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UPPER COOK INLET MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY, 1998

Report for the Alaska Board of Fisheries

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by

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the sixteen salmon management plans currently in regulation governing the salmon fisheries of Cook Inlet north of Anchor Point. It is intended to provide the Board of Fisheries (BOF) with a summary of the important points of each plan, a brief history of the plan's development and approximate time period covered by each plan.

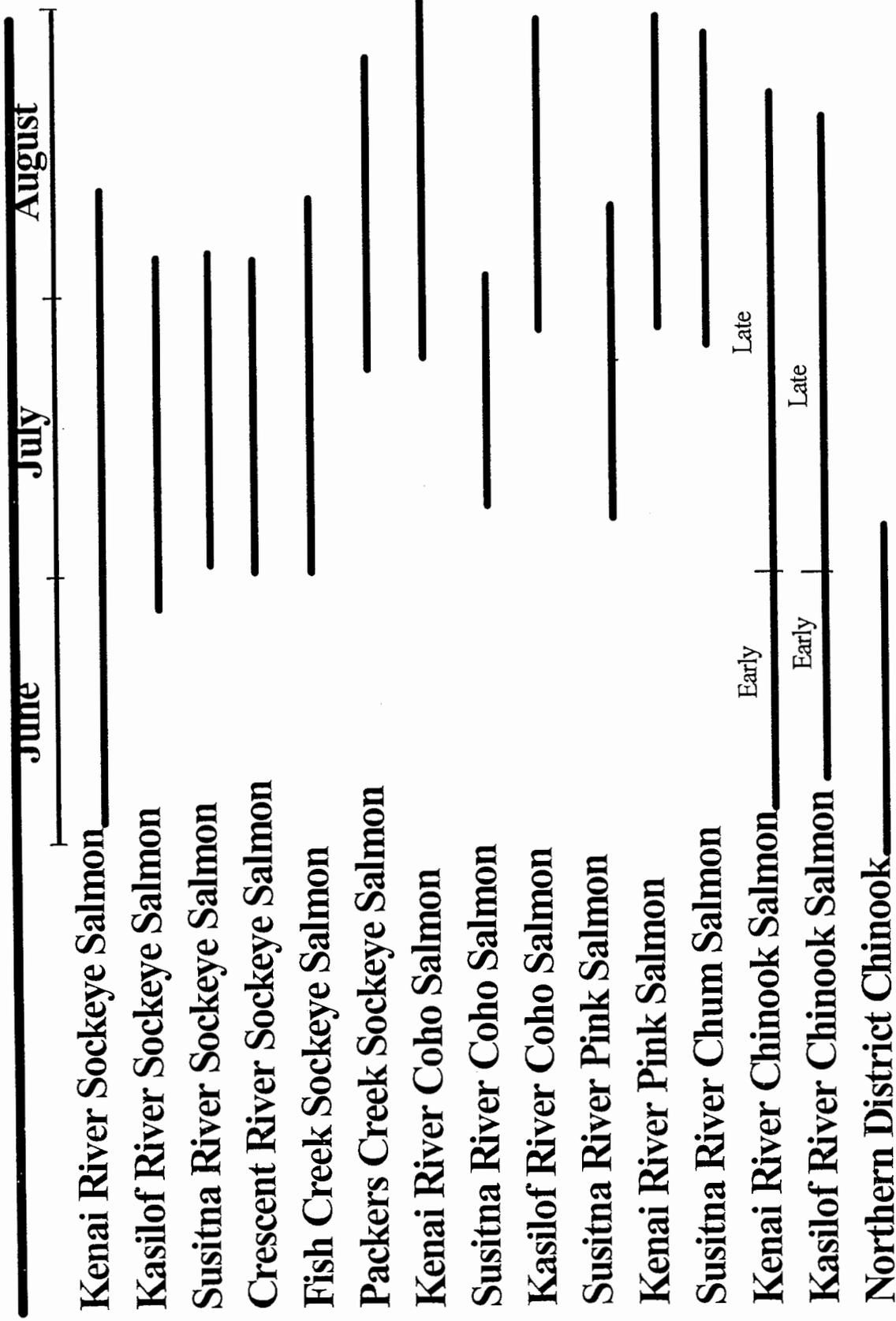
HISTORY OF THE UPPER COOK INLET SALMON MANAGEMENT PLAN

The harvest of salmon in Upper Cook Inlet is largely governed by the wording and intent expressed in the Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.363). This plan was first adopted in December of 1977 as a board policy (Policy number 77-27-fb) to act as an overall guide to the allocation and management of Upper