

PROPOSAL 218

5 AAC XX.XXX. New section.

Create an optimal escapement goal for McRoberts Creek coho salmon of 450-1,400 fish, as follows:

Adopt a **McRoberts Creek coho salmon OEG of 450 — 1,400 fish.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Adopt a McRoberts Creek OEG for McRoberts Creek/Jim Creek coho salmon. This fishery has some years been the largest producer of sport caught silver or coho salmon in the entire Northern Cook Inlet Management area with past sport harvests numbering over 10,000 coho annually. The current McRoberts Creek escapement goal, in comparison, is minuscule — and the other 3 streams with coho salmon escapement goals in Upper Cook Inlet all have significantly larger goals than the McRoberts Creek/Jim Creek system.

Part of the reason for this disparity in escapement goal size is while index foot surveys are done in two important spawning areas of the McRoberts Creek/Jim Creek system the goal only encompasses the McRoberts Creek portion of the drainage. The Department is currently operating Jim Creek weir which enumerates the entire drainage escapement below the McRoberts Creek fork. The Department has used weir escapements to manage the sport fishery in the recent past — but has yet to develop a weir-based coho salmon escapement goal that encompasses the entire Jim Creek drainage. A solid precautionary management approach would be to maintain the McRoberts Creek goal, at the current level as a board adopt OEG, until such time as the Department makes public a weir-based coho salmon escapement goal for the entire Jim Creek drainage.

It should be pointed out that the McRoberts Creek goal is a post season number not available for inseason management, but important, nonetheless, in measuring Jim Creek coho salmon sustainability.

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