

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE—GROUP 5: COMMERCIAL SALMON (5 PROPOSALS)

Copper River commercial salmon: 44-48

PROPOSAL 44 – 5AAC 24.310. Fishing seasons.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal would mandate that the first commercial fishing period within the CRD would not happen until the department has verified by sonar that salmon have passed the Miles Lake sonar site.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 5 AAC 24.310(a) The Copper River District is open and closed by emergency order. Additionally, Copper River salmon runs are managed to assure sustained yield as outlined in 5 AAC 24.360, *Copper River District Salmon Management Plan* as well as 5 AAC 24.361 *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* which directs the department to manage the Copper River commercial, sport, personal use and subsistence fisheries to achieve a sustainable goal of 24,000 or more for king salmon. For the purposes of managing these fisheries, the department shall consider the best available information regarding harvest, age composition, and escapement, including escapement information obtained from mark-recapture studies, aerial surveys, or by other means.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would likely result in foregone commercial harvest of sockeye and king salmon. More salmon would likely be available for harvest by inriver fisheries. Escapement of both sockeye and king salmon would likely increase.

BACKGROUND: Copper River sockeye salmon escapement goals have been consistently achieved and often exceeded in recent years (Table 44-1). King salmon escapement goals have been achieved in 8 of the last 10 years (Table 44-2). Historically, the CRD has opened to commercial fishing near May 15 each year. In some years sonar deployment is delayed due to shore ice and river flows. In the absence of sonar deployment early season management is based on environmental conditions and harvest rates. Depending upon water level in the Copper River, it takes between three and 10 days for salmon to migrate from the fishing district to the sonar site. At the time a salmon is counted at the sonar, considering the distance (~30 miles) between the sonar site and the fishing district, it is possible that large numbers of salmon are in the river between the district and the sonar (Figure 44-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it reduces the department's ability to provide commercial fishing opportunity on salmon runs within or above escapement goals. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative effects of this proposal.

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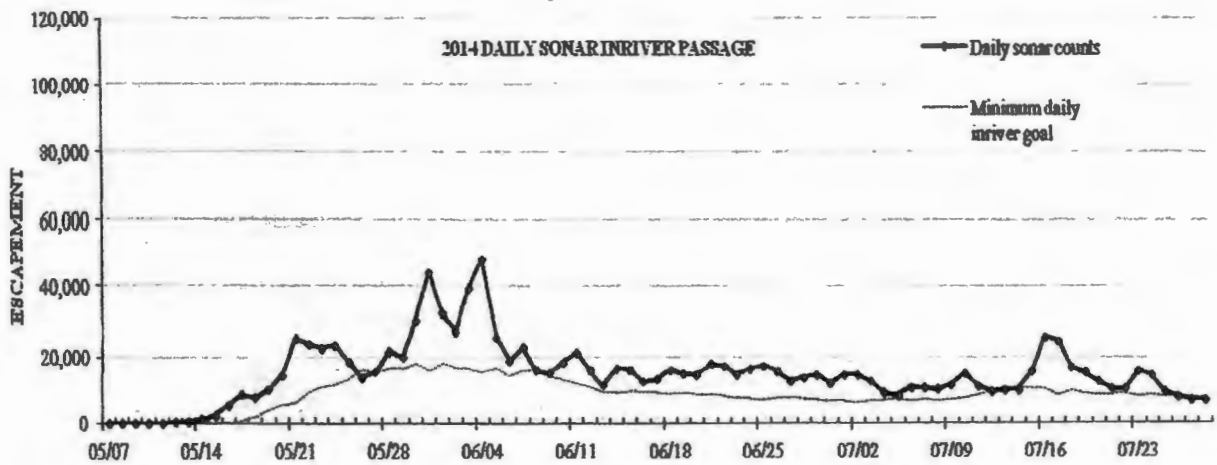
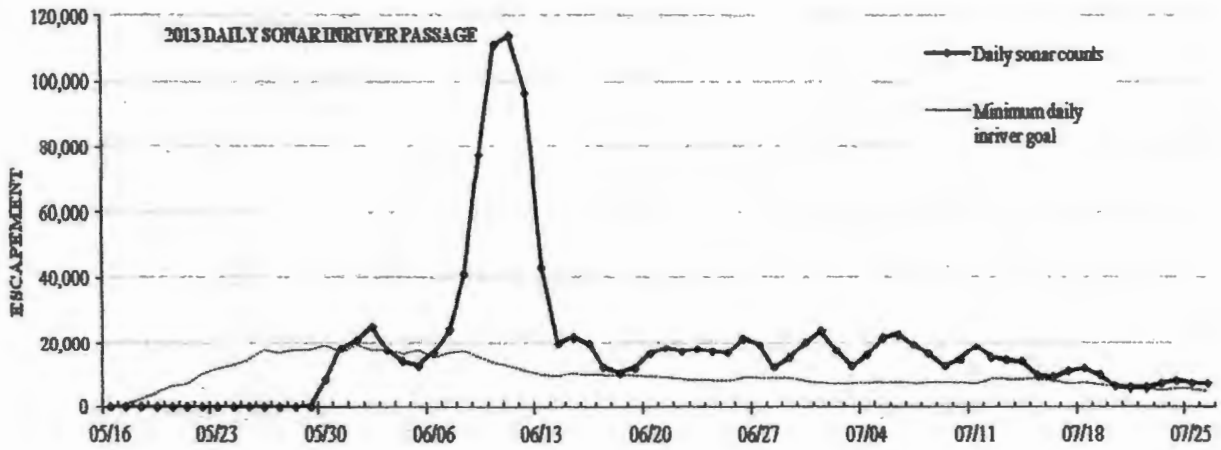
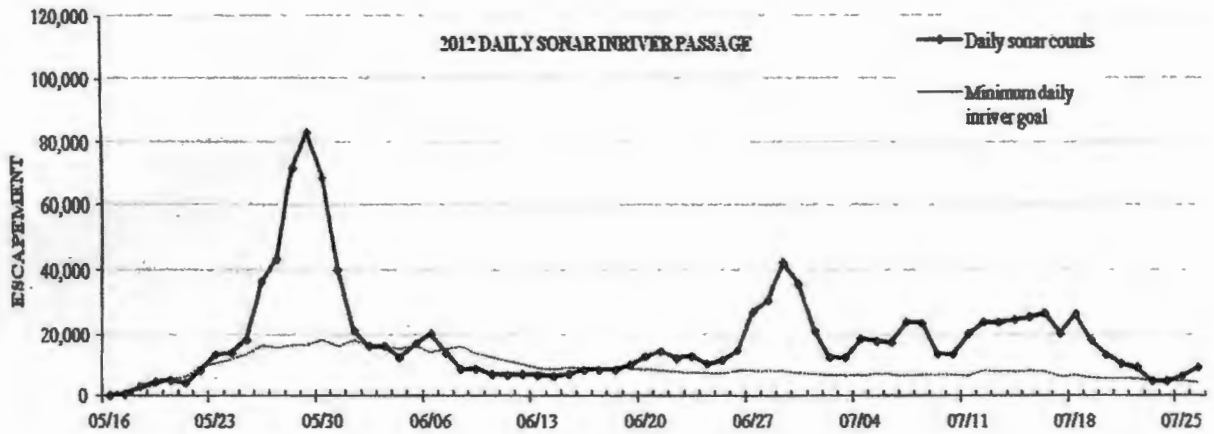


Figure 2.—Anticipated components of the Copper River salmon escapement versus actual escapement past the Miles Lake sonar, 2012–2014.