

PROPOSAL 80

5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.

Prohibit retention of king salmon greater than 36” in the Upper Cook Inlet commercial gillnet fisheries, as follows:

Upper Cook Inlet commercially caught king salmon, 36 inches or longer in length, must be released. King salmon smaller than 36 inches in length may be retained.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Low abundances of “large” Kenai River king salmon trigger inseason restrictions to commercial, personal use, and sport fisheries. By management plan intent language, Kenai River king salmon are to be managed primarily for sport and guided sport use. In an effort to put more large Kenai River king salmon inriver and therefore, provide all user groups more fishing opportunity Alaska Sportfishing Association suggests limiting the Upper Cook Inlet commercial gill net harvest of king salmon to fish under 36 inches in length. All gill net caught king salmon 36 inches or greater in length would be required to be released. This is a package proposal with a similar proposal submitted for the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery.

All Kenai River king salmon 36 inches or greater in length passing through the gill net, personal use, and sport fishery would be counted as escapement and would therefore, help maintain fishing and harvest opportunities for each of these user groups. “Large” Kenai River king salmon tend to be predominately female fish and also provide better quality (eggs in the gravel) escapement for maintaining future Kenai River king salmon returns. Even during times of heavy commercial harvest, a king salmon 36 inches or greater in length, would readily stand out as a “large” fish to be released. All shorter king salmon that do not count toward the Kenai River “large” king salmon escapement goal may be harvested. The mesh size allowed for Upper Cook Inlet gill netting frequently results in larger fish being easier to remove as they may only be tangled by their teeth rather than their gills.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Sportfishing Association/Martin Meigs (HQ-F19-084)
