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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON
COMMERCIAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE
REGULATORY PROPOSALS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 1–3
FOR

LOWER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING
HOMER, ALASKA

November 30–December 3, 2016

Regional Information Report No. 2A16-01

The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, November 30–December 3, 2016 in Homer, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change, as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following acronyms and abbreviations, and others approved for the Système International d'Unités (SI), are used without definition in the following reports by the Divisions of Commercial Fisheries, Sport Fish, and Subsistence: All others, including deviations from definitions listed below, are noted in the text at first mention, as well as in the titles or footnotes of tables, and in figure or figure captions.

Weights and measures (metric)

centimeter	cm
deciliter	dL
gram	g
hectare	ha
kilogram	kg
kilometer	km
liter	L
meter	m
milliliter	mL
millimeter	mm

Weights and measures (English)

cubic feet per second	ft^3/s
foot	ft
gallon	gal
inch	in
mile	mi
nautical mile	nmi
ounce	oz
pound	lb
quart	qt
yard	yd

Time and temperature

day	d
degrees Celsius	°C
degrees Fahrenheit	°F
degrees kelvin	K
hour	h
minute	min
second	s

Physics and chemistry

all atomic symbols	
alternating current	AC
ampere	A
calorie	cal
direct current	DC
hertz	Hz
horsepower	hp
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH
parts per million	ppm
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰
volts	V
watts	W

General

Alaska Administrative Code	AAC
all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.
all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.
at	@
compass directions:	
east	E
north	N
south	S
west	W
copyright	©
corporate suffixes:	
Company	Co.
Corporation	Corp.
Incorporated	Inc.
Limited	Ltd.
District of Columbia	D.C.
et alii (and others)	et al.
et cetera (and so forth)	etc.
exempli gratia (for example)	e.g.
Federal Information Code	FIC
id est (that is)	i.e.
latitude or longitude	lat or long
monetary symbols (U.S.)	$, ¢
months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan,...,Dec
registered trademark	®
trademark	™
United States (adjective)	U.S.
United States of America (noun)	USA
U.S.C.	United States Code
U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)

Acronyms

Acceptable Biological Catch	ABC
Alaska Board of Fisheries	board
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	department /ADF&G
Amount Necessary for Subsistence	ANS
Alaska Wildlife Troopers	AWT
Biological Escapement Goal	BEG
Central Gulf of Alaska	CGOA
Coded Wire Tag	CWT
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission	CFEC
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association	CIAA
Customary and Traditional	C&T
Department of Natural Resources	DNR
Demersal Shelf Rockfish	DSR
Emergency Order	EO
Guideline Harvest Level	GHL
Gulf of Alaska	GOA
Global Positioning System	GPS
Individual Fishing Quota	IFQ
Local Area Management Plan	LAMP
Lower Cook Inlet	LCI
Mean Low Water	MLW
Mean Lower Low Water	MLLW
No Data	ND
National Marine Fisheries Service	NMFS
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon	NDFL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council	NPFMC
Optimum Escapement Goal	OEG
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	PSR
Prince William Sound	PWS
Prior Notice of Landing	PNOL
Private Nonprofit Salmon Hatchery	PNP
River Mile	RM
Special Harvest Area	SHA
Sustainable Escapement Goal	SEG
Trail Lakes Hatchery	TLH
Upper Cook Inlet	UCI
Western Gulf of Alaska	WGOA

REGIONAL INFORMATION REPORT 2A16-01

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON COMMERICAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE REGULATORY PROPOSALS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 1–3 FOR

LOWER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING HOMER, ALASKA

NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 3, 2016

by
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Sport Fish, Research and Technical Services
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518–1565

November 2016

ABSTRACT

This document contains Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence regulatory proposals for the Lower Cook Inlet finfish. These comments were prepared by the department for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, November 30–December 3, 2016, in Homer, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change, as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Key words: Alaska Board of Fisheries (board), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department), staff comments, regulatory proposals, fisheries, commercial, personal use, sport, subsistence, finfish, supplemental issues, Lower Cook Inlet, special harvest areas, methods, means, bag limits, possession limits, king, sockeye, coho, chum, pink, salmon, herring, smelt, groundfish, sablefish, rockfish.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Page

Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals for Lower Cook Inlet Finfish – Homer, November 30–December 3, 2016.

Proposal No.	Department Position	Issue
1	S	Amend the fishing season and closed waters so that personal use fishery does not open on a fixed date.
2	S	Establish and define the Port Graham Section and English Bay Section in the Port Graham Subdistrict.
3	S	Amend waters closed to commercial salmon fishing in the Kamishak District and Outer District of Lower Cook Inlet.
4	S	Clarify procedures for obtaining and submitting log sheets for the Cook Inlet commercial sablefish fishery.
5	S	Clarify procedures for obtaining and submitting log sheets for the Cook Inlet commercial rockfish fishery.
6	S	Extend the fishing season for Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and Stariski Creek from October 31 through November 30.
7	S	Extend the fishing season on Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, Stariski Creek through November 15.
8	S	Extend the start date for king salmon fishery on the Ninilchik from July 1 to June 16.
9	S	Increase the bag limit for king salmon on the Ninilchik River to 2 per day, only 1 may be wild.
10	O	Require mandatory retention of king salmon caught with bait on Anchor River, Deep Creek, and the Ninilchik River.
11	N	Create a youth-only fishery on Anchor, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik rivers.
12	N	Create a youth-only fishery on Anchor, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik rivers.
13	NA	Create a disabled angler-only fishing area on the Anchor River.
14	O	Allow snagging for sockeye salmon in all Cook Inlet freshwater lakes (*This proposal will be heard and public testimony will be taken at both the LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting*).
15	S,N	Modify the king salmon bag and possession limit north of the latitude of Bluff Point, the Cook Inlet harvest record requirement, and the Winter King Salmon Management Plan to include all Cook Inlet salt waters from September 1 through March 31, and review the guideline harvest level.
16	S	Redefine fishing area, species that may be retained, the goal of the Cook Inlet Saltwater Early-run King Salmon Management Plan, and eliminate special harvest areas, and clarify that guides and their crew may not fish for king salmon while guiding.
17	S	Remove the special harvest areas and extend the distance from shore an angler can fish for king salmon after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length.
18	S	Align the saltwater closed area season with inriver run timing and freshwater regulations.
19	O,N	Amend *Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* by starting the season August 10.
20	O	Amend Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan by extending season to April 30.
21	O,N	Eliminate king salmon annual limit for Lower Cook Inlet marine fishery south of Anchor Point Light.
22	O	Eliminate harvest record requirement for king salmon in Lower Cook Inlet marine fishery south of Anchor Point Light.
23	O	Eliminate harvest record requirement for Alaska residents for king salmon in Lower Cook Inlet marine fishery south of Anchor Point Light.
24	O,N	Eliminate harvest limit for king salmon harvested in Lower Cook Inlet marine fishery south of Anchor Point Light.

N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action, WS = Withdrawn Support

Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals for Lower Cook Inlet Finfish – Homer, November 30–December 3, 2016.

Proposal No.	Department Position	Issue
25	N	Amend *Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* to specify that the plan applies to king salmon of Cook Inlet spawning origin.
26	N	Amend *Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* to specify that the plan applies to king salmon of Cook Inlet spawning origin.
27	N	Amend *Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* by removing the guideline harvest level.
28	O	Reduce Lower Cook Inlet marine fishery bag limit to one king salmon.
29	N	Allow anglers fishing from non-motorized vessels to keep fishing in the Cook Inlet special harvest areas after harvesting a king salmon.
30	O	Increase the king salmon daily bag limit to 10 king salmon under 20" at the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon.
31	O	Create an archery fishery for salmon in waters of Kachemak Bay open to snagging.
32	O	Open Lower Cook Inlet lingcod season on June 15 instead of July 1.
33	O	Establish possession and size limits for small salmon in Resurrection Bay.
34	O	Allow party fishing in Cook Inlet salt and freshwaters for all species except king salmon (*This proposal will be heard and public testimony will be taken at both the LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting*).
35	S	Define the existing seaward boundaries of areas where commercial set gillnets may be operated in the Southern District using Global Positioning System coordinates.
36	N	Move eastern boundary near Halibut Cove where commercial set gillnet gear is permitted.
37	O	Open water of the Outer District east of Gore Point to commercial salmon fishing under regular fishing periods.
38	O	Open waters of Aialik Bay in the Eastern District to commercial salmon fishing under regular fishing periods.
39	N	Reinstate *Bear Lake Management Plan* with an equal allocation between cost recovery and common property fisheries.
40	S	Amend the *Bear Lake Special Harvest Area* to exclude fresh waters that are currently open to salmon sport fishing.
41	N	Amend the *Bear Lake Special Harvest Area* to exclude nearshore marine waters in Resurrection Bay.
42	N	Amend lawful gear to allow groundfish pots to be connected when commercial fishing for sablefish in the Cook Inlet Area.
43	O	Reduce closed waters for commercial groundfish in Kachemak Bay.
44	S	Add a 6-hour prior notice of landing requirement for the Cook Inlet commercial sablefish fishery.
45	S	Add a 6-hour prior notice of landing requirement for the Cook Inlet commercial rockfish fishery.
46	O	Increase the trip limit for rockfish in the *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan*.
277	S	Establish saltwater sport fishing guide licensing regulations, amend freshwater sport fishing guide registration requirements and fresh and salt water sport fishing guide vessel registration and reporting requirements.

N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action, WS = Withdrawn Support

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 1: LOWER COOK INLET COMMERCIAL AND PERSONAL FISHING, SPECIAL HARVEST AREAS (17 PROPOSALS)

Personal Use (1 Proposal)

PROPOSAL 1 – 5 AAC 77.549. Personal Use Coho Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would clarify language used to describe the beginning and end of the personal use coho salmon fishery season in Kachemak Bay. Language describing closed waters references outdated regulation numbers resulting in incorrect or irrelevant closure designations. This would also update language in the plan referring to current closed waters.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Salmon may be taken for personal use in this fishery from August 16 through September 15, from 6:00 a.m. Monday until 6:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 6:00 a.m. Thursday until 6:00 a.m. Saturday.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would remove confusion regarding split fishing periods (less than 48 hours). Historically, the department has written EOs each year to clarify when the fishery would open and close. With standardized start and end periods in regulation, annual EOs would no longer be necessary and permit holders would know what to expect each year. Additionally, language referring to closed waters would include updated references to current regulations.

BACKGROUND: Historically, there has been confusion when the opening and closure dates fall within prescribed fishing periods. To address this confusion, the department issued EOs clarifying start and end times. In addition, within this regulation, references were made to 5 AAC 21.350. *Closed waters*. Since this regulation was first adopted, there have been changes made to 5 AAC 21.350 without appropriate adjustments being made to the references.

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.

Commercial Fisheries (4 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 21.200. Fishing districts, subdistricts, and sections.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish the Port Graham Section and the English Bay Section in regulation (Figures 2-1 and 2-2). Both of these areas are recognized as discrete statistical reporting areas.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, there are no descriptions of the Port Graham or English Bay sections in regulation.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The department will no longer have to provide definitions of these statistical areas in EOs. Stakeholders, department, and enforcement benefit from clearly defined fishing areas in regulation and improved reporting.

BACKGROUND: The Port Graham statistical area and English Bay statistical area have been recognized as separate statistical areas since before 1991. Salmon harvested from the Port Graham statistical area are comprised significantly of fish returning to the Port Graham River. Salmon caught in the English Bay statistical area are primarily fish returning to the English Bay River. Frequently these areas are opened to commercial salmon harvest separately. This requires providing definitions of these statistical areas in announcements as well as EOs.

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.

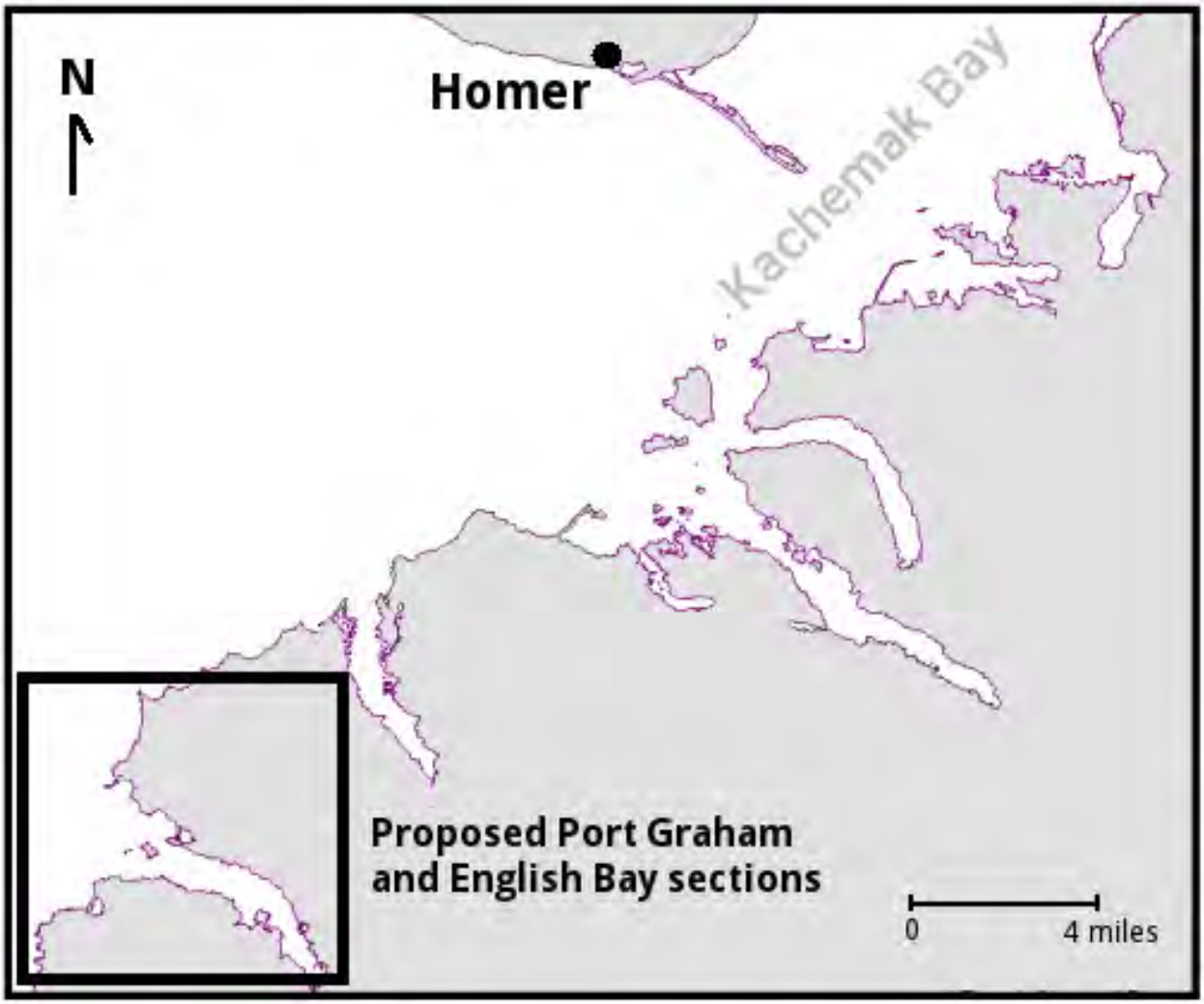

Figure 2-1.–Location of proposed Port Graham and English Bay sections in Lower Cook Inlet.

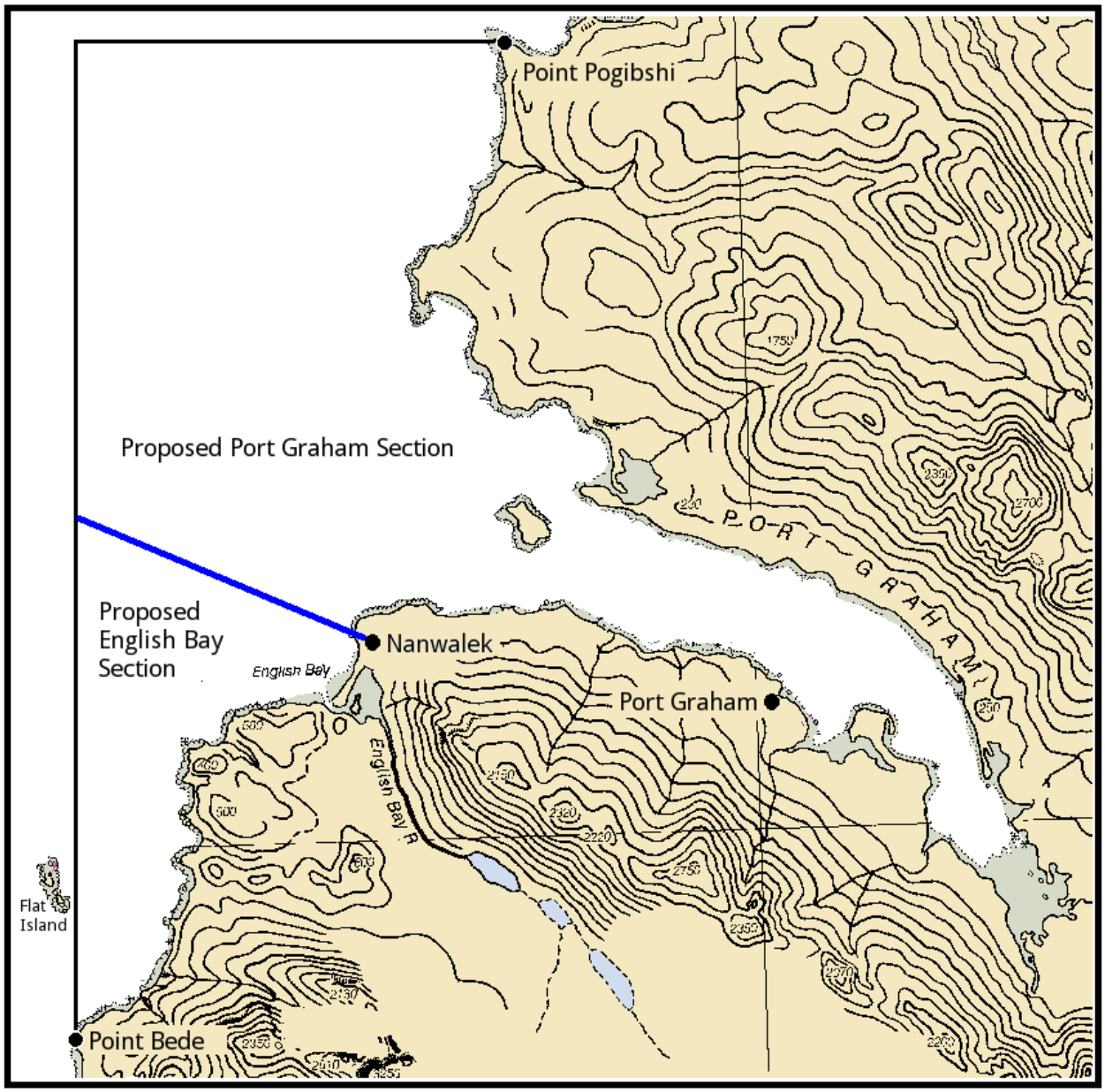

Figure 2-2.–Proposed Port Graham and English Bay sections in the Port Graham Subdistrict of Lower Cook Inlet.

PROPOSAL 3 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend closed waters for LCI to include closed waters historically defined by physical markers in the Akumwarvik Bay, Douglas River, and Petrof River areas (Figures 3-1, 3-2, 3-3 and 3-4).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations do not describe these three areas that are closed to commercial fishing in LCI which are identified by department regulatory or boundary markers. The department no longer maintains the markers in these areas.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would help clarify and more accurately describe these closed waters in LCI. The *Closed Waters* section of regulation 5 AAC 21.350 would provide a comprehensive listing of all closed waters in LCI as defined by latitude and longitude coordinates. Public, enforcement, and department all benefit from clearly defined closed waters with GPS coordinates.

BACKGROUND: These three areas have historically been closed to commercial salmon harvest and are identified by regulatory markers only.

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.

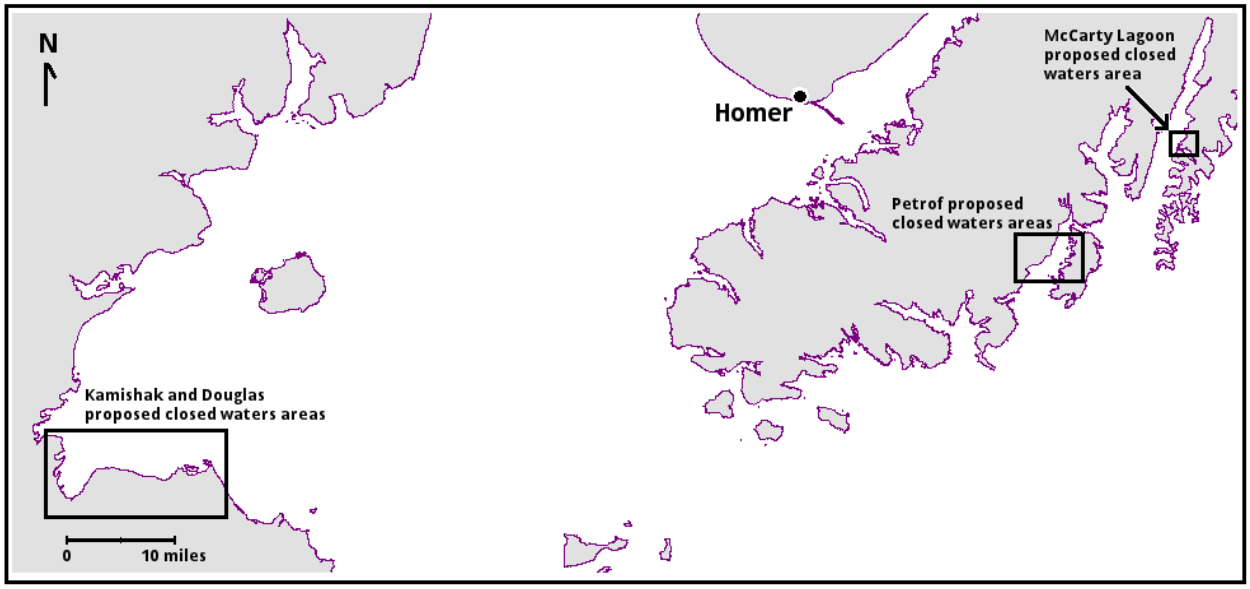

Figure 3-1.–Location of proposed commercial fishing closed waters areas in Lower Cook Inlet.

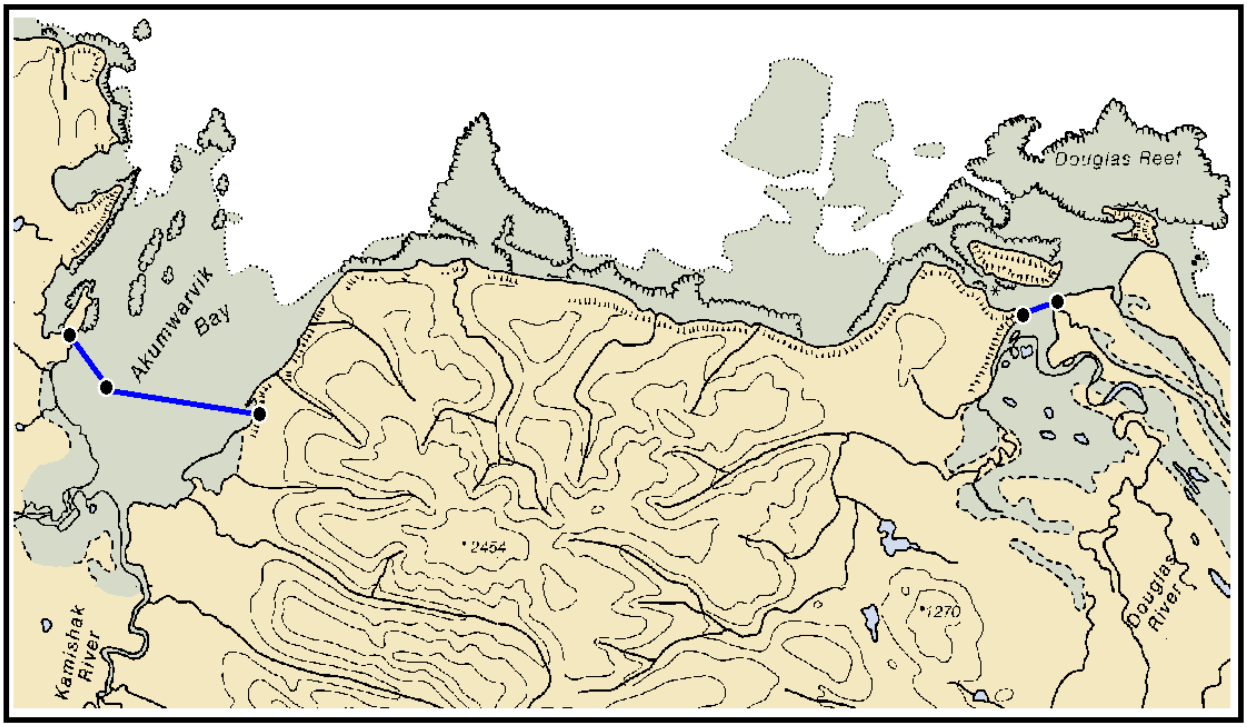

Figure 3-2.–Proposed commercial fishing closed waters in the Kamishak Bay District.

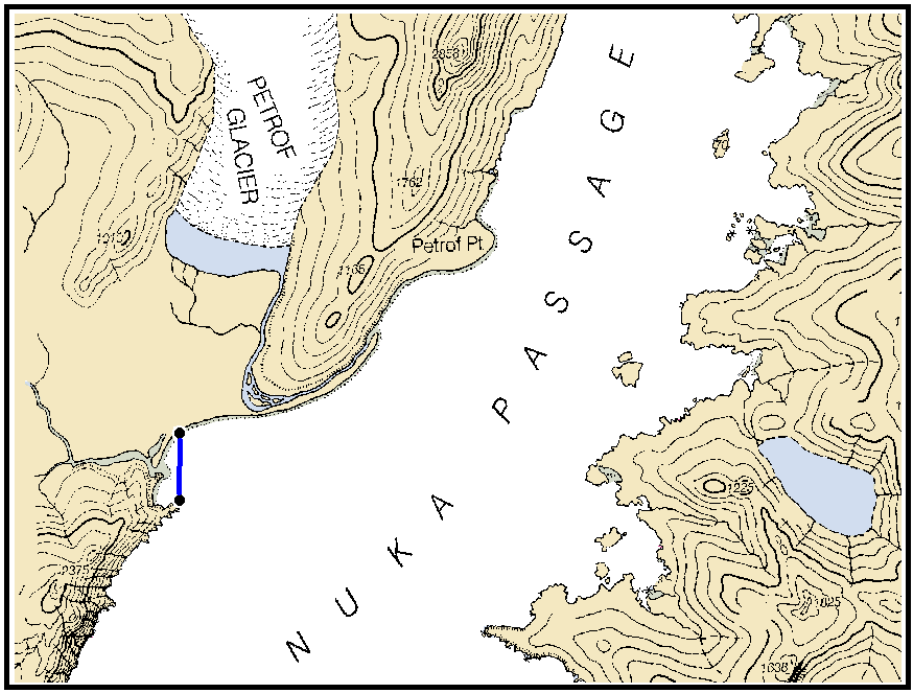

Figure 3-3.–Proposed commercial fishing closed waters in the Petrof area of the Outer District.

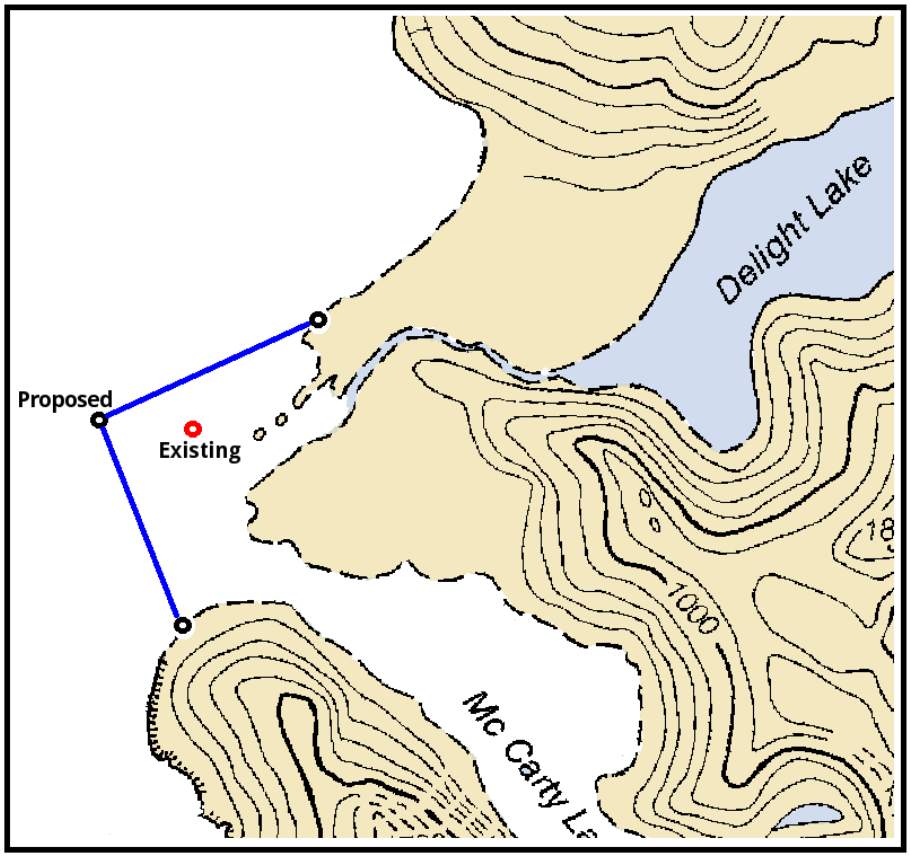

Figure 3-4.–Proposed commercial fishing closed waters in the McCarty Fjord area of the Outer District.

