PROPOSAL A: 5 AAC 61.112. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would modify the bag and possession limit for northern pike on Alexander Lake. This proposal would remove the bag and possession limit for northern pike less than 27 inches in length and establish limits for northern pike 27 inches or greater in length of one per day and one in possession. The proposal would also allow the use of five lines when fishing for northern pike through the ice on Alexander Lake and Alexander Creek and would allow anglers to discard northern pike less than 27 inches in length without being cited for waste.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Alexander Lake the bag and possession limits are as follows;

- northern pike less than 22 inches in length; no bag or possession limit;
- northern pike 22 inches in length to 30 inches in length may not be retained; and
- northern pike greater than 30 inches in length; bag and possession limit of one fish.

When fishing through the ice on Alexander Lake only two lines are allowed.

When fishing through the ice in the flowing waters of Alexander Creek, bait is not allowed and only two lines are allowed.

The intentional waste or destruction of northern pike in Alexander Lake is prohibited under 5AAC 75.065.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Adoption of this proposal would increase the harvest of smaller sized pike while still retaining angler interest by continuing to provide the adequate opportunity to harvest one large sized fish. This proposal may increase angler effort significantly. Previous studies have show that approximately 95% of the pike in Alexander Lake are less than 27 inches in length. By instituting a size limit anglers will be able to maximize their harvest while still providing opportunity to catch and harvest one large sized pike. Retaining a size limit of one fish greater than 27 inches in length will also increase the mortality of smaller sized fish as large pike are cannibalistic in nature and prey on smaller sized pike throughout the year. Research has shown that small pike tend to eat more salmonids than large pike so adoption of this proposal could possibly reduce pike predation on salmonids in Alexander Lake.

BACKGROUND: During the 1998 Board of Fish (Board) meeting, the department was tasked by the Board to investigate potential management strategies that would provide opportunities for anglers to harvest large sized pike, but at the same time reduce the number of small sized pike which are primarily responsible for decimating salmonid

populations. In an effort to test future pike regulatory strategies the department supported a public proposal which was adopted by the Board to institute a slot limit regulation on Alexander Lake. The department was asked by the Board to evaluate the success of the slot limit management strategies in 2008 and 2009. The slot limit strategy was established to increase angling participation by providing more opportunity to catch larger sized pike and reduce the abundance of smaller sized pike by encouraging anglers to keep pike under a certain size limit. Though the slot limit strategy has worked for sustaining historical size composition of the pike population, it has become evident that angler participation is not increasing as much as the department had anticipated. Therefore, a different management strategy that calls for increased harvest opportunities on smaller sized pike while still providing pike fishermen with the opportunity to harvest larger sized fish may be a more successful strategy for increasing angler participation and harvest of Alexander Creek pike.

To retain angler interest, pike fishermen desire the opportunity to harvest large-sized fish. Large pike are old fish and there are generally very few (<5%) in a population that attain sizes greater than 27 inches in length. Large sized pike are easily exploited by sport anglers. Large pike serve as a control mechanism for decreasing small pike abundance through cannibalism. Large pike may ingest upwards of 40-60 smaller pike each year thereby keeping the population of pike in balance. Results of studies conducted in the Susitna drainage show that large pike tend to be much more cannibalistic than smaller pike. Small pike tend to prey more on salmonids or smaller fishes. By maintaining numbers of large pike, the abundance of small pike will likely decrease.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The Department **SUPPORTS** the provisions of the proposal which provide for a size limit on Alexander Lake and increasing the number of lines allowed when fishing for northern pike though the ice on both the Alexander Lake and the flowing waters of Alexander Creek. The department supports invasive northern pike management strategies that will reduce northern pike abundance in waters where northern pike continue to prey upon native fish populations. This strategy should provide for increased angler participation by providing anglers a greater opportunity to harvest smaller sized pike while at the same time retaining angler interest by providing them the opportunity to harvest large sized pike.

The Department is **OPPOSED** to the provision that would allow anglers to discard their catch of northern pike. The prohibition of wanton waste of sport caught fish was adopted by the board prior to 1988 and is a cornerstone of sport fishing philosophy in Alaska. Although the department supports efforts to reduce the number of pike, or eliminate them entirely from the Alexander Creek drainage, we oppose sanctioning wanton waste as a means to do so.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional direct costs for private individuals to participate in this fishery.