Cook Inlet salmon stocks. The plan covers all of Upper Cook Inlet as a whole and represents compromises worked out over time regarding which user groups will harvest which stocks and to what extent. The *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* is general in nature giving the department and BOF long-term direction in the management of UCI salmon stocks. *The Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* sets out the primary and secondary uses of salmon stocks but does not provide for exclusive use of any stock by any group.

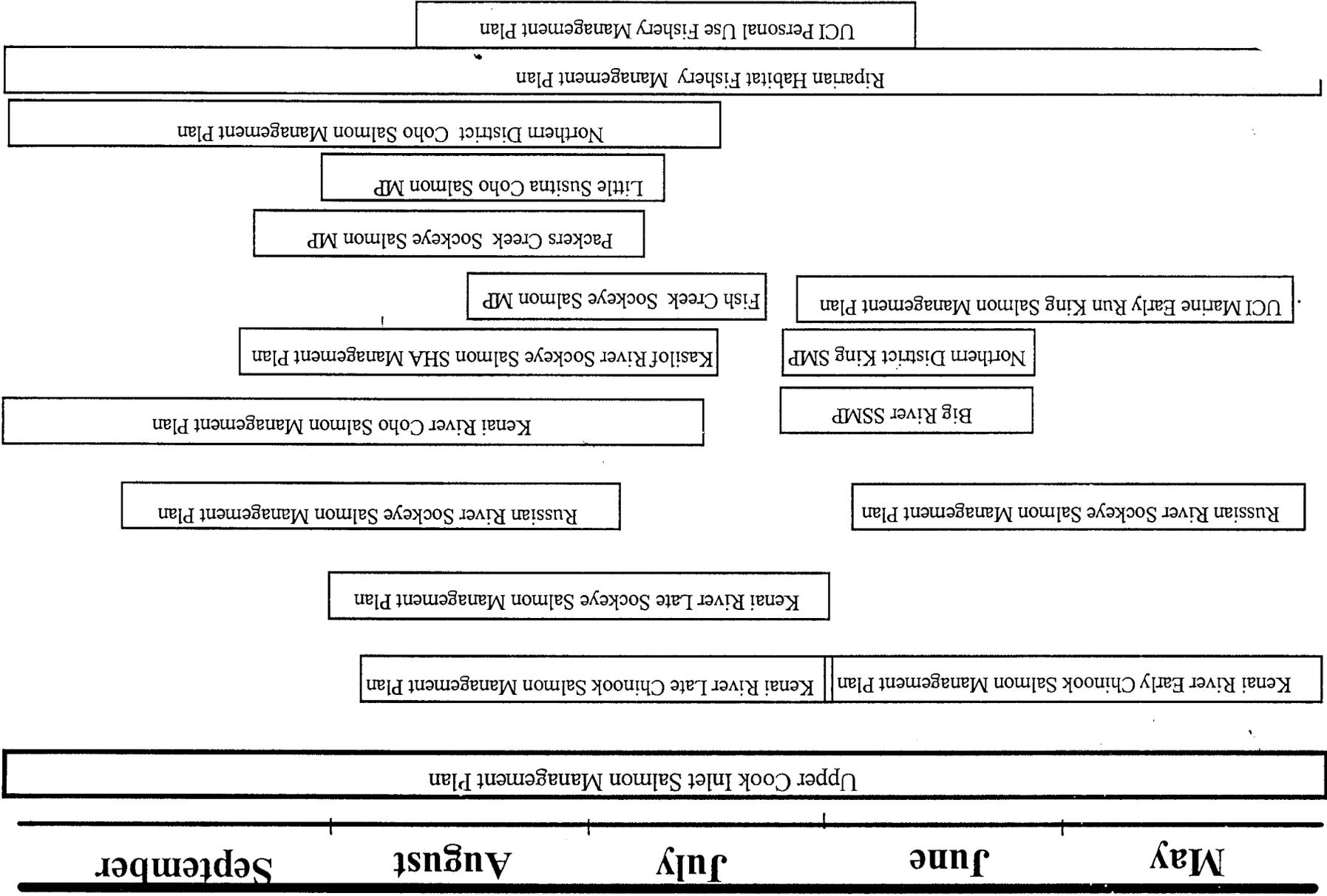
The plan as first adopted, as a formal regulation in December 1981 is essentially the same plan today with three changes. In 1992 the BOF changed Susitna River Kings to Northern District Kings under Section (a) as a stock to be managed primarily for recreational purposes prior to July 1. The remaining two changes occurred in 1996 when the term minimize was defined under Section (b) and Guiding Principles were added under Section (d).