PROPOSAL 4 – 5 AAC 28.360. Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would clarify procedures for obtaining and submitting log sheets for the Cook Inlet Area commercial sablefish fishery by specifying that log sheets will be provided by the department at the time of registration and log sheets must be submitted to the department's office in Homer within 10 days after each landing of sablefish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under 5 AAC 28.360 (b), an operator of a vessel participating in the Cook Inlet sablefish fishery is required to: 1) obtain and complete a logbook provided by the department, 2) have the logbook on board the vessel at all times when participating in the fishery, and 3) submit to the department each logbook page that corresponds with each ADF&G sablefish fish ticket. The regulation does not specify a timeline when logbooks are due to the department.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A clear deadline would be specified in regulation for when log sheets are due to the department. This would reduce confusion and improve compliance regarding the logbook requirement. The language also clarifies that log sheets correspond to a sablefish landing, instead of each ADF&G sablefish fish ticket. This proposal also specifies that log sheets rather than "logbooks" are provided by the department, and these log sheets will be provided by the department at the time of registration for the sablefish fishery.

BACKGROUND: The fishery logbook requirement was adopted by the board in 2004 as an element of 5 AAC 28.360, and was first effective in 2005. The Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery is managed out of the Homer ADF&G office and timely receipt of log sheets is necessary for corroboration of harvest data and analysis of effort. Typically, fishermen delivering to a processor will submit log sheet(s) to industry staff when completing fish ticket(s) and the buyer will submit the log sheet(s) with fish ticket(s) to the department. This practice works well because it is specified in regulation that fish tickets are due to the department within seven days of landing (5 AAC 39.130 (c)). Following registration, additional blank log sheets may be provided by the department by fax or e-mail, and fishermen may make copies to replenish their supply. There may be multiple fish tickets submitted for a single landing if there is more than one permit being used and/or more than one species being targeted (e.g., combination Pacific cod and sablefish trip). However, log sheets for a sablefish trip correspond to a single landing or delivery of sablefish, and the proposed amended language clarifies that distinction.

A similar regulation as proposed exists for Prince William Sound in 5 AAC 28.272 (f), which specifies that log sheets must be received within 10 days after each landing, at the department's Cordova office.

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 5 – 5 AAC 28.365. Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would clarify procedures for obtaining and submitting log sheets for the Cook Inlet Area commercial directed pelagic shelf rockfish jig fishery by specifying that log sheets will be provided by the department at the time of registration and log sheets must be submitted to the department's office in Homer within 10 days after each landing of directed rockfish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under 5 AAC 28.365 (e), an operator of a vessel participating in the Cook Inlet directed rockfish fishery is required to obtain and complete a logbook provided by the department and have the logbook on board the vessel at all times when participating in the fishery. The regulation does not specify that logbooks are due to the department or a timeline for submission.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A clear deadline would be specified in regulation for when log sheets are due to the department. This would reduce confusion and improve compliance regarding the logbook requirement. This proposal also specifies that log sheets rather than "logbooks" are provided by the department, and these log sheets will be provided at the time of registration for the directed rockfish fishery.

BACKGROUND: The fishery logbook requirement was adopted by the board in 2004, effective in 2005, concurrent with the rockfish jig fishery being restricted to pelagic shelf rockfish species. The Cook Inlet Area rockfish fishery is managed out of the Homer ADF&G office and timely receipt of log sheets is necessary for corroboration of harvest data, analysis of effort, and resolution of fishery location data. Typically, fishermen delivering to a processor will submit log sheet(s) to industry staff when completing the fish ticket and the buyer will submit the log sheet(s) with the fish ticket to the department. This practice works well since it is specified in regulation that fish tickets are due to the department within seven days of landing (5 AAC 39.130 (c)). Many participants in the directed rockfish fishery are catcher-sellers who complete their own fish tickets, and, therefore, they do not submit their log sheets to a separate buyer. At times, staff has contacted fishermen well after their landings have occurred in an attempt to collect missing logs, which has caused concern about accuracy of these logs. Following registration, additional blank log sheets may be provided by the department via fax or e-mail, and fishermen may make copies to replenish their supply. Log sheets correspond to a single landing; therefore, the proposed deadline for submission follows that landing.

A similar regulation as proposed exists for PWS in 5 AAC 28.272 (f), which specifies that log sheets must be received within 10 days after each landing, at the department's Cordova office.

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.

Southern District Salmon (2 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 21.330. Gear.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would redefine the existing seaward boundary of areas where commercial set gillnets may be operated in the Southern District using GPS coordinates (Figures 35-1, 35-2, 35-3, 35-4 and 35-5).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulation specifies that set gillnets in the Southern District may be commercially fished within 1,000 feet of MLW of land that is connected to shore at this tidal height; except in some areas along the south shore of Port Graham Bay, set gillnets may be commercially fished within 2,500 feet of MLW (5 AAC 21.330(b)(1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would more clearly define the areas open to commercial fishing with set gillnets in the Southern District. There has been difficulty enforcing the seaward boundary of these areas. The areas defined by GPS coordinates include the historical area where the commercial fishery was prosecuted and is not expected to change the management of the fishery. The proposed changes will benefit the public, enforcement and department.

BACKGROUND: The seaward boundary for commercial set gillnets in the Southern District was defined in regulation in 1979 as within 1,000 feet of beach areas at MLW. NOAA frequently included MLLW on charts. MLW does not appear on any NOAA chart and is considered a non-standard tidal reference. MLLW is defined as the average of the daily lowest low tide over the 17-year tidal datum. MLW is the average of both of the daily low tides over the tidal datum. Consequently, many of the surveys submitted to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources for shore fishery leases incorrectly identified MLLW as MLW, with the resulting shore fisheries lease extending further seaward than is specified in regulation (Figure 35-2). MLW in Seldovia is defined as being 0.51m (20 inches) above MLLW, which is the 0.0 tidal reference used throughout Alaska and the United States.

Given the lack of a reference for MLW on NOAA nautical charts, combined with the difficulty of establishing an accurate measurement of the distance from the seaward terminus of a set gillnet to the shore at MLW, beginning in 2015, the department identified latitude and longitude coordinates that were 1,000 feet offshore of the MLLW line shown on NOAA charts and established a seaward boundary for commercial set gillnet gear in portions of the Southern District outside of Port Graham. In Port Graham, the distance used offshore of the MLLW line was 2,500 feet as specified in regulation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. As currently written, the seaward boundary for commercial fishing with set gillnets in the Southern District is considered unenforceable by enforcement and department staff.

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.

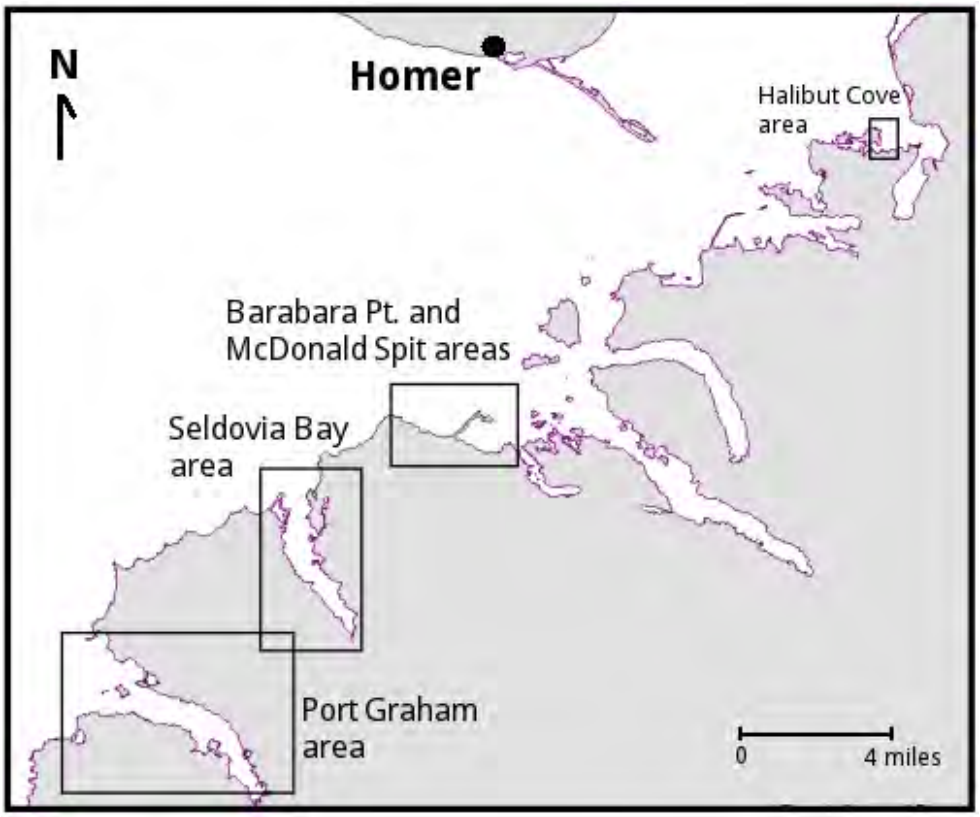

Figure 35-1.–Southern District, areas open to commercial fishing with set gillnets.

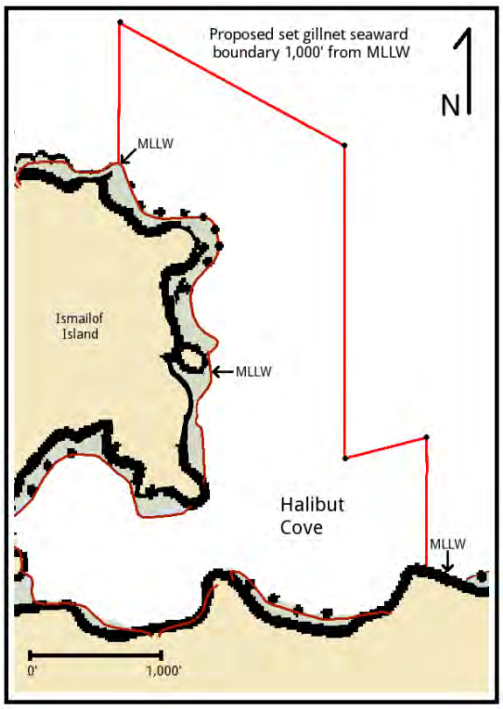

Figure 35-2.–Proposed 1,000 foot commercial set gillnet seaward boundary in the Halibut Cove area.

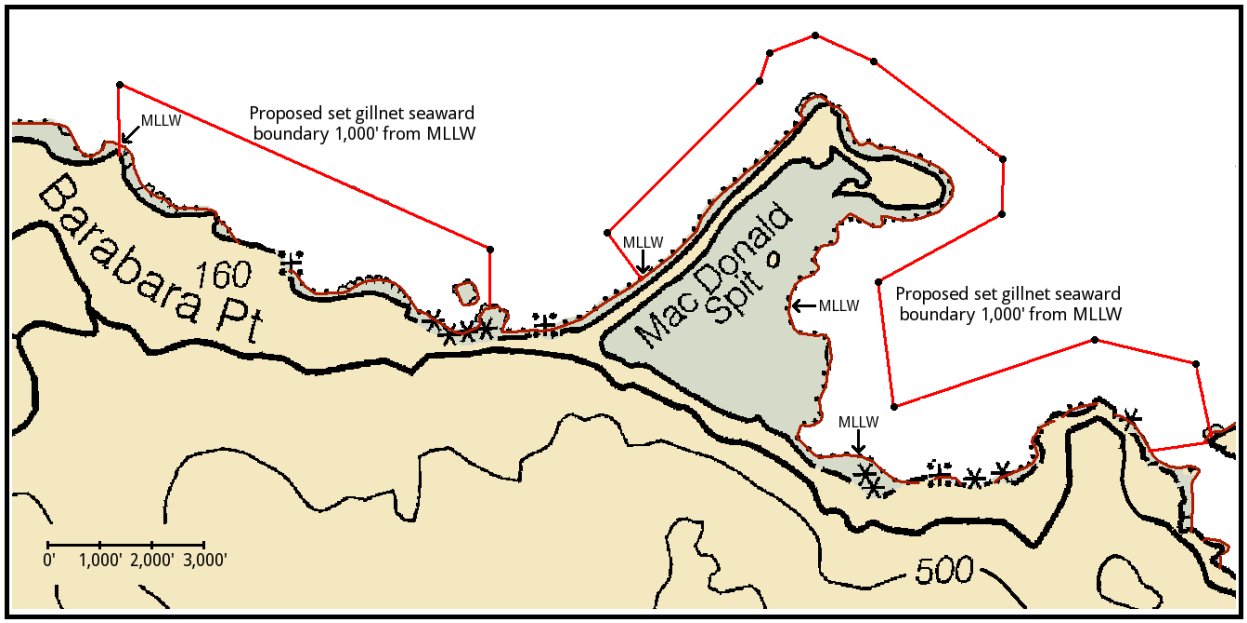

Figure 35-3.–Proposed 1,000 foot commercial set gillnet seaward boundary in the Barabara Point and McDonald Spit area.

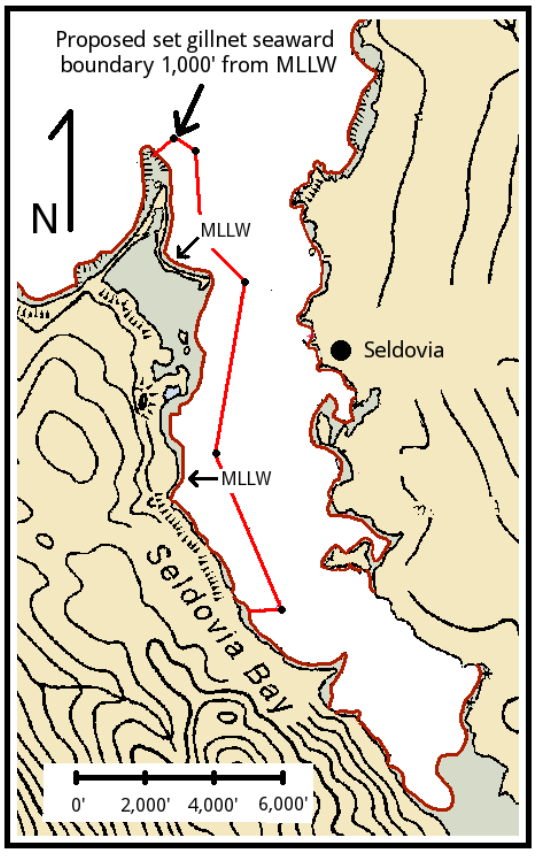

Figure 35-4.–Proposed 1,000 foot commercial set gillnet seaward boundary in the Seldovia Bay area.

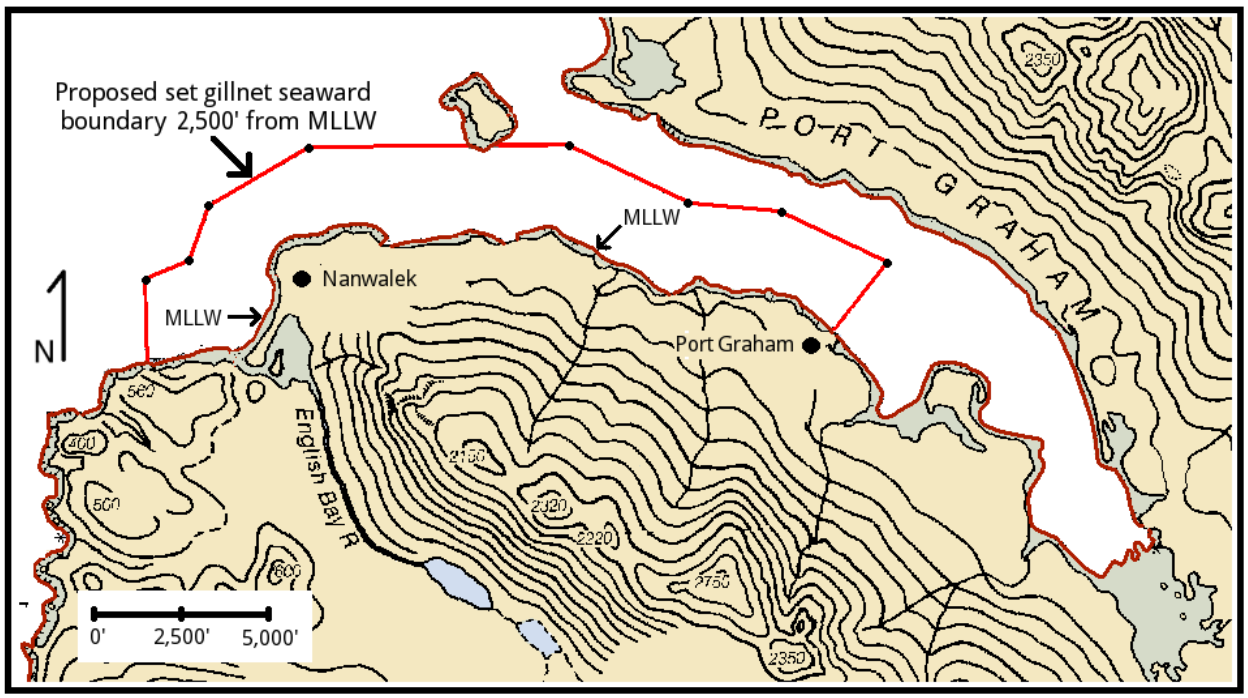

Figure 35-5.–Proposed 1,000 feet seaward boundary Port Graham area.

PROPOSAL 36 – 5 AAC 21.330. Gear.

PROPOSED BY: Elaine Challup and Warren Brown.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would move the eastern boundary of the commercial set gillnet area in the Halibut Cove Subdistrict 400 feet eastwards (Figure 36-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulation defines the eastern boundary of the commercial set gillnet area in the Halibut Cove Subdistrict as 151° 12.25' west longitude.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would align closed waters and shore fishery lease boundaries and allow commercial fishing at this location, thereby legalizing DNR shore fishery leases that have been owned and actively fished in waters outside of the legal area since the early 1990s. Shifting the boundary eastward may increase commercial harvest of salmon by an unknown, but likely small amount. The boundary shift is not expected to change management of the set gillnet fishery.

BACKGROUND: In 1990, DNR Shore Fisheries Leasing Unit began approving shore fishery leases that were outside of the area designated in 5AAC 21.330(b)(1)(A) in the portion of the Halibut Cove Subdistrict where commercial set gillnet gear is permitted (Figure 36-1).

On March 1, 2016 an email sent by DNR indicated that a surveyor licensed with the state of Alaska,

"...went out to Halibut Cove and conducted a survey of the area and found that the regulatory marker was located in a different location than what was in the ADF&G regulation book. So he moved the line based off of his findings on the ground. It would actually make sense because he depicts the regulatory marker on Shore Fish Diagram 1562."

These errors were not identified by the department, DNR, or AWT until the department was notified by the affected lease holder on June 4, 2015. The lease holder expressed confusion regarding how a lease that has been fished for 22 years could be considered illegal. The department recently found an ADF&G regulatory marker that was moved and placed near the proposed new boundary.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department supports aligning areas open to commercial fishing with shore fishery leases to aid in management and enforcement of the fisheries.

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.

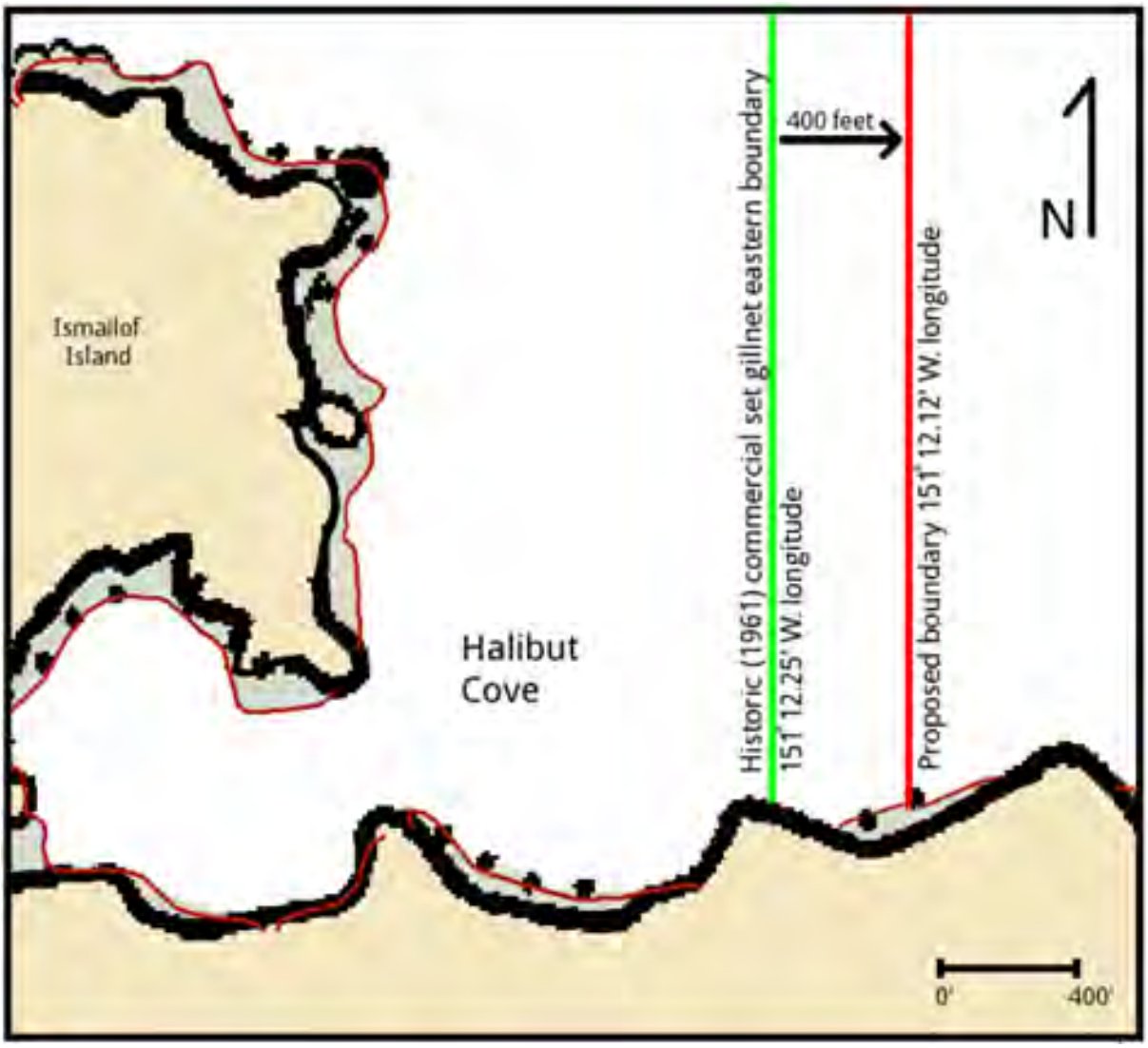

Figure 36-1.–Historical commercial set gillnet eastern boundary, including proposed boundary change, Halibut Cove area.

Outer and Eastern District Salmon (2 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 37 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.

PROPOSED BY: Thomas Buchanan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open the commercial salmon purse seine fishing season in waters of the Outer District east of Gore Point on July 1. However, in order to establish the specific fishing periods mentioned in the proposal, language would need to be added to 5 AAC 21.320. *Weekly Fishing Periods* specifying two 40-hour periods per week from 6 a.m. Monday to 10 p.m. Tuesday and 6 a.m. Thursday to 10 p.m. Friday until further notice.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial fishing season in the Outer District is opened by EO each year. Commercial fishing periods are also established by EO in the Outer District.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Commercial salmon fishing would open on July 1 east of Gore Point without regard to the abundance of salmon in the Outer District. This would likely increase the commercial harvest of salmon in the Outer District by an unknown amount. Overharvest could occur during years of modest runs and would make achieving salmon escapement goals in the Outer District more difficult. This would reduce the department's flexibility to manage commercial fisheries in this area based on inseason abundance.

BACKGROUND: The current regulation of opening and closing commercial seine fishing seasons by EO in the Outer District of Lower Cook Inlet has been in place since 1961. In nearly all waters of this district, the department determines appropriate openings based on inseason assessment of salmon abundance, escapement, run strength, and anticipated effort to facilitate an orderly harvest of identifiable surpluses while simultaneously attempting to achieve escapement goals. Assessment of sockeye, pink, and chum salmon runs in this district includes a combination of aerial and ground surveys, and, when budgets allow, a counting weir. Regular weekly fishing periods have occurred with significant harvests reported in waters near the Petrof River and in the vicinity of South Nuka Bay. Both of these areas are east of Gore Point. While other systems in the area are surveyed regularly by air, (Beauty Bay, west side of Nuka Island, McCarty Fjord) these systems only infrequently have abundances of pink salmon that are above escapement needs for these non-index systems. Since 1985, there have been only three years where the area east of Gore Point has been closed. Average pink salmon harvest from this area was 35,600 fish with a range of 9–487,000 fish. Delight and Desire lakes often have good runs of sockeye salmon. Since 1985, there were only six years when sockeye salmon were not harvested from this area. During years with harvests, average harvest was 19,700 sockeye salmon and ranged from 73–91,600 sockeye salmon. There are also numerous small pink salmon systems in this area that see runs of a few hundred to perhaps a thousand pink salmon in most years.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** 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 38 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.

PROPOSED BY: Thomas Buchanan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open the commercial salmon purse seine fishing season in waters of Aialik Bay on July 1. However, in order to establish the specific fishing periods mentioned, language would need to be added to 5 AAC 21.320. *Weekly Fishing Periods* specifying two 40 hour periods per week from 6 a.m. Monday to 10 p.m. Tuesday and 6 a.m. Thursday to 10 p.m. Friday until further notice.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial fishing season and fishing periods in the Eastern District are opened by EO each year.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Commercial salmon fishing would open on July 1 in Aialik Bay without regard to the abundance of salmon in the Eastern District. This would likely increase the commercial harvest of salmon in the Eastern District by an unknown amount. Overharvest could occur during years of modest runs and would make achieving salmon escapement goals in the Eastern District more difficult. This would reduce the department's flexibility to manage commercial fisheries in this area based on inseason abundance.

BACKGROUND: The current regulation of opening and closing commercial seine fishing seasons by EO in the Eastern District of Lower Cook Inlet including Aialik Bay has been in place since 1961. In nearly all waters of this district, the department determines appropriate openings based on inseason assessment of salmon abundance, escapement, run strength, and anticipated effort to facilitate an orderly harvest of identifiable surpluses while simultaneously attempting to achieve escapement goals. Assessment of sockeye salmon runs in Aialik Bay is done using aerial surveys. There has not been a commercial harvest of salmon reported from Aialik Bay since 2006. Harvests from that year as well as 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2005 are confidential due to fewer than three permit holders reporting deliveries. The 1998 harvest was comprised of 8,600 sockeye; 1,100 coho; 39,000 pink; and 51 chum salmon with five permit holders reporting deliveries. This harvest occurred between June 23 and August 11 with the majority of the sockeye salmon harvested in July, and coho and pink salmon in August. The sockeye salmon escapement goal for Aialik Lake has not been achieved since 2010.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** 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.

Salmon Hatchery Management Plans and Special Harvest Areas (3 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 39 – 5 AAC 21.375. Bear Lake Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Thomas Buchanan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to reinstate *Bear Lake Management Plan* with an equal allocation between cost recovery and common property fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? *Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.373) guides management of commercial fisheries targeting sockeye salmon returning to release sites in Resurrection Bay. This management plan defines SHAs associated with CIAA releases in LCI, and directs the department to manage associated subdistricts to provide for a common property fishery and to achieve the hatchery broodstock and cost recovery goals set by the hatchery operator and approved by the department for TLH.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would direct the department to manage the Resurrection Bay commercial salmon fishery to achieve an equal harvest allocation (presumably by numbers of fish) between common property harvest by the purse seine fleet and cost recovery harvest by CIAA. This not expected to affect the amount of salmon commercially harvested. The department would still manage the commercial fisheries to achieve escapement and hatchery broodstock goals. However, the department would manage the commercial fisheries to meet the equal harvest allocation. This would likely also affect cost recovery requirements at other CIAA release sites in LCI resulting in a probable reduction in common property opportunity in those areas. This could also preclude CIAA's ability to meet cost recovery goals for TLH in some years.

BACKGROUND: TLH was constructed in 1982, is owned by the department, and has been operated by CIAA since 1989. This facility has consistently reared from 2 million to 18 million sockeye salmon annually since 1983, as well as an average of 740,000 coho salmon annually. At the November 2004 board meeting, CIAA proposed an amendment to 5 AAC 21.375. *Bear Lake Management Plan*, requesting that the sockeye salmon harvestable surplus annually returning as a result of the Bear Lake enhancement project be managed to achieve an equal split (in numbers of fish) between the common property seine user group and TLH. The board adopted this provision, which became effective for the 2005 fishing season. Knowing that CIAA traditionally harvested fish at its Bear Creek weir site and that it also harvested fish near the end of the run after commercial fishermen had dispersed to other areas, the department generally allowed more opportunity for the commercial common property fleet at the beginning of each year's run. Despite large interannual variability from the desired 50/50 apportionment, over the 2005–2009 seasons during which this provision of the *Bear Lake Management Plan* was in place, the cumulative division of harvest showed that CIAA harvested approximately 49% of the available sockeye salmon, while common property seiners accounted for 51%. However, because a portion of CIAA's harvest came from fresh water or from later stages of the run, the value of its harvest was considerably less than that of the common property fleet.

CIAA petitioned the board in early 2009 to adopt a new management plan for the TLH, citing the need to harvest 100% of returning adults to meet its hatchery cost-recovery goal or it may become insolvent. The petition was converted into a proposal and adopted into regulation in the spring of 2009. The *Trail Lakes Hatchery Management Plan* contained a sunset provision that the 100% allocation for cost recovery would only extend until May 1, 2011, at which time CIAA indicated it would be financially stable. The management plan also contained a provision that no management restrictions would be imposed on the noncommercial fisheries (sport and personal use) in order to achieve the TLH cost recovery objectives for sockeye salmon. Because the new plan contained a number of provisions taken directly from the *Bear Lake Management Plan,* and thus carried the basic intent of that plan, the *Bear Lake Management Plan* was repealed from regulation. During the 2010 LCI board meeting, CIAA petitioned the board to consider removing the sunset provision and make the hatchery management plan permanent. However, the board took no action and therefore the plan sunsetted on May 1, 2011.

In 2013 the department submitted a proposal re-establishing the *Trail Lakes Hatchery Management Plan* while clarifying harvest priorities within SHAs and defining LCI SHAs that had previously only been established in Annual Management Plans. The board adopted the plan and it was signed into regulation in the spring of 2014.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative 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 40 – 5 AAC 21.373. Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Seward Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the Bear Lake SHA to exclude fresh waters that are currently open to sport fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sport fishing in Resurrection River is open downstream of Nash Road and the Seward Highway from June 16–December 31, with gear limited to single-hook artificial lures only (Figure 40–1). The bag limit is three salmon per day, of which only two may be coho salmon. The *Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Management Plan* defines the Bear Lake Special Harvest Area as the marine waters of Resurrection Bay in the Eastern District north of the latitude of Caines Head at 59º 58.93' N. lat., and the fresh waters of Bear Creek, Salmon Creek, and Resurrection River downstream from, and including the Bear Creek Weir.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would remove the fresh waters of Resurrection River from Nash Road downstream to the fresh/salt water boundary markers from the Bear Lake SHA. This would have no effect on sport and commercial fisheries as they are currently managed. The department would continue to manage the commercial fisheries in Resurrection Bay to achieve Trail Lakes Hatchery broodstock and cost recovery goals and not interfere with the recreational fishery.

