

Submitted by ADF&G at the request of Board Member Ruffner, December 2, 2018

Nushagak-Mulchatna King Salmon Management Plan (NMKSMP)

At the 2018 Bristol Bay meeting held in Dillingham, proposals were submitted that called for changes to the NMKSMP (5 AAC 06.361). A small group of stakeholders including the author of two relevant proposals met with three members of the Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) and multiple Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) staff. There was a consensus in the group to modify the NMKSMP by striking provisions (d) 2 and 3 as described in (RC51). This removes sonar triggers that auto-restrict the sport fishery. Removing these trigger provisions from NMKSMP (RC51) will allow ADF&G to consider sonar data along with other in-season information in managing fisheries to ensure the escapement goal is met.

The parties present recognized two concerns that need additional consideration:

- 1) Uncertainty in sonar data used to establish the king salmon escapement goal and recent in-season issues with the accuracy and precision of sonar counts may have caused unwarranted restrictive actions.
- 2) Restrictions in the sport fishery for king salmon without actions in the commercial sockeye fishery may or may not be achieving necessary conservation needs and should be considered in the context of sharing a conservation burden.

To address these concerns, ADF&G in collaboration with a stakeholder-led study team will review all data related to the enumeration of Nushagak River king salmon, and identify options to improve this information and management of Nushagak River king salmon. To support this effort, ADF&G would accelerate updating the Nushagak River king salmon escapement goal prior to March 2020. The study team will provide a progress report to the board at the October 2019 work session.

Concurrent with the technical enumeration study effort, the Board Chair will appoint a working committee (WC) consisting of no more than 9 members of the public and 3 members of the board for a total of 12. The WC will be supported by the technical study team and provide input to the help guide the team's work products. The WC committee will meet prior to the Oct. 2019 Board Work Session, receive a preliminary update from ADF&G on the enumeration efforts and set a schedule that includes a target of generating a proposal for any changes to NMKSMP to the Board for consideration at the Statewide Meeting in March 2020. This schedule signals the intent of this board to address the topic of the NMKSMP before the next regular Bristol Bay cycle if new information can refine the plan; however, it does not guarantee any particular outcome.

In addressing the allocative issue, the WC will acknowledge and adhere to the goals of the Sustainable Salmon Policy (5 AAC 39.222), as well as the concept of sharing the conservation burden as outlined in the Sustainable Salmon Policy. The WC will also recognize and consider that any hard trigger closures need to acknowledge tradeoffs between sockeye and king salmon. (i.e. is it in the best interest of the state to forego 100,000 sockeye salmon for 1,000 king salmon; 1,000,000 for 10?)