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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON CHIGNIK FINFISH REGULATORY PROPOSALS

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

DECEMBER 5-6, 2013

Regional Information Report No. 4K13-12

The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, December 5-6, 2013 in Anchorage, Alaska and are prepared to assist the public and board. The stated staff comments should be considered preliminary and subject to change, if or when new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral testimony presented to the board.

ABSTRACT

This document contains Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff comments on Chignik Management Area finfish regulatory proposals. These comments were prepared by the department for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, December 5-6, 2013 in Anchorage, Alaska to assist the public and board. The stated staff comments should be considered preliminary and subject to change, if or when new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral testimony presented to the board.

Key words: Alaska Board of Fisheries, staff comments, subsistence, personal use, sport, commercial, regulatory proposals, finfish, salmon.

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SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENT POSITIONS

Proposal #	Dept. Position	Issue
38	N	Open commercial fishing in June in the Western District, excluding the Inner Castle Cape Subsection, concurrently with commercial fishing openings in Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts.
39	N	Change management plan to direct department to manage Perryville and Western districts based on abundance of pink, chum, and coho salmon in Stepovak and Shumagin Islands sections of Southeastern District, including closures in July through August.
40	S	Change "shall" to "may" relative to use of emergency orders.
41	S	Change seine specification for when seine has stopped fishing.
42	N	Increase purse and hand purse seine, and seine lead lengths allowed in Eastern, Central, Western, and Perryville districts.
43	O	Establish state-waters groundfish management plans for trawl vessels 58 feet and less in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas.
44	N/O	Establish state-waters walleye pollock fisheries in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas for vessels 58 feet and less.
45	N	Require 100% observer coverage for trawl vessels targeting groundfish in state waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Chignik management areas.
368	S	Change the date agenda change requests (ACRs) are due.

Note: N = Neutral
S = Support
O = Oppose

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 15.357. Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Chignik Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would open the Western District of the Chignik Management Area (CMA) to commercial salmon fishing concurrently with the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts during June and early July, and directs the department to manage those waters similarly to the Eastern District.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan*, 5 AAC 09.357 (e), states that prior to July 6, the Western District (excluding the Inner Castle Cape Subsection) may open to commercial salmon fishing for no more than two fishing periods of up to 48 hours each, with a closure for a minimum of 48 hours between fishing periods. From July 6 until the end of the salmon fishing season, the Western District is managed based on the department's evaluation of local pink, chum, and coho salmon and the escapement objectives of Chignik late-run sockeye salmon.

Prior to July 6, the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts may open and close concurrently to commercial salmon fishing, depending on achievement of early-run sockeye salmon escapement objectives, except that from approximately June 26–July 8, the Eastern District may close to commercial salmon fishing as the department begins to assess the sockeye salmon late run.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? If adopted, the Western District would open concurrently with the Chignik Bay, Central, and Eastern districts during June and early July, which would greatly increase the area open to commercial salmon fishing. Increased fishing time in the Western District would increase harvest of sockeye salmon within that district, although it is unknown what the increase would be. This proposal may disperse commercial fishing effort; however, this dispersion may increase harvest of Chignik-bound sockeye salmon before they arrive in the Chignik Bay District.

BACKGROUND: Historically, Western District (Figure 38-1) remained closed to commercial salmon fishing during June and early July when Chignik early-run sockeye salmon transit the district. Since 1970, post-June fisheries in the Western District have accounted for an average of 2% of the total CMA sockeye salmon harvest.

In 2008, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) adopted a proposal allowing up to two 48-hour fishing periods, separated by at least 48 hours, in the Western District from June 1 to July 5. The intent of this proposal was to increase the area open to commercial salmon fishing to target Chignik-bound early-run sockeye salmon. In 2011, the board removed the sunset clause and the two 48-hour fishing periods became permanent. At that time, reliable salmon stock identification information was not available in the Western District during June. As a result, the department did not know the full effects of the proposal on local or adjacent salmon stocks, although no management concerns with the two 48-hour

fishing periods were noted by the department for the 2008, 2009, and 2010 commercial salmon seasons.

In the fall of 2012, the results of the 2006–2008 Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program (WASSIP) were released. The results of the WASSIP study indicated that harvests in the Western and Perryville districts were dominated by different reporting groups from 2006 through 2008; despite variable numbers of sockeye salmon harvested, the harvest rate of sockeye salmon bound for Chignik remained relatively stable (tables 38-1 and 38-2). Samples for the time period that pertain to adoption of this proposal were acquired in only one year, 2008, after the board first approved the two 48-hour June fishing periods. In that year, 20,420 sockeye salmon were harvested in late June, with 49% bound for the Chignik River watershed and the majority of the remaining fish bound for Bristol Bay (36%) and to regions east of the WASSIP study area (10%;Table 38-3). In the Western and Perryville districts, harvest rates, or the fractional harvest of a region's total run, on stocks bound for areas outside of Chignik, were well below 1% for all reporting groups, except for South Peninsula (3.9%) in 2008, in all years and time periods covered by the WASSIP study (Table 38-2). The department does not have reliable salmon stock identification information for the time period from June 1 through June 24.

Western District catch per unit effort data in June may be of little value in managing the sockeye salmon run bound for the Chignik River watershed since Western District harvests in June may be composed of a relatively high percentage of fish bound for other regions.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. This proposal is unlikely to create any biological or management concerns as the department would still manage Chignik sockeye salmon based on escapement objectives.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

Table 38-1.–WASSIP estimates of regional reporting group-specific sockeye salmon harvest, in numbers of fish and percent of the total sockeye salmon harvest, in the Western and Perryville districts for all strata, by year, 2006–2008.

	2006		2007		2008	
Region	Harvest	% of Total	Harvest	% Total	Harvest	% of Total
Norton Sound	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Kuskokwim Bay	0	0%	2,179	2%	1,233	2%
Bristol Bay	430	1%	10,218	8%	22,410	30%
North Peninsula	2	0%	2,892	2%	5,096	7%
South Peninsula	0	0%	0	0%	8,440	11%
East of WASSIP	22,219	32%	34,620	29%	9,934	13%
Chignik	46,918	67%	70,397	59%	27,740	37%
Total	69,569	100%	120,306	100%	74,853	100%

Table 38-2.–WASSIP estimates of regional reporting group sockeye salmon harvest rate in the Western District fishery, 2006–2008.

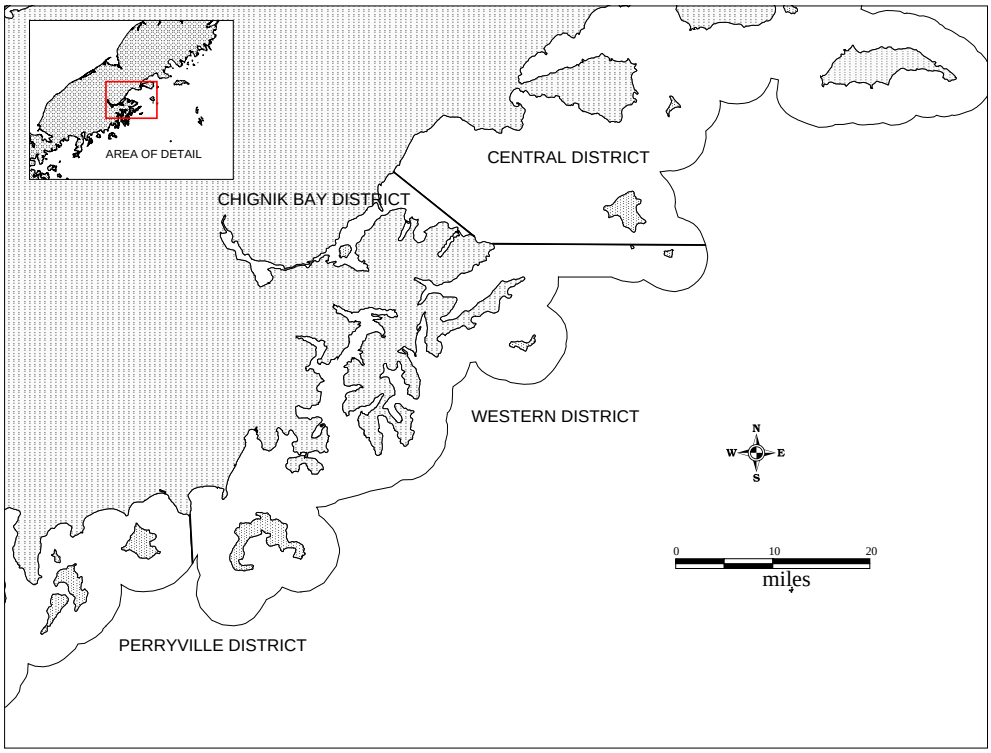
	2006	2007	2008
Region	Harvest Rate	Harvest Rate	Harvest Rate
Norton Sound	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kuskokwim Bay	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Bristol Bay	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
North Peninsula	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
South Peninsula	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%
Chignik	2.0%	4.3%	1.8%

Note: Harvest rate for East of WASSIP were not calculated because it was not part of the WASSIP plan.

