

Alaska Board of Fisheries Committee Summary

COMMITTEE B

Cook Inlet Commercial Fishing February 6, 2014

Board Committee Members:

1. Tom Kluberton, *Chair
2. John Jensen
3. Fritz Johnson

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Staff Members:

1. Jeff Regnart, Director, CFD
2. Forrest Bowers, Deputy Director, CFD
3. Tracy Lingnau, Regional Supervisor, CFD
4. Tim Baker, Regional Management Coordinator, CFD
5. Lowell Fair, Regional Research Coordinator, CFD
6. Pat Shields, Area Management Biologist, CFD
7. Aaron, Dupuis, Asst. Area Management Biologist, CFD
8. Mark Willette, Area Research Biologist, CFD
9. Tim McKinley, Area Research Biologist, SFD
10. Jim Hasbrouck, Regional Supervisor, SFD
11. Matt Miller, Regional Management coordinator, SFD
12. Sam Ivey, Area Management Biologist, SFD
13. Samantha Oslund, Asst. Area Management Biologist, SFD
14. Lisa Olson, Deputy director, Subsistence
15. Sarah Hazell, Subsistence Resource Specialist III, Subsistence

Alaska Wildlife Troopers

1. Captain Burke Waldron

Alaska Department of Law:

1. Mike Mitchell

Advisory Committee Members:

1. Andrew Couch, Mat Valley AC
2. David Martin, Central Peninsula AC
3. Jim Stubbs, Anchorage AC

4. Neil Dewitt, Anchorage AC
5. Robert Purpura. Seldovia AC

Public Panel Members:

1. Bruce Gabrys, Self / UCIDA
2. Mark Doner, Self
3. David Chessik, Self
4. Jeff Berger, Copper River Seafoods
5. Elbridge (Judd) Walker, Self
6. Todd Smith, Self
7. Brent Johnson, Self
8. Paul Shadura, SOKI
9. Larry Engel, Mat-Su Fish & Wildlife
10. Dan Anderson, Self
11. Paul Dale, ASA
12. Robert Williams, KPFA
13. Travis Every, KPFA
14. Monte Roberts, Self
15. Brian Gabriel, Self
16. Joseph Person, Self
17. Stephen Braund, Northern District Setnetters
18. Kevin Delaney, KRSA
19. David Welch, KINTAMA
20. Mark Glassmaker, Self

Federal Subsistence Representative:

1. None

The committee met February 6, 2014 at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

PROPOSALS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE WERE: (13 total) 121, 123, 124, 125, 81, 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 79, 181, and 182.