BACKGROUND: The freshwater drainage of Resurrection River, downstream of the Seward Highway and downstream of Nash Road, has been open to sport fishing for sockeye salmon since 2007 and since 2004 for coho salmon. CIAA has stocked sockeye salmon into Bear Lake annually since 1990 following a 1988 board decision to allow enhancement of sockeye salmon in this lake. CIAA harvests sockeye salmon for cost recovery in Resurrection Bay downstream of the sport fishery and at the Bear Creek weir upstream of the sport fishery. CIAA stops all fish entering Bear Lake at the Bear Creek weir where it harvests salmon for cost recovery and passes unharvested salmon into the lake for wild spawning and broodstock.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Removing this section of water better describes the area in which SHA regulations apply.

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.

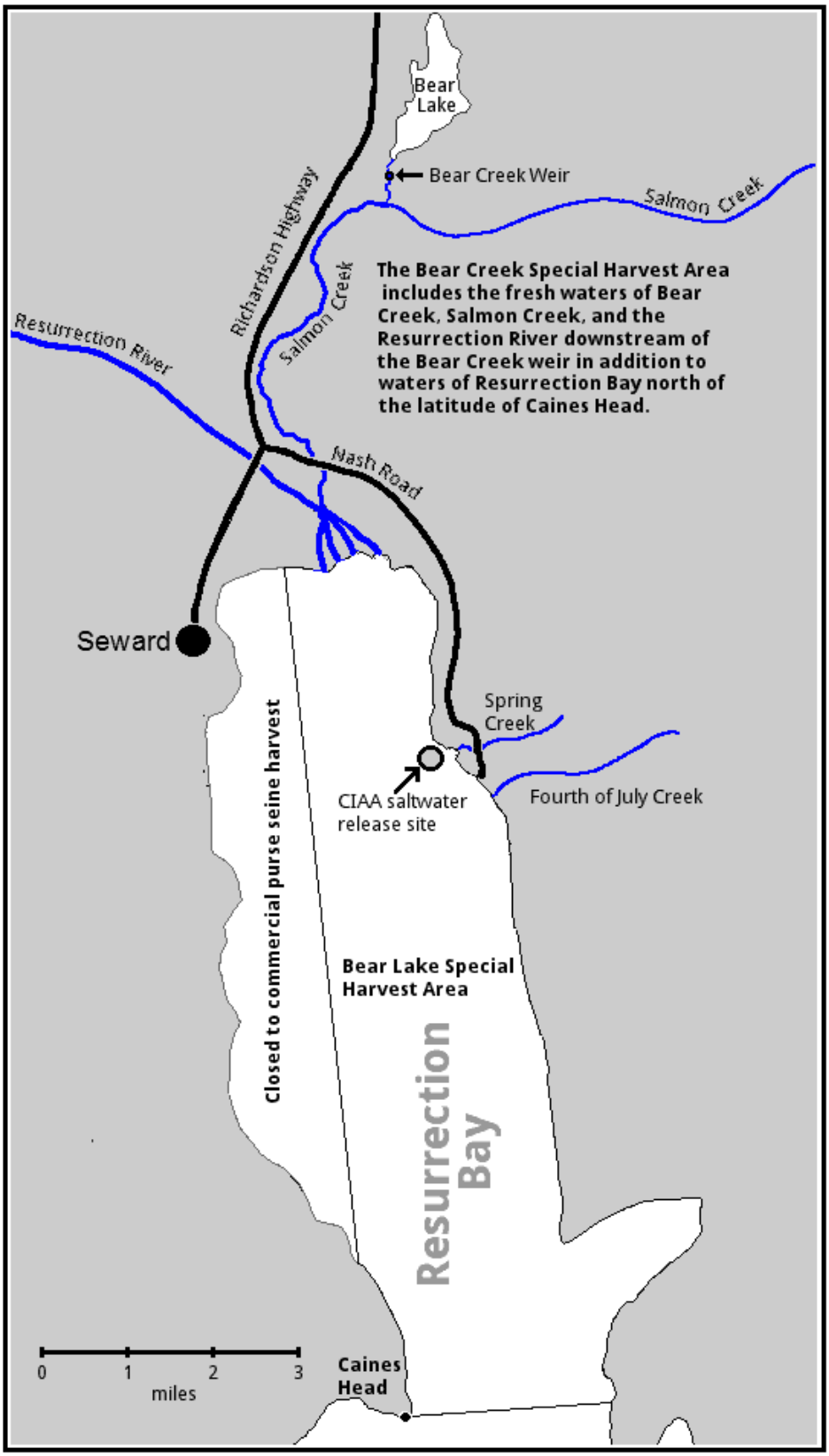

Figure 40-1.–Bear Lake Special Harvest Area.

PROPOSAL 41 – 5 AAC 21.373. Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Seward Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This amends the Bear Lake SHA to exclude nearshore marine waters in Resurrection Bay and preclude cost recovery harvest in that area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Management Plan* defines the Bear Lake SHA as the marine waters of Resurrection Bay in the Eastern District north of the latitude of Caines Head at 59º 58.93' N. lat., and the fresh waters of Bear Creek, Salmon Creek, and Resurrection River downstream from, and including the Bear Creek Weir. Sport fishing is allowed year-round in Resurrection Bay salt water, with bag limits of six salmon per day, all of which may be sockeye or coho salmon.

The *Resurrection Bay Salmon Management Plan* states the commissioner shall, by emergency order, manage the commercial fishery in Resurrection Bay in a manner that does not interfere with the recreational fishery.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the area available to cost recovery and could affect the efficiency and effectiveness of cost recovery efforts in the saltwater portion of the Bear Lake SHA. This could reduce the value of the fishery if a significant proportion of harvestable surplus must be harvested at the weir instead of in salt water. This could in turn reduce opportunity for the commercial common property fleet if cost recovery goals are not met or attainment of goals is delayed. This would likely reduce interaction between commercial and sport fishermen in these areas. The department would continue to manage the commercial fisheries in Resurrection Bay to achieve Trail Lakes Hatchery broodstock and cost recovery goals and not interfere with the sport fishery (5 AAC 21.376(b)(3)).

BACKGROUND: CIAA has stocked sockeye salmon into Bear Lake annually since 1990 following a 1988 board decision to allow enhancement of sockeye salmon in this lake. CIAA harvests sockeye salmon for cost recovery in Resurrection Bay salt water and at the Bear Creek weir upstream of the sport fishery. CIAA stops all fish entering Bear Lake at the Bear Creek weir. Here it harvests salmon for cost recovery and passes unharvested salmon into the lake for wild spawning and broodstock. When the annual cost recovery goal is met or its attainment is expected in combination with cost recovery efforts at other release sites, the common property commercial fishery is opened to target the harvestable surplus of hatchery runs in Resurrection Bay. In 2016, in response to requests by sport fishing community, the department worked with CIAA and identified a plan (described in LCI Salmon Fishery News Release #1, Issued April 29, 2016, http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/655716603.pdf), whereby cost recovery harvest in the area of Spring Creek would not occur within 100 feet of the water's edge between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. seven days a week.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative 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.

Groundfish Lawful Gear, Closed Waters, Landing Requirements, and Trip Limits (5 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 42 – 5 AAC 28.330. Lawful gear for Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Randy Arsenault.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Amend lawful gear to allow groundfish pots to be connected when commercial fishing for sablefish in the Cook Inlet Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Cook Inlet Area regulations do not allow a groundfish pot to be attached to a line connected to another groundfish pot.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, sablefish pots used in the Cook Inlet Management Area could be connected by a line to another sablefish pot (longlined). Pot gear has not been employed in this fishery, although it is an allowed gear type. The efficiency of fishing for sablefish with pots may be increased, which may result in the use of pot gear to harvest sablefish in the Cook Inlet Area.

BACKGROUND: The Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery opens July 15 and closes December 31 unless closed earlier by EO. Registration is required and legal gear for this fishery is longline, pot, or jig gear with mandatory logbooks. There is no pot limit in this fishery. The GHL is adjusted annually by the percentage change in the CGOA ABC calculated by NOAA/NMFS from stock assessment. Sablefish may only be retained on board a vessel that is registered to participate in the Cook Inlet sablefish fishery during the open season and there is a trip limit of 3,000 lb (round weight) of sablefish in two consecutive days.

Over the last eight years in the Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery, there has been consistently reduced harvest and participation compared to levels before 2008. The average annual harvest during 2008–2015 was 53,698 lb with an average of nine vessels participating, considerably less than historical harvest and effort (Table 42-1). During the last three years, the number of vessels participating has been fewer than nine, and only four vessels in 2015 (tied with 1989 for lowest effort). Harvest followed the same trend, with the lowest harvest since 1995 of 31,780 lb occurring in 2015. Average pounds per landing over the last eight years has also been low, ranging from 837 lb per landing in 2009 to 1,748 lb per landing in 2014, with the second lowest average pounds per landing of 935 lb in 2015.

Whale depredation, specifically, whales removing or damaging fish caught on fishing gear, has decreased profits of longline fishermen in federal and state waters sablefish fisheries and increased interest in using pots in these fisheries. The whale behavior has been documented and prevalent in Southeastern Alaska and Gulf of Alaska sablefish longline fisheries. Logbooks required in the PWS sablefish fishery have documented whale depredation activity but this behavior has been less common in the Cook Inlet Area. Connecting, or longlining, pots is allowed by 5 AAC 28.230(c) for the PWS sablefish fishery. Recently, the NPFMC took action to allow the use of longline pot gear in the Gulf of Alaska sablefish IFQ fishery. After public

testimony and NPFMC analysis, it was determined that allowing pots in the fishery may help to reduce the negative effects of whale depredation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative 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.

Table 42-1.–Cook Inlet Area commercial sablefish fishery harvest, effort, landings, GHL, and average pounds per landing, 1988–2015.

Year	Vessels	Landings	Harvest (lb)	Total harvest (lb)	GHL (lb)	Average lb/landing
1988	8	86	136,260	136,260		1,566
1989	4	5	2,996	2,996		599
1990	22	24	8,480	8,480		339
1991	25	33	103,597	103,597		3,139
1992	79	103	126,852	126,852		1,208
1993	36	52	95,016	95,016		1,827
1994	39	56	45,008	45,008		790
1995	33	45	22,551	22,551		501
1996	25	79	81,067	81,067		1,013
1997	39	97	125,349	125,349	72,000	1,279
1998	29	57	69,689	69,689	72,000	1,223
1999	23	40	73,695	76,741	63,400	1,842
2000	16	31	102,639	103,662	67,000	3,207
2001	21	32	133,435	133,435	67,000	4,170
2002	23	26	108,117	108,966	67,000	4,158
2003	14	14	122,098	122,098	75,000	8,721
2004	17	17	82,836	82,836	87,000	4,873
2005	10	37	84,023	84,023	86,000	2,271
2006	16	41	88,695	88,695	76,000	2,163
2007	10	36	76,889	76,889	74,000	2,136
2008	12	43	68,852	68,852	66,000	1,636
2009	13	66	55,263	55,263	59,880	837
2010	9	44	55,899	55,899	53,733	1,270
2011	10	39	57,350	57,350	56,473	1,471
2012	12	49	67,452	67,452	69,000	1,377
2013	8	44	42,287	42,287	66,000	961
2014	5	29	50,703	50,703	56,000	1,748
2015	4	34	31,780	31,780	55,500	935

Note: Harvest is reported in round pounds; includes mechanical jig and hand troll gear.

PROPOSAL 43 – 5 AAC 28.350. Closed waters in Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Al Ray Carroll.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the boundaries of the area in Kachemak Bay currently closed to commercial fishing with groundfish pot gear.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Cook Inlet Area regulation 5 AAC 28.350 (b)(2) prohibits use of groundfish pot gear in the described waters of Kachemak Bay.

Commercial Pacific cod pot gear must be configured with tunnel eye openings no larger than 36 inches in perimeter which likely reduces Tanner crab bycatch and Tanner crab are a prohibited species onboard a groundfish vessel. The state waters Pacific cod fishery does not have observer coverage requirements; however vessels participating in the parallel fishery are subject to federal observer coverage requirements. Tanner crab bycatch occurs in these fisheries and is documented. Gulf of Alaska wide bycatch estimates for Tanner crab between 2013 and 2016 range from 20,000 to 112,000 crab in the Pacific cod pot fishery.

Currently, there are two Pacific cod seasons identified in regulation. A parallel season opens January 1 and closes concurrent with the adjacent federal waters and a state-waters season opens 24 hours after the parallel season closure and closes when either the GHL or the gear-specific allocation is achieved. There are no limits on the amount of gear that may be fished during the parallel season. During the state-waters season, gear is restricted to 60 pots or five jig lines until October 30, at which time gear limits may be lifted by emergency order.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this would expand the area currently available for fishing for Pacific cod with groundfish pots by reducing the size of the current groundfish pot closure area in Kachemak Bay (Figure 43-1) by an estimated 44 square nautical miles. This pot closure area is close in proximity to Homer, where these pot fishermen reside. Fishermen would be able to get to these fishing grounds quicker than outer areas currently open to pot fishing. This could potentially increase the amount of effort and Pacific cod harvest.

By allowing Pacific cod fishermen to fish in areas which have historically contained higher levels of Tanner crab abundance than areas currently fished, Tanner crab bycatch in groundfish pots and associated Tanner crab handling mortality would likely increase by an unknown amount. Although Pacific cod fishermen release crabs caught as bycatch, there are associated negative handling effects on Tanner crab, including increased mortality, shell damage, and leg loss, which can lead to decreased reproductive potential.

Current noncommercial Tanner crab fishery season dates in regulation are September 1–December 31 and January 15–March 15, to avoid biologically sensitive molting and mating periods. If the noncommercial Tanner crab season opens, conflicts could occur between noncommercial Tanner crab fishermen and commercial Pacific cod pot fishermen whose effort and harvest are greatest in February and March (Figure 43-3). The potential area of overlap for

commercial Pacific cod fishery participants with noncommercial Tanner crab fishery participants would be increased if the groundfish pot closure area was reduced as proposed.

BACKGROUND: The Kachemak Bay groundfish pot closure area was first established by EO in 1990 and adopted into regulation in 1996. Designed to reduce Tanner crab bycatch and associated handling mortality during the Pacific cod fishery, the closure area encompasses the majority of known Tanner crab habitat in Kachemak Bay. Tanner crab abundance is at lower levels outside of the current closed area than inside of it.

The last commercial Tanner crab fishery in Kachemak Bay occurred in 1994 and approximately 285,000 pounds of Tanner crab were harvested. After the fishery closure, the population continued to decline. This was documented by department trawl surveys and resulted in closure of the noncommercial (sport, personal use, and subsistence) Tanner crab fisheries in Kachemak Bay between 2002 and 2007. By 2008, legal male Tanner crab abundance estimates increased and achieved the minimum threshold required to reopen the noncommercial fisheries. The noncommercial fisheries were opened from the 2008/09 to the 2011/12 season and then closed through the present, a result of low abundance estimates generated from the department trawl survey. The board has made a positive C&T finding for all shellfish in the waters of the Cook Inlet Area that are outside the Anchorage—Matsu—Kenai Peninsula Nonsubsistence Area, but has not made an ANS finding for crabs.

The Kachemak Bay large mesh trawl survey began in 1990 and was conducted annually (except 2010) through 2013. The survey was eliminated because of budget reductions. The survey is designed to target Tanner crab and survey data are used to develop abundance and biomass estimates. The trawl survey covers most of the groundfish pot closure area and targets areas of Tanner crab habitat and historical abundance (Figure 43-2).

Bycatch of Tanner crab results in several types of crab injury, including cold weather damage, handling effects, and increased mortality related to aerial exposure. Handling effects have been well researched and documented in Alaska; these effects include increased rates of mortality and negative effects on reproductive potential.

In 2011, federal gear sector splits changed the Pacific cod fishery by allocating harvest to longline, pots, and jig gear in the parallel fishery. Annually, the state-waters Pacific cod fishery GHL is calculated as 3.75% of the federal CGOA ABC and has ranged from 4.1 million to 5.1 million lb over the last five years (Table 43-1). Eighty-five percent of the GHL is allocated to vessels using pot gear and 15% to jig gear. Since 2012, the state-waters pot season has opened in mid-February. Vessels larger than 58 feet are capped at 25% of the total GHL; the number of these larger vessel participants has been fewer than three with a variety of season lengths. The smaller pot vessels have been able to fish all year from 2013–2015 in a parallel or state-waters season. Since 2010, harvest by pot gear in both the parallel and state-waters fisheries combined has been at the highest levels since the state-waters fishery was established in 1997.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and alteration of the groundfish pot closure area in Kachemak Bay. Reducing or eliminating bycatch mortality, particularly on a depressed stock such as Kachemak Bay Tanner crab, is an important factor in

promoting stock rebuilding. Tanner crab bycatch in groundfish pot fisheries has been documented by department observers (opportunistic, not mandatory) and although it has been generally low in areas outside the current closed area, it is likely that crab bycatch rates would increase in areas of greater crab abundance which may occur inside the current groundfish pot closure area. Because the Kachemak Bay Tanner crab stock is not surveyed, stock status is unknown and increased Tanner crab bycatch mortality resulting from expanding the groundfish pot closure area may present a conservation concern.

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 43-1.–Cook Inlet Management Area Pacific cod harvest, effort, and landings by pot gear in parallel and state-waters fisheries combined.

Year	Vessels	Landings	Harvest (lb)
1997	15	368	1,391,096
1998	15	384	1,071,615
1999	25	417	2,372,352
2000	20	503	1,906,201
2001	10	287	1,190,021
2002	10	413	1,618,622
2003	10	229	1,318,484
2004	12	213	2,146,023
2005	10	243	2,394,737
2006	12	228	1,996,728
2007	14	225	1,765,682
2008	13	275	2,524,558
2009	13	205	2,482,231
2010	9	160	3,303,300
2011	11	214	4,481,160
2012	13	245	5,000,765
2013	14	231	3,121,900
2014	9	168	3,367,218
2015	11	187	3,663,557

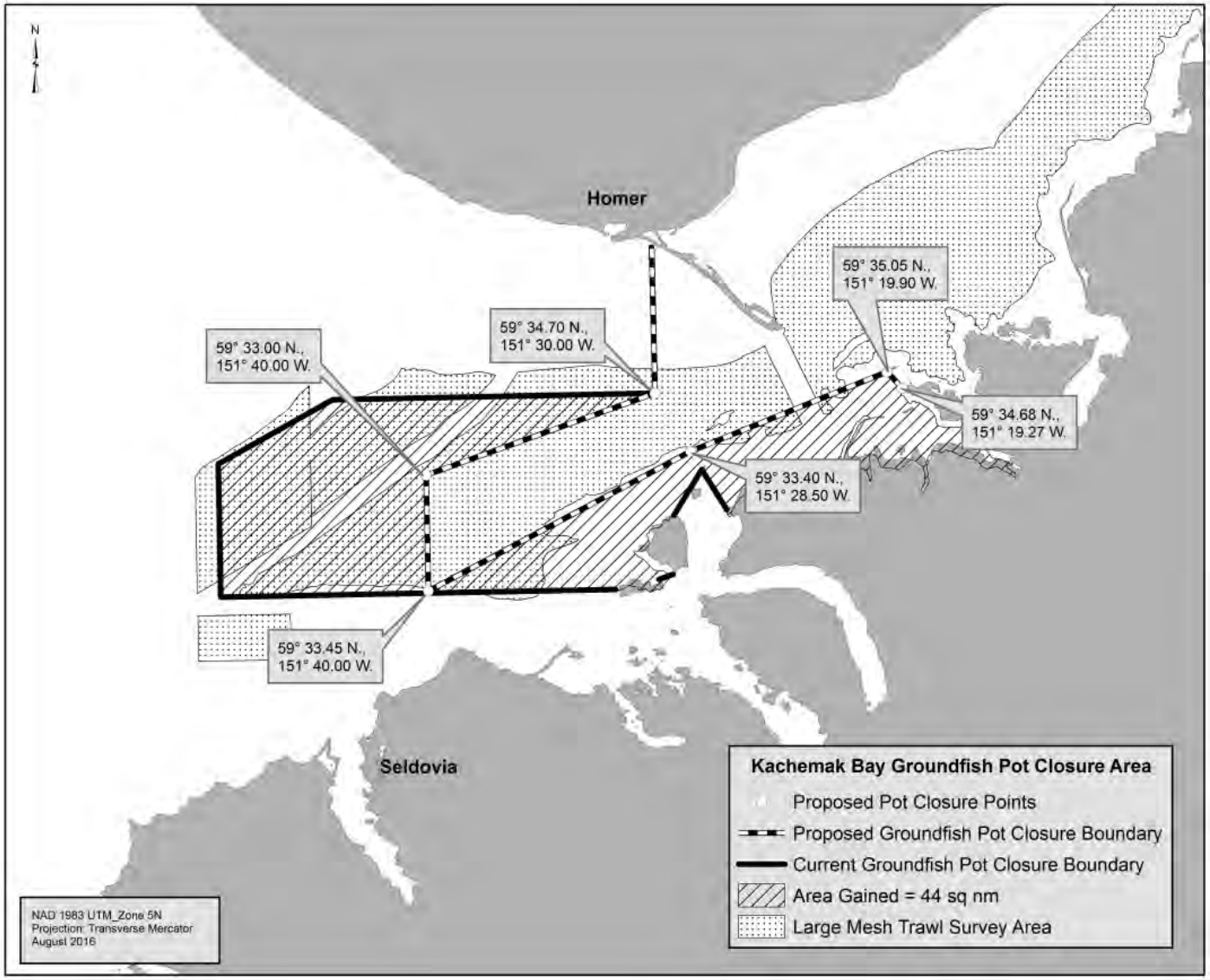

Figure 43-1.–Kachemak Bay Pacific cod current pot closure area and proposed closure area.

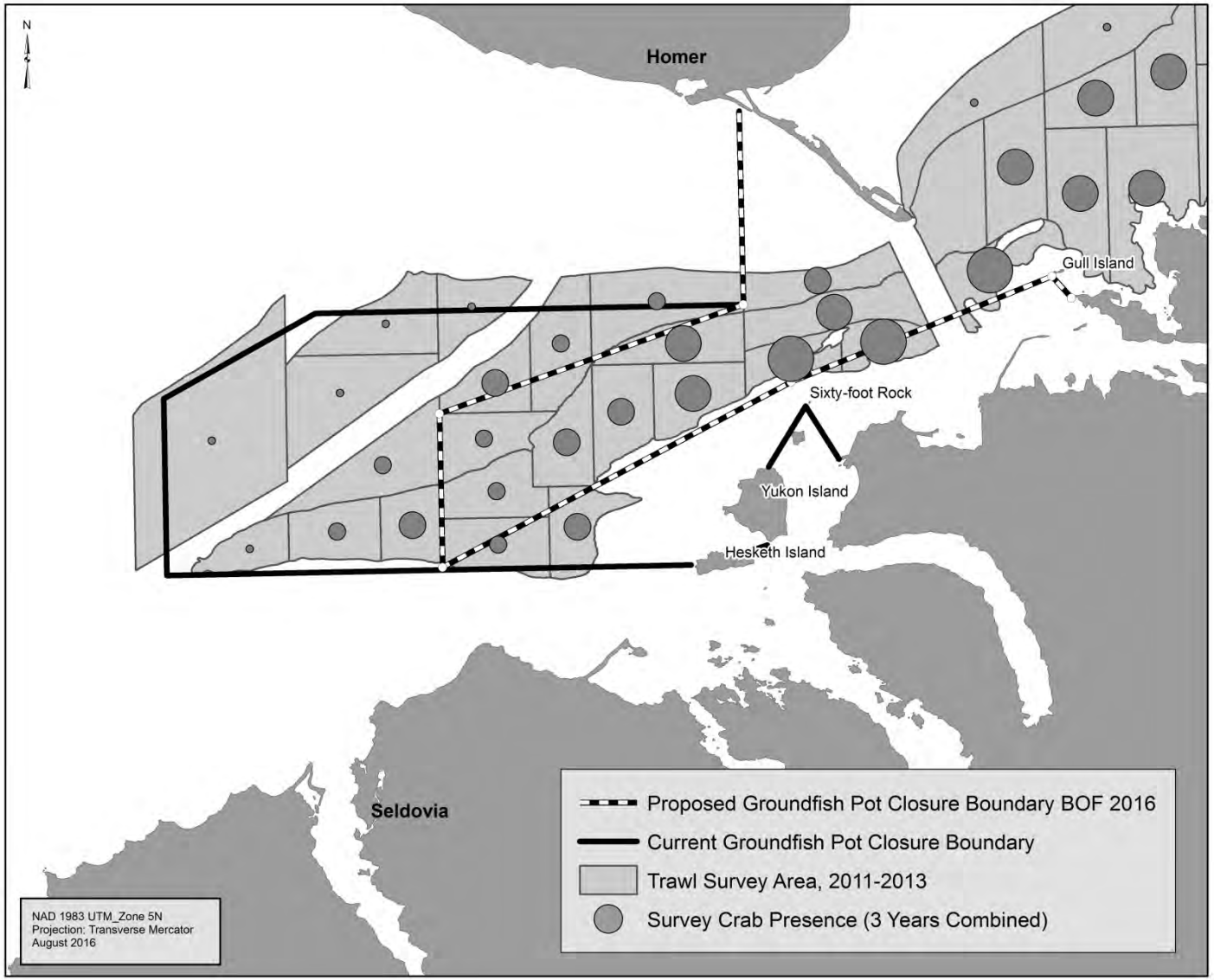

Figure 43-2.–Kachemak Bay large mesh trawl survey stations with Tanner crab presence from 2011–2013.

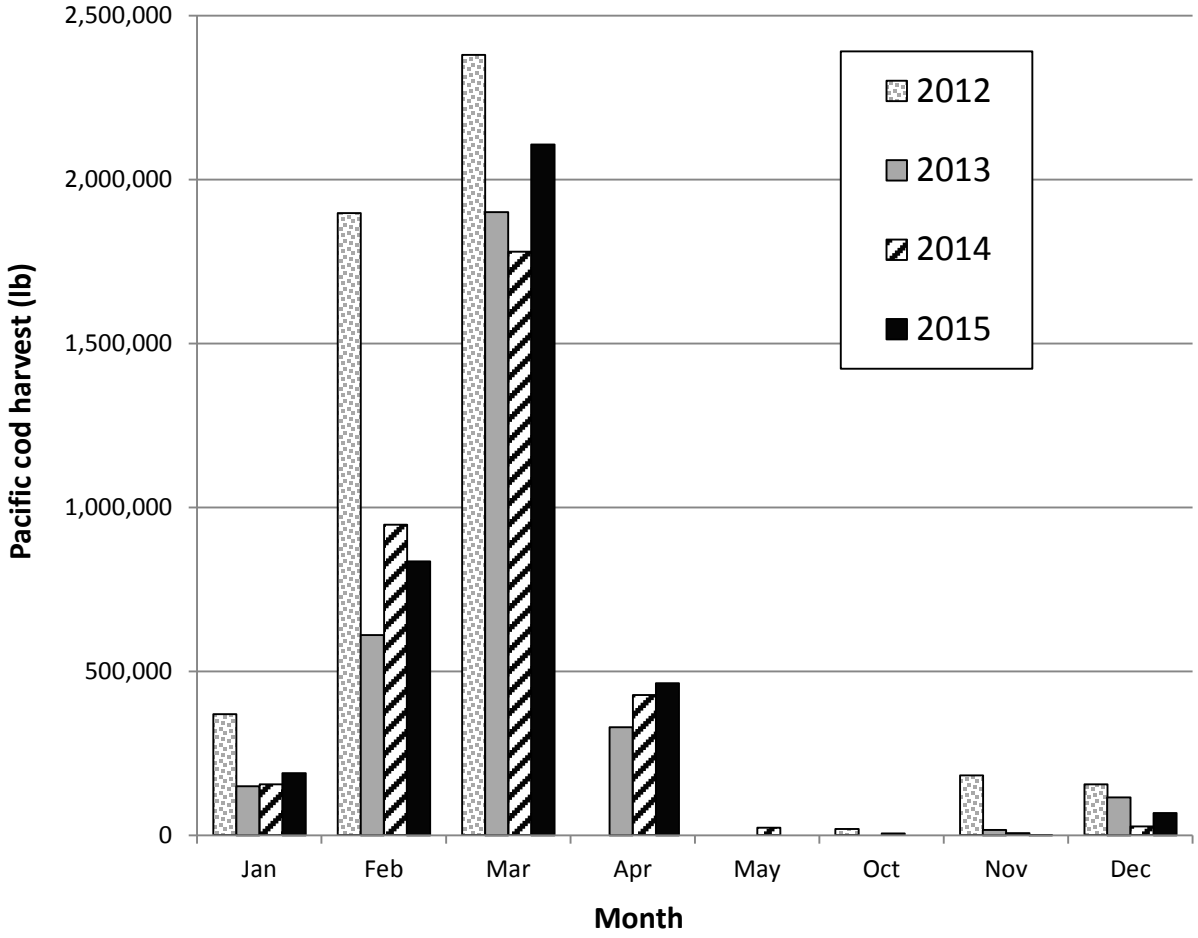

Figure 43-3.–Cook Inlet Management area monthly Pacific cod harvest by pots (combined state-waters and parallel seasons) from 2012–2015.

PROPOSAL 44 – 5 AAC 28.360. Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add a six-hour prior notice of landing requirement for the Cook Inlet Area commercial sablefish fishery. Fishermen would be required to call a telephone number, specified by the department on registration forms, at least six hours prior to landing and report the following information: 1) vessel name and ADF&G number; 2) date and location of landing, estimated time of arrival; 3) name of fish buyer or processor; 4) estimated number of pounds of sablefish on board the vessel; and 5) whether the catch is dressed fish or whole (in the round) fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is a registration, logbook, and trip limit requirement for the Cook Inlet sablefish fishery under the *Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.360). There is no PNOL requirement for vessels participating in the Cook Inlet sablefish fishery.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would result in: 1) improved reporting requirements; 2) increased sampling opportunities for the department; and 3) better overall enforcement in the fishery.