Table 38-3.–WASSIP estimates of regional reporting group-specific sockeye salmon harvest, in numbers of fish and percent of the total sockeye salmon harvest, in the Western District in June 2008.

	June 24–June 30	
Regional Reporting Group	Harvest	% of Total
Norton Sound	0	0%
Kuskokwim Bay	773	4%
Bristol Bay	7,269	36%
North Peninsula	0	0%
South Peninsula	336	2%
East of WASSIP	1,960	10%
Chignik	10,082	49%
Total	20,420	100%

Figure 38-1.–Map showing the location of the Western District in the Chignik Management Area.



PROPOSAL 39 – 5 AAC 15.357. Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Jack R. Foster Jr. and Amy M. Foster.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? From July 9 through September 30, this proposal would direct the department to manage the Western and Perryville districts depending on pink, chum, and coho salmon escapements in the Stepovak Bay and Shumagin Islands sections of the Southeastern District of the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands Management Area (Area M).

Additionally, this proposal would require a 48-hour commercial salmon fishing closure within a seven-day period regardless of the department's evaluation of local pink, chum, and coho salmon stocks in either the Southeastern District of Area M or the Western and Perryville districts in the Chignik Management Area (CMA).

It is not entirely clear how this proposal would direct the department to manage the Perryville and Western district salmon stocks in the event of low local runs when the Stepovak Bay and Shumagin Islands areas experience high local runs.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From July 6 until approximately July 15, fishing periods in the Western and Perryville districts are predominately based on late-run sockeye salmon escapement in the Chignik River. From July 15 until the end of the commercial salmon season, these areas are managed primarily on pink and chum salmon harvest data and aerial survey escapement estimates in local streams, in addition to Chignik River late-run sockeye salmon escapement objectives. Beginning approximately August 20, fishing periods in the Western and Perryville districts are also based on local coho salmon, in addition to local pink and chum salmon, as well as escapement objectives for Chignik late-run sockeye salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? If adopted, it would significantly alter management for local pink and chum salmon stocks in the Western and Perryville districts (Figure 39-1). The majority of the Western District (statistical areas 273-74, 273-80, and 273-90) and the entire Perryville District would open and close to commercial salmon fishing depending on pink, chum, and coho salmon escapements in the Stepovak Bay and Shumagin Islands areas of Area M (Figure 39-2). If Area M pink, chum, and/or coho salmon escapements are low, this proposal may result in a significant loss in harvest opportunities on local stocks returning to Western and Perryville district streams as well as pink salmon escapements well above the escapement goal. Conversely, if Area M pink, chum, and/or coho escapements are high, this proposal may allow commercial fishing on a low abundance of local salmon stocks in the Western and Perryville districts.

BACKGROUND: Pink salmon harvests in the Western and Perryville districts have ranged from 59,405 fish to 1,338,406 fish for the post-Chignik cooperative fishery (co-op) years that best approximate current and future fishing effort in these districts (2008–2013; Table 39-1). Chum salmon harvests have ranged from 15,764 to 206,470 fish during this time period.

Pink salmon index stream escapements in the Western and Perryville districts have ranged from 41,400 fish to 272,660 fish, and chum salmon index stream escapements have ranged from 44,700 to 217,200 fish during the post-co-op years, 2008–2013 (Table 39-1). The CMA areawide (including Chignik Bay, and Central and Eastern districts) pink salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 200,000–500,000 fish in even years and 500,000–800,000 fish in odd years. The CMA lower-bound SEG for chum salmon is 57,500 fish.

In Area M, Stepovak Bay is managed under the *Southeastern District Mainland (SEDM) Salmon Management Plan*. From July 6 until July 25, fishing periods in the majority of Stepovak Bay are based on the strength of the Chignik River sockeye salmon run, while the remaining Northwest Stepovak Section of Stepovak Bay is managed based on run strength of local sockeye salmon returning to Orzinski Lake. From July 26 through October 31, commercial fishing periods in Stepovak Bay are based on the department's evaluation of local pink, chum, and coho salmon stocks, except that the fishery will be closed for at least one 36-hour period within a seven-day period.

The Shumagin Islands Section of Area M is managed under the *Post-June Salmon Management Plan* during the timeframe described in this proposal. From July 6 through July 31, fishing opportunity in the majority of the Shumagin Islands Section consists of a 33-hour fishing period, followed by a 63-hour closure, followed by six 36-hour fishing periods separated by 60-hour closures (5 AAC 09.366(c)). Additional fishing opportunity may be allowed in a small area of the Shumagin Island Section, the Zachary Bay terminal harvest area, based on the department's evaluation of local salmon stocks returning to Zachary Bay.

From August 1 until August 31, in the Shumagin Islands Section, fishing periods are based on the strength of local sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon. From September 1 through October 31, these areas are primarily based on coho salmon abundance, although late pink and chum salmon run strengths may be considered when determining fishing time.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of the proposal.

However, the department is **OPPOSED** to aspects of this proposal that could create management implications as the department attempts to maintain pink salmon escapements within the bounds of the SEG. If this proposal is adopted as written, it may require the department to announce fishing periods in the Western and Perryville districts when local pink and chum salmon stocks are in low abundance, and conversely, fishing periods may not be allowed when local pink and chum salmon are in high abundance resulting in escapement far in excess of CMA escapement goals.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

Table 39-1.–Western and Perryville district days open to commercial salmon fishing, pink and chum salmon harvest July 6 through end of season, and pink and chum escapement estimates, by year, 2008–2013.

	Days Open		Pink		Chum	
Year	July 6-31	August	Harvest	Escapement	Harvest	Escapement
2008	12	28	1,338,406	272,660	90,393	104,665
2009	16	24	481,719	246,550	72,231	44,700
2010	15	23	227,111	41,400	206,470	98,600
2011	8	23	577,900	226,400	87,362	64,500
2012	6	27	59,405	71,400	36,484	71,800
2013	5	19	360,055	172,000	15,764	217,200

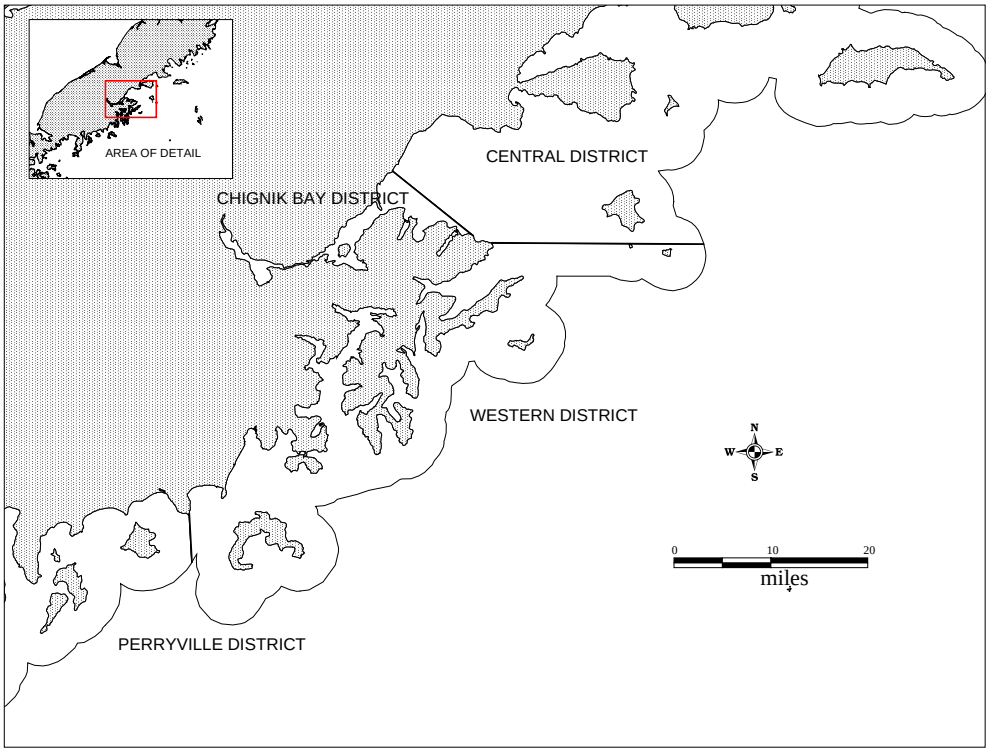


Figure 39-1.–Map of the Western and Perryville districts in the Chignik Management Area.

