

Proposal 25 Improvement Suggestions

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The original intent of Proposal 25 would "create a new troll fishery for coho outside commercial fishing districts of Bristol Bay." Doing so would provide new economic opportunity for Bristol Bay fishers, direct marketers like me especially, due to the high value of troll-caught salmon.

Discussion in committee pointed out several problems inherent in the proposal as written: (1) the fact that Bristol Bay's salmon fisheries are already fully allocated; (2) the fishery as proposed would harvest coho from potentially mixed stocks, in violation of Board policies; and (3) and that allowing the new fishery as proposed could threaten existing subsistence and commercial harvests. Those issues would be worsened if the enabling regulations encouraged significant expansion of salmon trolling beyond the state's existing legally areas.

All of those problems could be avoided by modifying the proposal to (1) only allow the new fishery within Bristol Bay's terminal districts; (2) limit participation to 32' vessels and by holders of Area T salmon permits; (3) only allow fishing during open commercial periods for gillnetting, and when subsistence needs are assured. Nothing in this modified proposal is intended to ever interfere with subsistence priorities.

The modified proposal would have the added benefits of removing 150 fathoms of gillnet gear from the fishery while trolling, and of using a less efficient method of fishing compared to gillnetting in order to focus on quality and higher value products.

Expanding the proposal with similar restrictions to include the harvest of king salmon by trolling would further enhance the potential economic benefit of the proposal. And to avoid the possibility of a host of unintended consequences, I'd suggest approving the proposal with a sunset clause that would require the Board to revisit the regulation in three years.