BACKGROUND: The *Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan* was adopted by the board in 2004 and became effective in 2005. The plan implemented a sablefish fishery-specific area registration, 3,000 pound trip limit, and logbook requirement.

Biological sampling of sablefish and rockfish bycatch harvested during the fishery is coordinated out of Homer and nearly all deliveries occur in Seward. Staff must travel by state vehicle from Homer to Seward in order to meet landings, which takes approximately four hours for the drive alone. Offloading happens quickly and the opportunity to sample landings can easily be missed if there is no notification beforehand. Therefore, having a PNOL in the regulations for this fishery would assist in achieving sampling goals, particularly since there has been a decline in effort and harvest in the sablefish fishery in recent years (Table 44-1), which has resulted in a protracted season with fewer deliveries during a given time period. A PNOL requirement would also allow AWT to be notified about upcoming deliveries providing a coordinated enforcement opportunity.

A similar regulation exists for the PWS sablefish fishery as defined under 5 AAC 28.272(e). Landings during the PWS fishery frequently occur in Seward or Whittier and are covered by the same Homer staff as Cook Inlet Area sablefish landings.

In 2015, a PNOL requirement was implemented for the Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery as a condition of registration as provided by 5 AAC 28.020. *Groundfish area registration* (c), and a check-out procedure to report landing information was specified on the registration form. Vessels complied reasonably well; however, several waivers of the PNOL requirement were requested. There is overlap of participants between the Cook Inlet Area and PWS sablefish fisheries and vessels are able to comply with the PNOL requirements for the PWS sablefish fishery. Therefore, it

would be expected that vessels would also be able to comply with the same requirement for the Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery if it was specified in regulation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Having a PNOL for both fisheries could potentially result in higher productivity and efficiency for the Central Region sampling program because it may allow for more deliveries to be covered during a single sampling trip.

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; however, due to available communication equipment, some fishermen may not have the ability to report their landing until their vessels are closer to port, possibly delaying the time of offload.

Table 44-1.–Cook Inlet Area sablefish harvest and effort since GHL implemented in 1997.

Year	Number of vessels	Number of landings	GHL (lb)	Harvest (lb)	Average/landing (lb)
1997	39	97	72,000	125,349	1,292
1998	29	57	72,000	69,689	1,223
1999	23	40	63,400	73,695	1,842
2000	16	31	67,000	102,639	3,311
2001	21	32	67,000	133,435	4,170
2002	23	26	67,000	108,117	4,158
2003	14	14	75,000	122,098	8,721
2004	17	17	87,000	82,836	4,873
2005	10	37	86,000	84,023	2,271
2006	16	41	76,000	88,695	2,163
2007	10	36	74,000	76,889	2,136
2008	12	43	66,000	68,852	1,601
2009	13	66	60,000	55,263	837
2010	9	44	53,700	55,899	1,270
2011	10	39	56,473	57,350	1,471
2012	12	49	69,000	67,452	1,377
2013	8	44	66,000	42,287	961
2014	5	29	56,000	50,703	1,748
2015	4	34	55,500	31,780	935

PROPOSAL 45 – 5 AAC 28.365. Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add a six-hour prior notice of landing requirement for the Cook Inlet Area commercial directed pelagic shelf rockfish fishery. Fishermen would be required to call a telephone number, specified by the department on registration forms, at least six hours prior to landing and report the following information: 1) vessel name and ADF&G number; 2) date and location of landing; 3) estimated time of arrival; 4) name of fish buyer or processor; and 5) estimated number of pounds of rockfish on board the vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is a logbook, trip limit, and mandatory retention of rockfish requirement for the Cook Inlet directed rockfish fishery under *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.365). There is no PNOL requirement for vessels participating in the Cook Inlet directed pelagic shelf rockfish fishery.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would result in: 1) improved reporting requirements; 2) increased sampling opportunities for the department; and 3) better overall enforcement in the fishery.

BACKGROUND: The *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan*, first implemented in 1993, established a 150,000 lb GHL for all rockfish species combined, and a trip limit. In 1998, the board adopted regulations to restrict the directed fishery to jig gear, and, in 2004, to restrict the fishery to pelagic shelf rockfish species. Additional regulatory changes adopted in 2004, and effective in 2005, required a logbook and mandatory retention of all rockfish.

Biological sampling of rockfish harvested during the fishery is coordinated out of Homer and deliveries generally occur in both Homer and Seward. For Seward landings, staff must travel by state vehicle from Homer to Seward in order to meet vessels, which takes approximately four hours for the drive alone. Offloading happens quickly and the opportunity to sample landings in both ports can easily be missed if there is no notification beforehand. Therefore, having a PNOL in the regulations for this fishery would assist in achieving sampling goals. A PNOL requirement would also allow AWT to be notified about upcoming deliveries providing a coordinated enforcement opportunity.

A similar regulation exists for the PWS sablefish fishery as defined under 5 AAC 28.272 (e), and there is a similar proposal to require PNOL for the Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery. Landings for both sablefish fisheries frequently occur in Seward and are covered by the same Homer staff as Cook Inlet directed rockfish fishery landings.

In 2015, a PNOL requirement was implemented as a condition of registration as provided by 5 AAC 28.020. *Groundfish area registration* (c), and a check-out procedure to report landing information was specified on the registration form. Effort in the directed rockfish fishery doubled from 2014 to 2015 (Table 45-1), and the PNOL requirement aided in coordinating sampling operations. Vessels complied reasonably well; however, several waivers of the PNOL requirement were requested. If

the PNOL requirement were defined in regulation, there would be less confusion by vessel operators regarding expectations of fishery participants.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Having a PNOL for all three fisheries could result in higher productivity and efficiency for the Central Region sampling program because it may allow for more deliveries to be covered during a single sampling trip.

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; however, due to available communication equipment, some fishermen may not have the ability to report their landing until their vessel is closer to port, possibly delaying the time of offload.

Table 45-1.–Cook Inlet Area directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) harvest and effort, 2006–2015.

Year	Number of PSR vessels	Number of PSR landings	Total directed harvest (lb)	Average/landing (lb)	Bycatch rockfish harvest (lb)	Total rockfish harvest (lb)
2006	5	7	12,313	1,759	15,622	27,935
2007	3	6	6,513	1,086	18,875	25,388
2008	3	6	9,667	1,611	20,301	29,968
2009	2	2	4,402	2,201	26,792	31,194
2010	10	17	23,483	1,381	29,132	52,615
2011	11	30	45,983	1,533	22,547	68,530
2012	5	12	12,748	1,062	34,039	46,787
2013	6	18	37,552	2,086	33,207	70,759
2014	12	22	41,758	1,898	19,081	60,839
2015	13	43	81,253	1,890	59,565	140,818

PROPOSAL 46 – 5 AAC 28.365 Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the trip limit for rockfish in the *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* from 4,000 lb to 6,000 lb within five consecutive days.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulation 5 AAC 28.365 (b) allows a vessel fishing in the North Gulf District of the Cook Inlet Management Area to land no more than 4,000 lb of all rockfish species combined within five consecutive days.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would make it more difficult for the department to manage the directed and bycatch rockfish fisheries and stay within the GHL.

BACKGROUND: Rockfish are managed via the *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.365), first implemented in 1993. The plan established a 150,000 lb fishery GHL for all rockfish species, provided for a bycatch fishery when the GHL was attained and five-day trip limits of 4,000 lb for the North Gulf District and 1,000 lb for the Cook Inlet District. From 1993 to 1996, rockfish opened to directed fishing January 1, closed when the 150,000 lb GHL was attained, and remained open as a bycatch-only fishery for the balance of the year. In 1996, due to bycatch harvest levels that exceeded directed fishery removals in some years and a lack of stock abundance information, the board adopted a more conservative approach by making the 150,000 lb GHL a harvest cap rather than a "trigger" for opening the bycatch fishery. Management under the harvest cap approach, begun in 1997, proved problematic, because it required the department to anticipate the amount of rockfish bycatch needed for other directed fisheries such as halibut and Pacific cod.

Also in 1998, the board established a July 1 directed rockfish season opening date and restricted gear for targeting rockfish to jig gear (mechanical jig or hand troll). These measures were adopted to align the directed rockfish season with the lingcod season due to similarities in gear and species habitat requirements, and to focus the directed fishery on black rockfish, rather than yelloweye rockfish, which are more susceptible to overfishing. However, once these changes became effective, yelloweye rockfish harvest in the directed rockfish jig fishery began to increase and by 2001, yelloweye rockfish harvest by jig gear surpassed the amount harvested from longline gear as bycatch to other directed groundfish fisheries. In addition, changes in the commercial harvest species composition heightened concern about stock sustainability because DSR, such as yelloweye, require a much longer rebuilding period than PSR in the event overfishing occurs. In response to the increased DSR harvest from jig gear, the department submitted a proposal in 2004 that was adopted by the board to restrict the directed fishery to PSR species and require logbooks. The effect of these regulatory changes focused the directed jig fishery on PSR species, and resulted in an immediate decline in DSR harvest by jig gear. Logbooks have also provided better resolution on harvest location.

Interest in the directed rockfish fishery has increased. After 2010, harvest and effort were higher than the previous four years, with 2015 harvest approaching the GHL (Table 46-1, Figure 46-1).

In 2015, total harvest was 140,818 lb, which was twice as much as the second highest harvest during the last 10 years, in 2013. In 2015, most of the harvest, or 81,253 lb, was caught in the directed fishery. But, harvest of rockfish as bycatch in other fisheries was also highest during the last 10 years, at 59,565 lb.

Annually since 2006, trip limit overages have occurred infrequently, ranging from one to three occurrences. Since 2006, there were a total of six reported trip limit overages from the North Gulf District and the average rockfish landing ranged from 1,086 lb to 2,201 lb. For the directed PSR fishery, the number of trips increased from 12 in 2012 to 43 in 2015 with a small number of overages. Department staff have not received any negative feedback about existing trip limits from participants in the directed rockfish fishery in the Cook Inlet Management Area.

Rockfish trip limits exist in regulation for other regions of the state, all of them over a five-day period. These rockfish trip limits range from 3,000 lb in PWS to 12,000 lb in East Yakutat Section. Kodiak has a black rockfish five-day trip limit of 5,000 lb which may be liberalized by the department after August 15.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Trip limits have provided the department with an important tool to manage the directed and bycatch rockfish fisheries and stay within the GHL; increased participation in the directed fishery in 2014 and 2015 has pushed harvest closer to the GHL.

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 46-1.–Cook Inlet Management Area commercial rockfish harvest, effort, trip information, 2006–2015.

Year	Participants (PSR)	Trips (PSR)	Trip limit overages [a]	Average per trip (lb)	Directed (lb)	Other fisheries (lb)	Total Area H rockfish harvest (lb)[b]
2006	5	7	0	1,759	12,313	15,622	27,935
2007	3	6	0	1,086	6,513	18,875	25,388
2008	3	6	0	1,611	9,667	20,301	29,968
2009	2	2	1	2,201	4,402	26,792	31,194
2010	10	17	2	1,381	23,483	29,132	52,615
2011	11	30	0	1,533	45,983	22,547	68,530
2012	5	12	0	1,062	12,748	34,039	46,787
2013	6	18	1	2,086	37,552	33,207	70,759
2014	12	22	2	1,898	41,758	19,081	60,839
2015	43	43	3	1,890	81,253	59,565	140,818

[a] All trip limit overages for this time series are from harvest in the North Gulf District, where landings exceeding 4,000 lb rockfish were subject to an overage; none are from the Cook Inlet District, which has a 1,000 lb trip limit.

[b] Directed pelagic rockfish harvest by mechanical jig and hand troll gear in the Cook Inlet and North Gulf districts.

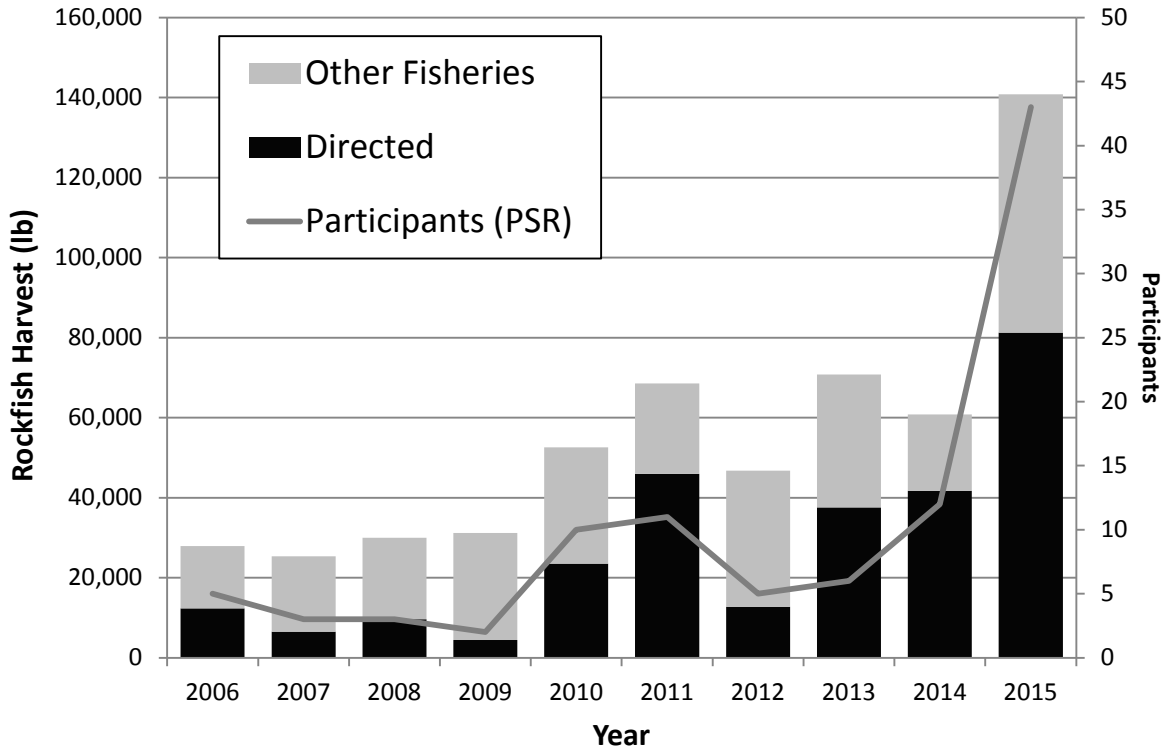

Figure 46-1.–Cook Inlet Management Area annual rockfish harvest for directed and bycatch fisheries with effort from the directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) fishery, 2006–2015.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE GROUP 2 – FRESH WATER SPORT FISHING, COOK INLET-WIDE SPORT FISHING, GUIDE LICENSING, REGISTRATION, AND REPORTING (15 PROPOSALS)

Freshwater Salmon (8 proposals)

PROPOSALS 6 and 7– 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Parker (Proposal 6), Jon Madison (Proposal 7)

WHAT WOULD THESE PROPOSALS DO? These proposals would extend the end of the fishing season for the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, Stariski Creek from October 31 to November 30 (Proposal 6) or through November 15 (Proposal 7).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From July 1 to October 31, sport fishing is allowed (except for king salmon) on the Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Stariski Creek. Rainbow/steelhead trout may not be retained or possessed.

Bait and multiple hooks are allowed from May–June and July 16–August 31. From July 1–15 and September 1–October 31, only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure is allowed.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THESE PROPOSALS WERE ADOPTED? This would provide additional sport fishing opportunity, and increase mortality of steelhead trout and Dolly Varden in these streams by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: The Anchor River, Stariski Creek, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River (roadside streams) support steelhead trout fisheries, of which the Anchor River is the largest. These fall-run steelhead trout stocks enter fresh water from August to November, spawn from April to May, and then emigrate in May and June after spawning. Most of the steelhead trout fishery occurs in the fall and continues until the November 1 season closure or earlier if the streams freeze up.

Creel surveys conducted from 1978–1985 on the Anchor River indicated angler effort decreased dramatically after October 31(Table 6-1).

Run assessment of steelhead trout has been conducted on the Anchor River, and data indicate run sizes were variable and typically small. The immigration, enumerated during three years of weir operation (1988, 1989, and 1992) at river mile (RM) 1, ranged from 769 to 1,261 fish. The midpoint of these runs ranged from September 15–25 and the immigration was 90 percent complete by October 2. Steelhead trout were enumerated in 2010 at RM 2 through most of the immigration and 586 steelhead trout were counted. In 2009, with early installation of the weir on May 13, steelhead trout were enumerated as they migrated downstream by direct observation and video. A total of 605 outmigrating steelhead trout were counted. The current abundance of Anchor River steelhead trout is thought to be within the historical range of abundances.

From 1989–2010, the annual steelhead trout SWHS catch estimates in these roadside streams was variable ranging from under 3,000 to over 14,000 steelhead. The annual variation in catch

estimates was influenced by run size, number of days the stream conditions were conducive to fishing, shifts in effort between streams, and overall variation in angler effort. From 2011–2015 (years with the November 1 closure date), the estimated combined annual steelhead trout catch averaged 3,014 fish, less than half of the 1989–2010 average (when the season closed on January 1) of approximately 6,251 (Table 6-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** these proposals. The proposed date change provides additional opportunity for fall steelhead fishing with little risk to the sustainability of steelhead trout in these roadside streams. Fishing effort in October and Novemeber was low when it was allowed and retention of steelhead trout is prohibited.

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

Table 6-1.–Total estimated angler-hours and average hours spent sport fishing on the Anchor River from August 16 to November 15, based on 1978–1985 creel surveys.

Date	Total angler hours for all years surveyed	Percent	Average angler hours	Percent
Aug 16–31	144,879	46.1	10,349	50.8
Sep 1–15	63,529	20.2	3,737	18.3
Sep 16–30	41,380	13.2	2,299	11.3
Oct 1–15	38,593	12.3	2,270	11.1
Oct 16–31	21,475	6.8	1,193	5.9
Nov 1–15	4,250	1.4	531	2.6
Total	314,106		20,379	

Table 6-2.–Sport catch of steelhead and rainbow trout in Lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, 1989–2015.

Year	Anchor River	Stariski Creek	Deep Creek	Ninilchik River	All streams
1989 [a]	2,066	10	409	505	2,990
1990	1,978	104	1,291	177	3,550
1991	2,349	12	425	512	3,298
1992	2,720	70	740	1,008	4,538
1993	4,156	31	1,448	442	6,077
1994	4,035	75	1,156	804	6,070
1995	2,232	-	520	178	2,930
1996	7,570	47	1,079	522	9,218
1997	3,103	-	384	380	3,867
1998	3,878	71	1,350	576	5,875
1999	3,920	305	689	694	5,608
2000	8,693	329	1,805	760	11,587
2001	3,045	51	627	283	4,006
2002	3,501	203	954	468	5,126
2003	3,409	46	2,456	952	6,863
2004	3,710	39	4,365	400	8,514
2005	2,524	106	1,355	934	4,919
2006	4,513	13	1,234	563	6,323
2007	8,365	23	2,668	725	11,781
2008	8,733	195	3,672	1,465	14,065
2009	4,119	113	1,463	1,181	6,876
2010	2,018	21	1,043	360	3,442
2011	401	19	122	53	595
2012	1,833	34	681	169	2,717
2013	2,246	38	515	100	2,899
2014	3,621	9	932	309	4,871
2015	2,892	33	728	336	3,989
Averages					
1989–2010	4,120	93	1,415	631	6,251
2011–2015	2,199	27	596	193	3,014

Source: Statewide Harvest Survey data from Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 1996– . Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited October 14, 2015). Available from: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/.

[a] Catch first estimated by SWHS during 1989. 1989 catch estimates from unpublished SWHS data. From 1989–2010 the streams were open until December 31 and from 2011–2016 the streams were open until October 31.

PROPOSAL 8 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Sinnhuber.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the start date for hatchery-only king salmon fishery on the Ninilchik River from July 1 to June 16.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Ninilchik River opens from the mouth to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles upstream to king salmon fishing beginning Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends for wild and hatchery king salmon. On July 1, Ninilchik River opens from the mouth to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles upstream and only hatchery king salmon may be retained.

The bag and possession limit is one king salmon 20 inches or longer and 10 king salmon less than 20 inches. King salmon 20 inches or longer harvested from the Ninilchik River count toward the Cook Inlet annual limit of five. Anglers must record the species, the water and date where king salmon 20 inches or longer are harvested on the back of their fishing license or harvest record card.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase opportunity to harvest surplus hatchery king salmon beginning June 16 and reduce the escapement of hatchery king salmon in the Ninilchik River. Catch-and-release mortality of wild king salmon would likely increase but not to a level that would jeopardize the sustainability of the wild escapement or meeting broodstock collection goals. Catch of non-targeted species (steelhead trout) may increase by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: King salmon have been stocked in the Ninilchik River since 1988 to provide additional harvest opportunity for sport anglers. As a result of the stocking program, two groups of king salmon (wild and hatchery) return to the Ninilchik River, which has added an additional level of complexity to the management of the stock. This stock annually supports a fresh water sport fishery, supplies the broodstock needed to stock back into the Ninilchik River and to support stocking in Kachemak Bay terminal salt water fisheries, and contributes to the salt water sport fishery in Cook Inlet.

Periodically from 1991–2007, the Ninilchik River sport fishery has been liberalized, through EO and the board process, to maximize the harvest of hatchery king salmon. The sport fishery has been liberalized through additional fishing days and increased bag limits. During the low production years from 2010–2015, the department restricted the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery by EO in an effort to achieve the king salmon escapement and broodstock goals. In 2013, the board reduced the bag and possession limit to one king salmon (wild or hatchery prior to July 1, hatchery-only July 1–October 31).

Since 2001, the Ninilchik River king salmon escapement has been assessed at the broodstock collection weir (Table 8-1). The SEG of 550–1,300 fish is an index of spawning escapement based upon counts of wild king salmon passed upstream of the weir during July 3–31. Hatchery king

salmon cannot be used towards achieving the SEG. The weir was operated over the total run from 1999–2005 and on average 65% of the wild king salmon escapement was during the index monitoring period. Based on aerial surveys, an average of 35% of king salmon escapement occurs downstream of the weir. Since 1999 the SEG has been achieved in all but three (2003, 2007, 2009).

Since 2009, king salmon harvest and sport fishing effort in the Ninilchik River has been well below historical averages (Table 8-2). From 2009–2015, the Ninilchik River king salmon sport harvest averaged less than 200 fish annually, which was over an 80% reduction from the pre-stocking years (1977–1990) and low stocking years (1999–2008). Sport fishing effort in the Ninilchik River declined by over 70% compared to the same historical periods. These declines were likely associated with below average king salmon runs and EO restrictions to the sport fishery.

In 2015, the annual hatchery king salmon stocking level for the Ninilchik River was increased ~3 fold to provide sufficient broodstock collection, to provide additional harvest opportunities, and buffer the harvest of wild king salmon during years of poor runs. The department anticipates a significant increase in the number of large hatchery king salmon available for harvest starting in 2017.

In 2016, the department issued an EO to open the hatchery king salmon sport fishery in the Ninilchik River on June 18. The gear was restricted to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from June 18–July 15. Despite this liberalization for additional harvest of hatchery king salmon and the increased broodstock goal, 695 hatchery king salmon escaped above the weir and accounted for 31% of total escapement.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal as it increases harvest opportunity directed toward hatchery king salmon. The increased stocking level of hatchery king salmon in the Ninilchik River should provide adequate runs to achieve broodstock collection goals and to support additional harvest opportunities. Maximizing harvest of hatchery king salmon will also provide an additional incentive for anglers to participate in this sport fishery and ultimately minimize the contribution of hatchery king salmon to the escapement.

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 8-1.–Number and escapement of wild and hatchery king salmon counted at the Ninilchik River weir during SEG index monitoring period, 1999–2016.

	Wild king salmon				Hatchery king salmon			
		SEG period[a]		SEG Escapement percentage of total escapement count		SEG period[a]		SEG Escapement percentage of total escapement count
Year	Total escapement count	Weir counts [b]	Escapement counts[c]		Total escapement count	Weir counts [b]	Escapement counts[c]	
1999	1,576	1,351	1,283	81	573	515	447	78
2000	1,553	1,346	1,265	81	685	786	618	90
2001	1,239	1,072	897	72	543	601	471	87
2002	1,340	1,073	897	67	395	403	238	60
2003	1,127	648	517	46	336	293	204	61
2004	1,393	811	679	49	469	409	342	73
2005	2,076	1,424	1,259	61	409	339	286	70
2006	ND	1,114	1,013	ND	ND	260	191	ND
2007	ND	672	543	ND	ND	83	63	ND
2008	ND	721	586	ND	ND	83	62	ND
2009	ND	551	528	ND	ND	97	69	ND
2010[d]	ND	605	605	ND	ND	34	34	ND
2011	ND	757	682	ND	ND	51	24	ND
2012	ND	561	556	ND	ND	65	52	ND
2013	ND	591	571	ND	ND	210	65	ND
2014	ND	983	891	ND	ND	1,116	90	ND
2015	ND	957	874	ND	ND	661	85	ND
2016	1,519	706	572	38	695	436	86	12
Averages								
1999–2005	1,472	1,104	971	65	487	478	372	74
2006–2011		733	655			111	84	
2011–2015		770	715			421	63	

[a] "SEG" is the Sustainable Escapement Goal established in 2007 based on escapement counts from 3–31 July, 1999–2007.

[b] Weir counts are the number of king salmon that arrive at the weir during the SEG period.

[c] Escapement counts are equal to weir counts minus all removals.

[d] No egg takes were conducted in 2010.

Table 8-2.–Statewide Harvest Survey estimates of angler effort and king salmon harvest and catch compared to the number of days open to fishing for Ninilchik River king salmon, 1977–2015.

Year	Estimate of angler effort in days fished [a]	Harvest		Catch [b]		Percent hatchery harvest [d]	Days open to fishing [e]
		Estimate	Percent < 20″ [c]	Estimate	Percent < 20″ [b]		
1977	11,350	1,168	ND	ND	ND	NA	8
1978	14,173	1,445	ND	ND	ND	NA	9
1979	18,282	1,493	ND	ND	ND	NA	9
1980	19,706	723	ND	ND	ND	NA	9
1981	14,184	1,523	11.0	ND	ND	NA	9
1982	11,806	1,240	14.9	ND	ND	NA	9
1983	9,458	871	7.8	ND	ND	NA	9
1984	10,122	648	20.9	ND	ND	NA	9
1985	10,213	983	12.9	ND	ND	NA	9
1986	9,250	420	14.1	ND	ND	NA	9
1987	13,329	1,112	2.2	ND	ND	NA	9
1988	12,533	795	7.6	ND	ND	NA	9
1989	9,997	744	42.8	ND	ND	ND	9
1990	8,323	693	16.9	1,598	16.4	ND	9
1991	19,640	3,123	13.4	5,260	11.5	77	12
1992	27,816	5,316	8.6	11,425	17.4	57	19
1993	20,466	4,235	9.2	9,491	11.3	50	23
1994	21,827	3,108	ND	5,482	ND	45	23
1995	16,160	2,451	ND	4,313	ND	50	23
1996	11,445	2,401	ND	7,481	ND	50	19
1997	11,064	3,263	ND	6,879	ND	ND	9
1998	10,994	1,453	ND	3,395	ND	ND	9
1999	15,344	1,945	ND	4,153	ND	ND	9
2000	12,432	1,782	ND	4,648	ND	49	9
2001	10,602	1,399	ND	3,014	ND	51	12
2002	9,572	830	ND	2,180	ND	ND	12
2003	9,843	1,452	ND	4,205	ND	ND	26
2004	10,500	1,240	ND	2,961	ND	ND	55
2005	9,003	1,342	ND	2,042	ND	ND	9
2006	9,620	1,329	ND	3,004	ND	≥39 [f]	40
2007	10,211	1,575	ND	4,774	ND	ND	58
2008	8,158	976	22.5	2,090	15.3	ND	23
2009	7,687	203	17.2	560	19.1	ND	23
2010	5,296	358	25.4	1,371	18.5	ND	23
2011	2,292	258	74.8	678	82.9	ND	23
2012	2,995	16	50.0	75	66.7	ND	9
2013	1,232	103	32.0	122	42.6	ND	9
2014	4,306	182	100.0	1,432	62.5	ND	23
2015	2,164	69	100.0	563	64.6	ND	23
Pre-stocking average							
1977–1990	12,338	990		1,598			
High stocking average							
1991–1998	17,427	3,169		6,716		55	
Low stocking average							
1999–2010	10,528	1,323		3,176		50	
2011–2015	2,165	126		478		ND	

-continued-

Note: “NA” means not applicable, “ND” means no data, "-" means the value cannot be calculated due to limitations of the data.

[a] The estimate for days fished are for the entire sport fishery season not just for king salmon.

[b] Catch is defined as the number of fish caught-and-released plus those harvested.

[c] The percentage of the total catch or harvest that is less than 20″ total length.

[d] Estimated by creel survey 1991–93, estimated by catch sampling from 1994–1996, 2000, 2001, and 2006.

[e] Standardized to end on 14 July. Additional days through EO for 1991–2007. Starting in 2008, the regulatory fishery was open from 1 July to 31 December.

[f] Minimum; an unknown number of hatchery fish were harvested in EO fishery after the survey was conducted.

PROPOSAL 9 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Sinnhuber.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would increase the bag limit for king salmon on the Ninilchik River to two per day, only one may be wild.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Ninilchik River opens from the mouth to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles upstream to king salmon fishing beginning Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends for wild and hatchery king salmon. On July 1, Ninilchik River opens from the mouth to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles upstream and only hatchery king salmon may be retained.

The bag and possession limit is one king salmon 20 inches or longer and 10 king salmon less than 20 inches. King salmon 20 inches or longer harvested from the Ninilchik River count toward the Cook Inlet annual limit of five. Anglers must record the species, the water and date where king salmon 20 inches or longer are harvested on the back of their fishing license or their harvest record card.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase opportunity to harvest surplus hatchery king salmon beginning June 16 and reduce the escapement of hatchery king salmon in the Ninilchik River. Catch-and-release mortality of wild king salmon would likely increase but not to a level that would jeopardize the sustainability of the wild escapement or meeting broodstock collection goals. Catch of non-targeted species (steelhead trout) may increase by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: King salmon have been stocked in the Ninilchik River since 1988 to provide additional harvest opportunity for sport anglers. As a result of the stocking program, two groups of king salmon (wild and hatchery) return to the Ninilchik River, which has added an additional level of complexity to the management of the stock. This stock annually supports a fresh water sport fishery, supplies the broodstock needed to stock back into the Ninilchik River and to support stocking in Kachemak Bay terminal salt water fisheries, and contributes to the salt water sport fishery in Cook Inlet.