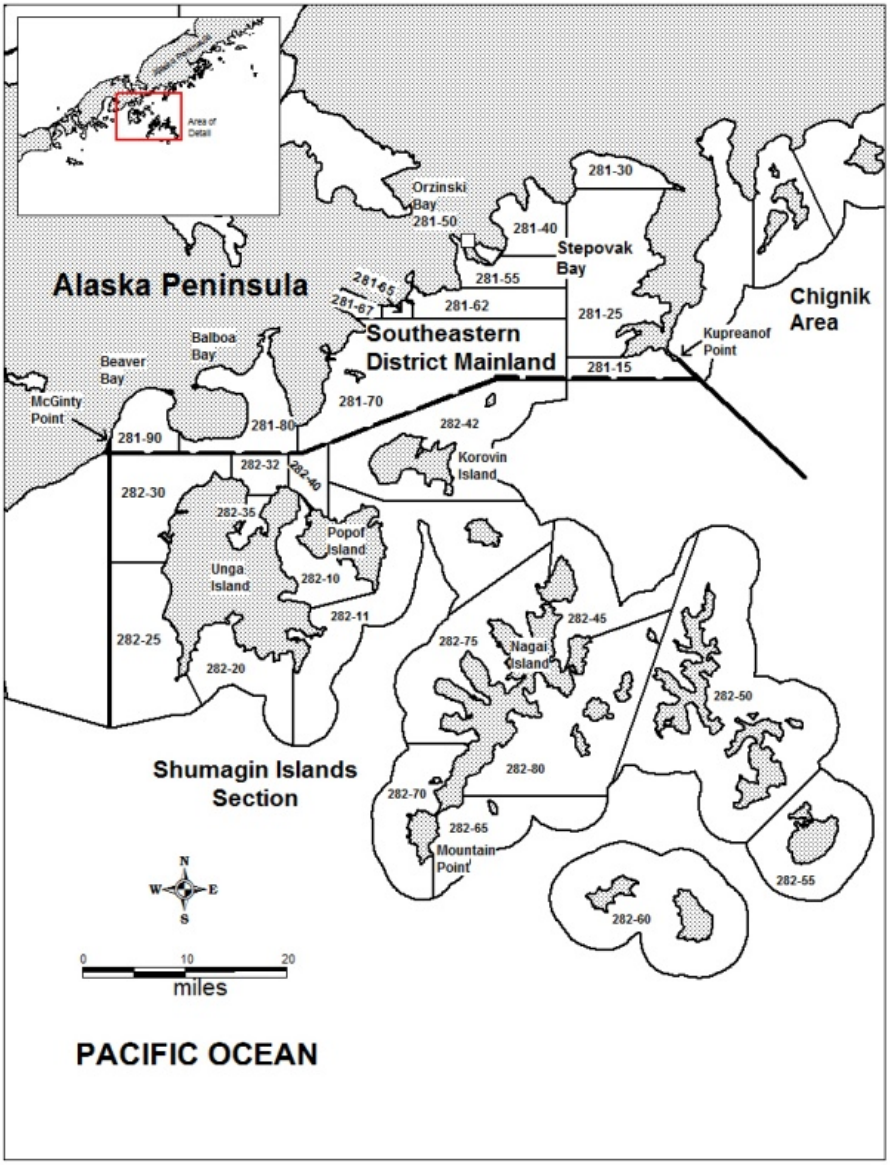


Figure 39-2.–Map of the Stepovak Bay and Shumagin Islands in the Alaska Peninsula Management Area.

PROPOSAL 40 – 5 AAC 15.357. Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal seeks to align regulatory language with Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) intent concerning the first commercial salmon fishing period of the season in the Chignik Management Area (CMA). The CMA can be opened to commercial salmon fishing when at least 20,000 sockeye salmon have escaped or are expected to escape, and escapement objectives have been or are expected to be met. By replacing "shall" with "may", the department would have the flexibility to keep the commercial salmon fishery closed if the sockeye salmon early run appears to be weak, even if the 20,000 fish threshold has been met.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulatory language (5 AAC 15.357(b)(1)) states that the commissioner shall open, by emergency order (EO), the commercial salmon fishery when 20,000 sockeye salmon have escaped into the Chignik River; however, if the department determines that a strong buildup of sockeye salmon exists in Chignik Lagoon and that 20,000 sockeye salmon will escape into the Chignik River, the commissioner may open, by EO, the commercial salmon fishery before 20,000 sockeye salmon have escaped into the Chignik River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? The Chignik commercial salmon fishery would be managed so that at least 20,000 sockeye salmon are available for subsistence uses and that escapement objectives would also be met, or expected to be met, prior to the first commercial salmon fishery period of the season.

BACKGROUND: Prior to the Chignik cooperative (co-op) fishery (2002–2005), a set of criteria were in place allowing the fishery to open if the June 12 escapement objective of 40,000 fish was met. If the June 12 escapement objective was not met, the fishery would remain closed until a subsequent escapement objective was met. These objectives are used to assure escapement throughout the course of the run based on historical run timing. With the advent of the Chignik co-op fishery, there were concerns that the fleet(s) would not be able to harvest enough fish early in the season and excess escapement would result. In December 2002, the board changed the opening criteria to reflect these concerns by allowing the fishery to open before the June 12 escapement objective of 40,000 fish was met. In 2003 and 2004, the co-op fishery opened up to commercial salmon fishing well before the Chignik weir escapement estimate reached 40,000 fish. In November 2004, the board modified the opening criteria in response to concerns from subsistence users who stated that they were unable to harvest enough salmon for subsistence uses after the June 12 escapement of at least 40,000 fish was removed from regulation. The board modified the language of the *Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan* to begin commercial salmon fishing when at least 20,000 sockeye salmon had passed the Chignik weir or were expected to pass the weir. After the Chignik co-op fishery was ended by court action, the intent of regulatory language was to reflect fishery management similar to the years prior to the co-op. The regulatory language with "shall" that resulted from the November 2004 Chignik board meeting ensures that

sockeye salmon are available for subsistence uses, but does not reflect the board's intent of managing for interim escapement objectives and the early-run sockeye salmon escapement goal.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

PROPOSAL 41 – 5 AAC 15.332. Seine specifications and operations.

PROPOSED BY: Axel Kopun.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Adoption of this proposal would amend the legal definition of when a commercial seine has ceased to fish in the Chignik Management Area (CMA). The proposed change would add the definition that a purse seine has stopped fishing when both ends of the seine, excluding tow lines or straps, are attached to the fishing vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The statewide salmon fishery seine specifications and operations regulation, 5 AAC 39.260(c), states that a purse seine is considered to have ceased fishing when all the rings are out of the water.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? Adoption of this proposal would eliminate an inconsistency in the definition of when a purse seine has stopped fishing between CMA salmon and herring purse seine fisheries. This change is not expected to significantly alter the catching power of a purse seine in the CMA. It may allow a purse seine fisherman to make and complete a set nearer to a fishery closing time and potentially increase the number of sets made in a season.

BACKGROUND: Since the early 1960s, *Seine specifications and operations* (5 AAC 39.260(c)) for commercial salmon fisheries have specified that a purse seine has ceased fishing when all the rings are aboard the vessel. In 1984, commercial herring fishery regulations were amended to state that purse and hand purse seine gear have stopped fishing when both ends of the seine are attached to the fishing vessel (5 AAC 27.050(f)). No similar regulation change was made for salmon seine fisheries. In 2005, a department-submitted proposal was adopted to align the definition between Area K salmon and herring fisheries to define that a seine has ceased fishing when both ends of the seine are attached to the fishing vessel.

At that time, department justifications for the regulatory change included: 1) the change would not significantly alter catching power of the seine fleet, 2) strong area tides may pull legally fishing vessels into closed waters before they are able to bring the rings aboard, and 3) the new definition would assist enforcement.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal since there would be no significant increase in catching power that would affect management of the fishery, the proposal would assist in enforcement, and would align the definition between salmon and herring fisheries to define that a seine has ceased fishing when both ends of the seine are attached to the fishing vessel.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

PROPOSAL 42 – 5 AAC 15.332. Seine specifications and operation.

