PROPOSAL 150
5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and
methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Require retention of sockeye salmon caught in the Kenai River, as follows:

The Kenai River sockeye salmon fishery is catch and keep. Every sockeye salmon caught, up to
the daily bag limit, must be kept. Once the bag limit is caught, the angler cannot fish on the Kenai
River for the remainder of that day. There is no release of sockeye salmon regardless of where the
sockeye salmon is hooked. No snagging is allowed.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce the waste of sockeye
salmon, from catch and release mortality, in the Kenai River. Because the Kenai River is on the
road system it gets heavily fished by tens of thousands of anglers. Hundreds of thousands of
sockeye salmon are caught and released. It is well known that sockeye salmon do not readily bite
a fly and have to be legally snagged by a method called lining, which results in snagging in the
mouth or other parts of the body. If snagged other than in the mouth, the salmon has to be released.
The sockeye salmon also have to be in the river in large numbers for this lining method to be
effective. It is common for anglers to spend the day catching and releasing sockeye salmon for the
fun of it. When the sockeye are thick in the river it is not unheard of for an angler to catch and
release forty, fifty, sixty or more sockeye in a day. These sockeye are going through an enormous
amount of stress at this time because their body is chemically acclimating from leaving salt water
and entering fresh water. The added stress from catch and release, especially when snagged and
released with gashes, results in a high mortality or nonviable eggs because of the build up of lactic
acid.

Most anglers do not know or use best practices on catch and release which compounds the
mortality. This large mortality number, from allowing catch and release sockeye fishing in the
Kenai River, is nothing more than legally allowing a wanton waste fishery. The released salmon
often swims off only to die unseen, in the murky water. This fishing practice is not sustainable and
is not being good stewards of the resource nor is it portraying to tourist the value Alaskans put on
salmon for food, recreation, jobs and economic importance. The vast number of anglers spending
the whole day on the river, also greatly contributes to bank erosion and habitat degradation, which
jeopardizes future salmon production. There are many other systems in the Cook Inlet drainage
for angler opportunity to fish, which will help relieve this unsustainable fishing pressure on the
Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F19-101)
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