

Submitted by Joseph Person

Proposal 185, June 20th Kasilof Section Opening

This RC is to provide supporting data and arguments for Proposal 185 which seeks to allow easier opening conditions for the Kasilof Section set gillnet fishery prior to June 25th.

Kasilof River escapement issues have been well documented at this meeting with the department lowering the goal and escapements 13 of the past 17 years having exceeded the new goal. Just being within the goal has proven impossible, and the targeted objective of spreading escapements throughout the range of the goal a distant dream. Socio-political, allocative, and conservation concerns for other stocks greatly hamper department efforts to manage to meet this escapement goal. Some adjustment to the management plan is warranted if the Board wishes to make even a token effort at managing this stock to escapement. I strongly feel that the easiest place by far to slightly increase Kasilof sockeye harvest while minimizing other impacts, is a few additional days at the very beginning of the season and approached that objective by slightly loosening the requirements for an opener prior to June 25th but after June 20th. Some advantages to this approach follow.

- Minimizes mixed stock impacts of attempting to harvest Kasilof Sockeye. Very few other fish are in the district at this time.
- Reduces impact on other user groups participating in popular July PU and inriver fisheries, as well as allocation impacts of Kasilof targeted openings later in the season when the Kenai Section is open.
- Maximizes value of the resource by providing more opportunity to harvest at time of highest demand and price for the fish.
- Reduces logistical uncertainty in the variable opening timings experienced by the fishery relieving strain on both fishermen and processors who are forced to achieve a state of readiness by June 20th regardless of when fishing may began.

My anticipation is that the strongest point of concern about this proposal will be its impact on and incidental harvest of late-run chinook headed for the Kenai River. Reference table 182-3 on page 72 of the Staff Comments for this workgroup on proposal 182. This contains a break down of the percentage of Kasilof district chinook harvest scaled for size and river of origin. On average over the 8 years included in the data percentage of harvest that is Large Late-Run Chinook is as follows:

Kasilof Section Early (Dates range from June 22 nd -July 9 th):	20%
Kasilof Section Late (Dates range from July 8 th -July 31 st):	27%

Data is consistent with general fishery knowledge and run timings regarding increased presence of large Kenai chinook later in the season. The time period we are interested in for the purpose of this proposal is June 20th – June 25th, the very earliest part of the 'Kasilof Section Early' time period. Unfortunately, the catch sampling data from this time period was not immediately available to me and the last half of the department's breakdown includes dates well into when the kings actually show up in the district; but it is consistent with both general trends and fleetwide experience that the presence of large kings at the very start of the season being extremely minimal. Substantially less than even this 20% that represents the two weeks following the window in question.

Harvesting Kasilof Sockeye prior to June 25th would save Kenai Chinook by reducing need for fishing effort later in the season when Chinook catches are much higher. In fact, restrictions to the Kasilof Section in June and inclusion in the chinook plan almost certainly have the opposite effect of stated intensions and actually increase overall set-net harvest of Late-Run Kenai Chinook.