Periodically from 1991–2007, the Ninilchik River sport fishery has been liberalized, through EO and the board process, to maximize the harvest of hatchery king salmon. The sport fishery has been liberalized through additional fishing days and increased bag limits. During the low production years from 2010–2015, the department restricted the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery by EO in an effort to achieve the king salmon escapement and broodstock goals. In 2013, the board reduced the bag and possession limit to 1 king salmon.

Since 2001, the Ninilchik River king salmon escapement has been assessed at the broodstock collection weir (Table 8-1). The SEG of 550–1,300 fish is an index of spawning escapement based upon counts of wild king salmon passed upstream of the weir during July 3–31. Hatchery king

salmon cannot be used towards achieving the SEG. The weir was operated over the total run from 1999–2005 and on average 65% of the wild king salmon escapement was during the index monitoring period. Based on aerial surveys, an average of 35% of king salmon escapement occurs downstream of the weir. Since 1999 the SEG has been achieved in all but three (2003, 2007, 2009). Since 2009, king salmon harvest and sport fishing effort in the Ninilchik River has been well below historical averages (Table 8-2). From 2009–2015, the Ninilchik River king salmon sport harvest averaged less than 200 fish annually, which was over an 80% reduction from the pre-stocking years (1977–1990) and low stocking years (1999–2008). Sport fishing effort in the Ninilchik River declined by over 70% compared to the same historical periods. These declines were likely associated with below average king salmon runs and EO restrictions to the sport fishery.

In 2015, the annual hatchery king salmon stocking level for the Ninilchik River was increased ~3 fold to provide sufficient broodstock collection, to provide additional harvest opportunities, and buffer the harvest of wild king salmon during years of poor runs. The department anticipates a significant increase in the number of large hatchery king salmon available for harvest starting in 2017 and a full complement of broods at the increased stocking level starting in 2019.

In 2016, the department issued an EO to open the hatchery king salmon sport fishery in the Ninilchik River on June 18. The gear was restricted to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from June 18–July 15. Despite this liberalization for additional harvest of hatchery king salmon and the increased broodstock goal, 695 hatchery king salmon escaped above the weir and accounted for 31% of total escapement.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal because the three fold increase stocking level of hatchery king salmon in the Ninilchik River should provide adequate runs to achieve broodstock collection goals and support additional harvest opportunities. Maximizing harvest of hatchery king salmon will also provide an additional incentive for anglers to participate in this sport fishery and ultimately minimize the contribution of hatchery king salmon to the escapement.

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 10 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Zach Stubbs, Mike Priebe.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require mandatory retention of king salmon caught with bait on Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? A king salmon that is 20 inches or longer that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person who originally hooked the fish. A person may not remove a king salmon 20 inches or longer from the water before releasing it.

Anglers may use bait to fish for king salmon on the Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River. The bag and possession limit is 1 king salmon 20 inches or longer and 10 king salmon less than 20 inches.

During May and June after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or longer, anglers may not fish for any species of fish on the Anchor River, Deep Creek or Ninilchik River for the remainder of the day. During the Ninilchik River hatchery-only king salmon fishery that begins July 1, after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or longer, an angler may not fish for any species of fish on the Ninilchik River for the remainder of the day.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce king salmon sport fishing opportunity on the Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River for anglers who chose to fish with bait. After catching a king salmon 20 inches or longer, the angler would be required to harvest and record the fish, and stop fishing for any species on any of these streams for the remainder of the day. The proposal would have an unknown effect on king salmon mortality in these systems. While some release-related mortality would be reduced by prohibiting catch-and-release fishing with bait, additional mortality may come from anglers required to harvest a fish they might otherwise have released. This proposal would increase regulation complexity and complicate enforcement since anglers using artificial lures would still be allowed to catch-and-release king salmon.

BACKGROUND: The Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River king salmon fisheries are conservatively managed through limited time, area, bag, possession, and annual limits. A SEG for each stream is reviewed every three years and the fisheries are managed to their SEG. Inseason escapement monitoring of Anchor River king salmon is used to manage the sport fisheries in these streams. The department has used its EO authority to restrict these sport fisheries preseason and inseason to achieve the SEG in these streams in years of low productivity. Since the use of bait is effective at catching king salmon in these streams, the use of bait has been a primary EO restriction to reduce and slow the king salmon harvest. From 2012–2016, the corresponding SEG was achieved in all years for Deep Creek and Ninilchik River and all years except 2014 for the Anchor River.

The board has adopted regulations to promote best practices for releasing fish and reducing release-related mortality by prohibiting removal of king salmon from the water if it is to be released. It does so primarily through harvest limit reductions and by prohibiting use of bait and multiple hooks when necessary.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it unnecessarily restricts angler opportunity during years of average to above average run strengths. It increases regulatory and enforcement complexity. In years of low runs, use of bait can, and has been restricted by EO. Current regulations allowing anglers to release king salmon caught with bait have resulted in a sustainable harvest during years of average to above average runs. Anglers release fish for a number of reasons and requiring mandatory harvest would contradict regulations prohibiting harvest of wild salmon in the Ninilchik River beginning July 1.

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.

PROPOSALS 11 and 12– 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Priebe (Proposal 11), Zach Stubbs (Proposal 12)

WHAT WOULD THESE PROPOSALS DO? These proposals would create a youth-only fishery on Anchor, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik rivers.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Anchor River, from its mouth to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles upstream, is open to sport fishing for king salmon four days per week over a period of five weeks. It first opens the weekend before Memorial Day weekend. Each week, it is open the weekend, and the Monday and Wednesday following that weekend.

Deep Creek and the Ninilchik River are open to sport fishing for king salmon from their mouths to the ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream beginning Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends. Each week, it is open the weekend, and the Monday following that weekend.

The Ninilchik River opens continuously to sport fishing for hatchery king salmon from its mouth to the ADF&G regulatory markers beginning July 1.

In April 2004, the Alaska Legislature passed HB 98 giving the board authority (Sec. 16.05.251(2)(B)) to establish restricted seasons and areas necessary for persons under 16 years of age to participate in sport fishing.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THESE PROPOSALS WERE ADOPTED? Sport fishing opportunities would increase by 15 hours on the Anchor River and nine hours on Deep Creek and the Ninilchik River. Proposal 11 would define youth as anglers less than 16 years old, proposal 12 would create the fishery for anglers between the ages of six and 15 years old. King salmon harvest would likely increase by a small amount, and allowing effort on Friday may decrease angler success during the Saturday fishery. These proposals would increase regulatory complexity.

BACKGROUND: The Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River king salmon fisheries are conservatively managed through limited time, area, bag and possession limits, and annual limits. A SEG for each stream is reviewed every three years and the fisheries are managed to their SEG. From 2012–2016, the corresponding SEG was achieved in all years for Deep Creek and Ninilchik River and all years except 2014 for the Anchor River.

Saturday openings on the Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River are typically more popular than the remaining opening days because fishing success is typically highest. The higher success rate is generally attributed to a buildup of fresh fish in the area open to fishing. Fishing success is generally considered to be lower on subsequent days, since some of the fish have been harvested or previously caught and less likely to be hooked again.

Currently there are two youth-only fisheries in the LCI Management Area at NDFL on the Homer Spit. These youth-only fisheries were created in a portion of the NDFL on the first Saturdays in June and August to fish for king and coho salmon, respectively.

During the 2016 legislative session, the Alaska Legislature passed HB 137 which increased sport fishing and hunting license fees. In addition, HB 137 changed the age requirement for which Alaska residents are required to have a sport fishing license from 16 to 18. Nonresident anglers age 16 or older are required to have a license to sport fish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of these proposals. There are no sustainability issues with the proposed increase in effort on these stocks. The department is supportive of establishing youth fisheries around the state and favors a limited youth fishery in a small defined area on the Ninilchik River focused on hatchery king salmon on the second Wednesday following Memorial Day weekend so the fishery can be easily monitored.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of these proposals is not expected to result in an additional directcost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

PROPOSAL 13 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Zach Stubbs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a disabled angler-only fishing area on the Anchor River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is no established authority giving the board discretion for creating a disabled angler-only fishing area on the Anchor River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide a dedicated and exclusive area for handicapped and disabled veterans to sport fish on the Anchor River. This change would require improvements to the area for safe access to the handicapped accessible area. Also the site will likely require additional ongoing maintenance and costs may increase significantly, especially following high water or flooding events.

BACKGROUND: Currently in southcentral Alaska, there is one sport fishery on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge lands below the Russian River ferry dock dedicated to wheelchair and mobility impaired anglers only. In the LCI Management Area, two accessible fishing areas have been developed for easier access. A gravel fishing platform for the mobility impaired was developed adjacent to the Silver King Campground within the Anchor River State Recreational area. The platform has since fallen in disrepair and improved access is marginal. A hard surface walkway was incorporated to improved access at NDFL on the Homer Spit. Maintenance of the walkway falls under the jurisdiction of the City of Homer, while stocking smolt in the NDFL and managing the king and coho salmon fishery falls under the jurisdiction of the department.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends **NO ACTION** on this proposal. The board does not have the authority to designate an exclusive handicapped and disabled veterans fishing area and land management of this section of the Anchor River is under jurisdiction of the Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks. The department supports improved access for handicapped and mobility impaired anglers.

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.

Methods and Means, Bag and Possession, Seasons, and Cook Inlet-wide (6 proposals)

PROPOSAL 30 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the king salmon bag limit to 10 king salmon less than 20 inches at the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The bag and possession limits are two king salmon of any size in all salt waters south of the latitude of Bluff Point include NDFL. King salmon 20 inches or longer caught between April 1–September 30 count toward the Cook Inlet annual limit of five and must be recorded.

The NDFL includes the waters from the Homer City Dock near the entrance to the Homer Boat Harbor northwest along the east side of the Homer Spit to the department marker placed approximately 200 yards northwest of the entrance to the NDFL , to a distance of 300 feet from the shore.

The NDFL is closed to snagging except during periods open by EO.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would likely increase harvest of king salmon less than 20 inches in the NDFL. This would establish bag limits for king salmon less than 20 inches that differ from area saltwater limits, including the three Kachemak Bay terminal king salmon fisheries. This does not increase the possession limit of two king salmon which would result in the current possession limit being exceeded when the daily harvest was greater than two fish.

BACKGROUND: The NDFL on the Homer Spit was established in 1984 to create a road accessible terminal salmon sport fishery in Kachemak Bay. Early-run king salmon have been stocked in Halibut Cove Lagoon since 1976, the NDFL since 1984, and Seldovia Lagoon since 1987. These stocking sites are strategically located in salt water areas so that returning adult salmon could be targeted by anglers fishing from shore or a small boat. The main goal of these terminal stockings is to meet demands for more sport fishing opportunities and to reduce fishing pressure on wild king salmon stocks.

These fisheries need to be stocked annually and are managed so that all returning fish are harvested. The department's objective for these fisheries is to provide for 35,000 combined angler-days of annual sport fishing opportunity directed at king and coho salmon in the NDFL, and king salmon in Seldovia Bay and Halibut Cove Lagoon.

The number of king salmon less than 20 inches varies annually and is influenced by various factors including smolt size at stocking, salt water survival during the first year after release, and rearing conditions.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal since it would create differing king salmon bag limits from other Kachemak Bay terminal fisheries and Cook Inlet salt water south of Bluff Point. The department uses emergency order authority to allow snagging in NDFL to encourage harvest and maximize utilization of these stocked fish when necessary.

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 31 – 5 AAC 58.030. Methods, means, and general provisions- Finfish.

PROPOSED BY: Dave Lyon.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create an archery fishery for salmon in waters of Kachemak Bay open to snagging.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The use of archery equipment in Alaska is allowed only for freshwater fish species with no bag limits or with liberal harvest limits (i.e., whitefish, suckers), or northern pike. The use of archery equipment is not permitted in any salt waters of Alaska.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow bowfishing in Halibut Cove Lagoon and along portions of Homer Spit; areas that sustain high public recreational use and concentrations of anglers. The proposed boundary includes areas that conflict with Alaska State Park regulations and City of Homer ordinances (Figure 31-1).

BACKGROUND: Anglers use archery equipment or "bowfishing" equipment in other states to target "rough" fish that generally are not targeted by sport anglers. The use of archery equipment for salmon has not been allowed in Alaska. Alaska State Parks and City of Homer ordinances restrict the use of weapons in the areas under their jurisdiction (Table 31-1). The areas east of the Homer Spit provide recreational opportunities for anglers, motorized and nonmotorized boaters, hikers, and sightseers.

Unless otherwise provided in specific area regulations, sport fishing in Alaska may only be conducted by the use of a single line attached to not more than one plug, spoon, spinner, series of spinners, or two flies, or two hooks attached to a pole or rod. Snagging is allowed year-round in Cook Inlet salt waters south of the latitude of Anchor Point, except for Kachemak Bay east of a line from Anchor Point to Point Pogibshi. East of the line from Anchor Point to Point Pogibshi, snagging is allowed from June 24–December 31, except in the NDFL on the Homer Spit. Snagging is not allowed in Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Anchor Point.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department has concerns that the use of archery gear will lead to safety issues in Cook Inlet saltwater locations where salmon schools attract a number of people in relatively small or confined areas. Potential conflicts with other state regulations and city ordinances are likely to limit this fishery to areas with wild stocks, such as Humpy Creek.

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.

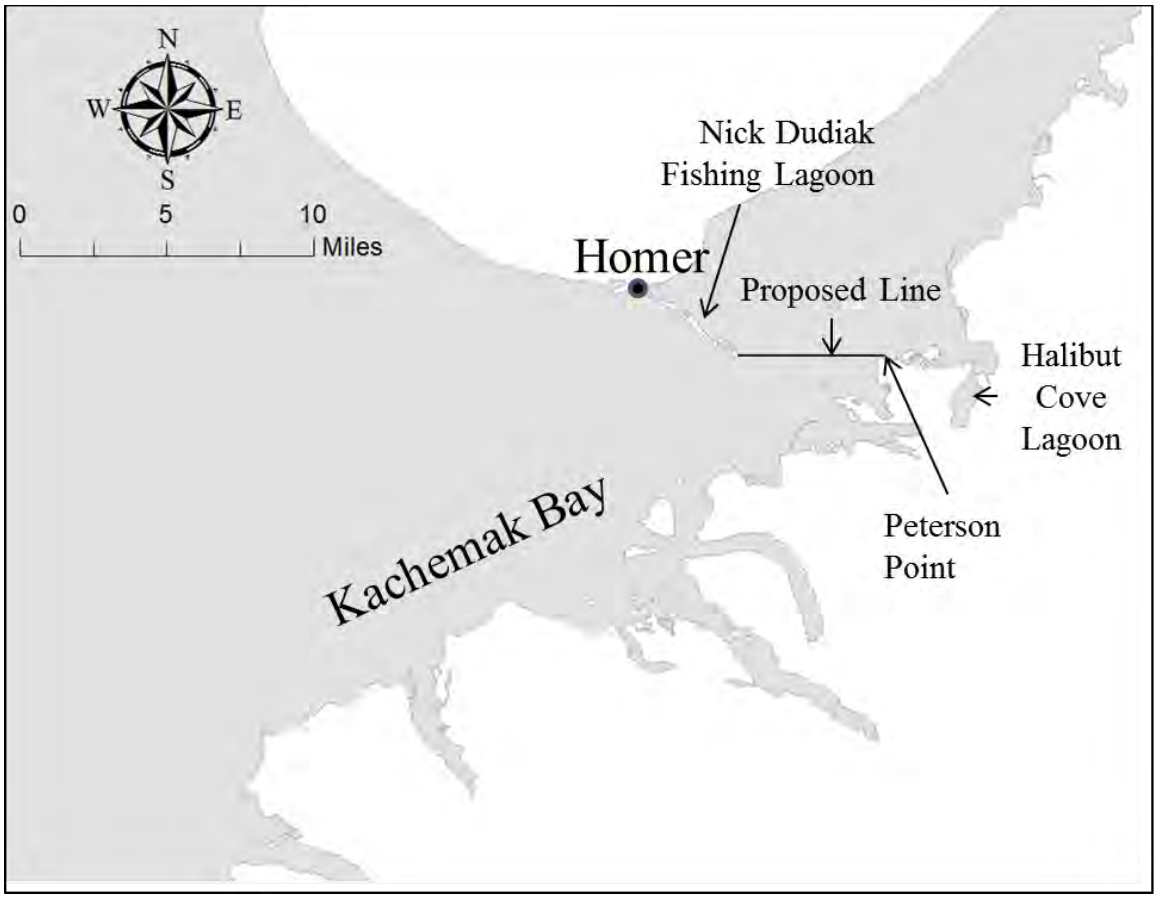

Figure 31-1.–Map of Kachemak Bay including the proposed boundary for archery fishing and other notable landmarks.

Table 31-1.–Use of weapons regulation in Alaska State Parks and within the city limits of Homer.

Alaska State Park Regulations:	
Kachemak Bay State Park Use of Weapons:	
11 AAC 20.100	The use and discharge of a weapon for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping is allowed in Kachemak Bay State Park, except within one-half mile of a developed facility.
Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park Use of Weapons:	
11 AAC 20.200	The use and discharge of a weapon for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping is allowed in Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park.
Definitions	
11 AAC 21.290(6)	"developed facility" includes a boat ramp, campground, picnic area, rest area, visitor information center, swim beach, trailhead, building, parking area, and developed ski area.
11 AAC 21.290(11)	"weapon" includes a bow and arrow, slingshot, crossbow, and firearm.
Homer City Ordinances	
5.28.010	Discharge of firearms prohibited – No person shall discharge a firearm within the corporate limits of the City.
5.30.020	Hunting game within the boundaries of the City of Homer with bow and arrow or by any other means is prohibited.
Definitions	
5.28.040	"Firearm" means a weapon, including a pistol, revolver, rifle or shotgun, either loaded or unloaded, operable or in operable, designed for discharging a shot capable of causing death or serious injury.

PROPOSAL 32 – **5AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for the Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.**

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Open lingcod fishing season in Lower Cook Inlet on June 15, two weeks earlier than the current opening date. It is unclear if this proposal is intended to refer only to Lower Cook Inlet (waters west of Gore Point), or include all waters of the Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area consists of all waters of Alaska excluding freshwater drainages enclosed by a line extending south from Cape Fairfield (148° 50.25′ W. long.), and a line extending east from Cape Douglas (58° 51.10′ N. lat.; Figure 32-1). State management authority for lingcod includes federal waters. The open season for commercial, subsistence, and sport lingcod fishing in this area is July 1–December 31.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Sport harvest of lingcod in Lower Cook Inlet would likely increase with an earlier and longer harvest season. Commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries for lingcod would have different opening dates. Annual production of lingcod may be reduced by the harvest of nest-guarding male lingcod during the month of June.

BACKGROUND: Lingcod are common in Cook Inlet waters. Adult lingcod can be found at depths up to 1,200 feet although they more typically inhabit nearshore rocky reefs from 30–300 feet in depth. Lingcod are a relatively fast growing fish and can live up to 29 years. Females grow faster and attain larger sizes than males. Female lingcod begin to mature at about 30 inches and 50% are mature at an age of seven years and length of 33 inches in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska. Maturity information is not available for male lingcod in Alaska, but nearly all males in southern British Columbia are estimated to be mature at a length of 28 inches.

Knowledge of lingcod spawn timing is based on studies from the Pacific Northwest and Southeast Alaska. Lingcod spawn from mid-February through mid-March in Southeast Alaska, about one month later than spawning in the Pacific Northwest. Prior to spawning, males move into shallow water along rocky reefs affected by wave action or strong tidal currents and begin defending territories. During spawning, females deposit eggs in layers in a single mass located in crevices or under large boulders within a male territory. Males fertilize the egg mass and remain in the vicinity to guard the nest, while females leave the area after spawning. Males are polygamous, potentially fertilizing eggs of multiple females within a season and between seasons. Males typically guard a single egg mass, but have been observed guarding up to three egg masses.

The egg incubation and nest guarding period averages 7–8 weeks, but can take longer in colder water or water with reduced flow rates. Most nest guarding is done by the end of March in Washington, by mid-April in British Columbia, and by early to mid-May in Southeast Alaska. There are no direct data on the nest-guarding season in Southcentral Alaska, but the latitudinal

trend suggests nest guarding extends into June. Male lingcod are aggressive throughout the nest-guarding period, making them extremely vulnerable to harvest. Some eggs are lost to predators even when guarded, but harvest of nest-guarding males virtually ensures complete loss of the egg mass. Department staff have documented what appeared to be fragments of lingcod egg masses in stomachs of halibut caught near Kayak Island as late as June 2.

In 1992, lacking a comprehensive stock assessment, the board adopted a precautionary approach for management of the sport lingcod fishery, which included a minimum size limit to allow fish to spawn prior to being harvested, and a closed season to protect spawners and nest-guarding males. The minimum size limit was set at 35 inches to allow most female lingcod to spawn at least once prior to recruiting into the fishery.

Information from monitoring of the sport harvest indicates a long period of stable size and age composition followed by recent declines in the average size of harvested fish and catch rate. Relatively weak recruitments from 1990 to 1996 reduced the numbers of older, larger lingcod typically seen in the harvest.

Annual sport harvest (SWHS) in Lower Cook Inlet from 1990–2006 averaged 2,180 lingcod then jumped to 7,012 lingcod in 2007 (Figure 32-2). Sport harvest peaked in 2011 at about 7,500 fish and has since declined to about 2,900 fish in 2015. The majority of the harvest is by guided anglers (75% over the last 10 years). Saltwater charter logbook data indicate that lingcod harvest is typically highest in early July and tapers off as the season progresses (Figure 32-3).

Commercial lingcod harvest in the Cook Inlet Area (same boundaries as Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area; Figure 32-1) has declined over the past 10 years from a high of 57,578 lb (Table 32-1; 1,681 fish) in 2006 to a low of 6,742 lb (223 fish) in 2015.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Current regulations in Cook Inlet are designed to improve lingcod reproduction. An earlier opening would likely result in increased harvest, at a time when sport harvests are declining and the department is working to compile stock status information.

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.

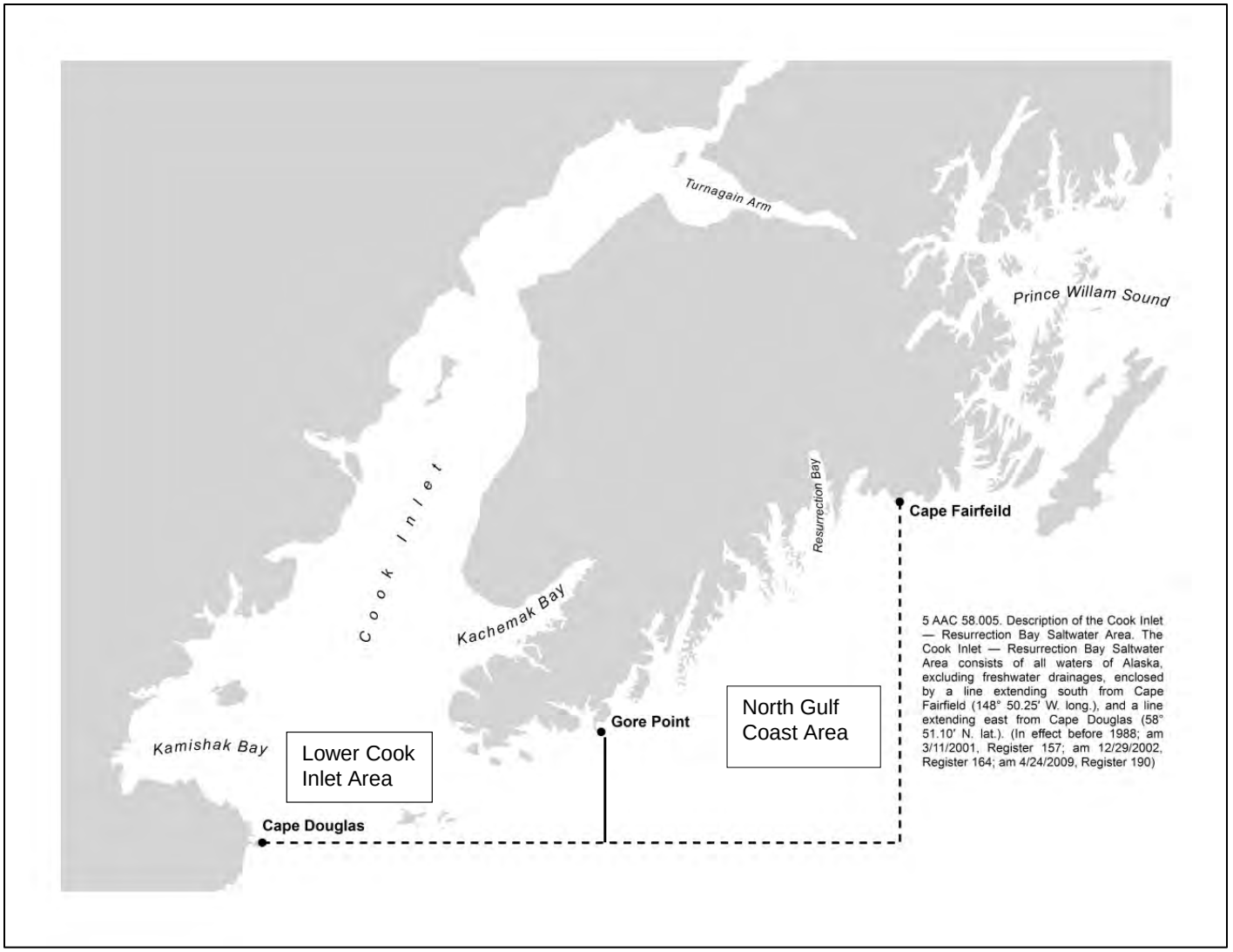

Figure 32-1.–Map of Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

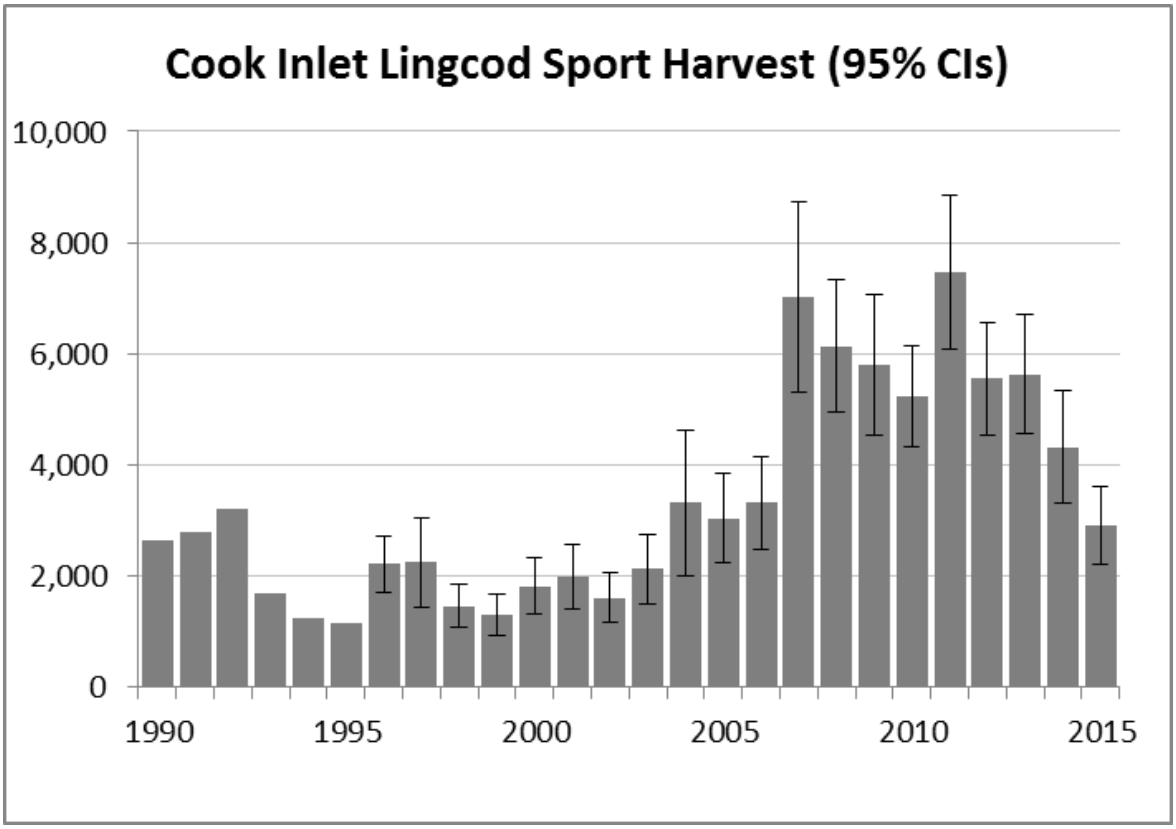

Figure 32-2.–Estimated number of lingcod harvested and released in Lower Cook Inlet, 1990–2015 (Source: ADF&G Statewide Harvest Survey).

Figure 32-3.–Saltwater logbook data for daily average of harvested lingcod.

Table 32 -1.–Cook Inlet Area commercial lingcod harvest, 2006–2015.

Year	Lingcod harvest (lb)	Average weight (lb)	Number of lingcod
2006	57,578	34.2	1,681
2007	47,080	30.0	1,568
2008	44,032	35.7	1,233
2009	19,180	31.0	618
2010	21,966	30.4	723
2011	9,195	33.1	278
2012	9,494	31.2	305
2013	12,010	30.9	389
2014	10,221	33.8	303
2015	6,742	30.3	223

PROPOSAL 33 – **5AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for the Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.**

PROPOSED BY: Thomas Buchanan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish bag and possession limits for small salmon in the salt waters of Resurrection Bay (north of a line from Aialik Cape to Cape Resurrection) as follows: sockeye, chum, pink, or coho salmon less than 16 inches in length, and king salmon less than 20 inches in length, 10 fish of all species combined.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Resurrection Bay, the bag and possession limit for king salmon is two fish any size from May 1–August 31, while the remainder of the year it is one fish any size. For salmon other than king salmon, the bag and possession limit is six fish any size, of which all six can be coho salmon. There are no size limits for salmon in the salt waters of Cook Inlet, Resurrection Bay, or North Gulf Coast with the exception of some Cook Inlet waters where there are specific area bag limits for king salmon larger than 20 inches.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the harvest of all small salmon including unmonitored wild pink and chum salmon stocks by an unknown amount. It would also increase regulatory complexity by creating different limits between the Resurrection Bay terminal harvest area and adjacent North Gulf Coast waters.