PROPOSAL 121 – 5 AAC 21.320. Weekly fishing periods. Allow regularly scheduled commercial fishing periods on Mondays and Thursdays, through July 18.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- This doesn't take into account run timing and everyone has a different idea of abundance.
- There is a rush to protect kings and we may be giving up too much early in the year, especially for Kasilof.
- When fishing is based on abundance, managers need to keep in mind fisherman on south the end of district (Kasilof Section). People at the south end may be affected negatively.
- Fishing based on abundance doesn't work if there is not enough time. The current decision tree doesn't work fast enough for fishing on abundance.
- This would allow regular fishing periods in the Upper Subdistrict with adoption of proposal 209 (RC 151). Would not be as restrictive as this proposal.
- Proposal is too vague.
- This makes management more restrictive, so opposed.
- This provides opportunity for reliability to have some fish and allows some harvest
- Beneficial for planning purposes for processors and establishing prices.
- Fishing the commercial fleet during regular periods can act as a "test" fishery and can allow managers to gauge the run based on harvest. Run varies from day to day.
- This is not a new concept. Regular period is 12 hours. Department still has emergency order (EO) authority based on abundance.
- Managers need flexibility; July 18 date is arbitrary.
- Management without data is not good enough to always regulate fishing; whereas regular periods give some minimum data, especially for Kasilof stock.
- Test fishing gives information; e.g., Port Moller test fishery; there is apprehension about fishing regular periods without abundance information; waiting for abundance at the terminal area leaves out southern fishermen.
- Information on abundance is not always timely (e.g., post-season analysis of 2012 Kenai king run, Kasilof sockeye sonar start June 15 after fish have passed southern beaches).
- This would affect set and drift fishing.
- Believes that this is what the department is already doing. Proposal unnecessary, just more regulations.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 123 – 5 AAC 21.320. Weekly fishing periods. Change regularly-scheduled fishing periods in the Kalgin Island and Western subdistricts to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday and Saturday.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Kalgin is mixed stock fishery; drifters have been fishing farther south and likewise with the tenders; Kalgin fish quality suffers because tenders are delayed in picking up Kalgin fish; change wording; allows to market fish better and in timely manner.
- RC 157 adds the Kustatan and Chinitna Bay subdistricts to the areas that would be fished on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Thus, all four subdistricts would fish on Wednesdays and Saturdays.
- Proposal is a great idea because there is difficulty in getting fish to the processors; this proposal will help processors as well.
- More access to market fish.
- Better for quality to fish during odd times. Not delivered all at the same time. Cost effective.
- Not detrimental to anyone.
- Northern district problem with making escapement. Need to think about escapement needs.
- Potential interception of northern bound fish.
- Question if any genetic stock ID of fish harvested in the Kalgin Island subdistrict?
- Make fishery more viable, better product. Able to schedule tenders and be more predictable.
- It's not registration specific. Possible for additional fishermen to move here from other areas in the Greater Cook Inlet Area on other days and harvest other stocks. Also look at sport fish bag limit issues in nearby streams.
- Only a few good sites so not much pressure for others to go in.
- Tenders would like a set schedule and would provide for an orderly fishery. No additional concern of more harvest potential.
- Kalgin harvest is not huge; let's improve fishing and not take away more fishing opportunity.
- Wording change may be needed, check RC 157.
- Caution: this may allow/increase more people fishing the area; may need to reduce harvest of coho in Kustatan because it's a mixed stock fishery.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 124 – 5 AAC 21.330. Gear; 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters; and 5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan. Correct errors in regulation regarding regulatory marker locations and fixed positions of area boundaries.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Substitute language for proposal 124 in RC 203.
- This proposal is to clarify errors in markers.
- Keep people legal with clarification of markers.
- Remote area markers may not be maintained because of declining budgets.
- Maintenance of some markers is easy compared to more remote markers.
- These sites are fixed locations, so fixing them in regulation with GPS will solidify marker points.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Concerned with one mile versus two miles in marker location; example is Deep Creek; needs to be clarified some people (may be referring to sport fish marker).
- Maintain physical marker for people to see. They do not want to rely only on GPS coordinates.
- Alaska Wildlife Troopers like GPS for enforcement.
- For the primary markers that the public identifies, department should work to maintain.
- To avoid potential conflict, all user groups should be able to use both physical and GPS markers.
- Fixed location markers are not based on tides.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 125 – 5 AAC 21.330. Gear. Allow selective harvest modules (SHM), under certain specifications and operations, to be used to commercially harvest salmon in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law:

- Need to distinguish this device from a fish trap if this device approved.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- RC 160 describes the device in detail. Replaces setnets; fish go into seine; skiffs operated by tide; balls up fish into net; roll fish into skiff. Need this to prevent loss of fishing when fishing is curtailed due to king conservation; costs ~\$5,000; works on flood tide so fish will not go dry compared to ebb tide; potential to be buried with high waves, but mesh is durable; does catch fish; tested, but not a lot; fish can swim back out; mesh is 20 feet deep; may use dip net as back up to get fish out of seine.
- Both setnets and this new device could fish at the same time. Easy to see Chinook salmon and remove unharmed.
- Received a commissioner's permit in 2013 to test a new device.
- Tested during a closed period, calm day. Ended up gilling fish in the lead. Need smaller seine mesh. Used 3.5 inch but need 2.5 inch mesh.
- Fish able to swim out, so not considered a trap.
- Similar method to what's proposed on the Yukon.
- Seine closed at the bottom.
- Never tested offshore design.
- Disappointed that the department has not provided much support in the use of these new devices. Fishermen are using their own money but the department is not supportive or helping out with these new devices to reduce Chinook harvest.
- Opposed to proposal. Can only be used in an exclusive area.
- This is an allocative issue and might separate fishermen.
- There are already Chinook saving gillnets in the regulations.
- Harvest on south side of beach not the problem. This won't help.
- Weather is a problem using these devices.
- Rolling fish from nets causes abrasion and potentially damages Chinook.
- 20 foot deep mesh is probably too deep.
- Concern with not working in all areas.
- Rolling fish can currently be used with setnets to conserve Chinook salmon.
- Show of hands - panel would agree to Commissioner's permit to continue to test as new gear.

