

**PROPOSAL 85 – 5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.**

Repeal and readopt provisions (a)–(f) of the management plan and add provisions to manage the drift gillnet fishery to harvest surplus sockeye, pink, and chum salmon production and achieve escapement goals, as follows:

**(Repeal and Readopt)**

**5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management**

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to direct the harvest of surplus salmon in the Central District of UCI by the drift gillnet fishery. The department shall manage the drift gillnet fishery to harvest sockeye, pink and chum salmon stocks in UCI surplus to the escapement needs in order to achieve the various escapement goal ranges for these stocks. This plan does not provide for additional fishing periods directed at Susitna River, Little Susitna River or Kenai River coho salmon stocks. The department shall manage the Central District commercial drift gillnet fishery as follows.

(b) The fishery will be open for regular weekly fishing periods as described in 5 AAC 21.320(b). The fishing season will open the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.

(c) From July 1 through August 15,

(1) Fishing will be allowed with drift gillnets as described in 5 AAC 21.320(b)(1).

(2) The fishing periods set forth in (1) of this subsection may be modified by emergency order based on the abundance of sockeye, pink and chum stocks.

(d) If additional fishing time is necessary to harvest surplus salmon it will be allowed in one or more of the following areas based on inseason salmon abundance by stock:

(1) Expanded Kenai Section

(2) Expanded Kasilof Section

(3) Anchor Point Section

(4) Drift Gillnet Area 1

(5) Central District

(e) From August 16 until closed by emergency order, drift gillnetting will be allowed in all waters of the Central District except those within 5 nautical miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline during regular fishing periods.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Both the Board and department are charged with conservation and development of fisheries which has been defined as managing for escapement goals and sustained yield. The Board has put in place the most restrictive and unmanageable management plans in Cook Inlet in an effort to give nearly exclusive use of coho stocks in Cook Inlet to sport fishing interests. The department has failed to react inseason or to submit proposals to correct this excessive waste of the resources they are charged to protect. The need and success of this "experiment" is readily apparent when you look at the Little Susitna Coho salmon catch and escapement data. One of only two escapement goals for coho salmon in Cook Inlet where approximately 1,000 coho stocks are known.

The Little Susitna coho salmon escapement of 10,100 to 17,700 has exceeded the goal in 14 of 25 years by an average of 14,000 coho and only achieved the goal in 7 years. This system can not be managed with restrictions in the commercial fishery to pour more and more coho into this stream

to achieve the escapement goal. It is obvious that the commercial restrictions are unnecessary and unwarranted in well over half of the years wasting hundreds of thousands of coho as well as sockeye, pink and chum salmon. In only 5 of 25 years of data was the goal not achieved, missing the lower end by an average of only 3,300 coho. This system is basically unmanaged and this needs to change. When you consider the fact that the Little Susitna is an index of other coho stocks, most with much less of an inriver exploitation the amount of overescapement, lost harvest and reduced production is staggering. Therefore, this proposal seeks to modify the overly restrictive provisions within the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan in order to: allow for flexible inseason management, provide a reasonable opportunity to harvest abundant sockeye, pink and chum salmon; and to provide adequate protection to northern bound sockeye salmon and coho salmon and Kenai River coho salmon. A companion proposal has been submitted under sport fishing regulations.

**PROPOSED BY:** Chris Garcia

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