BACKGROUND: Resurrection Bay is part of the North Gulf Coast management (Figure 33-1) area and is open to fishing for salmon year around. All five species are caught in Resurrection Bay but coho salmon make up the majority of the salmon harvest (Table 33-1). Resurrection Bay and surrounding waters support one of the largest coho salmon fisheries in Alaska, and is a designated terminal harvest area for stocked coho and king salmon. According to Statewide Harvest Survey data (2005–2014) an average of 92,811 anglers annually access North Gulf Coast and Prince William Sound fisheries through Resurrection Bay.

The most commonly fished wild stocks originating from Resurrection Bay are pink and chum salmon. Many are incidentally caught, but a few anglers target chum salmon on the east side of the bay. The stocks of both these salmon species are believed to be small and they are not monitored, whereas coho and sockeye salmon stocks are monitored by either foot surveys and/or weir. Because of high angling effort in Resurrection Bay, the fresh water drainages of Resurrection Bay have been closed to fishing for all salmon species since before statehood. Previously the board passed a proposal opening a small section of the fresh waters of the Resurrection River, downstream of the Seward Highway and Nash Road. These waters are open June 16–December 31 and only single-hook, artificial lures are allowed. The bag and possession limit is three salmon, of which two may be coho salmon. This freshwater fishery is designed to target stocked coho and sockeye salmon returning to the Bear Creek weir.

In late June and early July it is common to find coho salmon in Resurrection Bay. These coho salmon are moving through the bay taking advantage of the nutrient-rich feeding area on their way to their natal streams and hatcheries in Resurrection Bay, Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet,

and the Kodiak archipelago. During good years charter boats in Seward often take two boat trips per day, with almost all anglers limiting out on six coho salmon per day. Early in the season many of these fish are in the sixteen inch range.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Resurrection Bay is already a terminal harvest area for both king and coho salmon with liberal bag limits for adult salmon. Increased bag limits on small fish may impact small, wild stocks of pink and chum salmon. This would also further complicate regulations within a management area between the Resurrection Bay terminal harvest area and adjacent North Gulf Coast waters.

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.

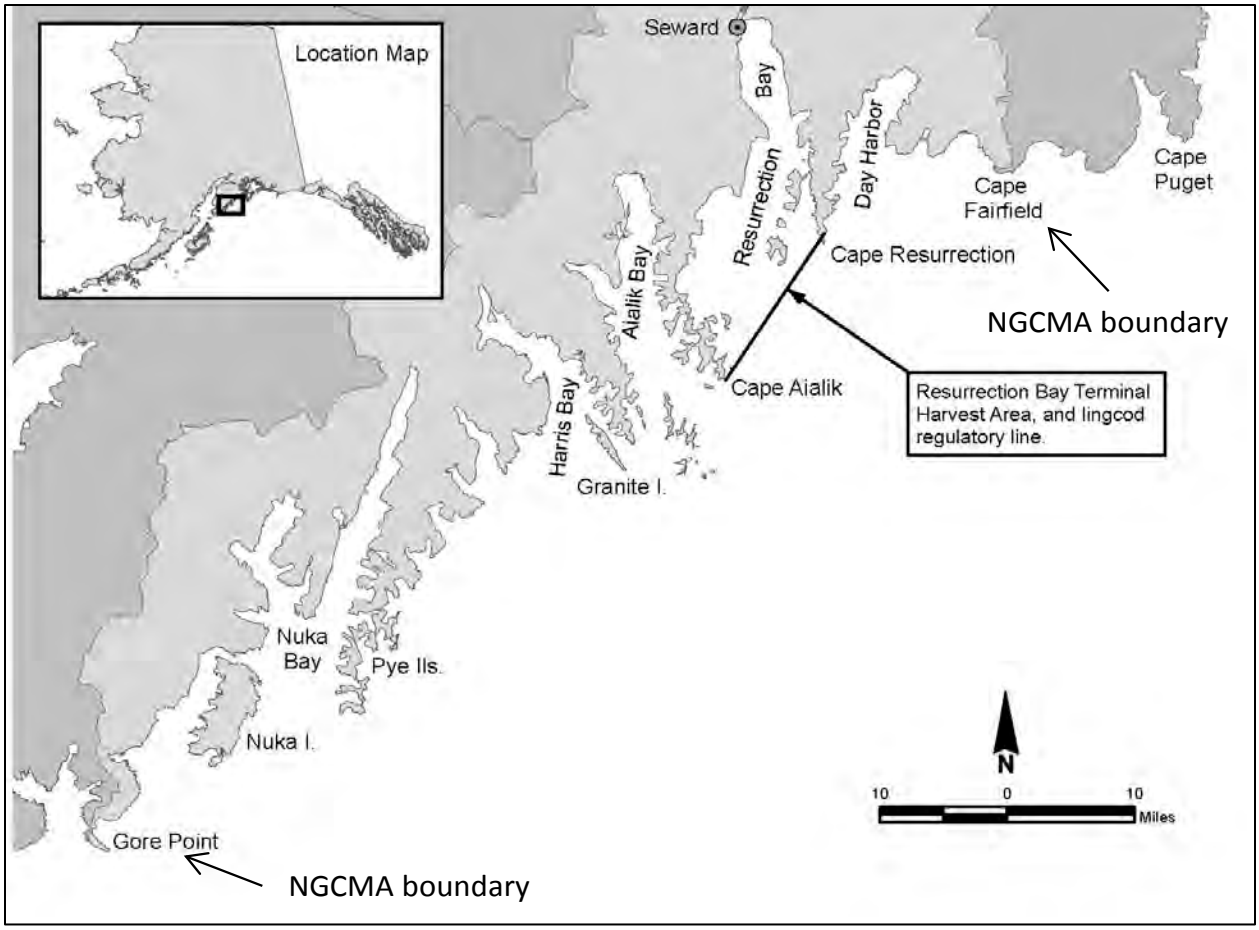

Figure 33-1.–Map of North Gulf Coast Management Area (NGCMA) and Resurrection Bay Terminal Harvest Area boundaries.

Table 33 -1.–Salmon, by species, harvest in Resurrection Bay (2001–2014) salt waters (SWHS).

Year	Coho	Pink	King	Sockeye	Chum	Total (all salmon)
2001	82,234	3,355	2,098	1,011	540	89,238
2002	81,335	3,478	2,752	1,867	324	89,756
2003	70,797	3,408	2,322	1,547	221	78,295
2004	85,775	4,729	2,325	2,300	963	96,092
2005	109,559	5,637	2,161	4,922	1,178	123,457
2006	68,479	2,954	2,643	4,372	715	79,163
2007	85,301	5,180	2,934	4,160	273	97,848
2008	50,139	4,559	1,229	5,277	1,174	62,378
2009	60,270	3,512	1,356	10,248	495	75,881
2010	36,959	2,008	1,250	4,448	188	44,853
2011	48,133	1,156	1,255	8,326	362	59,232
2012	25,465	3,079	514	4,576	476	34,110
2013	35,104	3,422	1,214	4,616	1,037	45,393
2014	43,300	2,423	1,105	4,927	408	52,163
Average	63,061	3,493	1,797	4,471	597	73,419

(Proposal 34 will be heard and public testimony will be taken at both LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting.)

PROPOSAL 34 – **5AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for the Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area; and 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.**

PROPOSED BY: Andy Housh.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow party fishing by group or vessel in fresh and salt waters of Cook Inlet. Anglers who have harvested a bag limit of fish (other than king salmon) could harvest more of these fish, if someone in their party has not yet caught a bag limit of that species.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under statewide regulations a fish when landed and not immediately released becomes part of the bag limit of the person who originally hooked it. Anglers are required to keep track of their individual harvest.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create an areawide exception to statewide individual-based bag limits. Based on SWHS data this proposal would impact an estimated 200,000 anglers that annually participate in Cook Inlet salt and fresh water fisheries, and create inconsistent regulations for halibut because currently individual-based harvest limits are set by federal regulation. Party limits would likely increase harvest by an unknown amount. A clear definition of a "vessel" or "party" bag limit would need to be established. There may be conflict within a vessel or group if any angler did not want to participate in a party limit.

BACKGROUND: Party fishing has not been implemented at any time in Alaska. A similar proposal was addressed by the board during the 2015 Southeast Alaska Finfish meeting. During this meeting it was discussed that the definition of bag limit is consistent statewide and changing the definition would need to be addressed at a statewide meeting due to such broad implications.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Allowing party fishing would increase harvest of all fish by an unknown amount, add complexity to the regulations, make enforcement challenging, and may require other management measures if harvest were to exceed sustainable levels.

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 14 will be heard and public testimony will be taken at both the LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting.)

PROPOSAL 14 – 5AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Andy Housh.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow sockeye salmon not hooked in the mouth (snagged) to be retained in freshwater lakes in the Kenai Peninsula Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Statewide, it is unlawful to intentionally snag or attempt to snag any fish in fresh water. Fish unintentionally hooked elsewhere than in the mouth must be released immediately. "Snag" means to hook a fish elsewhere than in the mouth. Snagging is also not allowed in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of Anchor Point.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the sport harvest of sockeye salmon by increasing angler efficiency, open areas currently closed to sockeye salmon fishing, and could increase fishing effort towards sockeye salmon. Catch-and-release mortality of sockeye salmon and nontarget species may increase by an unknown amount. Area regulations would deviate from statewide regulations which prohibit snagging in fresh water. It would make the enforcement of snagging for other species difficult. In addition, it could encourage anglers to target sockeye salmon on lake spawning grounds.

BACKGROUND: Snagging has been illegal in the fresh waters of Alaska since before statehood. The majority of the sport fisheries for sockeye salmon occur in flowing waters. According to the most recent Statewide Harvest Survey data (SWHS; 2006–2015), in the Kenai Peninsula Area an average of 1,610 sockeye salmon are reported caught in lakes and, 804 of those were harvested (50%). In comparison, 581,052 sockeye salmon are caught in streams and 393,781 (68%) were harvested. There are approximately 9,053 lakes in the Kenai Peninsula Area and few are open to sockeye salmon fishing.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Snagging has been illegal in all fresh waters of Alaska since before statehood and the department continues to oppose the practice in fresh waters. Snagging in freshwater lakes could result in increased injury to salmon and nontarget fish species, and would complicate the enforcement of snagging for other species.

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.

Guide Licensing, Registration, and Reporting (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 277 – 5 AAC 47.090. George Inlet superexclusive guided sport ecotourism Dungeness crab fishery.; 5 AAC 75.075. Sport fishing services and sport fishing guide services; registration requirements; regulation of activities.; 5 AAC 75.076. Sport fishing services and sport fishing guides reporting requirements.; 5 AAC 75.077. Sport fishing guide vessel registration requirements.; 5 AAC 75.085. Guided sport ecotourism requirements.; and 5 AAC 75.995. Definitions.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish saltwater sport fishing guide and operator licensing regulations and amend freshwater sport fishing guide and operator registration requirements, fresh- and saltwater sport fishing guide vessel registration, and fresh- and saltwater sport fishing guide logbook regulations.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Fresh- and saltwater guides and operators must register with the department before conducting sport fishing and sport fishing guide services. A sport fishing guide must obtain and complete a logbook in the manner and at the location specified in the logbook. A vessel must be registered with the department before being used to provide sport fishing services.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would align regulations with statute and continue the sport fishing guide registration program in fresh waters. It would continue vessel registration and logbook programs for all sport fishing guides and operators with no gap in data collection. These data will continue to provide the department, board, and other entities with detailed information on harvest and effort of guided sport fish anglers in fresh- and saltwater fisheries.

BACKGROUND: In February 1998, the board established statewide registration requirements for sport fishing businesses and guides, and required sport fishing business owners to complete logbooks for saltwater charter vessels. In May 2004, the Alaska Legislature adopted HB 452, which established statewide licensing requirements for sport fishing guide business owners and sport fishing guides. The bill also established reporting requirements for all guided fishing trips, in both salt and fresh water, and required that all vessels used in these guided fishing trips be registered with the department. In November 2004, the board amended the state regulations for sport fishing guide businesses and guides to implement the new statutes created by the Alaska Legislature.

The department has operated a program to register (1998–2004, 2015–2016) and/or license (2005–2014) both sport fishing guides and businesses, administer sport fishing salt- (since 1998) and freshwater (since 2005) guide logbooks, and register sport fishing guide vessels (since 2005). The statutes (AS 16.05.260–16.05.299) established by adoption of HB 452 sunsetted effective January 1, 2015. The department used its authority under AS 16.05.251 to continue sport fishing services and guide registration, reporting and vessel registration until legislative action. During the 2016 legislative session, HB 41 was amended before adoption by the Alaska

Legislature to only require licensing of sport fishing guides and businesses operating in salt water.

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.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE GROUP 3: COOK INLET SALT WATER SPORT FISHING (15 PROPOSALS)

Saltwater King Salmon (15 proposals)

PROPOSAL 15 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.; and 5 AAC 58.060. Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the king salmon bag and possession limit north of the latitude of Bluff Point, as well as the Cook Inlet harvest recording requirement; eliminate the annual limit during the months when mature king salmon stocks are not present, from September 1–March 31; include all Cook Inlet salt waters from September 1–March 31 in the *Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.060; *Winter Fishery Plan*); and review the GHL in the *Winter Fishery Plan*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan* stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of the latitude of the Anchor Point Light, including all of Kachemak Bay to the latitude of Cape Douglas and east to the longitude of Gore Point. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Bluff Point.

In Cook Inlet salt waters north of the Anchor Point Light, the king salmon bag and possession limits are one king salmon any size year-round and king salmon 20 inches or longer apply to the annual limit of five king salmon. In Cook Inlet salt waters between the Anchor Point Light and Bluff Point, from April 1–September 30, the king salmon bag and possession limit is one king salmon of any size and king salmon 20 inches or longer apply to the annual limit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would incorporate all Upper Cook Inlet salt waters north of Anchor Point Light into the *Winter Fishery Plan*. This proposal would also expand effective period of the plan to include the month of September when mature Cook Inlet king salmon stocks are no longer present. This would also increase sport fishing and harvest opportunity and reduce regulation complexity by eliminating the annual limit and recording requirement for all Cook Inlet salt waters in September, by increasing the bag and possession limit to two king salmon of any size, and by eliminating the annual limit requirement north of the Anchor Point from October through March.

BACKGROUND: Anglers have trolled for immature king salmon in Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay throughout the year since the 1960s or earlier. Access is primarily through the Homer harbor but anglers from the south side of Kachemak Bay (Bear Cove to Port Graham) also participate in these fisheries. Participation in the winter fishery is dependent on weather conditions and size of boat. Most fishing effort occurs near Bluff Point, and the south side of Kachemak Bay, from Point Pogibshi east to Chugachik Island.

An annual limit of five king salmon for Cook Inlet waters was implemented in 1979. In 1988, the board revised the annual limit and applied it only to Cook Inlet waters north of the line from Cape Douglas to Point Adam from April 1–September 30. In 1990, the board reduced the bag and possession limit from January 1–December 31 north of Bluff Point to one king salmon of any size, but maintained the limit of two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point.

In November 2001, the board adopted a regulation that created an annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for all Cook Inlet waters from January 1–December 31. The regulation became effective on March 18, 2002. The board cited increasing fishing effort and harvest, unknown stock of origin of king salmon in the harvest, and an intent to slow future growth of the winter king salmon fishery as reasons for the regulatory change. Public opposition to the regulation prompted the board to form a LAMP committee in the spring of 2002, charged with developing a regulatory alternative to slow growth in the winter king salmon harvest. In 2002, the board established the *Winter Fishery Plan* based upon a proposed plan submitted by the LAMP committee. In 2010, the board moved the northern boundary of the winter fishery from Bluff Point to the Anchor Point Light (navigational marker).

The *Winter Fishery Plan* established a GHL of 3,000 king salmon. From 2002–2013, king salmon harvest was below the GHL and averaging 2,018 king salmon annually. Harvest exceeded the GHL in 2014 and 2015 (Table 15-1). The increased harvest was attributed to high production of non-local stocks, an increase in the number of days with favorable weather conditions, and an increased abundance of forage fish in Cook Inlet attracting king salmon to feed in the area. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

Prior to 2014, stock composition of the winter king salmon fishery was limited to CWT recoveries collected during department sampling programs, from salmon derbies, and from samples voluntarily turned in by sport anglers. Since 1992, there have been a limited number (less than10) of volunteer CWT detections annually for the winter fishery. No Cook Inlet stocks have been detected in the winter fishery harvest, British Columbia stocks have been the most prevalent. However, relatively few king salmon stocks of Cook Inlet origin have been tagged and relatively few individual Cook Inlet fish received CWTs compared to the diversity of stocks outside of Cook Inlet.

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014 and it is expected to end after 2017. This program will estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-run, summer, and winter fisheries. Preliminary results suggest the king salmon harvest in the winter fishery is nearly exclusively the outside Cook Inlet group (Figure 15-2) but have not identified the stocks that made up the non-Cook Inlet group during the winter fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. It simplifies and aligns king salmon sport fishing regulations during the months when mature king salmon stocks are essentially absent from Cook Inlet salt waters.

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.

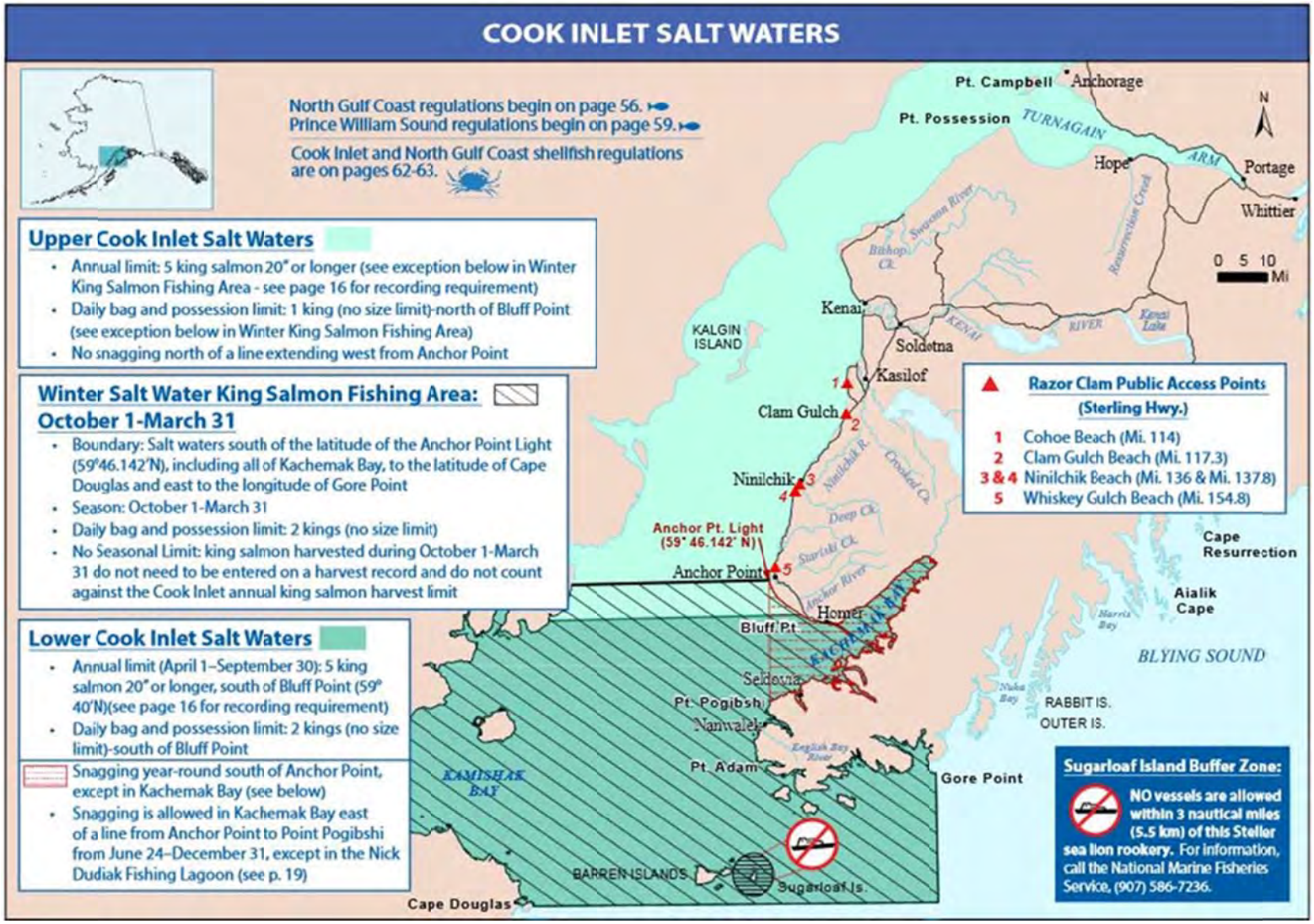

Figure 15-1.–Cook Inlet salt water sport fishery regulation summary for king salmon, 2016 Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary, Southcentral Alaska, page 18.

Table 15-1.–Annual estimates of king salmon harvest in Cook Inlet salt waters by location and fishery, 1972–2015.

	Upper Cook Inlet [a]			Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay						
Year	Early-run [b]	Late-run [c]	Total	Summer [d]	Winter [e]	Summer + Winter total [f]	NDFL	Total	Remainder (unknown location)	Cook Inlet total
1972	1,000	1,250	2,250	–	–	–	–	–	–	2,250
1973	519	491	1,010	–	–	–	–	–	–	1,010
1974	500	100	600	–	–	–	–	–	–	600
1975	540	345	885	–	–	–	–	–	–	885
1976	5,495	1,382	6,877	–	–	–	–	–	–	6,877
1977	4,617	366	4,983	–	–	970	–	970	–	5,953
1978	2,669	2,693	5,362	–	–	816	–	816	–	6,178
1979	3,088	1,164	4,252	–	–	1,034	–	1,034	–	5,286
1980	521	747	1,268	–	–	431	–	431	368	2,067
1981	2,363	170	2,533	–	–	1,145	–	1,145	292	3,970
1982	2,497	1,173	3,670	–	–	1,963	–	1,963	355	5,988
1983	1,000	1,707	2,707	–	–	2,664	–	2,664	260	5,631
1984	2,386	835	3,221	–	–	1,559	–	1,559	2,077	6,857
1985	5,087	1,731	6,818	–	–	883	–	883	–	7,701
1986	2,888	1,208	4,096	–	–	439	–	439	855	5,390
1987	3,613	1,512	5,125	–	–	452	833	1,285	934	7,344
1988	4,243	1,775	6,018	–	–	1,472	5,275	6,747	3,118	15,883
1989	3,863	1,616	5,479	–	–	899	1,956	2,855	1,721	10,055
1990	4,694	1,964	6,658	–	–	1,123	2,027	3,150	1,570	11,378
1991	4,824	2,019	6,843	–	–	775	1,634	2,409	1,341	10,593
1992	5,996	2,509	8,505	–	–	2,978	1,406	4,384	1,466	14,355
1993	8,136	3,404	11,540	–	–	4,400	4,997	9,397	2,336	23,273
1994	6,850	2,296	9,146	–	–	6,154	2,607	8,761	1,832	19,739
1995	8,230	2,673	10,903	–	–	3,642	4,266	7,908	1,786	20,597
1996	4,702	2,006	6,708	–	–	3,509	2,356	5,865	1,801	14,374
1997	5,646	2,850	8,496	–	–	3,591	2,962	6,553	1,839	16,888
1998	5,783	1,680	7,463	–	–	3,417	1,856	5,273	1,064	13,800
1999	4,907	997	5,904	–	–	3,605	2,441	6,046	1,679	13,629
2000	4,773	1,026	5,799	–	–	3,628	2,012	5,640	1,384	12,823
2001	3,671	860	4,531	–	–	3,715	2,535	6,250	772	11,553
2002	3,368	427	3,795	3,877	1,423	5,300	2,621	7,921	122	11,838
2003	4,042	200	4,242	4,590	1,804	6,394	4,059	10,453	133	14,828
2004	3,880	1,539	5,419	6,034	2,069	8,103	4,068	12,171	147	17,737

-continued-

Table 15-1.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Upper Cook Inlet [a]			Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay					Remainder (unknown location)	Cook Inlet total
	Early-run [b]	Late-run [c]	Total	Summer [d]	Winter [e]	Summer + Winter total [f]	NDFL	Total		
2005	3,746	1,040	4,786	8,170	2,958	11,128	2,810	13,938	126	18,850
2006	5,035	898	5,933	6,772	1,515	8,287	2,092	10,379	56	16,368
2007	4,015	797	4,829	3,959	2,011	5,970	1,757	7,727	0	12,556
2008	2,137	517	2,654	3,357	1,692	5,049	833	5,882	26	8,562
2009	1,415	256	1,671	2,444	1,696	4,140	710	4,850	25	6,546
2010	1,753	558	2,311	4,369	2,559	6,928	883	7,811	12	10,134
2011	2,201	853	3,054	3,711	2,000	5,711	418	6,129	101	9,284
2012	955	453	1,408	3,373	2,079	5,452	14	5,466	16	6,890
2013	2,027	510	2,537	5,810	2,411	8,221	95	8,316	169	11,022
2014	1,554	985	2,539	5,059	3,173	8,232	1,060	9,292	158	11,989
2015	2,658	1,528	4,186	8,030	5,137	13,494	1,766	15,260	314	19,760
Averages										
1972–2001	3,837	1,485	5,322			2,211	2,611	3,777	1,374	9,431
2002–2013	2,881	671	3,553	4,706	2,018	6,724	1,697	8,420	78	12,051
2014–2015	2,106	1,257	3,363 #	6,545	4,155	10,863	1,413	12,276	236	15,875

Note: An en dash indicates no data are available.

[a] Excludes harvest from shore.

[b] Early run is 1 January to 30 June.

[c] Late run is 1 July to 31 December.

[d] Summer is 1 April to 30 September.

[e] Winter is 1 January to 31 March and 1 October to 31 December.

[f] Prior to 2002, SWHS did not estimate the Chinook salmon harvest in Lower Cook Inlet salt waters by fishery.

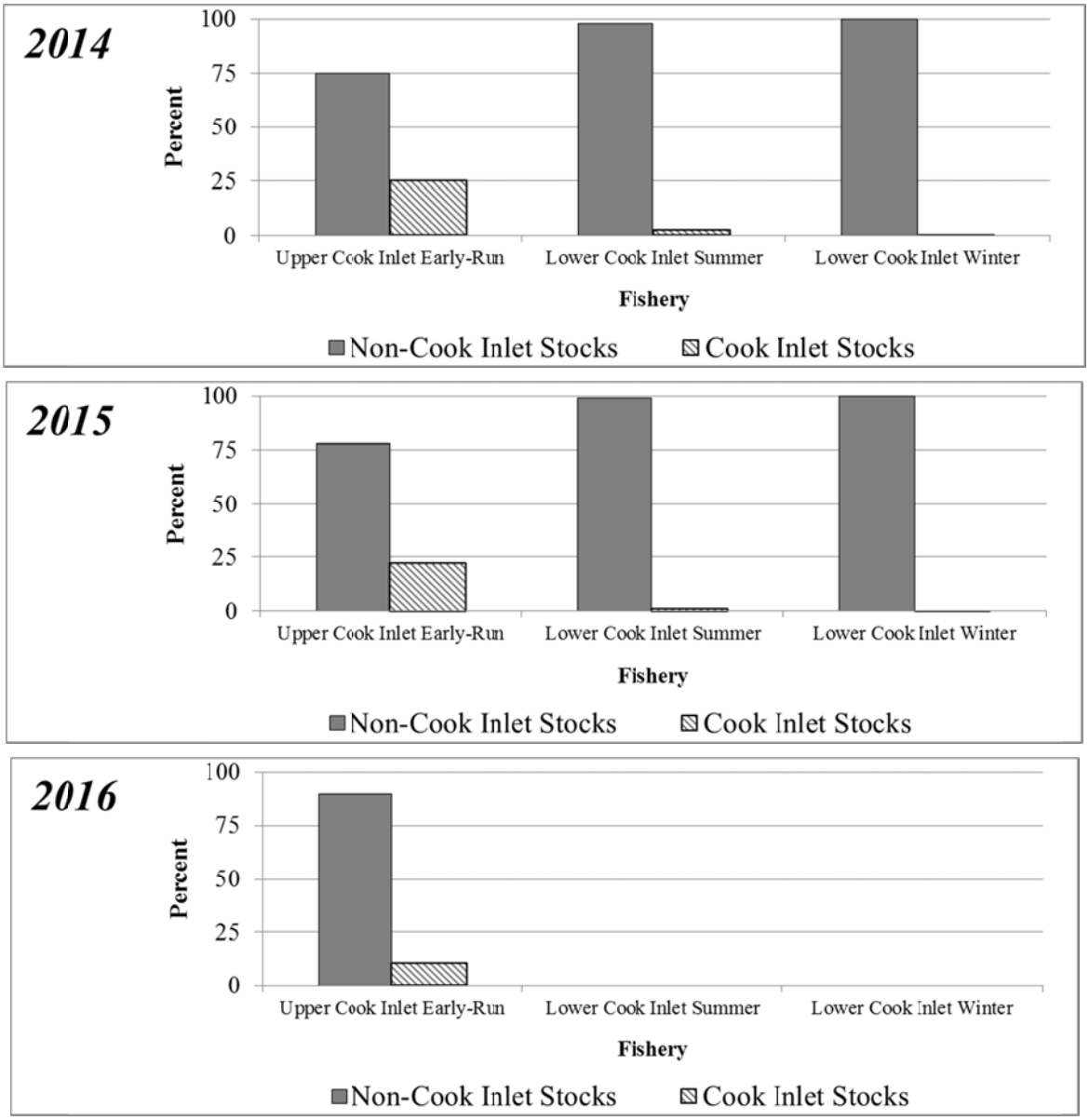

Figure 15-2.–Genetic stock composition of the king salmon harvest in Upper and Lower Cook Inlet king salmon salt water sport fisheries, 2014–2016.

PROPOSAL 19 – 5 AAC 58.060. Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.060; *Winter Fishery Plan*) by starting the season August 10.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan*stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of latitude of the Anchor Point Light, including all of Kachemak Bay to the latitude of Cape Douglas and east to the longitude of Gore Point. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Bluff Point.

