.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? no

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee (EF-F27-038)

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PROPOSAL 223

5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Remove the seasonal closure to sport fishing on Hidden Lake as follows:

Reopen Hidden Lake for sport fishing between September 15th and November 30th for all species except King Salmon and Burbot.

Allow sport fishing year round for Kokanee, Rainbows, Dollies and Lake Trout while still keeping King Salmon and Burbot closed for the entire year.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The fall closure of all sport fishing on Hidden Lake is unnecessary since Fish and Game has taken measures in the past such as 1 Lake trout under 16 inches and 1 in possession.

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

PROPSED BY: Tyland Vanlier (EF-F27-071)

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PROPOSAL 224

5 AAC 57.180. Riparian Habitat Fishery Management Plan for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Revise Riparian Closure Signage to Emphasize Habitat Protection on the Kenai River as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 57.180 to replace the existing "no fishing within 10 feet of shore" restriction with habitat-based protections that focus on limiting vegetation disturbance and managing access.

Proposed regulatory language:

REPEAL:
[IN DESIGNATED RIVERBANK FISHERY AREAS, A PERSON MAY NOT FISH FROM THE BANK WITHIN 10 FEET OF THE ORDINARY HIGH WATER LINE, EXCEPT AT DESIGNATED ACCESS POINTS.]

ADD:
In designated riparian protection areas along the Kenai River:

- These areas shall be identified as Habitat Protection Areas.
- Entry into riparian vegetation is prohibited except at designated access points.
- Fishing may occur only in a manner that does not damage or disturb riparian vegetation.
- Access points, boardwalks, or other infrastructure may be used to concentrate foot traffic and protect habitat.

Implementation and specific access management measures should be administered by appropriate land managers pursuant to their existing authority, including 11 AAC 12 and 11 AAC 18.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current riparian protection areas under 5 AAC 57.180 are marked with "No Fishing within 10 feet of shore" signage. While intended to protect habitat, this approach focuses on restricting fishing activity rather than addressing the primary cause of habitat degradation, foot traffic and trampling of riparian vegetation.

These signs can create confusion among anglers and do not effectively prevent entry into sensitive vegetation. In some cases, individuals may enter these areas without fishing, resulting in continued bank erosion, vegetation loss, and habitat degradation.

Additionally, prohibiting fishing within a fixed distance from shore can unnecessarily restrict angling opportunity in areas where fishing could occur without impacting habitat if access is properly managed.

Riparian habitat protection is more effectively achieved by controlling access and minimizing disturbance to vegetation rather than broadly prohibiting fishing activity. Clear "Habitat Protection Area" signage would better communicate the purpose of these areas, improve compliance, and more effectively protect riparian habitat while allowing fishing where it can occur without damage.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This proposal was developed in coordination with the local Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) Guide Advisory Committee, Alaska State Parks staff, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and the City of Soldotna. The intent is to improve clarity and effectiveness of riparian protection measures by aligning signage and regulations with the primary objective of protecting habitat rather than broadly restricting fishing activity.

PROPOSED BY: Monte Roberts (EF-F27-149)

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PROPOSAL 225

5 AAC 77.540 Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Establish guide registration requirements for the personal use fishery on the Kenai River as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 57 (Kenai River Drainage Area) to add a new section establishing registration requirements for personal use fishing guides operating on the Kenai River, as follows:

Add new section

5 AAC 57.145. Personal use fishing guide registration requirements for the Kenai River.

(a) For purposes of this section, a "personal use fishing guide" means a person who, for compensation or remuneration of any kind, provides assistance, instruction, a vessel, gear, or any combination thereof to another person for the purpose of participating in a personal use fishery on the Kenai River.

(b) A person may not act as a personal use fishing guide on the Kenai River unless that person has registered annually with the department as a personal use fishing guide. Registration shall be on a form provided by the department and shall include:

(1) the name, address, and contact information of the guide;

(2) the name and address of any business entity under which guiding services are offered;

(3) the Alaska Department of Motor Vehicles vessel registration number or United States Coast Guard documentation number of any vessel used to provide personal use guiding services; and

(4) any other information the department determines necessary to administer this section.

(c) A vessel used to provide personal use fishing guide services on the Kenai River shall display a current department-issued guide vessel registration decal in a manner consistent with the requirements of 5 AAC 75.077.