PROPOSED BY: Axel Kopun.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would increase maximum purse seine and hand purse seine lengths to 250 fathoms, and the maximum lead length to 100 fathoms, in the Eastern, Central, Western, and Perryville districts of the Chignik Management Area (CMA). The maximum aggregate length of seines and leads would be 250 fathoms.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Eastern, Central, Western, and Perryville districts, purse seines and hand purse seines may not be less than 100 fathoms or more than 225 fathoms in length. Additionally, leads may be no more than 75 fathoms, with an aggregate seine and lead maximum length of 225 fathoms.

In the Chignik Bay District of the CMA, purse seines and hand purse seines may not be less than 100 fathoms or more than 125 fathoms in length.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF THE PROPSAL IF ADOPTED? This proposal would allow fishermen in Eastern, Central, Western, and Perryville districts (the outside districts of the CMA) to use longer purse seines. Longer seine gear may result in a higher catch per unit effort for fishermen with vessels equipped to fish waters outside of Chignik Bay District. Increasing seine length for outside districts may result in conflicts with fishermen in Chignik Bay District who must wait for sockeye salmon to arrive to the Chignik Lagoon from outside districts. In addition to higher catch rates of targeted adult salmon, the incidental harvest of immature salmon may increase as well.

BACKGROUND: The regulation limiting seine length to 225 fathoms in Eastern, Central, Western, and Perryville districts was implemented prior to 1970. The maximum seine length of 125 fathoms in Chignik Bay District is necessary due to the higher concentration of fishing effort in the relatively small area of Chignik Lagoon.

This proposal cites a seine length disadvantage with adjacent management areas of Area K (Kodiak) and Area M (Alaska Peninsula). Area K purse seine length may be no less than 100 fathoms or no more than 200 fathoms in length (Table 42-1). Chignik Management Area permit holders may fish gear with longer seine (225 fathoms) than Area K. However, if an Area K permit holder uses a lead with seine gear, the aggregate length of seine plus lead may be up to 250 fathoms.

Area M purse seines may not be less than 100 fathoms or more than 250 fathoms in length. Area M allows use of a lead no less than 50 fathoms or more than 150 fathoms in length, in addition to the maximum seine length of 250 fathoms (Table 42-1). The maximum aggregate length of seine and lead is 150 to 400 fathoms; however, leads are rarely used by seine fishermen in Area M.

The number of active commercial salmon fishing permits in the CMA has steadily increased since the Chignik cooperative fishery (co-op) disbanded prior to the 2006 fishing season. Since the co-op, active permits in the CMA have ranged from a low of 48 in 2006 to a high of 76 in 2013 (Table 42-2).

Sockeye salmon harvest contributes the largest portion of exvessel value in the CMA, with most sockeye salmon harvested in Chignik Bay District. Since 2006, the percentage of CMA sockeye salmon harvested in Chignik Bay District has ranged from a high of 80% (2006) to as low as 61% (2010; Table 42-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of the proposal.

If adopted, this proposal may increase sockeye salmon harvest outside of Chignik Bay District and limit harvest opportunities for fishermen who traditionally fish within Chignik Lagoon. Furthermore, there is the potential for an increase in immature salmon harvests, resulting in localized fishing closures, although adoption of this proposal is not likely to affect the way the department currently manages the CMA fishery.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

Table 42-1.–Current legal seine, lead, and aggregate seine plus lead length, in fathoms, for Chignik, Kodiak (Area K), and Alaska Peninsula (Area M) management areas.

Management Area	Purse Seine Length	Lead Length	Aggregate Length
Chignik[a]	100-225	0-75	100-225
Kodiak	100-200	0-100	100-250
Alaska Peninsula	100-250	50-150	150-400

[a] Excluding Chignik Bay District

Table 42-2.–Number of total active permits, number of Chignik Bay permits making deliveries, sockeye salmon harvest in number of fish, and percent of total CMA sockeye salmon harvest; outside districts' (Central, Eastern, Western, and Perryville districts) number of permits making deliveries and sockeye salmon harvest, in number of fish, 2006–2013.

	Active	Chignik Bay			Outside Districts[a]	
Year	Permits	Permits	Sockeye	% of CMA harvest	Permits	Sockeye
2006	48	45	719,841	80%	15	175,960
2007	55	47	540,104	65%	20	289,006
2008	54	48	521,860	77%	37	160,244
2009	55	48	868,126	73%	32	328,199
2010	65	57	839,516	61%	45	532,751
2011	64	57	1,643,218	66%	46	846,907
2012	69	58	1,120,309	62%	44	677,210
2013	76	62	1,597,218	67%	45	793,759
Average	61	53	981,274	71%	36	475,505

[a] Central, Eastern, Western, and Perryville districts.

PROPOSAL 43 – 5 AAC 28.36X. Cook Inlet State-Waters Groundfish Trawl Management Plan; 5 AAC 28.46X. Kodiak Area State-Waters Groundfish Trawl Management Plan; and 5 AAC 28.53X. Chignik Area State-Waters Groundfish Trawl Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Matt Hegge.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create state-waters (0–3 nautical miles) management plans for all groundfish species in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik management areas for nonpelagic trawl vessels less than or equal to 58 feet in length. Management plans would be based on 25% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for groundfish species abundance in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA).

State-waters management plans would establish prohibited species caps, and require 100% observer coverage paid for by the vessel. Groundfish trawl fisheries would open January 20 with a vessel landing limit of 150,000 pounds total of all groundfish species and a time period of no less than 72 hours between landings. Harvest of Pacific cod would be limited to no more than 100,000 pounds per landing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Except for a seasonal nonpelagic trawl opening on the westside of Kodiak and Afognak islands (Figure 43-1), all other state waters in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik, management areas are closed to nonpelagic trawl gear. The Kodiak and Chignik management areas are closed under 5 AAC 39.164, whereas the Cook Inlet management area is closed under 5 AAC 28.330. In the area open to nonpelagic trawl gear in the Kodiak Area, the state opens a parallel fishery concurrent to the adjacent federal fishery and adopts federal area closures, bycatch limits, and inseason management actions by emergency order, 5 AAC 28.086, *Parallel groundfish fishery emergency order authority*.

Two other regulations address nonpelagic trawl gear in state waters. *Bottom Trawl Fisheries Management Plan* (5 AAC 39.163), was adopted in 1984 based on concerns for crab and halibut bycatch during groundfish fisheries. When adopted, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) determined onboard observers provided the only effective means of collecting information essential to management of certain nonpelagic trawl fisheries. The plan does not specifically close or prohibit nonpelagic trawl gear inside state waters, but mandates onboard observer coverage for vessels operating within certain state waters where nonpelagic trawling is allowed. Because very limited nonpelagic trawl fisheries occur in state waters and because the state does not have an observer program, observer coverage during parallel fisheries has been determined by federal rules.

Non Pelagic Trawl Gear Restrictions (5 AAC 39.164), was initially adopted in 1986 in response to concerns regarding declining king crab stocks. When adopted, the regulation closed bays around Kodiak Island either year-round or on a seasonal basis. In 1999, the regulation was amended and seasonal closures were extended year-round. Closed waters increased to include previously open state waters in the Kodiak and Chignik management areas, with the exception of a seasonal opening in state waters along the westside of Kodiak and Afognak islands, which remain open to nonpelagic trawl gear on a seasonal basis (5 AAC 28.410 (c); Figure 43-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The State of Alaska would prosecute nonpelagic groundfish trawl fisheries independently of federal trawl fisheries. The state-waters guideline harvest levels (GHL) would be based on 25% of the CGOA ABC for each groundfish species or species complex. The proposal would restrict 25% of the CGOA groundfish ABCs to vessels 58 feet in length or less. Currently, most nonpelagic trawl vessels operating in the CGOA exceed 58 feet in length. Reduced harvest levels and vessel size restrictions may result in smaller harvests, shorter seasons, and increased competition among existing federal/parallel trawl participants.

In contrast, state-waters nonpelagic trawl fisheries would provide harvest opportunity for vessels eligible to participate in those fisheries. Federal trawl fisheries are limited-access fisheries; the department interprets that the proposed state-waters trawl fisheries would be open-access fisheries, which may provide opportunity for new entrants into the fishery.

