

PROPOSAL 29

5 AAC 24.350. Closed waters.

Extend inside closure area to 1/4 mile off the southern shores of all barrier islands in the Copper River commercial drift gillnet salmon fishery, as follows:

- (1) Extend the inside closure area to 1/4 mile off the southern shores of all barrier islands.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Rolling up Kings in gillnets close to the barrier islands. Incidental commercial harvest of Kings in 2016 and 2017 has eliminated all opportunity for upriver users and plunged Kings into stock of concern status.

Inside closures have proven only mildly effective at reducing incidental King harvest. Gillnetters continue to target Kings by placing nets in shallow water close to the island shore and dragging their nets across the bottom, catching large Kings by rolling them up in the small mesh.

In 2017, the Department has closed all upriver sport and P/U harvest opportunity, but has announced a goal not to exceed 3,5000 harvest in the commercial fishery. They will never achieve this goal and have proven unable or unwilling to use tools already in their toolbox to reduce or eliminate incidental harvest of Kings. The Board needs to impose meaningful restrictions, and the department will agree that dragging gillnets across the ocean floor within 1/4 mile of the barrier islands is an effective method of harvesting Kings in the Copper River Flats.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F17-043)