(d) A person acting as a personal use fishing guide on the Kenai River shall carry proof of registration while guiding and shall present it upon request to any peace officer or department employee.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize a person to participate in a personal use fishery who is not otherwise eligible to do so under applicable law and regulation. All participants in a guided personal use trip remain subject to the personal use permit, residency, and harvest requirements of 5 AAC 57.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Sport fish guides on the Kenai River are subject to ADF&G registration, DNR/Division of Parks commercial use permits, USCG licensing requirements, guide vessel decaling, and logbook requirements. Personal use guides

operating on the same river, sometimes from identical vessels on the same day, are subject to none of these requirements. The result is a disparity in accountability that is difficult to justify on management, fairness, or resource-protection grounds. The Guided Personal Use fishing industry has slowly grown for years within an already fully-allocated fishery, inside one of the most crowded and highly regulated rivers in AK, with zero regulation or reference in AK code or statute relative to the industry. There are currently no state of AK requirements for Personal Use fishing guides, other than a business license.

Alaska law requires that all participants in a personal use fishery be Alaska residents. This proposal does not alter that requirement. Nothing in this proposal authorizes a nonresident to participate in the personal use fishery in any capacity. Subsection (f) makes this explicit. The proposal focuses solely on the guide (the person providing services for compensation) and requires that person to register. Whether or how the residency requirement interacts with the business of personal use guiding is a legal and policy question for the legislature and the department; this proposal does not resolve it, but it creates the regulatory visibility needed for that question to be addressed.

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

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith (EF-F27-112)

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PROPOSAL 226

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Fishery Management Plan.

Modify emergency order authority for the Kenai River late run sockeye personal use fishery as follows:

Modify 5AAC 77.540 subsection (c) to read:
(A) from July 10 through July 31, seven days per week, from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; the commissioner may extend, by emergency order, the **shore-based** personal use fishery to 24 hours per day if the department determines that the abundance of the Kenai River late run sockeye salmon is greater than 2,300,000 fish.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Restrict ADFG's EO authority in the Kenai Personal Use powerboat fishery to prevent 24 hour openers. ADFG has regularly been extending the Personal Use fishery for 24 hour operation. The nighttime powerboat fishery is less productive, less utilized, and creates all kinds of issues relative to City services, enforcement, noise in an urban area, driving under the influence, and hazard mitigation on a navigable waterway. A permanent operating hours cap from 6am to 11pm will have a negligible effect on total harvest and user access, but will have a huge effect on keeping the fishery legal and safe. It is unwise to allow a 24 hour fishery, with zero limitations on boat size, horsepower, or speed, in an active river/port as constrained as the Kenai River.

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

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith (EF-F27-113)

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PROPOSAL 227

5 AAC 77.540 - Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan

Modify boundaries of the Kasilof personal Use dip net fishery.

Change the personal use dipnet fishery area rules pertaining to the Kasilof to allow fishing past the markers provided you are fishing from the ground in the flowing waters of the Kasilof riverbed or channel.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Changes to the boundaries for personal use dip netting on the and around the mouth of the Kasilof to prevent unnecessary confrontations with uniformed fish and game officers, and confrontations between fishers as they compete for limited space, especially at low tide.

At high tide there is plenty of room to dip net between the markers. When the water recedes the fishable area is reduced and large numbers of people tend to fish the riverbed in flowing water out past the markers. This is technically against regulation even though it has no impact on the set net fishery (because the proposed expansion is called out explicitly as off-limits for set-neters), and ADFG officer(s) strictly enforces this regulation.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? All my friends who dipnet here agree.

PROPOSED BY: Roman Romanovski (EF-F27-005)

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PROPOSAL 228

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Close the Kasilof personal use set gillnet salmon fishery as follows:

(b) **repealed** [~~SALMON MAY BE TAKEN WITH A SET GILLNET IN THE CENTRAL DISTRICT AS FOLLOWS:~~

~~(1) FROM JUNE 15 THROUGH JUNE 24;~~

~~(2) FISHING PERIODS WILL BE DAILY FROM 6:00 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.;~~

~~(3) REPEALED 6/22/2002;~~

~~(4) SALMON MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM ADF&G REGULATORY MARKERS LOCATED AT THE MOUTH OF THE KASILOF RIVER TO ADF&G COMMERCIAL FISHING REGULATORY MARKERS LOCATED APPROXIMATELY ONE MILE FROM THE MOUTH ON EITHER SIDE OF THE KASILOF RIVER; FISHING IS PROHIBITED BEYOND ONE MILE FROM THE MEAN HIGH TIDE MARK AND IS ALSO PROHIBITED WITHIN THE FLOWING WATERS OR OVER THE STREAMBED OR CHANNEL OF THE KASILOF RIVER AT ANY STAGE OF THE TIDE;~~

~~(5) SALMON MAY BE TAKEN ONLY BY SET GILLNETS AS FOLLOWS:~~

~~(A) A SET GILLNET MAY NOT EXCEED 10 FATHOMS IN LENGTH, FOUR AND THREE-QUARTER INCHES IN MESH SIZE, AND 29 MESHES IN DEPTH;~~