Currently 25% of the CGOA Pacific cod ABC is apportioned to the State of Alaska in support of state-waters Pacific cod pot and jig fisheries in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas. A separate state-waters Pacific cod nonpelagic trawl fishery would increase the total amount of Pacific cod ABC allocated to state-waters fisheries.

Separate bycatch caps for halibut, king salmon, and crab species would be established for the state-waters nonpelagic trawl fisheries; however, the proposal does not provide specific recommendations for the allowable bycatch limits that would apply to the state-waters nonpelagic trawl fisheries. This proposal would require 100% observer coverage for all nonpelagic trawl vessels participating in the proposed state-waters fishery; however, the state does not have a groundfish observer program.

BACKGROUND: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) establishes most groundfish harvest levels in waters off Alaska, in addition to specifying prohibited species catch limits and observer coverage requirements. For the 2013 fisheries, NMFS established 17 unique ABCs for groundfish species specific to the CGOA. Many of the established ABCs were for groundfish species that are 1) not commonly targeted with nonpelagic trawl gear (walleye pollock) or 2) do not occur inside state waters in large abundance (sablefish, deepwater flatfish, and most rockfish species). Based on department crab and groundfish surveys, several commercially important groundfish species occur inside state waters in quantities that may support commercial nonpelagic trawl fisheries. These species include Pacific cod, flathead sole, rock sole, yellowfin sole, arrowtooth flounder, big skate, and longnose skate. The 2013 CGOA ABCs for these seven species totaled approximately 532 million pounds. As proposed, the state-waters GHLs for these species would total 133 million pounds based on 25% of their respective ABCs. Determining GHLs would require annual coordination between the state and federal governments.

Since 2000, state waters in the Chignik and Cook Inlet areas have been closed to nonpelagic trawl gear. Walleye pollock, arrowtooth flounder, and rock sole were the dominant species harvested by nonpelagic trawl gear in state waters of the Kodiak Area from 2000–2012 (Table 43-1).

Federally-permitted nonpelagic trawl vessels are subject to federal observer program requirements. Annually, NMFS-certified observers are deployed across most federal groundfish and halibut fisheries based on management and conservation needs. Vessels subject to observer requirements are placed into one of two observer coverage categories: 1) full coverage category, or 2) partial coverage category. Most trawl catcher vessels in the Gulf of Alaska are placed into the partial coverage category, resulting in a level of observer coverage less than 100%. Funding associated with deploying federal observers on vessels in the partial coverage category is provided through annual fees based on the exvessel value of groundfish and halibut retained during those fisheries.

Establishing a state groundfish observer program would be duplicative to the federal groundfish observer program for transboundary groundfish species. A state groundfish observer program would require a substantial investment in time and resources for the state of Alaska. Because NMFS provides stock assessment for most groundfish, maintaining a compatible state-waters observer program with data collected by the NMFS observer program would be essential to provide the same quality and type of information in order to be used for both catch accounting and stock assessment. In addition to establishing a state groundfish observer program, the department would need additional groundfish management staff to develop and manage new state-waters nonpelagic trawl fisheries.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) recently adopted Gulf of Alaska (GOA) king salmon prohibited species bycatch caps (PSC) for federal (pelagic and nonpelagic) trawl fisheries and reduced the GOA halibut PSC caps for trawl and longline fisheries. Currently, federal PSC caps are apportioned based on season, fishery target species, and gear/processing sector type. When the apportioned PSC cap is achieved, the directed fishing season is closed for the applicable federal fishing sector.

The NPFMC is currently considering a new management program for federal GOA trawl vessels (catcher vessels and catcher processors) aimed at reducing bycatch of nontarget species, including Pacific halibut and king salmon. This action is ongoing; in October 2013, the NPFMC proposed evaluation of a cooperative program which would allocate pollock, Pacific cod, halibut PSC, and king salmon PSC in federal waters. The initial design proposed in October includes 100% observer coverage on all trawl catcher vessels (trawl catcher processors already have at least 100% coverage). This action is intended to solicit and focus public input prior to the NPFMC determining alternatives for a formal analysis. It is not possible to project when final action on such a program would occur, but it is likely at least 18 months to two years away. The NPFMC has specifically noted that the interrelationships between state-waters, parallel, and federal fisheries management programs will be considered as trawl bycatch management measures are developed, and will necessitate coordination with the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal. The department supports closure of state waters included in this proposal to nonpelagic trawl gear to protect nearshore habitat and fishery resources.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal would result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery if fishery participants are required to pay for observers. Observer fees vary depending on the observer provider; however, observer coverage may cost vessel operators $450 per day.

Table 43-1.–Nonpelagic trawl harvest of the top five species in waters of the Kodiak area open to nonpelagic trawl gear, 2000–2012.

Kodiak	**Pounds**	**Chignik**	**Cook Inlet**
Walleye Pollock	3,315,314		
Arrowtooth Flounder	2,084,378		
Rock Sole	1,357,237	**Closed to nonpelagic trawl gear**	
Pacific cod	604,024		
Flathead Sole	586,295		

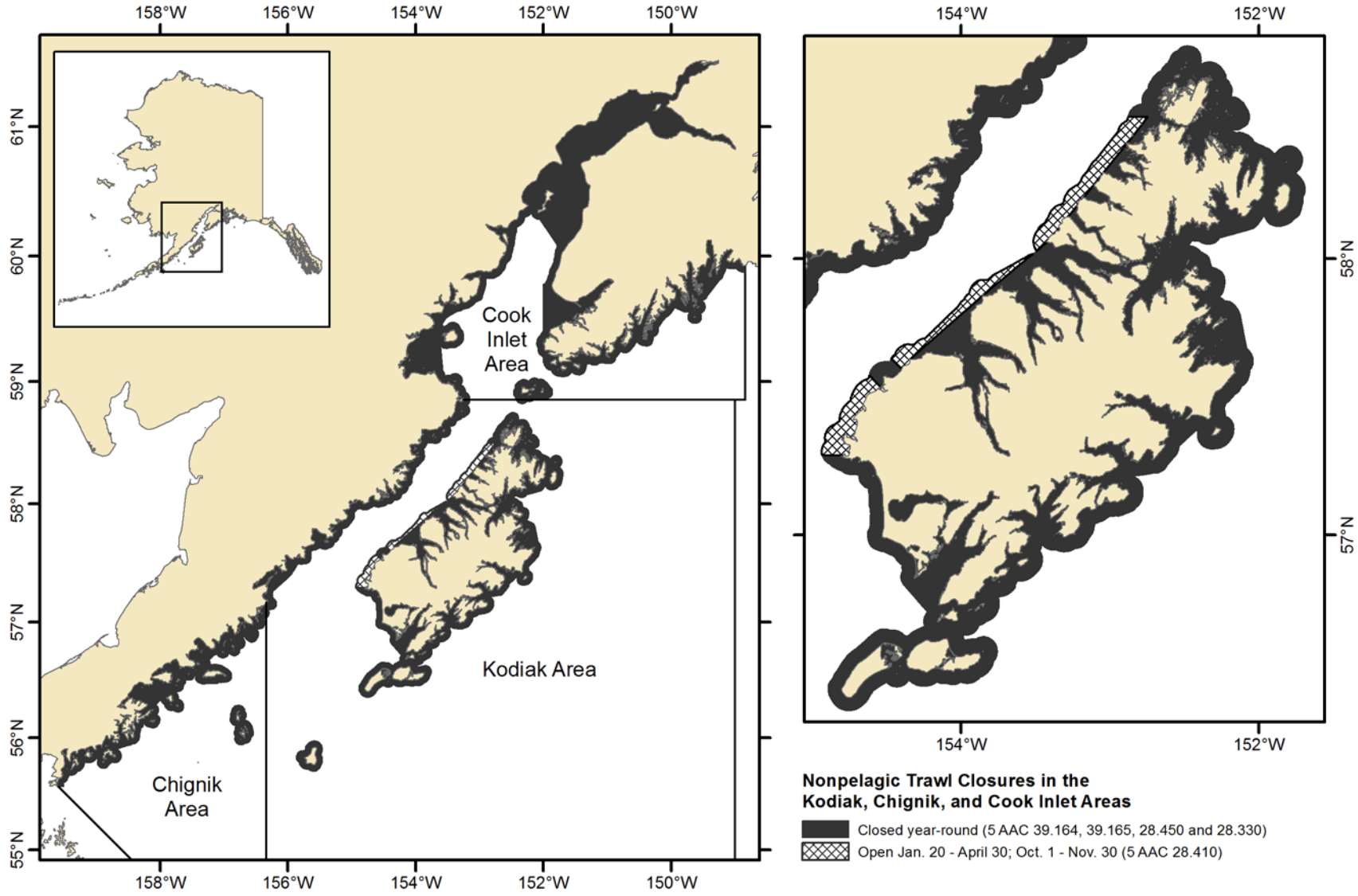


Figure 43-1.–Nonpelagic trawl gear restrictions in state-waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas.

