

PROPOSAL 138 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area. Allow retention of Arctic grayling on the Chena River, as follows:

This proposal would allow a limited harvest of Arctic grayling less than 12 inches from June 1 to July 15 from a marker placed by the department 500 yards downstream of the Nordale Road Bridge to the confluence with the Tanana River including Piledriver Slough. From June 1 – July 15 the Chena River would remain closed to grayling retention above the Nordale Bridge. From July 16 to May 31 the entire Chena River would be closed to all grayling retention. The normal gear restrictions would apply. This regulation will sunset after three years.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Retention of grayling in a portion of the Chena River drainage.

The Chena River has been catch and release for Arctic grayling since 1991 (by EO and then regulation). The department has conducted virtually no studies on the population of Arctic grayling since 2005. The last stock assessments and abundance estimates are now 10 years old. The department has no funding for new work. The fishery is touted as one of the best “large” grayling streams on the road system and users report large congregations of fish on several stretches of the river.

The Fairbanks AC has supported the restriction to catch and release, but it was with the expectancy that the department would keep track of this population so that some harvest of grayling could be allowed without harm to the population. Anglers now concentrate the catch and release fishing at access points. The estimated mortality for the catch and release fishery is 5% to 7%. Because a large number of anglers on the lower river are children, visitors and new sports fishermen, some of the fish are treated pretty roughly in the catch and release fishery.

Our proposal would allow a very limited harvest. The limits would be both by season, size and bag limit and a sunset to the harvest regulation. The AC would like the department to have some information on the harvest because it has been so long since harvest was allowed; there is no data on the impact of limited harvest to the population. A three year “trial” would give the managers some information to work with. If this waterway is so popular it can be advertised in numerous “fish Alaska” type publications it should be studied for the potential for a return to some harvest. There is absolutely no need for the entire Chena River to catch and release forever. For example, the new Fairbanks hatchery can add fish to the system if the population starts to drop again.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F15-067)
