

PROPOSAL 149 - 5 AAC 57.160. Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan. Revise *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

Revise the management to achieve to following goals.

1. Manage for escapements comparable to the historical average and range.
2. Manage conservatively at low run sizes to optimize future returns.
3. Provide fishery opportunity based on abundance.

Establish a “step-up” regulatory strategy that replaces the slot limit with an effective but precautionary alternative:

- A. Limit harvest to fish under 30 inches at run sizes which produce escapements within the OEG in order to optimize fishery opportunity while also providing some harvest opportunity on small fish sizes that have been historically underexploited.
- B. Liberalize fishing opportunity at run sizes which produce escapements exceeding the OEG while also encouraging increased harvest of small fish sizes to balance potential angler preferences for larger fish.
- C. Repeal the “over 55 inches” provision and the sealing requirements that help implement this provision.

AAC 57.160 Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan (a)

The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of early-run king salmon into the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, to conserve the unique large size early-run king salmon in the Kenai River, and to provide the department with management guidelines.

(b) The department shall manage the Kenai River early-run king salmon sport and guided sport fisheries to achieve the optimal escapement goal of 5,300 – 9,000 fish, to provide reasonable harvest opportunities over the entire run, and to ensure **escapement of a representative age and size composition of the run** [THE AGE AND SIZE COMPOSITION OF THE HARVEST CLOSELY APPROXIMATES THE AGE AND SIZE COMPOSITION OF THE RUN].

(c) The department shall manage the Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport and guided sport fisheries to achieve the sustainable escapement goal, to provide reasonable harvest opportunities over the entire run while ensuring adequate escapement of naturally-produced king salmon, and to minimize the effects of conservation actions for the Kenai River on the Kasilof River.

(d) In the Kenai River,

(1) **Repeal** the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and other special provisions for early-run king salmon set out in 5 AAC 57.120(a)(2)(i) and (iii), the provision in 5 AAC 57120 (b)(1) addressing the annual limit of king salmon less than 28 inches in length taken from the Kenai River from January 1 through June 30 and **Replace as follows.**

(2) if the spawning escapement is projected to be less than the lower end of the optimal escapement goal, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, restrict as necessary the taking of king salmon in the sport and guided sport fisheries in the Kenai River to achieve the optimal escapement goal using one of the following methods:

(A) prohibit the retention of king salmon **greater than** [LESS THAN 55 INCHES IN LENGTH, EXCEPT KING SALMON LESS THAN] 20 inches in length, downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake through June 30,

and require that upstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, from July 1 through July 14, only one unbaited, barbless, single-hook, artificial lure, as described in 5 AAC 57.121(1) (J), may be used when sport fishing for king salmon and only king salmon less than 20 inches in length [~~AND 55 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH~~] may be retained; or

(B) close the sport and guided sport fisheries to the taking of king salmon in the Kenai River

(i) downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake through June 30; and

(ii) from July 1 through July 14, upstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake;

(3) if the spawning escapement is projected to fall within the optimal escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, liberalize the sport fishery downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, [~~BY ALLOWING THE USE OF BAIT~~] if the department projects that the total harvest under a liberalized sport fishery will not reduce the spawning escapement below the optimal escapement goal as follows;

(i) only king salmon less than 30 [42] inches in length [~~OR 55 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH MAY~~] to be retained;

(ii) only one unbaited, barbless, single-hook, artificial lure, as described in 5 AAC 57.121(1) (J), may be used when sport fishing for king salmon and;

(iii) allow one king salmon less than 30 inches to be retained per day in addition to daily and annual bag limits and allow an individual who retains a king salmon less than 30 inches to continue to fish for king salmon.

(4) if the spawning escapement is projected to exceed the optimal escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, liberalize the sport fishery downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, by one or more of the following:

(i) allow the use of bait;

(ii) allow retention of king salmon of all sizes

(iii) allow one king salmon less than 30 inches to be retained per day in addition to daily and annual bag limits and allow an individual who retains a king salmon less than 30 inches to continue to fish for king salmon.

~~(4) a person may not possess, transport, or export from this state, a king salmon 55 inches or greater in length taken from the Kenai River from January 1 through July 31, unless the fish has been sealed by an authorized representative of the department within three days after the taking; the person taking the fish must sign the sealing certificate at the time of sealing; the seal must remain on the fish until the preservation or taxidermy process has commenced; a person may not falsify any information required on the sealing certificate; in this paragraph,~~

~~(A) "sealing" means the placement of an official marker or locking tag (seal) by an authorized representative of the department on a fish and may include~~

~~(i) collecting and recording biological information concerning the conditions under which the fish was taken;~~

~~(ii) measuring the specimen submitted for sealing; and~~

~~(iii) retaining specific portions of the fish for biological information, including scales, fin rays, and vertebrae;~~

~~(B) "sealing certificate" means a form used by the department for recording information when sealing a fish. }~~

(e) In the Kasilof River, the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and other special provisions for king salmon are set out in 5 AAC 56.120(1) and 5 AAC 56.122(a) (8).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Management plan provisions are contrary to plan goals and have produced undesirable unintended consequences.

- The size slot limit restricting harvest to fish less than 42 inches prevents managing harvest to closely approximate the size and age composition of the run by design.
- At large run sizes, the protected size slot results in escapements that exceed the optimum escapement goal.
- The size slot has failed to eliminate fishery selectivity. Harvest remains concentrated on the largest fish allowed under the slot. Smaller fish continue to be substantially under harvested relative to abundance.
- While the slot limit has eliminated the harvest of fish over 42 inches, it has failed to increase relative abundance of large fish which ADFG has determined results from ocean conditions.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association

(HQ-F16-073)