~~(B) NO PART OF A SET GILLNET MAY BE OPERATED WITHIN 100 FEET OF ANOTHER SET GILLNET;~~

~~(C) A PERSON MAY NOT OPERATE MORE THAN ONE SET GILLNET; THE PERMIT HOLDER SHALL ATTEND THE SET GILLNET AT ALL TIMES WHEN IT IS BEING USED TO TAKE FISH;~~

~~(D) ONLY ONE SET GILLNET MAY BE OPERATED PER HOUSEHOLD;~~

~~(6) THE ANNUAL LIMIT IS AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 77.525.~~]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* allows for the use of set gillnets in the Kasilof personal use fishery. The fishery targets abundant sockeye but incidentally harvests king salmon which are at historically low levels throughout Cook Inlet including the Kasilof river where the kings are not currently assessed and no inseason management tools are available based on annual escapement estimates. Precautionary closures of the Kasilof personal use set gillnet fishery are warranted until such time as annual inseason abundance assessments are available for Kasilof late run kings.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Not applicable

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (EF-F27-166)

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PROPOSAL 229

5 AAC 96.XXX. New Section

This would establish regulatory guidance for the Alaska Board of Fisheries when considering proposals for Cook Inlet finfish meetings, as follows:

(Boards Support Note: This proposal will be heard and public testimony will be taken at both the LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting)

Add a new procedural regulation to require that substantive substitute language for a Cook Inlet finfish proposal be publicly posted before final action. Draft concept:

5 AAC 96.XXX. Public availability of substantive substitute language for Cook Inlet finfish proposals.

(a) If substitute language would materially change a Cook Inlet finfish proposal by altering area, time, thresholds, management authority, or conservation triggers, the board may not take final action on that substitute until the language has been publicly posted for at least one overnight period.
(b) The board may proceed without the overnight period only if it finds on the record that the substitute language is technical, corrective, narrowing in scope, or otherwise non-substantive.
(c) Nothing in this section prevents same-day amendments that are purely clerical or necessary to correct drafting errors discovered during deliberation.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Late substantive substitute language can materially change a Cook Inlet finfish proposal after the public has already testified, creating confusion about what regulation is actually before the Board and increasing avoidable disputes after the meeting. This proposal meets AO 360 by improving communication procedures, providing greater transparency in decision-making, and reducing administrative burdens associated with last-minute procedural confusion.

If nothing is changed, the Board may continue to face objections that stakeholders commented on one version while the Board voted on another. A clearer timing rule for substantive substitute language would improve notice without preventing the Board from using technical edits or clarifying amendments when needed

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This draft was prepared for further discussion and revision. It should be reviewed with Cook Inlet stakeholders, local Advisory Committees, and area staff before filing so the timing language fits actual board operations.

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson (EF-F27-082)

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PROPOSAL 230

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Amend the Upper Subdistrict commercial beach seine fishery and establish commercial set gillnet fishing opportunity in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 21.382

In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet commercial fishery,

(1) from June 20 through [JULY 31] **August 15**; when the **abundance** [FORECAST] of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is [GREATER] **less** than [14,250] **16,000** fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict fishery may open to S04H CFEC permit holders as follows:

(A)the use of a set beach seine, as described in 5 AAC 39.105(d)(6), is allowed as an alternative gear type for S04H CFEC permit holders;

(B) a S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than one set beach seine;

(C) the maximum legal limit for a set beach seine is 70 fathoms in length, 110 mesh depth, including border and chaffing strips, and three and one-half inch mesh size throughout; notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.332, a set beach seine has no minimum length, depth, or mesh size requirements;

(D) fishing with a set beach seine must occur from shore or waterline, with one end anchored on shore and the outside end set and retrieved back to the shore or waterline using a running line;

(E) openings will occur for **three** [TWO] 12-hour periods per week, established by emergency order; **with additional hours allowed by emergency order based on sockeye abundance;**

(F) retention of king **[**AND COHO] salmon is prohibited, except that a king [OR COHO] salmon that is mortally wounded or caught in a set beach seine is subject to (i) and (j) of this section; in this paragraph, "caught" has the meaning given in (j) of this section;

(G) the number of king [OR COHO] salmon released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under the disposition code for live release;

(H) a commercial dip net may not be operated within 600 feet of any part of a commercial set beach seine, and no part of a commercial set beach seine may be operated within 600 feet of any part of another commercial set beach seine

(2) from June 20 through [JULY 31] **August 15,**

(A) the use of dip nets is allowed as an alternative gear type for holders of an S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit;

(B) openings may occur outside of specified openings in this section based on abundance of sockeye salmon from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, unless closed by emergency order;

