



Alaska Trollers Association

130 Seward St., No. 205
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 586-9400
(907) 586-4473 Fax

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RE: Proposed Amendment to Proposal 208

Proposed Amendment

In District 8, from Stat Week 24 through June 30, the maximum mesh size is 6 inches, unless the inseason projection of Stikine Chinook salmon provides a U.S. allowable catch of 1,000 fish or more, and the Department determines they can conduct a directed fishery.

Goals

Provide another tool for ADFG to protect Stikine River kings, when needed; and, allow trollers a better chance to harvest Anita Bay hatchery king salmon in an area utilized by both the troll and gillnet fleets.

Rationale

The original Proposal 208 is far too restrictive and ATA does not support it as written. We suggested different language in our written comments (PC93). Since that time, we met with ADFG managers and refined our request.

ATA's original proposed amendment included a mesh restriction through June 30th. ADFG pointed out that the way it was written it could prevent gillnetters from accessing an allowable catch (AC) under the Transboundary Rivers annex of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The AC is generated either pre-season or through weekly in-season assessments. The annual AC might not be known until sometime in June. We do not want to see gillnetters lose this opportunity – it is important to catch Alaska's harvest share and protect all fleets' historic access to king salmon.

Therefore, we modified our suggested approach and tied it to the AC of Stikine River Chinook under the treaty, to ensure that the gillnet fleet will be able to prosecute a fishery in June if ADFG feels there are enough fish to open a directed fishery.

Note that a 6" mesh restriction is often implemented during the District 11 sockeye fishery to avoid catching kings. There has been no similar rule enacted in District 8. While there is no conservation problem at this time, it makes sense that a 6" mesh restriction be an available tool for ADFG to use in all areas, as needed.

Trollers are not as effective when there is a net fishery in the vicinity. This is a problem both when the fleets work an area together, and for a few days after the net fishery is closed.

Restricting mesh size will not preclude the harvest of kings by the gillnetters; it will just slow down their catch rate of hatchery kings for a few weeks during the gillnet sockeye fishery, and only if there is no treaty AC.

Restricting gillnetters to sockeye nets in District 8 from Stat Week 24 through June 30th, when there is no AC, would allow trollers better access to returning Anita Bay hatchery king salmon.

At 18%, trollers are still chronically under the hatchery allocation (27-32%). Gillnetters are averaging 35% and remain consistently over their range (24-29%).

Thanks for your service and consideration of ATA's point of view.

Dale Kelley, Executive Director