

PROPOSAL 203

5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.

Provide additional fishing periods in the Northern District king salmon commercial fishery when the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery is liberalized, as follows:

5 AAC 21.366(a)(2) would be amended to include a new subsection, as follows:

(2) fishing periods are from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays;

If the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery bag limit is increased to two or more king salmon per day, the commissioner may open, by emergency order, one additional commercial fishing period per week, as defined in 5 AAC 21.360(i), not to exceed 6 hours in duration;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Northern District King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.366) was first adopted in 1986. The purpose of the plan was to provide for a small, conservative commercial fishery on Northern Cook Inlet king salmon stocks, while ensuring sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these stocks over the entire run as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. To meet these objectives, the management plan specifies gear, time, and area restrictions to the commercial fishery in order to moderate king salmon harvest. Moreover, the commercial fishery has a king salmon cap of 12,500 fish, which if met, closes the fishery. This cap was met only one time, the first year of the fishery, primarily as a result of set gillnet fishermen from the Upper Subdistrict fishing in the Northern District. After registration requirements went into effect in the early 1990's, harvest declined considerably and for the past 10 years has averaged around 1,800 king salmon per year. Genetic stock identification data show that less than half of these kings are Susitna River king salmon. Estimates of the total run of king salmon in the Susitna River are more than 100,000 fish annually; thus, the commercial fishery harvests less than 1 % of the annual run of Susitna River king salmon.

Currently, the management plan states that if the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery is closed, the entire Northern District king salmon commercial fishery closes. However, the management plan does not provide any kind of option for increased commercial fishery opportunity if the Deshka River sport fishery is liberalized.

In the essence of "sharing the burden of conservation," this proposal seeks to also "share the wealth," by providing the Northern District king salmon commercial fishery with a little extra fishing time when the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery is liberalized. Specifically, if the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery bag limit is increased from 1 fish per day to 2 or more fish per day, the Northern District king salmon commercial fishery will be provided an additional day of fishing per week not to exceed 6 hours in duration. This would apply only to the time period covered by 5 AAC 21.366, or May 25 through June 24.

PROPOSED BY: Betty Gilcrist

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