PROPOSAL B - 5 AAC 47.020. General provisions for seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the salt waters of the Southeast Alaska Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would increase the resident and nonresident daily bag limit for sablefish (black cod) in Southeast Alaska and remove the resident annual limit as follows:

> For resident anglers: sablefish may be taken from January 1 through December 31; daily bag limit of **four** [TWO] fish, possession limit of four fish, and **no annual limit** [ANNUAL LIMIT OF EIGHT FISH].
>
> For nonresident anglers: sablefish may be taken from January 1 through December 31; daily bag limit of **four** [TWO] fish, possession limit of four fish, and annual limit of eight fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? During the February 2009 Board of Fisheries meeting in Sitka, the board adopted a proposal that established sablefish harvest limits for the sport fishery. These new sport sablefish limits specify a daily bag limit of two fish, a possession limit of four fish, and an annual limit of eight fish for both resident and nonresident anglers.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? The effects of this proposal cannot be evaluated since the amount of sablefish harvested by the sport fishery is currently unknown.

BACKGROUND: Prior to February 2009 Southeast Finfish meeting in Sitka, sablefish bag, possession, or annual limits had not been established for the sport fishery. During the meeting the board addressed sablefish bag, possession, and annual limits, and established a sablefish bag limit of four fish, a possession limit of eight fish, and an annual limit of 12 fish. During deliberations department staff stated that the amount of sablefish harvested by the sport fishery was currently unknown. Staff also stated that survey and biomass data for the Chatham Strait sablefish stock suggest that the stock is in a period of significant decline and the department has taken conservative management actions in the commercial fishery. On the last day of the meeting the board reconsidered its decision on sablefish regulations and passed a regulation lowering the limits to a bag limit of two fish, a possession limit of four fish, and an annual limit of eight fish.

A review of Statewide Harvest Survey data for Southeast Alaska (1997 - 2006) indicates, on average, that 97% of the sport finfish harvests are species with bag and possession limits, while 3% are unregulated species (Table B-1). Existing sport harvest data for unregulated species primarily includes pooled estimates and rarely individual species (e.g., Pacific cod). Pooled estimates represent either a collection of a few species (e.g., smelt - 3 species) or large pooled groupings such as “other fish.” Sablefish is one of the

species falling into the “other fish” category. This category is known to include species that some anglers may take for food or use as bait, such as herring. Harvest estimates for this group have ranged from 2,200 to 13,700 fish per species/group for all of Southeast Alaska (Table B-2). The marine sport creel survey program began examining sport catches for sablefish in 2008. A total of 11 sablefish were observed by creel technicians. The marine sport creel survey program does not sample remote locations; therefore, the sport harvest of sablefish at remote locations is unknown.

In order to provide an estimate for the amount of sablefish harvested in the sport fishery to the board in 2012; the marine sport creel survey program will continue examining sport catches for sablefish; charter operators will be required to record sablefish harvest in the saltwater charter logbook beginning in 2009; and sablefish harvest information will be obtained through the Statewide Harvest Survey Program beginning in 2010.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The Department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: The adoption of this proposal is not expected to add any direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

Table B-1. Statewide Harvest Survey estimates of Southeast Alaska sport fishing effort, harvest, and percentage of unregulated species, 1997-2006.

Year	Total SEAK Angler Days	Finfish Harvests: Regulated	Finfish Harvests: Unregulated	Unregulated Finfish
1997	346,197	466,561	19,523	4%
1998	295,208	453,249	14,699	3%
1999	435,379	668,827	14,996	2%
2000	434,944	535,443	16,256	3%
2001	408,928	654,825	11,531	2%
2002	367,606	577,494	7,497	1%
2003	369,289	649,636	12,126	2%
2004	443,028	748,213	17,921	2%
2005	465,584	864,838	21,661	2%
2006	411,748	570,473	23,668	4%
Average	397,791	618,956	15,988	3%

Table B-2. Unregulated finfish harvest estimated for Southeast Alaska sport fisheries by Statewide Harvest Survey, 1997-2006.

Year	Unregulated Finfish: Pacific Cod	Unregulated Finfish: Other Fish	Unregulated Finfish: Smelt	Total
1997	9,318	5,727	4,478	19,523
1998	5,355	6,061	3,283	14,699
1999	7,956	3,915	3,125	14,996
2000	9,713	5,096	1,447	16,256
2001	6,732	2,384	2,415	11,531
2002	4,410	2,207	880	7,497
2003	2,786	5,324	4,016	12,126
2004	6,663	7,716	3,542	17,921
2005	13,019	5,232	3,410	21,661
2006	9,165	13,737	766	23,668
Average	7,512	5,740	2,736	15,988

Table 1.–The annual harvest objective, equal quota share, reported harvest, ex-vessel value, and effort for the directed commercial NSEI sablefish fishery, 1985 through October 2008.