From April 1–September 30, the bag limit is one king salmon of any size in waters between the Anchor Point Light and Bluff Point and is two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point. In all Cook Inlet waters from April 1–September 30, king salmon 20 inches or longer harvested must be recorded and count towards the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Changing the season date from October 1 to August 10 would increase the bag limit from one to two king salmon of any size and eliminate harvest recording and annual limit restriction between Bluff Point and the Anchor Point Light and salt waters south of Bluff Point during August 10 to September 30 or an additional 52 days. Harvest in the winter fishery would increase and likely exceed the king salmon GHL; because it would remove the annual limit from these waters earlier in the season. The harvest of king salmon 20″ or longer may increase in other Cook Inlet sport fisheries restricted by the annual limit because king salmon harvested during this time would no longer count towards the annual limit.

BACKGROUND: UCI summer sport fisheries from April–September are managed under the *Early-run Plan* and *Late-run Plan*. During the low production years (2009–2015) of Cook Inlet king salmon stocks, the early-run and late-run fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet were further restricted by EO to minimize mature king salmon harvest.

In November 2001, the board adopted a regulation that created an annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for all Cook Inlet waters from January 1–December 31. The regulation became effective on March 18, 2002. The board cited increasing fishing effort and harvest, unknown stock of origin of king salmon in the harvest and an intent to slow future growth of the winter king salmon fishery as reasons for the regulatory change. Public opposition to the regulation prompted the board to form a LAMP committee in the spring of 2002, charged with developing a regulatory alternative to slow growth in the winter king salmon harvest. In 2002, the board established the *Winter Fishery Plan* based upon a proposed plan submitted by the LAMP committee. In 2010, the board moved the northern boundary of the winter king salmon fishery from Bluff Point to the Anchor Point Light (navigational marker).

The *Winter Fishery Plan* established a GHL of 3,000 king salmon. From 2002–2013, king salmon harvest was below the GHL and averaged 2,018 king salmon annually. Harvest exceeded the GHL in 2014 and 2015 (Table 15-1). The increased harvest was attributed to high production of non-local stocks, an increase in the number of days with favorable weather conditions, and an increased abundance of forage fish in Cook Inlet attracting king salmon to feed in the area. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

Since 1996, king salmon maturity has periodically been assessed to estimate stock composition of the harvest using dockside sampling programs (Table 16-1). Based on Kenai Peninsula king salmon escapement monitoring projects and dock side samples, Cook Inlet stocks are still migrating through Cook Inlet salt waters in August. Maturity was assessed for the early-run fishery from 1996–2002 and the late-run fishery in 1997 and 1998. From 2014–2016, maturity was assessed for the early-run and late-run fisheries. During the above average production of Cook Inlet stocks from 1996–2002, the percentage of the mature fish averaged approximately 76%. In the late-run fishery, on average (1997–1998), approximately 80% of the king salmon harvested were mature. From 2014–2016 maturity was again assessed using dock sampling. During this period, immature king salmon were highly abundant and mature king salmon were less prevalent in the harvest approximately 12% of the king salmon sampled were maturing fish. In the 2014 -2016 late-run fishery, 11%–43% of the king salmon sampled were maturing. Maturing king salmon were observed in the harvest from May–August in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries from 2014–2016.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Based on Kenai Peninsula king salmon escapement monitoring, mature Cook Inlet king salmon stocks are migrating through Cook Inlet salt waters through the end of August. The department submitted Proposal 15 to change the start date of the winter fishery to September 1. Because this proposal would remove the annual limit from these waters earlier in August, it may increase harvest of king salmon 20 inches or longer in other Cook Inlet sport fisheries restricted by the annual limit. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal in waters south of Bluff Point.

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 20 – 5 AAC 58.060. Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the *Winter Fishery Plan* by extending season to April 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan* stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of the latitude of the Anchor Point Light, including all of Kachemak Bay to the latitude of Cape Douglas and east to the longitude of Gore Point. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Bluff Point.

The Early-run Plan applies from April 1–June 30 and designates salt waters from Bluff Point north to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and within one statute mile of shore as the Early-run King Salmon SHA (Figure 16-1). In the SHA, guides may not fish while accompanying paid clients (except to provide assistance to a disabled client), and anglers may not continue to fish for any species on the same day after taking a king salmon 20 inches or longer. The plan also creates three conservation zones within the SHA: 1) south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to two statute miles south of Deep Creek, 2) one statute mile north and south from Stariski Creek, and 3) one statute mile north and ¾ statue mile south of the Anchor River. The conservation zones are closed to sport fishing from April 1–June 30 except sport fishing is allowed from shore south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to Deep Creek on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

From April 1–September 30, the bag limit is one king salmon of any size in waters that lay between the Anchor Point Light and Bluff Point and is two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point. In all Cook Inlet waters from April 1–September 30, king salmon 20 inches or longer harvested must be recorded and count towards the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This adds one month to the Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water Fishery. This change will increase the bag limit from one to two king salmon of any size and eliminate the harvest recording and the annual limit restriction between Bluff Point and the Anchor Point Light during the spawning migration of early-run king salmon. Harvest of Cook Inlet king salmon stocks will likely increase north of Bluff Point and result in exceeding the early-run GHL in some years. This proposal would also eliminate the harvest recording and the annual limit restriction in salt waters south of Bluff Point and of hatchery king salmon returning to Kachemak Bay terminal areas. Harvest within the winter fishery will increase and likely exceed the GHL.

The area between the Anchor Point Light and Bluff Point is included in the *Early-run Plan* and does not apply to this proposal.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet salt waters support a diversity of year round king salmon sport fishing opportunities (Figure 15-1). Feeder (immature), spawner (mature) and stocked (Cook Inlet hatchery) king salmon support the harvest in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet. Immature king salmon are harvested year round while stocked and mature king salmon are harvested April–August. In UCI, king salmon are primarily harvested in nearshore waters from Bluff Point north to Deep Creek. Primary access to UCI occurs at tractor launch facilities on the Deep Creek and Anchor Point beaches (May–August) and year round from the Homer harbor. Small boats may also be self-launched from any beach in the area. In LCI and Kachemak Bay, king salmon are harvested both in terminal fishery locations and by trolling in nearshore and offshore waters. Access is primarily through the Homer harbor but residents from the south side of Kachemak Bay (Bear Cove to Port Graham) also participate in these fisheries.

There are five primary king salmon sport fisheries that occur in Cook Inlet salt waters In UCI, north of Bluff Point, king salmon sport fisheries are defined as the early-run (April 1–June 30) and late-run (July 1–September 30). In LCI, king salmon sport fisheries are defined as the Kachemak Bay Terminal Fishery and the summer fishery south of Bluff Point (April 1–September 30). The winter fishery occurs primarily south of the Anchor Point Light from October 1–March 31. Immature king salmon are harvested in all fisheries except the Kachemak Bay terminal fishery. The winter fishery harvest is assumed to be comprised of only immature king salmon. Mature king salmon are primarily harvested north of Bluff Point with a smaller portion harvested south of Bluff Point in the LCI Inlet summer fishery. Stocked king salmon are harvested in all fisheries. Within LCI, king salmon are stocked at the Kachemak Bay Terminal Fishery locations at NDFL on the Homer Spit, Halibut Cove Lagoon and Seldovia Slough. These fish are harvested in their stocking location but may also support the LCI summer fishery as they return.

From 1996–2002, CWT recoveries were used to assess the contribution of tagged Cook Inlet stocks to the king salmon harvest of the early-run fishery. On average, 6% of the early-run fishery king salmon harvest were tagged Cook Inlet stocks. Non-Cook Inlet tagged stocks contributed roughly 7%, on average, during these years for the early-run fishery. Very few Cook Inlet king salmon stocks were marked for this study but the results suggested that the mature portion of the king salmon harvest in the early-run fishery is well mixed between Cook Inlet stocks. Although CWT recoveries were collected in dock sampling in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet fisheries from 2014–2016, no Cook Inlet stocks were tagged in 2014–2015 and only age-1 fish returning to Ninilchik River, Crooked Creek and Deception Creek were marked in 2016. Since 1992, there has been a limited number (less than10) of volunteer CWT detections annually for the winter fishery. No Cook Inlet stocks have been detected for the winter fishery, with British Columbia hatchery stocks being the most prevalent.

Since 1996, king salmon maturity has periodically been assessed to estimate stock composition of the harvest using dockside sampling programs (Table 16-1). Maturity was assessed for the early-run fishery from 1996–2002. From 2014–2016, maturity was again assessed for the early-run fishery. During the above average production of Cook Inlet stocks from 1996–2002, mature king salmon accounted for 49%–82% of the early-run harvest. From 2014–2016 immature king salmon were highly abundant and mature king salmon were less prevalent. Maturing king salmon were observed in the harvest from May–August in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries from 2014–2016.

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014. The study is expected to end after 2017. This study objective is to estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-run, summer and winter fisheries. Preliminary results have found the outside Cook Inlet group to comprise the majority of harvest in the early-run, summer and winter fisheries (Figure 15-2). Low effort and harvest in the late-run fishery has impeded our ability to assess that fishery. The three Cook Inlet genetic groups are primarily harvested in the early-run fishery. Preliminary results suggest that immature king salmon are nearly exclusively the outside Cook Inlet group and the majority of maturing king salmon harvested in the summer fishery are also the outside Cook Inlet group. Based on the these results, the Cook Inlet genetic groups contribution to the harvest in summer and winter fisheries were at undetectable levels in 2014–2015. Preliminary results have not identified the stocks that comprised the non-Cook Inlet group. When pairing these genetic results with SWHS estimates for the early-run fishery, there were 374 and 558 Cook Inlet king salmon harvested in 2014 and 2015, respectively. Harvest contribution of these genetic groups to the Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries will likely fluctuate annually with shifts in the abundance of Cook Inlet stocks and the prevalence of immature king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Based on Kenai Peninsula king salmon escapement monitoring, mature Cook Inlet king salmon stocks are migrating through Cook Inlet salt waters during the month of April. King salmon have been counted in the Anchor River within the first week of May. This proposal conflicts with the *Early-Run Plan* that starts on April 1 to restrict the harvest of Cook Inlet stocks. The plan was established in 1996 and the start date was chosen based on when Cook Inlet stocks began returning to Cook Inlet. Maturity and genetic group stock composition for the early-run and summer fisheries have not been assessed in the month of April. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal in waters south of Bluff Point.

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 27 – 5 AAC 58.060. Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Winter Fishery Plan* by removing the guideline harvest level.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan* stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of the latitude of the Anchor Point Light, including all of Kachemak Bay to the latitude of Cape Douglas and east to the longitude of Gore Point. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Bluff Point.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would eliminate the GHL and likely increase the harvest of king salmon in the winter salt water fishery.

BACKGROUND: The *Winter Fishery Plan* established a GHL of 3,000 king salmon. From 2002–2013, king salmon harvest was below the GHL and averaging 2,018 king salmon annually. Harvest exceeded the GHL in 2014 and 2015 (Table 25-1). The increased harvest was attributed to high production of nonlocal stocks, an increase in the number of days with favorable weather conditions, and an increased abundance of forage fish in Cook Inlet attracting king salmon to feed in the area. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014. The study is expected to end after 2017. This study objective is to estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-un, summer, and winter fisheries. Preliminary results have found the outside Cook Inlet group to comprise the majority of harvest in the early-run, summer, and winter fisheries (Figure 25-2). Low effort and harvest in the late-run fishery has impeded our ability to assess that fishery. The three Cook Inlet genetic groups are primarily harvested in the early-run fishery. Preliminary results suggest that immature king salmon are nearly exclusively the outside Cook Inlet group and the majority of mature king salmon harvested in the summer fishery are also the outside Cook Inlet group. Based on these results, the Cook Inlet genetic groups contribution to the harvest in summer and winter fisheries were at undetectable levels in 2014-2015. Preliminary results have not identified the stocks that comprised the non-Cook Inlet group. Harvest contribution of these genetic groups to the Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries will likely fluctuate annually with shifts in the abundance of Cook Inlet stocks and the prevalence of immature king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The king salmon GHL was established to slow the growth of the winter king salmon fishery and was exceeded in in 2014 and 2015.

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 25 – 5 AAC 58.060. Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Winter Fishery Plan* to specify that the plan applies to king salmon of Cook Inlet spawning origin.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan* stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of the latitude of the Anchor Point Light. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Anchor Point Light.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would only apply the percentage of Cook Inlet origin king salmon harvested in the winter saltwater fishery to the GHL instead of all king salmon harvested. Adoption of this proposal may result in an increase in the harvest of king salmon, by an unknown amount, during the winter fishery.

BACKGROUND: The *Winter Fishery Plan* established a GHL of 3,000 king salmon. From 2002–2013, king salmon harvest was below the GHL and averaging 2,018 king salmon annually. Harvest exceeded the GHL in 2014 and 2015 (Table 25-1). The increased harvest was attributed to high production of nonlocal stocks, an increase in the number of days with favorable weather conditions, and an increased abundance of forage fish in Cook Inlet attracting king salmon to feed in the area. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014. The study is expected to end after 2017. This study objective is to estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-run, summer and winter fisheries. Preliminary results have found the outside Cook Inlet group to comprise the majority of harvest in the early-run, summer, and winter fisheries (Figure 25-1). Low effort and harvest in the late-run fishery has impeded our ability to assess that fishery. The three Cook Inlet genetic groups are primarily harvested in the early-run fishery. Preliminary results suggest that immature king salmon are nearly exclusively the outside Cook Inlet group and the majority of mature king salmon harvested in the summer fishery are also the outside Cook Inlet group. Based on the these results, the Cook Inlet genetic groups contribution to the harvest in summer and winter fisheries were at undetectable levels in 2014–2015. Preliminary results have not identified the stocks that comprised the non-Cook Inlet group. Harvest contribution of these genetic groups to the Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries will likely fluctuate annually with shifts in the abundance of Cook Inlet stocks and the prevalence of immature king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The king salmon GHL was established to slow the growth of the winter king salmon fishery and was exceeded in 2014 and 2015. If the board adopts regulations affecting the winter king salmon fishery, it may want to consider if the GHL is still appropriate and consistent with other plan

provisions and board intent to manage for all king salmon stocks or specifically those of Cook Inlet origins.

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.

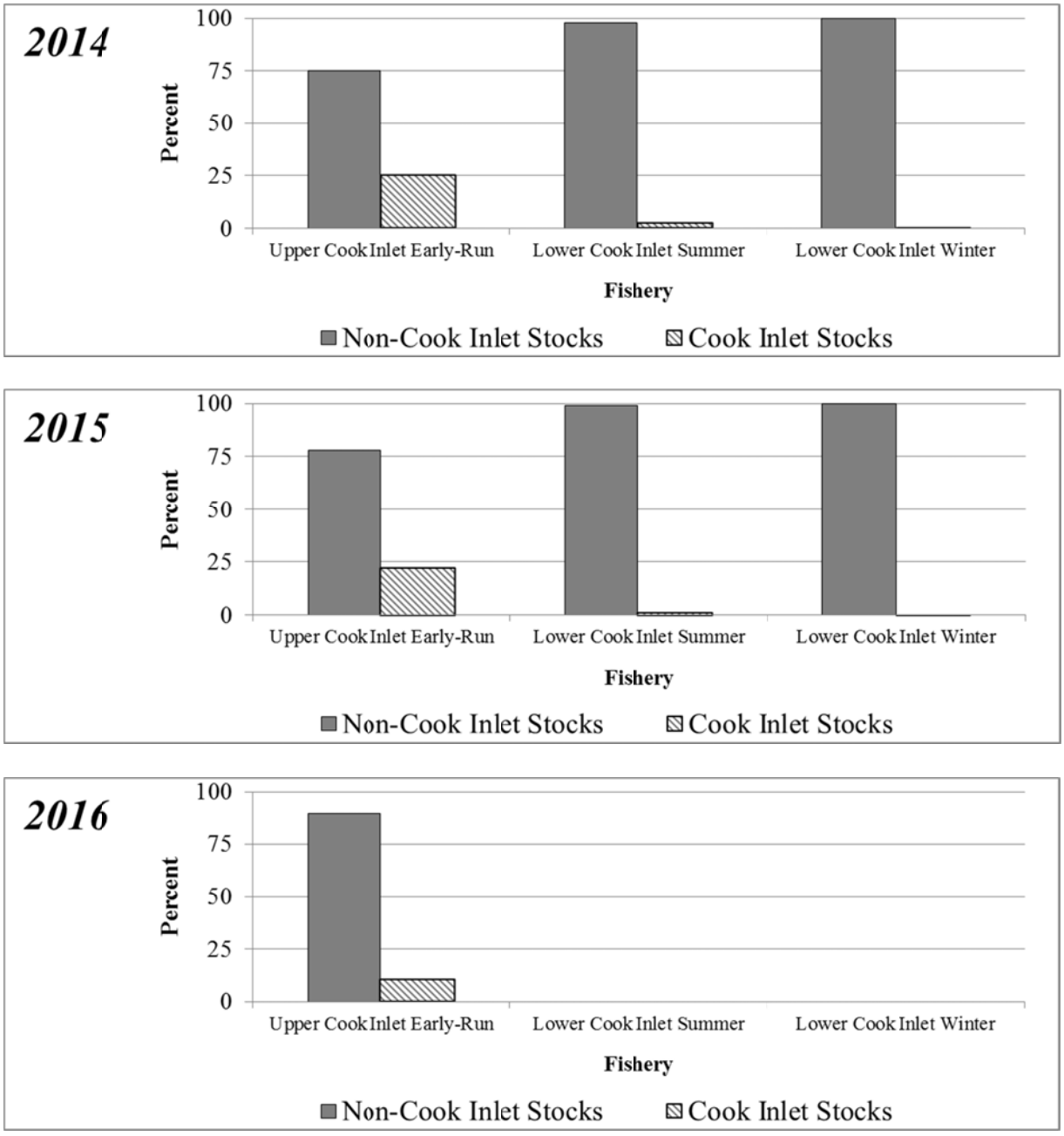

Figure 25-1.–Genetic stock composition of the king salmon harvest in Upper and Lower Cook Inlet king salmon salt water sport fisheries, 2014–2016.

PROPOSAL 26 – 5 AAC 58.060. Lower Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Winter Fishery Plan* to specify that the guideline harvest level is 3,000 king salmon originating from Cook Inlet spawning aggregations.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan* stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of the latitude of the Anchor Point Light, including all of Kachemak Bay to the latitude of Cape Douglas and east to the longitude of Gore Point. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Bluff Point.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would only apply the percentage of Cook Inlet origin king salmon harvested in the winter saltwater fishery to the GHL instead of all king salmon harvested. This may result in an increase in the harvest of king salmon, by an unknown amount, during the winter fishery.

BACKGROUND: The *Winter Fishery Plan* established a GHL of 3,000 king salmon. From 2002–2013, king salmon harvest was below the GHL and averaging 2,018 king salmon annually. Harvest exceeded the GHL in 2014 and 2015 (Table 25-1). The increased harvest was attributed to high production of nonlocal stocks, an increase in the number of days with favorable weather conditions, and an increased abundance of forage fish in Cook Inlet attracting king salmon to feed in the area. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014. The study is expected to end after 2017. This study objective is to estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-run, summer, and winter fisheries. Preliminary results have found the outside Cook Inlet group to comprise the majority of harvest in the early-run, summer, and winter fisheries (Figure 25-2). Low effort and harvest in the late-run fishery has impeded our ability to assess that fishery. The three Cook Inlet genetic groups are primarily harvested in the early-run fishery. Preliminary results suggest that immature king salmon are nearly exclusively the outside Cook Inlet group and the majority of mature king salmon harvested in the summer fishery are also the outside Cook Inlet group. Based on the these results, the Cook Inlet genetic groups contribution to the harvest in summer and winter fisheries were at undetectable levels in 2014–2015. Preliminary results have not identified the stocks that comprised the non-Cook Inlet group. Harvest contribution of these genetic groups to the Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries will likely fluctuate annually with shifts in the abundance of Cook Inlet stocks and the prevalence of immature king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The king salmon GHL was established to slow the growth of the winter king salmon fishery and was

exceeded in in 2014 and 2015. If the board intent is for the GHL to only apply to king salmon originating from Cook Inlet spawning aggregations, the department can use genetics data to determine average contribution of Cook Inlet stocks and apply it to the GHL.

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 16 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the *Upper Cook Inlet Salt Water Early-run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.055; *Early-run Plan*) to align the dates within the plan to encompass the spawning migration of all Cook Inlet stocks from April through August; modify the continuing to fish in the same day regulation; clarify that guides and their crew may not fish for king salmon while guiding; and revise the name of the plan and extend the northern boundary to one mile north of the Ninilchik River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Early-run Plan*is in effect from April 1–June 30 and designates salt waters from Bluff Point north to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and within one statute mile of shore as the early-run King Salmon SHA (Figure 16-1). In the SHA, guides may not fish while accompanying paid clients (except to provide assistance to a disabled client), and anglers may not continue to fish for any species on the same day after taking a king salmon 20 inches or longer. The plan also creates three conservation zones within the SHA: 1) south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to two statute miles south of Deep Creek, 2) one statute mile north and south from Stariski Creek, and 3) one statute mile north and ¾ statue mile south of the Anchor River. These conservation zones are closed to sport fishing from April 1–June 30 except sport fishing is allowed from shore south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to Deep Creek on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

The *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359; *Late-run Plan*) has a provision from July 1–July 31 in salt waters north of Bluff Point that the fishery will be closed by the department if the projected Kenai River late-run escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon.

Cook Inlet salt waters within the one mile radius of the terminus of the Ninilchik River are closed to sport fishing for king salmon from January 1–June 30, except sport fishing from shore is allowed on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

In Cook Inlet salt waters north of Bluff Point from April 1–30, the king salmon bag and possession limit is one king salmon of any size and king salmon 20 inches or longer apply to the five king salmon annual limit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would align king salmon sport fishing regulations in UCI salt waters during the months when mature Cook Inlet king salmon stocks are present. This proposal effectively adds two additional months to the management plan, providing the same protections to all Cook Inlet king salmon stocks (early-run and late-run) moving north of Bluff Point to 1-mile north of the Ninilchik River while they migrate to reach their spawning stream. Harvest would likely change significantly and be expected to fall within the 8,000 fish GHL. This would remove references to the SHAs and make Cook Inlet salt

water regulations for king salmon the same for all salt waters north of Bluff Point to the mouth of Ninilchik River from April 1–August 30. Anglers would be prohibited from fishing for king salmon after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or longer, and guides and their crew would be prohibited from sport fishing while guiding. The early-run portion of the title would be removed since the plan will also encompass the late-run fishery.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet salt waters support a diversity of year-round king salmon sport fishing opportunities (Figure 15-1). In Upper Cook Inlet, king salmon are primarily harvested in nearshore salt waters from Bluff Point north to Deep Creek. Primary access to these waters occurs at tractor launch facilities on the Deep Creek and Anchor Point beaches (May–August) and year round from the Homer harbor. Small boats may also be self-launched from any beach in the area. Immature (feeder), mature (spawner) and stocked (Cook Inlet hatchery) king salmon support the harvest in Upper Cook Inlet. Immature king salmon are harvested year round, while stocked and mature king salmon are harvested in addition to immature king salmon from April–August, during their spawning migration to Cook Inlet streams and terminal fisheries.

The Upper Cook Inlet summer sport fisheries from April through September are managed under the *Early-run Plan* (Figure 16-1), and *Late-run Plan*. The early-run has a GHL of 8,000 king salmon. In 2009–2015 the early-run and late-run fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet were further restricted by EO to minimize mature king salmon harvest.

The board adopted the *Early-run Plan* in 1996. The plan was intended to stabilize a growing king salmon fishery on fully utilized mixed stocks in nearshore salt waters from the mouth of the Ninilchik River south to Bluff Point, and to prevent overexploitation of early-run Cook Inlet king salmon stocks that were experiencing below average returns and were thought to be intercepted in the salt water sport fishery. These king salmon stocks included Anchor River, Deep Creek, Kenai River, and some Northern Cook Inlet tributaries. Record harvests were occurring in the Anchor River and Deep Creek concurrently with below average escapement. In addition to creating the management plan, the board restricted fresh water king salmon fisheries in Anchor River and Deep Creek as a further conservation measure. The plan also established closed water areas at the mouths of the roadside streams that extended one mile seaward from the mouth of the Ninilchik River to Bluff Point.

Based on SWHS estimates from 1990–2015, the overall catch of king salmon in Cook Inlet salt waters averaged approximately 20,500 fish annually. The Cook Inlet king salmon average salt water harvest from 1977–2015 was ~11,500 fish (Table 15-1). The early-run fishery contributes on average approximately 33% to the overall Cook Inlet king salmon harvest. In most years, the late-run fishery has had the smallest contribution to the overall harvest.

From 1996–2002, CWT recoveries were used to assess the contribution of tagged Cook Inlet stocks to the king salmon harvest of the early-run fishery. On average 6% of the early-run fishery king salmon harvest were tagged Cook Inlet stocks. Non-Cook Inlet tagged stocks contributed roughly 7% on average during these years for the early-run fishery. Very few Cook Inlet king salmon stocks were marked for this study but the results suggested that the mature portion of the king salmon harvest in the early-run fishery was well mixed between Cook Inlet stocks. Although CWT recoveries were collected in dock sampling in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet fisheries from 2014–2016, no Cook Inlet stocks were tagged in 2014 or 2015 and only age-1 fish returning to Ninilchik River, Crooked Creek and Deception Creek were marked in 2016. Since 1992, there has been a limited number (less than 10) of volunteer CWT detections annually for

the winter fishery. No Cook Inlet stocks have been detected in the winter fishery. British Columbia stocks have been the most prevalent outside-Cook Inlet stock.

Since 1996, king salmon maturity was periodically assessed to estimate stock composition of the harvest using dockside sampling programs (Table 16-1). Maturity was assessed for the early-run fishery from 1996–2002 and the late-run fishery in 1997 and 1998. From 2014–2016, maturity was assessed for the early-run and late-run fisheries. During the above average production of Cook Inlet stocks from 1996–2002, the percentage of the mature fish averaged approximately 76%. During these years, a higher percentage (range 52%–83%) of the king salmon harvested within the Special Harvest Areas (SHA, within one mile of shore) were maturing fish and 17%–37% of the harvest in waters greater than one mile from shore were also maturing fish. In the late-run fishery on average (1997–1998) 80% of the king salmon harvested were maturing fish. From 2014–2016 maturity was again assessed using dock sampling. During this period, immature king salmon were highly abundant and mature king salmon were less prevalent and approximately 12% of the king salmon sampled were maturing fish. In the early-run fishery, the harvest of king salmon in the SHA (range from 15%-38%) was slightly higher than in waters greater than one mile from shore (range 10% - 20%). Although maturing king salmon were observed in the harvest from May through August in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries, they were more prevalent in the SHAs of the early-run fishery and just south of Bluff Point in May in the summer fishery.

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014. The study is expected to end after 2017. This study objective is to estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-run, summer and winter fisheries. Preliminary results have found the outside Cook Inlet group comprises the majority of the harvest in the early-run fishery (Figure 15-2). Low effort and harvest in the late-run fishery has impeded our ability to assess that fishery. The three Cook Inlet genetic groups are primarily harvested in the early-run fishery. When pairing these genetic results with SWHS harvest estimates for the early-run fishery, there were 374 and 558 Cook Inlet king salmon harvested in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The harvest contribution of these genetic groups to the Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries will likely fluctuate annually with shifts in the abundance of Cook Inlet stocks and the prevalence of immature king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. This proposal would simplify regulations in Upper Cook Inlet while better aligning and maintaining the most effective suite of regulations to restrict the harvest of mature Cook Inlet king salmon stocks as they migrate through Cook Inlet salt waters. This proposal would extend these regulations to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and include July and August, which would align with the entire spatial and temporal distribution of the mature king salmon migration.

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.

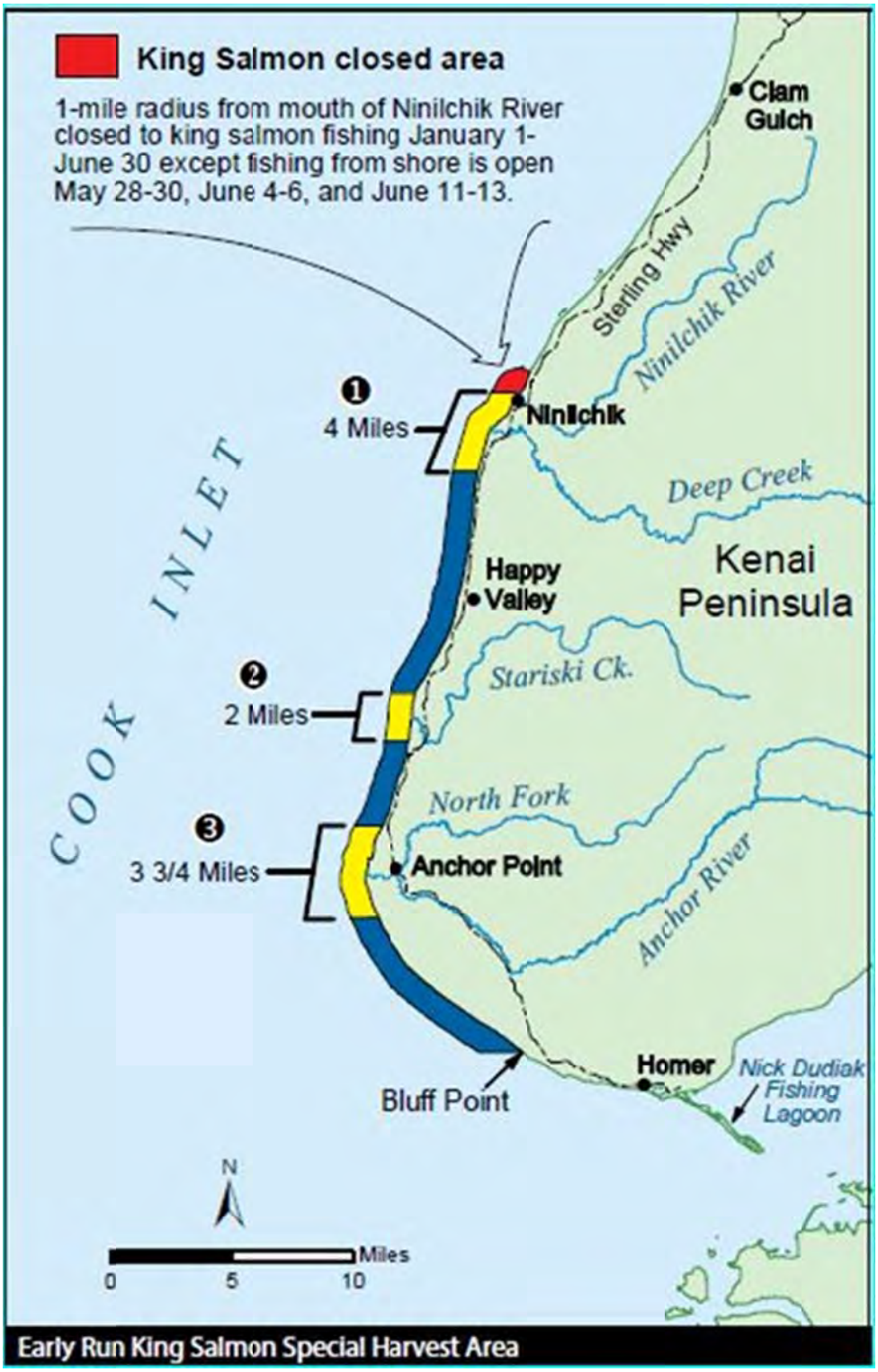

Figure 16-1.–Cook Inlet salt water sport fishery regulation summary for king salmon, *2016 Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary, Southcentral Alaska*, page 18.