For the most part this plan has been altered very little since it's inception, instead the strategy the BOF has employed in the past is to amend or develop separate management plans to address the specific rivers, stocks and or fisheries of concern. In addition to the *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* there are fifteen additional management plans in UCI which are more specific in nature, tending to focus on single rivers, stocks and or fisheries.

Run Timing of the Major Salmon Stocks in Upper Cook Inlet



Timing of Management Plans in Upper Cook Inlet



List of Upper Cook Inlet Management Plans

Plans Giving General Direction

1. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.363)

Plans Giving Specific Direction

1. Kenai River Early Run Chinook Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 56.070)
2. Kenai River Late Run Chinook Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.359)
3. Kenai River Late Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.360)
4. Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.361)
5. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.357)
6. Kasilof River Sockeye Salmon SHA Management Plan (5 AAC 21.365)
7. UCI Marine Early Run King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 58.055)
8. Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.368)
9. Fish Creek Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.364)
10. Packers Creek Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.370)
11. Little Susitna Coho Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 61.060)
12. Northern District Coho Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.358)
13. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.366)
14. Riparian Habitat Fishery Management Plan (5 AAC 56.065)
15. UCI Personal Use Fishery Management Plan (5 AAC 77.540)

Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan

Section a.

1. Provide for the Subsistence priority;
2. Prior to July 1 salmon stocks managed primarily for recreational purposes;
-Stocks include early Kenai kings, early Russian River sockeye & Northern District kings- (Changed from Susitna River Kings in 1992)
3. July 1 to August 15 salmon stocks managed primarily for commercial purposes;
4. After August 15 Kenai Peninsula stocks managed primarily for recreational purposes;
5. After August 15 remaining stocks managed primarily for commercial purposes;

Section b. Consistent with section (a) the department shall;

1. Manage commercial fishery to "**minimize**" the incidental take of Susitna Coho, late Kenai Kings and early Kenai Coho;

Minimize defined; (definition of minimize added in 1996)

- A. Additional fishing periods;
 1. Not given in Northern District or Upper Subdistrict if coho are expected to be the most abundant species;
 2. In the Kenai, Kasilof and East Forelands sections are curtailed when sockeye are below the upper end of the sonar goal, sockeye catches declining sharply and coho catch increasing;
 3. Not given based on the abundance Susitna Coho, late Kenai Kings and early Kenai Coho;
- B. Regular Monday and Friday fishing periods are not restricted even if coho salmon are expected to be the most abundant;
- C. Extra fishing periods targeting Kasilof sockeye are restricted to the Kasilof Section to reduce Kenai king harvest;
- D. Management following management plans;
2. Assist the BOF in setting optimal harvest rates;
3. Maintain sustained yield of pink, chum and sockeye salmon stocks;
4. Ensure subsistence use priorities are met;

Section c. UCI salmon stocks are those stocks that move through to spawn in the Northern and Central Districts of Cook Inlet;

Section d. BOF will consider the following guiding principles; (added in 1996)