- Potential for whole new type of fishery. Needs to be in selective area.
- Most setnet sites don't harvest Chinook. This should only be limited to high Chinook areas.
- Doesn't work during slack tide, requires current.
- Only 13% of the late run Kenai River Chinook salmon run is harvested during sockeye openings but we have still been sitting on the beach so need new ideas to harvest only sockeye salmon.
- Seine rolled fish is considered better quality. This will improve quality of fish to market.
- Opposed; forcing new obligations on the industry; makes more sense to protect spawning ground and rehabilitate stock; this may not work in all situations.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 81 – 5 AAC 21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations; 5 AAC 21.332. Seine specifications and operations; and 5 AAC 27.410. Fishing seasons for Cook Inlet Area.

Establish various management measures to address decline in returning king salmon to Cook Inlet, including requiring net gear be certified as avoiding king salmon interception and closing commercial herring fisheries (The finfish aspects of this proposal were discussed at the Lower Cook Inlet meeting. The King and Tanner crab aspects of this proposal will be considered during the Statewide King and Tanner Crab meeting.).

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: See Department of Law memo contained in RC1.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Supportive of concept that the department studies to make improvements through a scientific process.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to oppose.

PROPOSAL 128 – 5 AAC 21.333. Requirements and specifications for the use of 200 fathoms of drift gillnet in the Cook Inlet Area; 5 AAC 21.334. Identification of gear; and 5 AAC 21.345. Registration. Amend references to registration requirements for set and drift gillnetting in Upper Cook Inlet.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- It's cost effective.
- Save money with electronic registration.
- Sell around 450 buoy stickers/year.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Make it easier and more consistent.
- Concern with cost.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 129 – 5 AAC 21.333. Requirements and specifications for the use of 200 fathoms of drift gillnet in the Cook Inlet Area. Remove registration requirement for joint operation of drift gillnet gear.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- See RC 165 CFEC email.
- Registration requirement is a remnant of old fish ticket system.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 130 – 5 AAC 21.345. Registration. Require CFEC setnet permit holders registered in the Upper Subdistrict to fish in only one section (Kasilof or Kenai) for the entire season.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Proposer wishes to withdraw proposal 130 (RC 164).
- Opportunity to harvest as many sockeye salmon as possible.
- AC support if did not include Kasilof Special Harvest Area.
- Some conflict issues; allows movement to the lucrative areas.
- Concept OK, but opposed.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 133 – 5 AAC 21.355. Reporting requirements. Require the number of commercially-harvested king salmon to be recorded by length (under 20” and over 20”) on fish tickets.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Department already collects these data. Would make regulation more cumbersome.
- Samples currently taken by statistical area.
- Concern that measurement wouldn't be accurate if not taken by department staff.
- Creel survey of Kenai River sport fishery below Soldotna bridge estimates harvest with size data included.
- Genetic information since 2010. All size data collected.
- The question was raised with the legality of proposal because industry would be collecting the data. Currently harvest on fish tickets recorded in number and pounds. It would potentially add to the complexity to require collection of biological information.
- If length not recorded, processor or buyer could receive a citation for failure to fill out the fish ticket per this proposal requirement.
- If proposal passes, the department would still sample the fishery for age, sex, length, and genetic material.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Needed because there is a lot of confusion with king numbers; see RC 135 size selectivity between fisheries; needed to compare apples to apples.
- There is no current way to differentiate between fisheries.
- Suggest making the cutoff 30 inches.
- Currently price set by size at buying stations. Used to be by weight but now by length.
- Would make it easier to account for jacks during inseason fisheries.
- Consensus to support, if agree on size to determine a jack. Need a definition of a jack. Size of 20 inches or 28 inches as the cutoff.
- Concern what you call a jack in salt water compared to once they get inriver.
- Length reporting in the commercial fishery is critical to so many people.
- Length should compare to length of big fish on DIDSON.
- Doesn't see burden in collecting data on fish tickets. If it's a jack or not jack king.
- Require department to provide data to public.
- Sport harvest is reported post season compared to commercial inseason reports.
- Being managed socially. Public perception of Upper Subdistrict setnet king harvest has an impact.