Year	Annual harvest objective (round lbs)	Equal quota share (round lbs)	Harvest (round lbs)	Ex-vessel value	No. of permits	No. of Days
1985	2,380,952		2,951,056	$2,005,394	105	3
1986	2,380,952		3,874,269	$2,866,959	138	2
1987	2,380,952		3,861,546	$3,514,006	158	1
1988	2,380,952		4,206,509	$4,543,029	149	1
1989	2,380,952		3,767,518	$2,900,988	151	1
1990	2,380,952		3,281,393	$3,543,904	121	1
1991	2,380,952		3,955,189	$6,882,028	127	1
1992	2,380,952		4,267,781	$4,907,948	115	1
1993	2,380,952		5,795,974	$5,622,094	120	1
1994	4,761,905	38,889	4,713,552	$9,144,290	121	30
1995	4,761,905	38,889	4,542,348	$7,721,991	121	30
1996	4,761,905	38,889	4,673,701	$9,908,246	121	61
1997	4,800,000	39,300	4,753,394	$11,550,747	122	76
1998	4,800,000	41,700	4,688,008	$7,360,172	116	76
1999	3,120,000	28,000	3,043,273	$6,634,335	112	76
2000	3,120,000	28,600	3,082,159	$7,394,890	111	76
2001	2,184,000	19,600	2,142,617	$4,563,774	111	76
2002	2,005,000	18,400	2,009,380	$4,814,718	109	76
2003	2,005,000	18,565	2,001,643	$4,809,492	108	93
2004	2,245,000	20,787	2,229,956	$4,532,611	108	93
2005	2,053,000	19,400	2,026,131	$5,027,393	106	93
2006	2,053,000	19,550	2,033,786	$5,066,320	105	93
2007	1,488,000	14,500	1,501,478	$3,754,847	103	93
2008	1,508,000	15,710	1,438,286	$4,511,072	96	93

Table B-4.–The annual harvest objective, equal quota share, and reported harvest (in round lbs), along with ex-vessel value and effort for the directed commercial SSEI sablefish fishery, 1985 through October 2008. Number of permits in 1985 represents permits fished; limited entry was implemented in 1986.

			Longline Fishery				Pot Fishery			
Year	Annual harvest objective	Equal share quota	Harvest	Ex-vessel value	No. of permits	No. of days	Harvest	Ex-vessel value	No. of permits	No. of days
1985	790,000		511,617	$322,319	43	7				
1986	790,000		554,121	$260,436	22	7	confidential	confidential	2	7
1987	790,000		435,501	$291,785	22	5	confidential	confidential	1	5
1988	790,000		712,787	$719,914	26	5	confidential	confidential	1	5
1989	790,000		952,231	$714,173	31	5	confidential	confidential	1	5
1990	790,000		758,663	$553,823	30	3			0	3
1991	790,000		679,623	$625,253	30	2.4	confidential	confidential	1	2.4
1992	790,000		936,811	$936,811	30	2.4	confidential	confidential	1	2.4
1993	790,000		824,011	$815,770	30	2.4			0	2.4
1994	790,000		866,788	$1,066,149	30	2.4			0	2.4
1995	790,000		678,762	$1,323,585	30	2			0	2
1996	790,000		502,459	$899,401	30	2			0	2
1997	790,000	23,200	608,786	$1,345,423	30	45	116,281	$256,981	5	76
1998	632,000	20,400	496,210	$699,656	29	45	81,846	$113,765	4	76
1999	720,000	24,000	565,190	$1,006,038	26	45	96,234	$193,430	4	76
2000	696,000	24,000	494,528	$989,056	25	76	96,287	$187,760	4	76
2001	696,000	24,000	554,490	$1,064,621	25	76	96,188	$184,679	4	76
2002	696,000	24,000	554,074	$1,074,904	25	76	96,265	$212,746	4	76
2003	696,000	24,860	557,102	$1,286,906	24	76	99,834	$219,635	4	76
2004	696,000	24,860	550,472	$871,689	24	76	98,373	$158,986	4	76
2005	696,000	24,860	539,251	$1,127,483	24	76	100,468	$223,957	4	76
2006	696,000	21,750	537,812	$1,224,134	28	76	87,020	$210,605	4	76
2007	696,000	21,750	533,130	$1,306,573	28	76	87,038	$207,780	4	76
2008	696,000	21,750	531,866	$1,598,097	28	76	86,167	$256,300	4	76

Figure B-1. History of the commercial sablefish fishery in NSEI with quota, harvest and days of fishing by year.