1. the conservation and sustained yield of healthy salmon resources and maintenance of the habitat and ecosystem on which salmon and allied species depend for survival throughout their life-cycle;
2. the maintenance of viable and diverse fish species and stocks;
3. the maintenance of the genetic diversity of fish species and stocks;
4. the best available information presented to the board;
5. the capability of being implemented and evaluated, including factors such as flexible and adaptive management, conflict with other law, and mixed stock management;
6. the capability of providing tangible benefits to user groups or conservation, with the least risk to existing fisheries and to conservation;
7. stability and viability of sport, commercial, and personal use fisheries;

Kenai River Early Run Chinook Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1989 fishing season. It directs management of the Kenai River recreational chinook fishery as follows;

1. Sets escapement goal of 5,300 to 9,000 chinook;
2. Only artificial lures until 9,000 chinook goal is projected;
3. If projection of 9,000 chinook bait shall be allowed and fishing on Mondays from boats may be allowed downstream from Skilak Lake;
4. If between 5,300 and 9,000 manage toward 9,000 by limiting time and area or reduce bag limits to zero except that kings larger than 52 inch may be retained;
5. If escapement is less than 5,300 the department shall close downstream of Funny River until July 1 and upstream until July 10;

Kenai River Late Run Chinook Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1989 fishing season. It directs management of the Kenai River recreational chinook fishery, marine recreational fishery north of Bluff Point, the set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict and drift gillnet fishery within three miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline as follows;

1. Manage for escapement goal of 15,500 and 22,300;

RED ZONE

2. If escapement is projected less than 15,500;
 - a. Close recreational fisheries in the Kenai River and marine waters north of Bluff Point to taking of king salmon;
 - b. Close drift gillnet fishery within 3 miles of Kenai Peninsula shoreline;
 - c. Close set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict;

ORANGE ZONE

3. Between 15,500 and 22,300 restrict recreational fisheries by reducing;
 - a. time and area;
 - b. bag limit of zero with artificial lures only, 52 inch or greater may be retained;

YELLOW ZONE

4. Between 15,500 and 19,000 limit set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict to regular periods only, this provision does not apply if Kenai River sockeye escapement is projected to exceed the 850,000 sonar goal;

GREEN ZONE

5. Over 22,300 the department may allow;
 - a. Before August 1 recreational fishing from boats on Mondays;
 - b. Between August 1-7 sport fishing for chinook below Eagle Rock, river mile 11.25;

Kenai River Late Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1980 fishing season and has changed significantly over time with respect to the sonar range to achieve which was originally 300,000 to 350,000 sockeye salmon. This plan currently directs the department to manage the commercial fishery in Cook Inlet to provide for a sonar count of 550,000 to 850,000 late run sockeye salmon and gives the department guidelines to provide for the in-river recreational fishery and personal use dip net fishery as follows;

1. Purpose of this plan is to achieve the BEG set by the department and provide guidelines to the department;
2. Manage the commercial fishery to achieve a sonar count of 550,000 to 850,000 Sockeye;
3. BOF may reduce sonar goal if recreational fishing is causing a net loss in "Habitat Units";
4. Provides for Personal Use dip net fishery from July 10 to August 5;
5. Manage the sport fishery to achieve the Biological Escapement Goal;
6. Provides for recreational fishery 7 days per week with bag limit of 6 sockeye in the Kenai River drainage except in the Russian River;

Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1980 fishing season. It directs the department to manage the Kenai-Russian River recreational fisheries as follows;

1. Sets early Russian River escapement goal at 16,000;
2. Sets late Russian River escapement goal at 30,000;
3. Directs the department to manage Russian River as separate entity without regard to Kenai River system run strength;
4. When Late Russian River stocks comprise the majority of Kenai River stocks the department will make appropriate restrictions to protect Kenai River stocks;

Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1997 fishing season. It sets management guidelines for the in-river recreational coho fishery, personal use fishery and set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict as follows;

1. Closes the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery after the first regular period on or after August 10;

2. Sport fishing for coho is only allowed from July 1 to September 30;
3. October 1 to June 30 only unbaited artificial lures in the Kenai River;
4. From the end of the King salmon season through September 30 a registered guide vessel is restricted as follows;
 - a. guide may not fish with exceptions for guiding persons with disabilities;
 - b. number of rods operated may not exceed number of clients;
 - c. downstream of the Moose River sport fishing on Mondays is prohibited;
 - d. upstream of the Moose River sport fishing for coho salmon on Mondays is prohibited;
5. Kenai River personal use dip net fishery is closed after July 31;
6. If the department determines that additional conservation measures are necessary, the department may make additional restrictions in the inriver sport and personal use fisheries as follows;
 - a. daily bag and possession limits are two coho;
 - b. daily bag and possession limits are one coho;
 - c. only unbaited artificial lures may be used;
 - d. fishing time may be reduced;
7. Provisions of this plan do not apply after December 31, 2002.

