

PROPOSAL 52

5 AAC 67.022. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means in the Bristol Bay Area.

Limit the number of clients a sport fishing guide or sport fishing guide business may have while targeting trout in a portion of the Naknek River drainage, as follows:

5 AAC 67.022 (d) (XXX).

Commercial entities (Lodges, guide services, businesses including LLC's, rental boat operators, fishing clubs) are limited to four guests/anglers at any given time to fish for trout. Guests may fish for other species, or fly out to other creeks, but on the Naknek, only four guests at one time can fish for rainbow trout. Each commercial operator will have four badges (similar to the Brooks River guide badge), issued by Fish and Game. These badges are to be worn by each person fishing one rod, for trout. Badges can be rotated or transferred to other guests of the same operation during the day. They must be visible on the arm, so this regulation can be easily enforced. Non-compliance can result in a fine for both the angler and the commercial entity to which the badge was assigned. Badges are not transferrable. Commercial entities are prohibited from using LLCs, in attempts to justify more than 4 badges. Dolly Varden, Arctic Char and Arctic Grayling occupy similar habit to trout, are equally affected and therefore included in this regulation.

Naknek River Drainage:

Upstream from ADF&G markers located ½ mile above Rapids Camp to ADF&G markers at Trefon's cabin at the outlet of Naknek Lake:

June 8 – October 31: **Each commercial entity will have four badges, one per angler, to sport fish for Rainbow Trout, Dolly Varden, Arctic Char and Arctic Grayling. Badges must be worn on the arm of the angler and visible at all times.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Sport fishing pressure on the Naknek River trout fishery has skyrocketed to the point of unsustainability. Once a river where local guides and residents could enjoy catching the world's largest trout, it is now a river overrun by guided, transported self-guided, boat rentals and fishing clubs. The number of sport fishing guide registrations has nearly doubled from 45 in 2005 to 86 in 2016. Data has not been officially accumulated for 2017, but we anticipate the guide registrations to be well over 90. This is almost a 100% increase in guide pressure on the Naknek River in the last seven years. Approximately 5 miles long, the upper portion of the Naknek offers about 14 spots anglers can fish for trout. The capacity for each spot, to ensure quality of experience, is 2-4 anglers. Currently, there are multiple boats in each spot, many with 4 – 6 anglers in each boat. This compounds pressure on the resource, effecting younger trout the most. Age classes of smaller trout are underrepresented, forecasting a dramatic decline in larger fish in the future. Equally critical is the quality of experience. Increased pressure is creating a competitive, hostile and even dangerous environment. Inexperienced, and often unlicensed boat drivers are running the river without bearing in mind rules of road and basic etiquette. With guide licenses so easy to acquire, professionalism is lacking. Guests are being dropped off to wade in areas with heavy current, with no boat nearby in case of emergency. This is a slippery slope. *If left unchecked, such pressure is threatening three things of tremendous value: the health of a world-renowned trout fishery, the quality of experience for all user groups, and a way of life for locals.*

The majority of pressure is by out of state commercial entities who, over the last seven years, have lost sight of or have no consideration of the sustainability of this fishery. The focus has shifted from quality of experience, to quantity of money. These low quality, high volume operations, wreak havoc on our resource and leave our state. Left unchecked without regulation, these revenue-generating businesses will be copied, thriving on the misconception that Alaska is a limitless resource. Similar to a virus, the more these operations succeed; the more they squeeze out smaller sustainable businesses, which market for low volume and high-quality experience for ALL user groups. Guests, who have been fishing the Naknek every year for 15 years, are not returning. Locals can no longer go out on a Sunday and find a place to fish. Future stewardship of this river rests in the hands of younger generations in the community. If they are not able to experience the resource, they will not be inclined to protect it. Currently, there are many taking, but not enough giving back. This imbalance is not sustainable and must be managed.

PROPOSED BY: Naknek/Kvichak Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F18-088)