- Department can get commercial size reports out in a day so can compare apples to apples between harvests. Department confirmed.
- Aerial census escapement surveys only count large kings in the Northern District, so separating out small kings in the commercial harvest would allow apples to apples comparison.
- This is needed to compare size of fish in catch versus escapement.
- Not an issue to take this data at a buying station.
- Consensus to support but need to determine length cutoff.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 134 – 5 AAC 21.368. Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan. Amend management plan to include all waters of the Kalgin Island Subdistrict and reduce fishing time from three days a week to two days a week.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Fishery originally designed to harvest sockeye on the way to the Big River lakes area. No stock composition estimates.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- 2005 board decision to open west side of Kalgin Island. Approved to make more fishing area, but not all have been able to participate.
- RC158 contains possible substitute language to amend the proposal.
- Is it possible to allow for a king cap such that each permit only allowed a certain amount of Chinook salmon? Department of law thought this is possible.
- All fisheries need to make a sacrifice for Chinook conservation so the reduction in days would account for that.
- The way current regulations are written excludes otherwise eligible people. Just not enough area for them to fish.
- Opposition because this would increase west side Kalgin issues; people on westside would suffer by getting one less fishing period per week.
- This would make it more equitable for all fishermen.
- Doesn't see a conservation issue. In support of the proposal.
- Not fair to other fishermen.
- Suggestion to change spacing to allow more nets to fit in the subdistrict.
- No conservation concern for Packers Lake. Will not impact fishery.
- Extend the offshore set line to allow more space. Greater than the 35 fathom line.
- A cap on kings will increase more legal/enforcement issues and questions.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 79 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters. Close waters to commercial fishing within one statute mile of the terminus of any anadromous fish stream in Cook Inlet as measured from the mean lower low tide, not mean high tide.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Specific to the westside of Upper Cook Inlet and not all of Cook Inlet.
- Directly across from Kenai; remote fishery; there are 8-10 thousand visitors to the area.
- Large commercial coho fishery; no stock assessment currently; this is for coho conservation; current regulations seem inconsistent.
- Drift fishermen are in the inter tidal areas because river beds continue into inter tidal areas; See RC 161; change to mean low tide and not mean high tide to protect coho.
- Mud flats 2-3 miles wide, streams feather out throughout; this proposal would shut down drift fishery on the west side of UCI; current regulations (900 ft) addressed this issue and helps enforcement as well; coho sport fishery exploitation should be more of a concern.
- At low water you would essentially close entire commercial fishery if this were to pass.
- One incident of lack of enforcement shouldn't be cause for change.
- Concern about fly-in fisheries; lots of catch and release of coho.
- Northern area opposed. There are existing setnet sites in the area and at high water you can't identify the creek terminus.
- May impact traditional fishing sites if passed.
- Support because it seems that this issue is consistent between areas for coho. Protection for commercial sockeye but why not other sport fisheries?
- Should be tailored to specific areas. Agree with concept if specific.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 181 – 5 AAC XX.XXX. Cook Inlet Northern Pike Management Plan.
Establish a commercial fishery for northern pike in Upper Cook Inlet.

Comment Summary:

Department: Staff would also have to discuss impacts of such a fishery. Noted that if adopted, there would have to be significant work to develop a management plan.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Northern district setnetters started seeing northern pike and pike have started moving down the inlet. Problem because pike are moving into new drainages on west side.
- The controversy will never end while there's pike in these rivers.
- Opening door to other commercial fisheries on resident species.
- If we had pike in sufficient quantity, we'd be able to market them commercially.
- Currently liberal pike sport fishing regulations are not increasing angler harvest rates.
- Need to apply commercial fishery "surgically" to minimize by-catch of other species.
- Potential problem because this may promote increasing pike abundance to maintain fishery.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 182 – 5 AAC XX.XXX. New Section. Establish a five-dollar bounty for northern pike.

Comment Summary:

Department: None.

Department of Law: None.

Department of Public Safety: None.

Federal Subsistence Representative: None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Need some guidelines for the bounty. Need more specifics.
- There is one ADF&G pike eradication project on Alexander Creek and other pike studies by CIAA; the public can do more on more streams than the ADF&G or CIAA on one or two streams.
- Pick lakes with only pike to prevent the risk of killing other species.
- May have to sacrifice a few anadromous species during the eradication process; make \$10 bounty and have borough provide the money.
- Institute another pike derby like they had at Houston.
- This would help to expand opportunities for fishing.
- Possible problems with enforcement.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.