

## *Norton Sound Sport Fisheries (1 proposal)*

### **PROPOSAL 75**

#### **5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.**

Modify Arctic grayling bag, possession, and length limits in the Northwestern Area, as follows:

5 AAC 70.011(c)(3)(E) is amended to read:

(3) in Northern Norton Sound, which is described as all waters draining into Norton Sound from Cape Darby to Cape Prince of Wales on the Seward Peninsula, except Salmon Lake, the bag and possession limit for

(E) Arctic grayling is two [FIVE] fish, with no size limit [OF WHICH ONLY ONE FISH MAY BE 15 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH];

5 AAC 70.011(c)(4) is amended to read:

(4) in the Pilgrim River drainage, including Salmon Lake, the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is one [TWO] fish, with no size limit [OF WHICH ONLY ONE FISH MAY BE 15 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH];

5 AAC 70.011(7)(B) is amended to read:

(7) in the Snake River drainage,

...  
(B) the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is one [TWO] fish, with no size limit [OF WHICH ONLY ONE FISH MAY BE 15 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH];

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Stock assessment of several Northern Norton Sound Arctic grayling populations indicated abundances within established index areas to be well above desired management threshold levels. The current 15-in length limit was a conservative management measure used to protect larger fish from overexploitation because the Arctic grayling abundances within the index areas are predominately composed of fish >15 inches; this is the size most caught by anglers. Since 2010, estimates of annual fishing effort and harvest in the sport fishery have declined substantially and the conservative regulations are no longer needed. Eliminating the 15-in minimum size limit for harvest and maintaining the five fish bag and possession limit, with no size limit, may result in unsustainable harvest, but a bag limit of two fish, with no size limit, would be sustainable and allow anglers to harvest more large fish. In the Pilgrim and Snake Rivers, smaller population sizes and presence of multiple roadside access points put Arctic grayling stocks at a higher risk of overharvest than in the larger or more remote rivers. Reducing the bag limit from two fish (only one fish  $\geq 15$  inches) to one fish (no size limit) would allow for harvest and not alter the size structure of the Arctic grayling populations in the Pilgrim and Snake Rivers.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F22-054)

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