Kasilof River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1986 fishing season but has never been implemented. It gives the department discretion in opening this SHA and direction in management of the set gillnet and drift gillnet fisheries within this area as follows;

1. ADF&G may open the SHA when sockeye salmon escapement will exceed 275,000 in Kasilof River;
2. Open waters are within 1.5 miles of the navigational light;
3. Set nets must be within 600 feet of mean high tide;
4. Only one 35 fathom set gillnet per permit;
5. Drift gillnets may not be operated within 600 feet of mean high tide;
7. Only one 50 fathom drift gillnet per permit;
7. No person may operate a gillnet both inside & outside of SHA ;
8. No minimum distance between units of gear;

Upper Cook Inlet Marine Early Run King Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1996 fishing season. It directs the department to manage the recreational fisheries in this area as follows;

1. Goal of this plan is to stabilize the harvest of king salmon in this mixed stock fishery;
2. Special harvest area established south of Ninilchik River to Bluff Point within one mile of shore;
3. From April 1 to June 30 guides can not fish except for assisting disabled persons;
4. The following waters within one mile of shore are closed to all fishing from April 1 through June 30;
 - a. south of Ninilchik River to a regulatory marker two miles south of Deep Creek;
 - b. from one mile north of Stariski Creek to one mile south of Stariski Creek;
 - c. from two miles north of the Anchor River to two miles south of the Anchor River;
5. Within the SHA described in (2) above a person may not fish for any species after taking a king salmon 16 inches or more in length;
6. Guideline harvest level established at 8,000 king salmon 16 inches or more until July 1;

Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1989 fishing season. It authorizes and establishes guidelines for a set gillnet fishery in a portion of the Kustatan Subdistrict as follows;

1. Season June 1 to June 24;
2. Periods are on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays;
3. Periods are from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.;
4. Season closes when 1,000 king salmon are harvested;
5. One 35 fathom set gillnet per permit;
6. Separation of 1,800 feet between nets;
7. No net may extend more than 35 fathoms seaward of mainland beach at the lowest tide of the day;

Fish Creek Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1987 fishing season. Originally this fishery could occur by EO daily until July 30. It was modified in 1991 to reduce the coho salmon harvest. This plan authorizes a set gillnet fishery to harvest surplus Fish Creek sockeye salmon in a portion of Knik Arm as follows;

1. Sets escapement goal at 50,000 Sockeye Salmon into Fish Creek;
2. Authorizes a commercial set gillnet fishery in a portion of Knik Arm;
 - a. Within 1 mile of shore at mean high water from the north shore of Goose Bay to Fish Creek;
 - b. Season is from July 15 to July 26; (shortened from July 29 in 1991)
 - c. Open Periods are on Tuesdays and Sundays; (changed from daily in 1991)
 - d. Periods are from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.;
 - e. No Emergency Orders extending this fishery;

Packers Creek Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1993 fishing season and directs management of the Kalgin Island Subdistrict set gillnet fishery as follows;

The Department may not base fishing time in the Kalgin Island Subdistrict on the enhanced run strength of Packers Creek sockeye salmon. For purposes of harvesting Packers Creek sockeye salmon, extra fishing time in the Kalgin Island Subdistrict shall be limited to no more than one additional fishing period per week.