PROPOSAL 44 – 5 AAC 28.36X. Cook Inlet Area Pollock Management Plan; 5 AAC 28.46X. Kodiak Area Pollock Management Plan and 5 AAC 28.53X. Chignik Area Pollock Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Matt Hegge.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create state-waters (0–3 nautical miles; nmi) walleye pollock fisheries in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas for vessels less than or equal to 58 feet in overall length using pelagic trawl, nonpelagic trawl, seine, or jig gear. This proposal would also require 100% observer coverage for all trawl vessels, paid for by the vessel, and establish a vessel landing limit of 150,000 pounds with a time period of no less than 48 hours between landings.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Walleye pollock fisheries in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas are managed as parallel fisheries (5 AAC 28.086). During parallel fisheries, the state opens a fishery from 0–3 nmi offshore concurrent to adjacent federal walleye pollock fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (3–200 nmi) and adopts by emergency order most federal rules, including seasons, area closures, bycatch limits, and management actions.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The State of Alaska would prosecute state-waters walleye pollock fisheries in the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas independently of federal walleye pollock fisheries. The guideline harvest level (GHL) would be based on 25% of the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) areas 620 and 630 walleye pollock acceptable biological catch (ABC).

Developing state-waters walleye pollock fisheries would result in reduction in catch for federal/parallel participants. The proposal would reserve 25% of the CGOA walleye pollock ABCs in areas 620 and 630 for vessels 58 feet in length or less in state waters. Currently, most vessels targeting walleye pollock in the CGOA exceed 58 feet in length. Reduced harvest levels and vessel size restrictions may result in smaller harvests, shorter seasons, and increased competition among existing federal/parallel trawl participants.

This proposal would require 100% observer coverage for trawl vessels participating in the proposed state-waters fishery; however, the state does not have a groundfish observer program.

BACKGROUND: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) is currently considering a new management program for federal Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl vessels (catcher vessels and catcher processors) aimed at reducing bycatch of non-target species including Pacific halibut and king salmon. This action is ongoing; in October 2013, the NPFMC proposed a preliminary program design based on a voluntary cooperative structure that would allocate pollock, Pacific cod, halibut prohibited species catch (PSC), and king salmon PSC in federal waters to cooperatives. This action is intended to solicit and focus public input prior to the NPFMC determining alternatives for a formal analysis. The initial design proposed in October includes 100% observer coverage on all trawl catcher vessels (trawl catcher processors already have at least 100% coverage). It is not possible to project when final action on such a program would occur, but it is likely at least 18 months to two years away. The NPFMC has specifically

noted that the interrelationships between state-waters, parallel, and federal fisheries management programs will be considered as trawl bycatch management measures are developed, and will necessitate coordination with the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board).

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) annually establishes separate walleye pollock ABCs for areas 620 and 630 in the CGOA (Figure 44-1). The Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas overlap with federal CGOA areas 620 and 630, such that state waters of the Cook Inlet area are entirely within area 630; Kodiak Area state waters are within both areas 620 and a portion of 630, and state waters of the Chignik Area, mostly within area 620 (Figure 44-1). The 2012 walleye pollock ABCs in Areas 620 and 630 totaled approximately 159 million pounds (Area 620 = 101 million pounds; Area 630 = 58 million pounds). The proposed GHL for the state-waters fisheries would total approximately 40 million pounds based on 25% of the combined areas 620 and 630 pollock ABCs.

From 2003 to 2012, walleye pollock harvested during the parallel fishery in federal Area 620 averaged approximately 19% of the walleye pollock ABC; ranging from 5% in 2005 to 35% in 2004 (Table 44-1). Parallel harvest within Area 630 averaged approximately 33% of the walleye pollock ABC; ranging from 5% of the ABC in 2011, to 49% in 2005. The majority of the parallel fishery harvest occurred in the Kodiak Area (Table 44-2).

From 2003 to 2012, an average of six trawl vessels 58 feet in length or less participated in the Chignik Area parallel walleye pollock fishery and an average of two trawl vessels participated in the Kodiak Area parallel fishery (Table 44-3). In 2012 all vessels 58 feet in length participating in the Chignik and Kodiak parallel fisheries were federally permitted to fish in federal waters. Parallel harvest by trawl vessels 58 feet in length or less averaged approximately 1.5 million pounds annually in the Chignik and Kodiak areas from 2003 to 2012 (Table 44-3). No trawl vessels 58 feet in length or less have targeted walleye pollock in the Cook Inlet Area. In 2004, a single commissioner's permit was issued to a vessel greater than 58 feet to allow pelagic trawl harvest of walleye pollock in state waters of the Cook Inlet Area. Walleye pollock harvest by jig gear vessels is limited and harvest records indicate most walleye pollock is retained as bycatch during directed jig gear fisheries for Pacific cod. Seine gear is not an allowable gear type for walleye pollock; therefore, no harvest information is available.

Pacific cod are commonly harvested as bycatch or as a secondary target species during directed walleye pollock trawl fisheries. The Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas are currently allocated a combined 25% of the CGOA Pacific cod ABC in support of state-waters Pacific cod fisheries for vessels using pot and jig gear. If adopted, the department seeks guidance from the board regarding Pacific cod GHL allocation and catch accounting during state-waters walleye pollock fisheries. Additionally, the NPFMC recently adopted king salmon PSC bycatch caps for federal/parallel walleye pollock fisheries in the GOA, which were implemented in late 2012. The federal PSC caps are apportioned based on season, fishery target species, and gear/processing sector type. When the apportioned PSC cap is achieved, the directed fishing season is closed for the applicable federal fishing sector.

Federally-permitted pelagic trawl vessels are subject to federal observer program requirements. Annually, NMFS-certified observers are deployed across most federal groundfish and halibut fisheries based on management and conservation needs. Vessels subject to observer

requirements are placed into one of two observer coverage categories: 1) full coverage category or 2) partial coverage category. Most trawl catcher vessels in the GOA are placed into the partial coverage category, resulting in a level of observer coverage less than 100%. Funding associated with deploying federal observers on vessels in the partial coverage category is provided through annual fees based on the exvalue of groundfish and halibut retained during those fisheries.

Establishing a state groundfish observer program would be duplicative to the federal groundfish observer program for transboundary groundfish species. A state groundfish observer program would require a substantial investment in time and resources for the State of Alaska. Because NMFS provides stock assessment for most groundfish, maintaining a compatible state-waters observer program with data collected by the NMFS observer program would be essential to provide the same quality and type of information in order to be used for both catch accounting and stock assessment.

The state would need additional personnel to manage these walleye pollock fisheries. Additional personnel would be needed for management of open-access derby style fisheries, coordinating dockside sampling, reviewing and analyzing inseason and postseason harvest and bycatch data from observer program and maintaining databases of fishery performance and length/weight data.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. However, as previously stated in proposal 43, the department is **OPPOSED** to nonpelagic trawl gear in state waters to reduce bycatch and protect habitat. The department would need funding to implement these new fisheries.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal would result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery if fishery participants are required to pay for observers. Observer fees vary depending on the observer provider; however, observer coverage may cost vessel operators $450 per day.

Table 44-1.–Walleye pollock acceptable biological catch (ABC) and retained harvest during parallel fisheries in federal areas 620 and 630 by year, 2003–2012.

	Area 620			**Area 630**		
Year	Parallel Harvest (Pounds)	620 ABC (Pounds)	Parallel Harvest as % of ABC	Parallel Harvest (Pounds)	630 ABC (Pounds)	Parallel Harvest as % of ABC
2003	7,184,392	43,397,996	17%	9,430,035	22,793,593	41%
2004	20,573,987	58,400,453	35%	11,116,438	30,952,902	36%
2005	3,698,705	75,847,837	5%	20,106,754	41,266,126	49%
2006	9,009,723	67,223,353	13%	19,209,333	40,670,878	47%
2007	6,310,075	46,252,983	14%	12,688,622	32,738,646	39%
2008	12,044,715	42,286,866	28%	10,699,750	30,071,053	36%
2009	7,770,885	31,080,770	25%	11,179,782	24,378,717	46%
2010	17,202,527	61,938,873	28%	6,509,534	42,147,975	15%
2011	9,484,954	82,375,724	12%	2,201,175	44,610,539	5%
2012	18,638,681	100,989,353	18%	9,195,678	58,087,397	16%
Average	11,191,864	60,979,421	19%	11,233,710	36,771,783	33%

Note: Harvest excludes discards at-sea.