Table 16-1.–The percentage of the Cook Inlet salt water king salmon harvest that was mature by location and fishery, 1996–2016.

	Percent mature					
	Upper Cook Inlet				Lower Cook Inlet	
	Early -Run					
Year	SHA[a]	Outside[b]	Combined	Late-Run	Summer	Winter
1996	-	-	82	-	-	-
1997	80	33	78	89	-	-
1998	66	17	60	72	-	-
1999	83	36	72	-	-	-
2000	76	29	60	-	-	-
2001	70	37	58	-	-	-
2002	52	26	49	-	-	-
2014	38	19	34	42	9	-
2015	25	20	22	43	11	-
2016	15	10	12	11	11	-

[a] "SHA" means Special Harvest Areas. These are within one mile from shore bordering the conservation zones around the mouths of the roadside streams.

[b] All remaining waters in Upper Cook Inlet greater than one mile from shore.

PROPOSAL 17 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet- Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the *Early-run Plan* by including the closed area one mile north of the Ninilchik River in the conservation zones specified in the plan and effectively eliminating the pie-shaped area currently closed to king salmon sport fishing from January 1–June 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Cook Inlet salt waters within the one mile radius of the terminus of the Ninilchik River are closed to sport fishing for king salmon from January 1–June 30, except sport fishing from shore is allowed on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

The *Early-run Plan* applies from April 1–June 30 and designates salt waters from Bluff Point north to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and within one statute mile of shore as the Early-run King Salmon SHA (Figure 16-1). In the SHA, guides may not fish while accompanying paid clients (except to provide assistance to a disabled client), and anglers may not continue to fish for any species on the same day after taking a king salmon 20 inches or longer. The plan also creates three conservation zones within the SHA: 1) south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to two statute miles south of Deep Creek, 2) one statute mile north and south from Stariski Creek, and 3) one statute mile north and ¾ statute mile south of the Anchor River. The conservation zones are closed to sport fishing from April 1–June 30 except sport fishing is allowed from shore south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to Deep Creek on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce regulation complexity by extending the closed area at the mouth of the Ninilchik River to one mile north and one mile offshore and combining it with the adjacent conservation zone, thus combining regulations that are functionally the same. Extending the closed area is not expected to have a measurable impact on harvest.

BACKGROUND: The evolution of the current regulations restricting time and area surrounding the mouth of the Ninilchik River, dates back to the 1960s when the freshwater king salmon bag limits and seasons were applied to within a ½ mile radius of the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, Stariski Creek and the Anchor River. Once the Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area was defined in 1981, special provisions closed the harvest of king salmon in salt waters within one mile of the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, Stariski Creek and Anchor River from January 1–June 30.

The board adopted the *Early-run plan* in 1996. The plan was intended to stabilize a growing king salmon fishery on fully utilized mixed stocks in the nearshore salt waters starting from the mouth of the Ninilchik south to Bluff Point. Since the area north of the Ninilchik River was not included in the plan, the 1-mile radius that extended north remained unchanged while the closed area to the south was changed to one-mile seaward of the Ninilchik River mouth to two miles south of Deep Creek (Figure 16-1). In 2010, the board adopted a public proposal to allow king

salmon sport fishing from shore within the closed areas north and south of the Ninilchik River mouth during the fresh water open season.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. This proposal will reduce regulation complexity by merging regulations that functionally are the same.

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 18 – 5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Salt Water Early-run King Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would align the salt water closed area season with fresh water run timing and fresh water regulations.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Early-run Plan* applies from April 1–June 30 and designates salt waters from Bluff Point north to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and within one statute mile of shore as the Early-run King Salmon SHA (Figure 16-1). In the SHA, guides may not fish while accompanying paid clients (except to provide assistance to a disabled client), and anglers may not continue to fish for any species on the same day after taking a king salmon 20 inches or longer. The plan also creates three conservation zones within the SHA: 1) south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to two statute miles south of Deep Creek, 2) one statute mile north and south from Stariski Creek, and 3) one statute mile north and ¾ statue mile south of the Anchor River. The conservation zones are closed to sport fishing from April 1–June 30 except sport fishing is allowed from shore south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to Deep Creek on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

On July 1, the salt water areas at the stream mouths open to sport fishing, anglers are allowed to use bait, and the bag limit is one king salmon of any size.

From July 1–15, sport fishing in the lower two miles of Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Stariski Creek is open to fishing for all species except king salmon, and gear is limited to one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure. On July 1, sport fishing in the Ninilchik River is open in the lower two miles for all species except wild king salmon. Bait and treble hooks are allowed in the Ninilchik River to harvest hatchery king salmon. The bag and possession limit is one king salmon 20 inches or long and the annual limit applies.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the effective date from June 30 to July 15 for the conservation zones in the *Early-run Plan* and reduce fishing opportunity in these waters by 15 days. This change better aligns salt and fresh water regulations to restrict the harvest of king salmon throughout the entire king salmon run to the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Stariski Creek and Ninilchik River. Conservation zones protect local stocks from harvest as they enter freshwater. Extending the effective date to July 15, provides this protection for their entire migration period.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet salt water king salmon fisheries are regulated under general Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay salt water regulations and under three management plans (Figure 15-1). In Upper Cook Inlet, regulations include: bag, possession, and annual limits, and special regulations. King salmon annual limits and recording requirements have been used in Cook Inlet salt waters since 1979 and seasonal area closures around the mouths of the roadside streams in the early-run fishery since 1978. The evolution of the current regulations restricting time and area surrounding the stream mouths, dates back to the 1960s when the fresh water king salmon bag limits and seasons applied to within a ½ mile radius of the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, Stariski Creek and the Anchor River. Once the Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area was defined in 1981, special provisions closed the salt waters within one mile of the Ninilchik River,

Deep Creek, Stariski Creek and Anchor River to the taking of king salmon from January 1–June 30.

The board adopted the *Early-run Plan* in 1996 (Figure 16-1). The plan was intended to stabilize a growing king salmon fishery on fully utilized mixed stocks in nearshore salt waters from the mouth of the Ninilchik River south to Bluff Point, and to prevent overexploitation of early-run Cook Inlet king salmon stocks that were experiencing below average returns and were thought to be intercepted in the salt water sport fishery. These king salmon stocks included Anchor River, Deep Creek, Kenai River, and some Northern Cook Inlet tributaries. Record harvests were occurring in the Anchor River and Deep Creek concurrently with below average escapement. In addition to creating the *Early-run Plan*, the board restricted fresh water king salmon fisheries in Anchor River and Deep Creek as a further conservation measure. The plan also established closed water areas at the mouths of the roadside streams that extended one mile seaward from the mouth of the Ninilchik River to Bluff Point. During the low production years (2009–2015) of Cook Inlet king salmon stocks, the early-run fishery in UCI north of Bluff Point was further restricted by EO to minimize the mature king salmon harvest. During these years, no EO restrictions were placed on Lower Cook Inlet salt water king salmon fisheries.

In some years, a large percentage of the king salmon return enters the roadside streams in July. During low stream flows and water levels, king salmon generally hold near stream mouths in the nearby salt water area and wait to for more optimal fresh water conditions before pushing up the river. On average (2004–2016), 15% of the Anchor River king salmon escapement was counted from July 1–15 (Table 18-1).

Upper Cook Inlet sport fisheries are managed under the *Early-run Plan* and *Late-run Plan*. The early-run has a GHL of 8,000 king salmon. From 2011–2013, EOs were issued annually restricting the fresh water and nearby salt water fisheries in July in response to low Anchor River king salmon escapements. In 2013, the board adopted gear restrictions from July 1–15 on the Anchor River, Stariski Creek and Deep Creek to reduce catch and associated hooking mortality of maturing king salmon holding in the lower two miles of the river. The Anchor River and Deep Creek are closed to sport fishing after the 2nd weekend in June after Memorial Day until July 1. When the streams open on July 1, anglers generally target Dolly Varden, although the majority of the fish in the rivers during the first two weeks in July is often king salmon. On July 1, the conservation zones surrounding the roadside stream mouths in Upper Cook Inlet saltwater open to fishing and king salmon are allowed to be harvested and bait is allowed.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. This proposal will align salt water and fresh water regulations to restrict king salmon harvest in the roadside streams throughout the entire run.

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 18-1.–Anchor River king salmon escapement and escapement counts from July 1–15, July 16–31, and July 1–31, 2004–2016.

		King salmon escapement counts					
		July 1–15		July 16–31		July 1–31	
Year	Escapement	Total	Percent [a]	Total	Percent [a]	Total	Percent [a]
2004	12,016	643	5	340	3	983	8
2005	11,156	463	4	161	1	624	6
2006	8,945	793	9	380	4	1,173	13
2007	9,622	1,982	21	547	6	2,529	26
2008	5,806	721	12	340	6	1,061	18
2009	3,455	728	21	297	9	1,025	30
2010	4,449	564	13	249	6	813	18
2011	3,545	565	16	203	6	768	22
2012	4,509	476	11	897	20	1,373	30
2013	4,378	1,022	23	354	8	1,376	31
2014	2,497	517	21	269	11	786	31
2015	10,048	2,130	21	354	4	2,484	25
2016	7,146	1,072	15	360	5	1,432	20
Average	6,736	898	15	365	7	1,264	21

[a] Percent of the total king salmon counted.

PROPOSAL 21 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate the king salmon annual limit for Lower Cook Inlet salt water fishery south of Anchor Point Light.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Winter Fishery Plan* stipulations apply October 1–March 31 in salt waters south of the latitude of the Anchor Point Light, including all of Kachemak Bay to the latitude of Cape Douglas and east to the longitude of Gore Point. In these waters during this time period, the bag and possession limit of king salmon is two with no minimum size limit. King salmon harvested do not need to be recorded and do not count against the Cook Inlet annual king salmon harvest limit. The management plan includes a sport fishery guideline harvest level of 3,000 king salmon for the salt waters south of Bluff Point.

The *Early-run Plan* applies from April 1–June 30 and designates salt waters from Bluff Point north to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and within one statute mile of shore as the Early-run King Salmon SHA (Figure 16-1). In the SHA, guides may not fish while accompanying paid clients (except to provide assistance to a disabled client), and anglers may not continue to fish for any species on the same day after taking a king salmon 20 inches or longer. The plan also creates three conservation zones within the SHA: 1) south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to two statute miles south of Deep Creek, 2) one statute mile north and south from Stariski Creek, and 3) one statute mile north and ¾ statue mile south of the Anchor River. The conservation zones are closed to sport fishing from April 1–June 30 except sport fishing is allowed from shore south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to Deep Creek on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

In Cook Inlet salt waters south of the Anchor Point Light and north of Bluff Point from April 1–September 30, king salmon bag and possession limits are one king salmon of any size. King salmon harvested 20 inches or longer must be recorded and count as part of the Cook Inlet annual limit of five. In Cook Inlet waters north of Bluff Point, the *Late-run Plan* is in effect between July 1–July 31.

In Cook Inlet salt waters south of Bluff Point between April 1–September 30 there is a daily bag limit of two king salmon of any size. King salmon 20 inches or longer must be recorded and count as part of the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would eliminate the annual limit of five king salmon between April 1–September 30 in salt waters of LCI south of Bluff Point and UCI south of the Anchor Point Light to Bluff Point. This will increase the harvest of Cook Inlet king salmon returning to streams to spawn, Cook Inlet hatchery king salmon returning to Kachemak Bay terminal fisheries and immature king salmon in UCI and LCI by an unknown amount. It may increase harvest in all the other Cook Inlet sport fisheries that are included into the Cook Inlet king salmon annual limit. It will likely increase the harvest of Cook Inlet stocks during their spawning migration north of Bluff Point and result in

exceeding the early-run GHL in some years. Harvest south of Bluff Point will increase during the summer fishery.

BACKGROUND: Since the closure of king salmon sport fishing in all Cook Inlet waters from 1964–1966, sport fishing regulations for king salmon have evolved through the board process to protect Cook Inlet stocks. Initially the recording requirement for king salmon in salt water was from 1967–1978 and corresponded to freshwater opening for king salmon. Once the five king salmon annual limit for Cook Inlet waters was implemented in 1979, king salmon recording was required for all anglers. In 1988, the board revised the king salmon annual limit and applied it only to Cook Inlet waters north of the line from Cape Douglas to Point Adam from April 1–September 30. In 1990, the board reduced the bag and possession limit from January 1–December 31 north of Bluff Point to one king salmon of any size, but maintained the limit of two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point.

In November 2001, the board adopted a regulation that created an annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for all Cook Inlet waters from January 1–December 31. In 2002, the board established the *Winter Fishery Plan*, which exempted king salmon from the annual limit from October 1–March 31 south of Bluff Point. In 2010, the board moved the northern boundary of the winter king salmon fishery from Bluff Point to the Anchor Point Light (navigational marker).

Based on SWHS estimates from 1990–2015, the overall catch of king salmon in Cook Inlet salt waters has averaged approximately 20,500 fish annually. The Cook Inlet king salmon average salt water harvest from 1977–2015 was ~11,500 fish (Table 21-1). The early-run fishery contributes on average approximately 33% to the overall Cook Inlet king salmon harvest. On average (2006–2015), 88% of the Cook Inlet salt waters annual guided harvest occurred from May–August. From April–June (during the primary dates of the early-run fishery), approximately 58% of the overall guided king salmon harvest occurred in Lower Cook Inlet in both 2015 and 2016. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** eliminating the annual limit between Bluff Point and the Anchor Point Light from April–August when local stocks are returning to Cook Inlet streams. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal in waters south of Bluff Point.

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 21-1.–Annual estimates of king salmon harvest in Cook Inlet salt waters by location and fishery, 1972–2015.

	Upper Cook Inlet [a]			Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay						
Year	Early-run [b]	Late-run [c]	Total	Summer [d]	Winter [e]	Summer + Winter total [f]	NDFL	Total	Remainder (unknown location)	Cook Inlet total
1972	1,000	1,250	2,250	–	–	–	–	–	–	2,250
1973	519	491	1,010	–	–	–	–	–	–	1,010
1974	500	100	600	–	–	–	–	–	–	600
1975	540	345	885	–	–	–	–	–	–	885
1976	5,495	1,382	6,877	–	–	–	–	–	–	6,877
1977	4,617	366	4,983	–	–	970	–	970	–	5,953
1978	2,669	2,693	5,362	–	–	816	–	816	–	6,178
1979	3,088	1,164	4,252	–	–	1,034	–	1,034	–	5,286
1980	521	747	1,268	–	–	431	–	431	368	2,067
1981	2,363	170	2,533	–	–	1,145	–	1,145	292	3,970
1982	2,497	1,173	3,670	–	–	1,963	–	1,963	355	5,988
1983	1,000	1,707	2,707	–	–	2,664	–	2,664	260	5,631
1984	2,386	835	3,221	–	–	1,559	–	1,559	2,077	6,857
1985	5,087	1,731	6,818	–	–	883	–	883	–	7,701
1986	2,888	1,208	4,096	–	–	439	–	439	855	5,390
1987	3,613	1,512	5,125	–	–	452	833	1,285	934	7,344
1988	4,243	1,775	6,018	–	–	1,472	5,275	6,747	3,118	15,883
1989	3,863	1,616	5,479	–	–	899	1,956	2,855	1,721	10,055
1990	4,694	1,964	6,658	–	–	1,123	2,027	3,150	1,570	11,378
1991	4,824	2,019	6,843	–	–	775	1,634	2,409	1,341	10,593
1992	5,996	2,509	8,505	–	–	2,978	1,406	4,384	1,466	14,355
1993	8,136	3,404	11,540	–	–	4,400	4,997	9,397	2,336	23,273
1994	6,850	2,296	9,146	–	–	6,154	2,607	8,761	1,832	19,739
1995	8,230	2,673	10,903	–	–	3,642	4,266	7,908	1,786	20,597
1996	4,702	2,006	6,708	–	–	3,509	2,356	5,865	1,801	14,374
1997	5,646	2,850	8,496	–	–	3,591	2,962	6,553	1,839	16,888
1998	5,783	1,680	7,463	–	–	3,417	1,856	5,273	1,064	13,800
1999	4,907	997	5,904	–	–	3,605	2,441	6,046	1,679	13,629
2000	4,773	1,026	5,799	–	–	3,628	2,012	5,640	1,384	12,823
2001	3,671	860	4,531	–	–	3,715	2,535	6,250	772	11,553
2002	3,368	427	3,795	3,877	1,423	5,300	2,621	7,921	122	11,838
2003	4,042	200	4,242	4,590	1,804	6,394	4,059	10,453	133	14,828
2004	3,880	1,539	5,419	6,034	2,069	8,103	4,068	12,171	147	17,737

-continued-

Table 21-1.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Upper Cook Inlet [a] Early-run [b]	Late-run [c]	Total		Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay Summer [d]	Winter [e]	Summer + Winter total [f]	NDFL	Total	Remainder (unknown location)	Cook Inlet total
2005	3,746	1,040	4,786		8,170	2,958	11,128	2,810	13,938	126	18,850
2006	5,035	898	5,933		6,772	1,515	8,287	2,092	10,379	56	16,368
2007	4,015	797	4,829		3,959	2,011	5,970	1,757	7,727	0	12,556
2008	2,137	517	2,654		3,357	1,692	5,049	833	5,882	26	8,562
2009	1,415	256	1,671		2,444	1,696	4,140	710	4,850	25	6,546
2010	1,753	558	2,311		4,369	2,559	6,928	883	7,811	12	10,134
2011	2,201	853	3,054		3,711	2,000	5,711	418	6,129	101	9,284
2012	955	453	1,408		3,373	2,079	5,452	14	5,466	16	6,890
2013	2,027	510	2,537		5,810	2,411	8,221	95	8,316	169	11,022
2014	1,554	985	2,539		5,059	3,173	8,232	1,060	9,292	158	11,989
2015	2,658	1,528	4,186		8,030	5,137	13,494	1,766	15,260	314	19,760
Averages											
1972–2001	3,837	1,485	5,322				2,211	2,611	3,777	1,374	9,431
2002–2013	2,881	671	3,553		4,706	2,018	6,724	1,697	8,420	78	12,051
2014–2015	2,106	1,257	3,363	#	6,545	4,155	10,863	1,413	12,276	236	15,875

Note: An endash indicates no data are available.

[a] Excludes harvest from shore.

[b] Early run is 1 January to 30 June.

[c] Late run is 1 July to 31 December.

[d] Summer is 1 April to 30 September.

[e] Winter is 1 January to 31 March and 1 October to 31 December.

[f] Prior to 2002, SWHS did not estimate the Chinook salmon harvest in Lower Cook Inlet salt waters by fishery.

PROPOSALS 22 and 23 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet- Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSALS DO? Proposal 22 would eliminate the harvest record requirement for Alaska residents for king salmon in the Lower Cook Inlet salt water fishery south of Anchor Point Light, and Proposal 23 would eliminate the harvest record requirement for all anglers.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All anglers, regardless of residency, are required to record king salmon 20 inches or longer harvested south of the Anchor Point Light.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSALS WERE ADOPTED? These would increase regulation and enforcement complexity. These proposals eliminate the recording requirement but do not eliminate the annual limit of five king salmon harvested from Cook Inlet waters. Without a recording requirement, there would be no way to keep track of an angler's annual limit. This would likely result in decreased compliance with the annual limit and increased harvest of returning Cook Inlet king salmon returning to streams to spawn, returning Cook Inlet hatchery king salmon and feeder king salmon in UCI and LCI. Complexity will further increase by creating separate regulations for residents and nonresidents

BACKGROUND: Since the closure of king salmon sport fishing in all Cook Inlet waters from 1964–1966, sport fishing regulations for king salmon have evolved through the board process to protect Cook Inlet stocks. Initially the recording requirement for king salmon in salt water was from 1967–1978 and corresponded to freshwater openings for king salmon. Once the five king salmon annual limit for Cook Inlet waters was implemented in 1979, king salmon recording was required for all anglers. In 1988, the board revised the king salmon annual limit and applied it only to Cook Inlet waters north of the line from Cape Douglas to Point Adam from April 1 through September 30. In 1990, the board reduced the bag and possession limit from January 1–December 31 north of Bluff Point to one king salmon of any size, but maintained the limit of two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point.

In November 2001, the board adopted a regulation that created an annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for all Cook Inlet waters from January 1–December 31. In 2002, the board established the *Winter Fishery Plan*, which exempted king salmon from the annual limit from October 1–March 31 south of Bluff Point. In 2010, the board moved the northern boundary of the winter king salmon fishery from Bluff Point to the Anchor Point Light (navigational marker).

Based on SWHS estimates from 1990–2015, the overall catch of king salmon in Cook Inlet salt waters has averaged approximately 20,500 fish annually. The Cook Inlet king salmon average saltwater harvest from 1977–2015 was ~11,500 fish (Table 21-1). The early-run fishery contributes, on average, approximately 33% to the overall Cook Inlet king salmon harvest. On average (2006–2015) 88% of the annual guided harvest occurred from May–August. From April–June (during the primary dates of the early-run fishery), approximately 58% of the overall guided king salmon harvest occurred in Lower Cook Inlet in both 2015 and 2016. From 2002–

2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** these proposals. The king salmon harvest record requirement exists to work in concert with the Cook Inlet king salmon annual limit. Eliminating the harvest record requirement south of the Anchor Point Light for Alaska residents without also eliminating the Cook Inlet annual limit south of Anchor Point Light creates a situation in which resident anglers have no way to record king salmon harvest or be held accountable for the number of king salmon they have harvested. This would additionally complicate enforcement by only requiring nonresident anglers to record king salmon caught south of Anchor Point Light.

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

PROPOSAL 24 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet- Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fishermen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate the annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for Alaska residents between April 1 and September 30 in salt waters south of the Anchor Point Light.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Between April 1 and September 30, king salmon 20 inches or longer must be recorded and count towards the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

In Cook Inlet salt waters south of the Anchor Point Light and north of Bluff Point (Figure 16-1) from April 1–September 30, the king salmon bag and possession limit is one king salmon. King salmon 20 inches or longer must be recorded and count as part of the Cook Inlet annual limit of five.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase regulation and enforcement complexity. This creates separate regulations for residents and non-residents. This will increase the harvest of Cook Inlet king salmon returning to streams to spawn, Cook Inlet hatchery king salmon returning to Kachemak Bay terminal fisheries, and immature king salmon in UCI and LCI by an unknown amount. The harvest of king salmon 20″ or longer may increase in other Cook Inlet sport fisheries restricted by the annual limit because king salmon harvested in this fishery by Alaska residents would no longer count towards the annual limit. It may result in exceeding the early-run GHL in some years.

BACKGROUND: Since the closure of king salmon sport fishing in all Cook Inlet waters from 1964–1966, sport fishing regulations for king salmon have evolved through the board process to protect Cook Inlet stocks. Initially the recording requirement for king salmon in salt water was from 1967–1978 and corresponded to freshwater opening for king salmon. Once the five king salmon annual limit for Cook Inlet waters was implemented in 1979, king salmon recording was required for all anglers. In 1988, the board revised the king salmon annual limit and applied it only to Cook Inlet waters north of the line from Cape Douglas to Point Adam from April 1–September 30. In 1990, the board reduced the bag and possession limit from January 1–December 31 north of Bluff Point to one king salmon of any size, but maintained the limit of two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point.

In November 2001, the board adopted a regulation that created an annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for all Cook Inlet waters from January 1–December 31. In 2002, the board established the *Winter Fishery Plan*, which exempted king salmon from the annual limit from October 1–March 31 south of Bluff Point. In 2010, the board moved the northern boundary of the winter king salmon fishery from Bluff Point to the Anchor Point Light (navigational marker).

Based on SWHS estimates from 1990–2015, the overall catch of king salmon in Cook Inlet salt waters has averaged approximately 20,500 fish annually. The Cook Inlet king salmon average salt water harvest from 1977–2015 was ~11,500 fish (Table 21-1). The early-run fishery

contributes, on average, approximately 33% to the overall Cook Inlet king salmon harvest. On average (2006–2015), 88% of the annual guided harvest occurred from May–August. From April–June (during the primary dates of the early-run fishery), approximately 58% of the overall guided king salmon harvest occurred in Lower Cook Inlet in both 2015 and 2016. From 2002–2015, guided anglers accounted for approximately 19% of the king salmon harvest during the winter fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** eliminating the annual limit between Bluff Point and the Anchor Point Light from April–August when local stocks are returning to Cook Inlet streams.. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal in waters south of Bluff Point.

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 28 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Andy Couch.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce Lower Cook Inlet salt water fishery bag limit to one king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Lower Cook Inlet salt waters south of Bluff Point, the king salmon bag and possession limit is two king salmon of any size year round. From April 1–September 30, king salmon 20 inches or longer must be recorded and count as part of the Cook Inlet annual limit of five.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the bag limit from two to one king salmon of any size in both the summer and winter fisheries in Lower Cook Inlet salt waters. During the winter fishery, this would create a disparity in the bag limit south of Bluff Point and in salt waters between Bluff Point and the Anchor Point Light. This would reduce the overall king salmon harvest in these fisheries.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet salt waters support a diversity of year round king salmon sport fishing opportunities (Figure 22-1). Feeder (immature), spawner (mature) and stocked (Cook Inlet hatchery) king salmon support the harvest in both Upper and Lower Cook Inlet. Immature king salmon are harvested year round while stocked and mature king salmon are harvested April–August. In UCI, king salmon are primarily harvested in nearshore waters from Bluff Point north to Deep Creek. Primary access to UCI occurs at tractor launch facilities on the Deep Creek and Anchor Point beaches (May through August) and year round from the Homer harbor. Small boats may also be self-launched from any beach in the area. In LCI and Kachemak Bay, king salmon are harvested both in terminal fishery locations and by trolling in nearshore and offshore waters. Access is primarily through the Homer harbor but residents from the south side of Kachemak Bay (Bear Cove to Port Graham) also participate in these fisheries.

In 1990, the board reduced the bag and possession limit from January 1–December 31 north of Bluff Point to one king salmon of any size, but maintained the limit of two king salmon of any size south of Bluff Point. In November 2001, the board adopted a regulation that created an annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or longer for all Cook Inlet waters from January 1–December 31. In 2002, the board established the *Winter Fishery Plan*, which exempted king salmon from the annual limit from October 1–March 31 south of Bluff Point. In 2010, the board moved the northern boundary of the winter king salmon fishery from Bluff Point to the Anchor Point Light (navigational marker).

The department implemented a salt water sport fishery genetic stock identification study in 2014. The study is expected to end after 2017. This study objective is to estimate the king salmon harvest contribution of four genetic groups (outside Cook Inlet, West Cook Inlet/Susitna, Kenai River and other Cook Inlet) within the early-run, late-run, summer, and winter fisheries. Preliminary results have found the outside Cook Inlet group to comprise the majority of harvest in the early-run, summer, and winter fisheries (Figure 25-2). Low effort and harvest in the late-run fishery has impeded our ability to assess that fishery. The three Cook Inlet genetic groups are primarily harvested in the early-run fishery. Preliminary results suggest that immature king

salmon are nearly exclusively the outside Cook Inlet group and the majority of mature king salmon harvested in the summer fishery are also the outside Cook Inlet group. Based on the these results, the Cook Inlet genetic groups contribution to the harvest in summer and winter fisheries were at undetectable levels in 2014–2015. Preliminary results have not identified the stocks that comprised the non-Cook Inlet group. Harvest contribution of these genetic groups to the Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries will likely fluctuate annually with shifts in the abundance of Cook Inlet stocks and the prevalence of immature king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. It will unnecessarily reduce king salmon opportunity and harvest in Lower Cook Inlet salt waters. During the winter fishery it would increase regulation complexity by establishing differential bag limit south of Bluff Point. Based on preliminary results of the genetic stock identification study in 2014–2015, mature Cook Inlet stocks are harvested at undetectable levels in the summer fishery and the immature king salmon harvest in the winter fishery is almost exclusively king salmon stocks from outside Cook Inlet.

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 29 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Salt Water Area.

PROPOSED BY: Ryuichi Rudy Tsukada.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow anglers fishing from nonmotorized vessels to keep fishing in the Cook Inlet special harvest areas after harvesting a king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Early-run Plan* applies from April 1–June 30 and designates salt waters from Bluff Point north to the mouth of the Ninilchik River and within one statute mile of shore as the Early-run King Salmon SHA (Figure 16-1). In the SHA, guides may not fish while accompanying paid clients (except to provide assistance to a disabled client), and anglers may not continue to fish for any species on the same day after taking a king salmon 20 inches or longer. The plan also creates three conservation zones within the SHA: 1) south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to two statute miles south of Deep Creek, 2) one statute mile north and south from Stariski Creek, and 3) one statute mile north and ¾ statue mile south of the Anchor River. The conservation zones are closed to sport fishing from April 1–June 30 except sport fishing is allowed from shore south of the latitude of the Ninilchik River to Deep Creek on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow anglers using small, nonmotorized boats such as kayaks to continue to fish for other species such as halibut close to shore. Harvest of other species will likely increase by a small unknown amount. It would increase regulatory and enforcement complexity by adding exceptions to regulations for specific anglers.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet salt waters support a diversity of year-round king salmon sport fishing opportunities. Immature (feeder), mature (spawner) and stocked (Cook Inlet hatchery-produced) king salmon support the harvest in UCI. Immature king salmon are harvested year-round while stocked and mature king salmon are harvested April–August. In UCI, king salmon are primarily harvested in nearshore waters from Bluff Point north to Deep Creek. Primary access to these waters occurs at tractor launch facilities on the Deep Creek and Anchor Point beaches (May–August) and year-round from the Homer harbor. Small boats may also be self-launched from any beach in the area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The increased opportunity would not negatively affect the department's ability to manage Cook Inlet sport fisheries. The department continues to work with the board to reduce regulatory complexity and submitted Proposal 16 which would achieve the objective of this proposal while simplifying regulations.

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.