

**PROPOSAL 33 - 5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan.** Establish a biological escapement goal of 28,000 king salmon for the Copper River drainage, as follows:

Amend the *King Salmon Management Plan* to achieve a BEG of 28,000 kings, rather than a sustainable escapement goal of 24,000.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) has often responded to declining king stocks by lowering the escapement goal. Recently this practice led to a management disaster on the Kuskokwim River. The department is still trying to explain how a lowered goal for king salmon in the Kenai is now justified by its newer sonar technology, when the old technology was touted as being very accurate at counting kings. The Miles Lake Sonar does not distinguish between kings and sockeye, so the department uses several much less reliable methods to predict escapement. Several years ago, after not meeting escapement, the goal was lowered from a minimum 28,000 to 24,000 kings. The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) has the authority to set biological escapement goal (BEG) and has done so for many other king salmon stocks, while directing the division to manage for that goal. The board should look at the recent restrictions placed on all fisheries, as well as not meeting even the reduced goal and determine whether the Copper River kings deserve a biological escapement goal more in line with historical escapement numbers rather than based on the currently depleted runs and imprecise counting methods.

**PROPOSED BY:** Fairbanks Advisory Committee

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