Table 44-2.–Total retained parallel walleye pollock harvest, by all gear types, in the Cook Inlet, Chignik, and Kodiak management areas, 2003–2012.

	Cook Inlet		Chignik		Kodiak			
Year	Harvest (Pounds)	Harvest as % of Area 630 ABC	Harvest (Pounds)	Harvest as % of Area 620 ABC	Area 630 Harvest (Pounds)	Harvest as % of Area 630 ABC	Area 620 Harvest (Pounds)	Harvest as % of Area 620 ABC
2003	CF	CF	100,968	0%	9,430,014	41%	7,083,424	16%
2004	342,305	1%	1,118,569	2%	10,774,133	35%	19,455,418	33%
2005	CF	CF	857,414	1%	20,106,655	49%	2,841,291	4%
2006	CF	CF	1,186,683	2%	19,209,320	47%	7,823,040	12%
2007	1,694	0%	76,421	0%	12,686,928	39%	6,233,653	13%
2008	CF	CF	169,459	0%	10,699,664	36%	11,875,256	28%
2009	5,269	0%	CF	CF	11,174,513	46%	7,770,787	25%
2010	CF	CF	175	0%	6,509,379	15%	17,202,351	28%
2011	5,761	0%	131,221	0%	2,195,415	5%	9,353,733	11%
2012	4,301	0%	5,406,273	5%	9,191,376	16%	13,232,408	13%
Average	71,866	0%	1,005,243	1%	11,197,740	33%	10,287,136	18%

CF = Confidential data

Note: Harvest excludes discards at-sea

Table 44-3.–Parallel walleye pollock harvest by pelagic and nonpelagic trawl vessels greater than 58 feet and less than or equal to 58 feet in the Chignik and Kodiak areas, 2003–2012.

	Chignik				Kodiak			
	Vessels less than or Equal to 58 Feet		Vessels Greater than 58 Feet		Vessels less than or Equal to 58 Feet		Vessels Greater than 58 Feet	
Year	Harvest (Pounds)	Vessel Count	Harvest (Pounds)	Vessel Count	Harvest (Pounds)	Vessel Count	Harvest (Pounds)	Vessel Count
2003	CF	2	CF	1	CF	1	16,319,568	33
2004	922,546	4	CF	2	0	0	30,208,945	38
2005	429,682	4	524,984	3	CF	2	22,605,699	36
2006	642,675	3	CF	2	CF	2	26,851,128	31
2007	CF	1	0	0	0	0	18,723,343	27
2008	CF	1	0	0	CF	1	22,394,257	32
2009	0	0	0	0	CF	1	18,584,399	30
2010	0	0	0	0	1,604,716	4	22,025,932	32
2011	CF	1	CF	1	1,106,214	3	10,355,108	29
2012	4,103,067	11	CF	1	1,837,227	4	20,413,182	36
Average	1,524,493	6	524,984	1	1,516,052	2	20,848,156	32

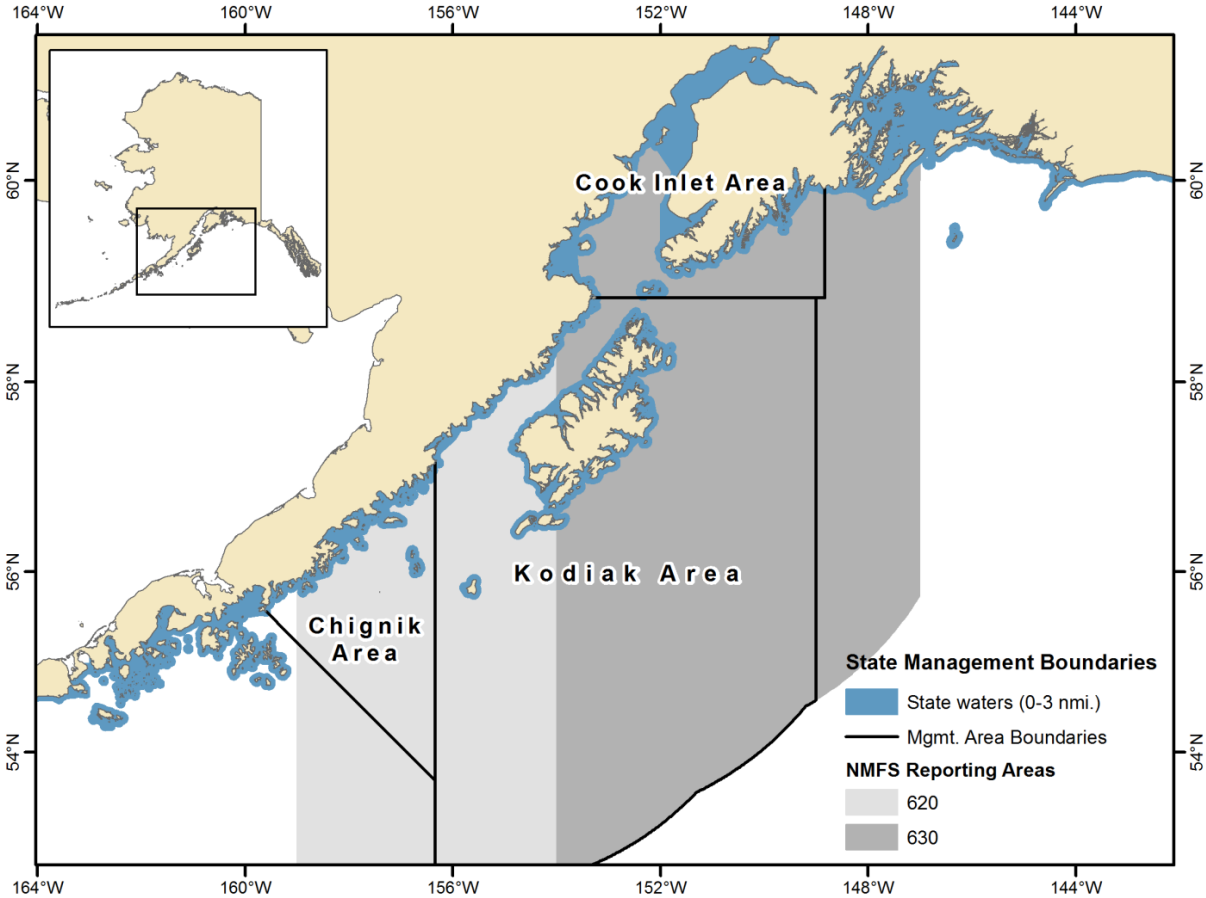


Figure 44-1.–Map depicting the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik management areas and federal areas 620 and 630 for walleye pollock.

PROPOSAL 45 – 5 AAC 28.XXX. New Section.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Marine Conservation Council, Cape Barnbus Inc., and Ouzinkie Community Holdings.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require 100% observer coverage for trawl vessels targeting groundfish inside state waters (0–3 nautical miles) of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik management areas.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The state opens a parallel pelagic trawl walleye pollock fishery concurrent to the federal fishery (3–200 nmi) and adopts most federal rules and management actions inside state waters by emergency order (5 AAC 28.086). Pelagic trawl gear is a legal gear type in all state waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas; however, during the parallel walleye pollock fishery, the state adopts most Steller sea lion federal closures prohibiting directed walleye pollock fishing in some areas inside state waters.

Except for a portion of state waters on the westside of Kodiak Island and Afognak Island (Figure 45-1), nonpelagic trawl gear is prohibited in all state waters of Kodiak, Chignik, and Cook Inlet areas (5 AAC 39.164; 5 AAC 28.330). Where nonpelagic trawl gear is allowed, the state opens a parallel fishery concurrent to the adjacent federal fishery. During the parallel season, the state adopts by emergency order federal rules and management actions inside state waters.