(C) an S04H commercial set gillnet CFEC permit holder may operate not more than four dip nets at a time, and each dip net must be operated by either the permit holder or an ADF&G licensed crewmember;

(D) retention of king and coho salmon is prohibited, except that a king salmon that is brought aboard the vessel or to shore is subject to (i) and (j) of this section;

(E) fishing with a dip net may occur from a vessel or from shore; fishing from shore must occur at the location of a shore fishery tract identified in the recorded plat for that lease under AS 38.05.082 or City of Kenai shore fishery lease; nothing in this subsection affects or changes the terms or conditions of a lease and its lessee under AS 38.05.082 or a City of Kenai shore fishery lease and its lessee;

(F) the number of king or coho salmon that are released must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket under the disposition code for live release.

(3) from June 20 through August 15 when the abundance of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is more than 16,000 fish, including harvest and forecast error, the Upper Subdistrict fishery may open to S04H CFEC permit holders as follows:

(A) each setnet permit may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(B) is open for not more than three 12 hour periods per week;

(C) one 48 hour continuous closure per week, beginning between 7:00pm Thursday and 7:00 am Friday;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? For many in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fleet, this proposal reflects the reality of a fleet adapting to changing conservation needs while grieving the loss of historic gear and fishing opportunity that has existed since the inception of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery in the 1880s. Generations of fishing families built their livelihoods around set gillnets, and years of restrictions have created significant financial impacts through lost income, declining permit values, and stranded investments in gear and infrastructure.

Under 5 AAC 21.382, the Board of Fisheries already established clear biological criteria for recovery and eventual removal of the late-run Kenai River king salmon stock from Stock of Concern status. The regulation states that the stock may be considered for delisting when the escapement goal has:

1. "achieved or exceeded for three consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish, which is the estimated number of spawners needed for maximum sustained yield and is expected to achieve the goal established in (a) of this section in four years;" or
2. "achieved four of six consecutive years, one of which is at or above 18,000 fish and is expected to achieve the goal established in (a) of this section in future years."

This proposal aligns with that framework by linking allowable gear types to king salmon abundance while maintaining conservation protections and harvest opportunity. When projected or in-season abundance is below 16,000 large king salmon, harvest opportunity would occur through selective alternative gear such as set beach seines and dip nets. These gear types allow harvest of abundant sockeye salmon while minimizing king salmon mortality through live release.

The proposal establishes 16,000 fish as a reasonable and precautionary transition point because it remains 1,000 fish above the lower bound of the Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) of 15,000 fish. Fishing within the OEG framework is specifically intended to allow harvest while protecting sustained yield and long-term stock productivity, recognizing that the stock can sustain carefully managed harvest without threatening future productivity or rebuilding objectives. By exceeding the lower bound of the OEG, the 16,000-fish threshold also represents measurable progress toward the recovery goal and continued movement toward eventual exit from the Stock of Concern plan, while still maintaining precautionary conservation measures within the management framework.

Reinstituting limited gillnet opportunity within the Stock of Concern framework is further justified because king salmon impacts have already been substantially reduced through years of regulatory restrictions. The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fleet has operated under reduced fishing time, shortened openings, area restrictions, mesh limitations, and repeated closures specifically intended to minimize king salmon harvest. The active fleet itself has also been significantly reduced from historic participation levels.

The 2024 season demonstrates the effectiveness of this reduced-impact framework. During two eight-hour set gillnet openings, the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery harvested approximately 43,000 sockeye salmon while harvesting only six large king salmon. That level of impact demonstrates that limited, tightly controlled gillnet openings can provide meaningful sockeye harvest opportunity while maintaining extremely low king salmon mortality.

Rather than relying on a binary choice between full closure and unrestricted fishing, this proposal creates a graduated conservation structure tied directly to stock abundance. Below 16,000 fish, the fishery would operate with selective alternative gear to minimize king salmon mortality. Above 16,000 fish, limited gillnet opportunity becomes appropriate because abundance exceeds the lower OEG threshold and because the existing Stock of Concern restrictions already substantially limit king salmon impacts.

By aligning gear type with stock abundance, this proposal creates a practical, performance-based management structure that protects king salmon while maintaining opportunity for an already substantially reduced Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fleet. It preserves harvest of surplus sockeye salmon that would otherwise go unharvested, maintains participation for permit holders, and

replaces unnecessary closures with adaptive management tied directly to conservation performance.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, this proposal was presented to the Soldotna ADFG staff for comments and regulatory language.

PROPOSED BY: Travis and Amber Every, Sarah and Jason Hudkins, Brian and Lisa Gabriel (EF-F27-232)

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