Little Susitna Coho Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1990 fishing season. It directs the department to manage the recreational fishery as follows;

1. Manage the sport fishery to achieve an escapement of 7,500 non-hatchery coho;
2. Sets bag and possession limit to 3 coho and only artificial lures from July 15 to August 5;

Northern District Coho Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1996 fishing season, it restricts the drift gillnet fishery, the Northern District set gillnet fishery and the personal use gillnet fishery in the Northern District as follows;

1. Purpose to minimize the harvest of Susitna River coho and further to limit the commercial harvest of other Northern District coho, by directing the department to do the following;
 - a. reduce the drift fishery to no more than the Kenai and Kasilof sections for the first period after July 25;
 - b. Close the drift fishery on August 9;
 - c. No personal use gillnet fishery in the Northern District;
 - d. Regular periods only after August 15 in Northern District set gillnets;

Northern District King Salmon Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1986 fishing season and was modified in 1996 to include item numbers 8, 9 and 10 which sunset December 31, 1998. This plan establishes a set gillnet fishery in the Northern District as follows;

1. Season June 1 to June 24;
2. Periods are on Mondays from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
3. Harvest may not exceed 12,500 king salmon;
4. One 35 fathom set gill net per permit;
5. Separation of 1,200 feet between nets;
7. No net may be set seaward of another net;

After December 31, 1998 the following provisions do not apply.

8. From June 1-24 that area from 1 mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River is closed;
9. If in 1997 the escapement into the Chuitna or Theodore rivers is less than 90 percent of the BEG then from June 1-24 in 1998 that area from 1 mile south of the Chuitna River to the Susitna River is closed;
10. If in 1997 the escapement into the Chuitna River is less than 90 percent of the BEG then the Chuitna River will be closed to sport fishing for king salmon in 1998 by EO;

Riparian Habitat Fishery Management Plan

This plan was first in effect for the 1996 fishing season. It defines and closes certain riparian habitats as follows;

1. Recognizes the use of freshwater fisheries and possible negative impacts to riparian habitats, and defines riparian habitats to be within 10 feet in either direction of the Kenai River waterline;
2. BOF will consider avoidable impacts related to recreational fisheries in UCI;
3. Gives EO authority to the department to close "public lands" within 10 feet of shore to fishing to protect riparian habitat. To date there have been 3 EO closures;
 - a. 1997 closed 0.1 of a mile at Centennial Campground;
 - b. 1997 closed 0.7 of a mile at Keystone Dr. -
 - c. 1998 closed 0.7 of a mile at Keystone Dr.
4. From July 1 to August 15 there are 23 sections closed to fishing by this plan. These closures represent approximately 15 miles of closed areas out of a total of 170 miles of river banks.

UCI Personal Use Fishery Management Plan

This plan was first passed under subsistence regulations in 1991 authorizing both dip net and set gillnet fisheries throughout most of upper Cook Inlet and was conducted under subsistence regulations for 1991, 1992 and 1994, it was conducted under personal use regulations in 1993, 1995 and 1996 through 1998. In 1996 the gillnet fishery was reduced to the Kasilof River terminus and dip net opportunities were increased in the Kenai and Kasilof rivers and in Fish Creek as follows;

1. Provides for personal use fisheries by permit, with seasonal salmon harvest limits of 25 per head of household with an additional 10 per household member as follows;
 - a. Kasilof Gillnet;
 1. Open area for 1 mile on either side of the river mouth out to 1 mile from shore;
 2. Open from June 21 until closed by EO (generally 4 days);
 3. Open 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily;
 4. A single 60 foot net per permit, maximum 6 inch mesh and 45 meshes in depth;
 5. 100 feet separation between nets;
 - b. Kenai and Kasilof rivers dip net;
 1. Open July 10 to August 5, except in the Kenai River it closes on July 31 through the 2002 season under 5 AAC 21.357 for coho protection;
 2. Only one king salmon per household may be retained;
 3. In the Kenai River dip nets may be used to take salmon as follows;
 - a. From shore downstream of the Warren Ames Bridge;

- b. From boats upstream of the city dock to Warren Ames Bridge;
- 4. In the Kasilof River dip nets may be used from the markers on the Cook Inlet beaches to a marker 1 mile upstream of the river terminus;
- c. Fish Creek dip net;
 - 1. Open from July 10-31, from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., seven days per week;
 - 2. King salmon may not be retained;
 - 3. Open area is from stream terminus to ¼ mile above the Knik-Goose Bay Road.

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