Annually, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) observers are deployed across most federal/parallel groundfish and halibut fisheries based on management and conservation needs. Federally-permitted trawl vessels are subject to federal observer program requirements during parallel fisheries. Trawl vessels without federal fishing permits are not subject to federal observer requirements during parallel fisheries. All Gulf of Alaska trawl vessels that currently participate in parallel groundfish fisheries have federal license limitation pemits (LLP) and federal fisheries permits (FFP).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? All vessels targeting groundfish with trawl gear would be required to have an observer onboard the vessel 100% of the time while operating inside state waters, although the state does not have a groundfish observer program. The proposal does not specify which management agency (Alaska Department of Fish and Game or NMFS) would be responsible for deploying observers and administering the program. Although the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) could require 100% observer coverage in state waters, the state does not have authority to regulate the federal observer program and thus, some state program would be required. Increased trawl vessel observer coverage inside state waters would provide increased bycatch and discard monitoring, and biological samples in support of research and assessment of fishery resources.

BACKGROUND: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) recently adopted Gulf of Alaska (GOA) king salmon prohibited species (PSC) bycatch caps for federal trawl (pelagic and nonpelagic) fisheries and reduced halibut PSC caps for trawl and longline fisheries. Federal PSC caps are apportioned based on season, fishery target species, and gear/processing sector type. When the apportioned PSC cap is achieved, the directed fishing season is closed for

the applicable federal fishing sector. Currently, there are no state or federal PSC caps for crab species in the GOA.

Vessels subject to federal/parallel observer requirements are placed into one of two observer coverage categories: 1) full coverage category or 2) partial coverage category. Most trawl catcher vessels in the GOA are placed into the partial coverage category resulting in a level of observer coverage less than 100%. Funding associated with deploying federal observers on vessels in the partial coverage category is provided through annual fees based on the exvessel value of groundfish and halibut retained during those fisheries.

The NPFMC is currently considering a new management program for federal GOA trawl vessels (catcher vessels and catcher processors) aimed at reducing bycatch of non-target species including Pacific halibut and king salmon. This action is ongoing; in October 2013, the NPFMC proposed a preliminary program design based on a voluntary cooperative structure that would allocate pollock, Pacific cod, halibut PSC, and king salmon PSC in federal waters to cooperatives. The initial design proposed in October includes 100% observer coverage on all trawl catcher vessels (trawl catcher processors already have at least 100% coverage). It is not possible to project when final action on such a program would occur, but it is likely at least 18 months to two years away. Although specific management alternatives have not been developed at this time, groundfish observer coverage has been identified by the NPFMC as an important consideration.

Establishing a state groundfish observer program would be duplicative to the federal groundfish observer program that currently operates in the parallel trawl fisheries for transboundary groundfish species. A state groundfish observer program would require a substantial investment in time and resources for the State of Alaska. Because NMFS provides stock assessment for most groundfish, maintaining a state-waters observer program with data compatible with data collected by the NMFS observer program would be essential to provide the same quality and type of information in order to be used for both catch accounting and stock assessment.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department supports collection of onboard fishery data; however, is **NEUTRAL** on requiring 100% coverage.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery if fishery participants are required to pay for observers. Observer fees vary depending on the observer provider; however, observer coverage may cost vessel operators $450 per day.

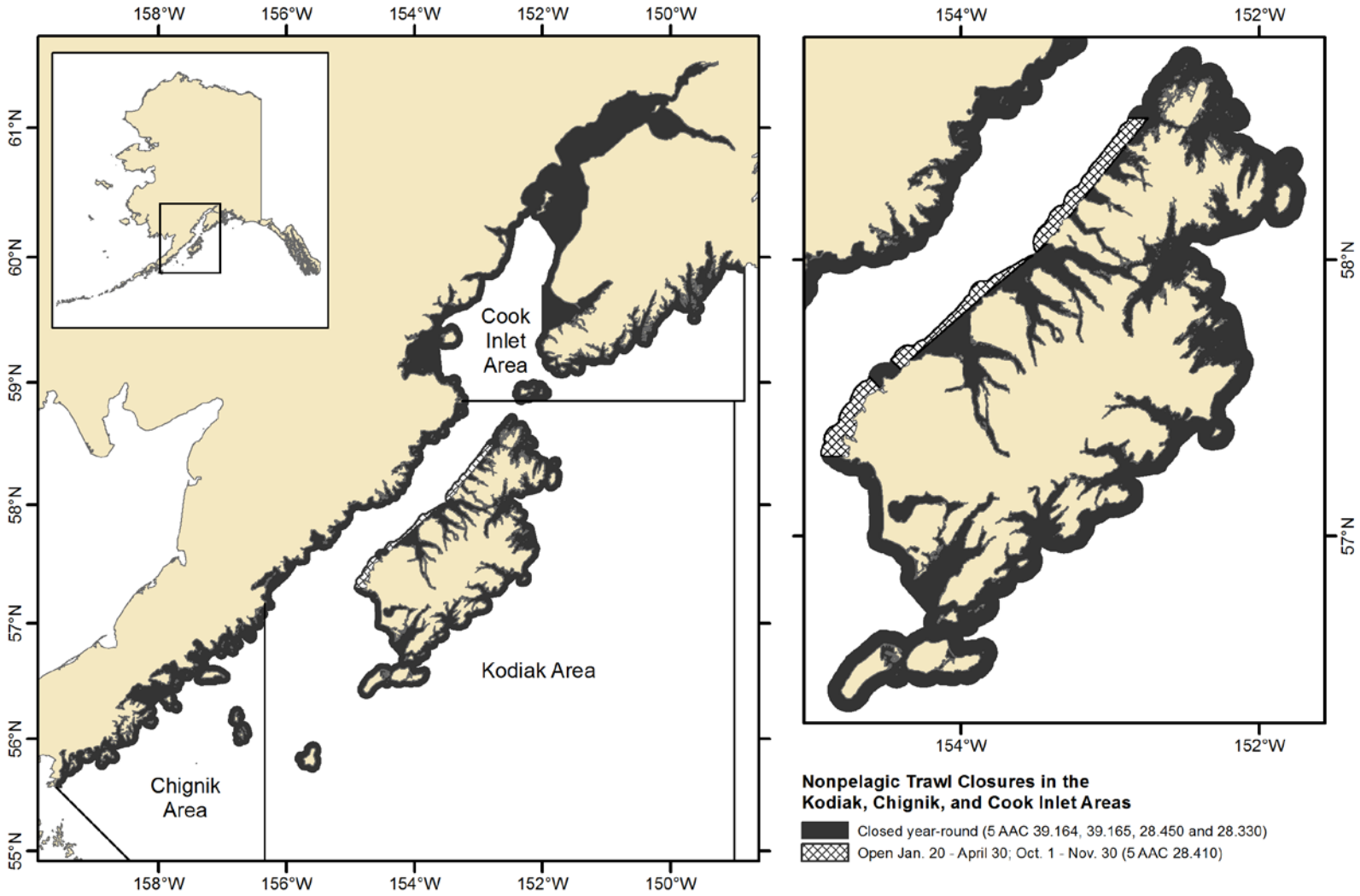


Figure 45-1.–Nonpelagic trawl gear closures in state-waters of the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik areas.

PROPOSAL 368-BGP1 – 5 AAC 39.999. Policy for changing board agenda. Change the date Agenda Change Requests (ACRs) are due.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) at the request of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Change the date ACRs are due to 60 days before the first meeting in the fall.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Policy for changing board agenda* (5 AAC 39.999) establishes guidelines for accepting and considering ACRs. The policy states that the board will consider ACRs only at its first meeting in the fall, and that requests must be sent to the executive director of the board at least 45 days before the first meeting in the fall.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would require ACRs to be submitted approximately two weeks earlier than currently required; ACRs would generally be due in early August. This would afford the department additional time to adequately prepare necessary information for use by the board at its annual work session (first meeting in the fall) and ensure that information is available to the board and the public in advance of the meeting.

BACKGROUND: The board's annual work session is the first meeting in the fall and takes place each October, shortly after conclusion of many state fisheries. Under current regulations, ACRs are typically due to the executive director in mid- to late-August. Department staff prepares information for the work session, including summaries of escapement goal analyses and stocks of concern relevant to the upcoming cycle. For each ACR submitted, the department conducts a review of relevant information and develops formal comments. The department strives to make meeting materials, including department comments, available to the board and public two weeks prior to the work session. This schedule affords the department approximately four weeks to prepare department comments on ACRs for use by the board.

A similar regulation applies to the Alaska Board of Game, and specifies that ACRs are due at least 60 days before a scheduled meeting unless the board allows an exception because of an emergency (5 AAC 92.005). That regulation does not limit the Alaska Board of Game to considering ACRs only at its first meeting.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department requested and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in any fisheries.