RC 2, Vol. 1

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON
COMMERCIAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE
REGULATORY PROPOSALS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 1–4
FOR

UPPER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

February 23–March 7, 2024

Regional Information Report No. 5J24-01

The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, February 23–March 7, 2024 in Anchorage, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change, as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following acronyms and abbreviations, and others approved for the Système International d'Unités (SI), are used without definition in the following reports by the Divisions of Commercial Fisheries, Sport Fish, and Subsistence: All others, including deviations from definitions listed below, are noted in the text at first mention, as well as in the titles or footnotes of tables, and in figure or figure captions.

Weights and measures (metric)

centimeter	cm
deciliter	dL
gram	g
hectare	ha
kilogram	kg
kilometer	km
liter	L
meter	m
milliliter	mL
millimeter	mm

Weights and measures (English)

cubic feet per second	ft^3/s
foot	ft
gallon	gal
inch	in
mile	mi
nautical mile	nmi
ounce	oz
pound	lb
quart	qt
yard	yd

Time and temperature

day	d
degrees Celsius	°C
degrees Fahrenheit	°F
degrees kelvin	K
hour	h
minute	min
second	s

Physics and chemistry

all atomic symbols	
alternating current	AC
ampere	A
calorie	cal
direct current	DC
hertz	Hz
horsepower	hp
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH
parts per million	ppm
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰
volts	V
watts	W

General

Alaska Administrative Code	AAC
all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.
all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.
at	@
compass directions:	
east	E
north	N
south	S
west	W
copyright	©
corporate suffixes:	
Company	Co.
Corporation	Corp.
Incorporated	Inc.
Limited	Ltd.
District of Columbia	D.C.
et alii (and others)	et al.
et cetera (and so forth)	etc.
exempli gratia (for example)	e.g.
Federal Information Code	FIC
id est (that is)	i.e.
latitude or longitude	lat or long
monetary symbols (U.S.)	$, ¢
months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan,...,Dec
registered trademark	®
trademark	™
United States (adjective)	U.S.
United States of America (noun)	USA
U.S.C.	United States Code
U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)

Acronyms

Acceptable Biological Catch	ABC
Alaska Board of Fisheries	board
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	department /ADF&G
Amount Necessary for Subsistence	ANS
Alaska Wildlife Troopers	AWT
Biological Escapement Goal	BEG
Central Gulf of Alaska	CGOA
Coded Wire Tag	CWT
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission	CFEC
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association	CIAA
Customary and Traditional	C&T
Department of Natural Resources	DNR
Demersal Shelf Rockfish	DSR
Emergency Order	EO
Guideline Harvest Level	GHL
Gulf of Alaska	GOA
Global Positioning System	GPS
Individual Fishing Quota	IFQ
Local Area Management Plan	LAMP
Lower Cook Inlet	LCI
Mean Low Water	MLW
Mean Lower Low Water	MLLW
No Data	ND
National Marine Fisheries Service	NMFS
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon	NDFL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council	NPFMC
Optimum Escapement Goal	OEG
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	PSR
Prince William Sound	PWS
Prior Notice of Landing	PNOL
Private Nonprofit Salmon Hatchery	PNP
River Mile	RM
Special Harvest Area	SHA
Sustainable Escapement Goal	SEG
Trail Lakes Hatchery	TLH
Upper Cook Inlet	UCI
Western Gulf of Alaska	WGOA

REGIONAL INFORMATION REPORT NO. 5J24-01

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON COMMERICAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE REGULATORY PROPOSALS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 1–4 FOR

UPPER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

FEBRUARY 23–MARCH 7, 2024

BY
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Sport Fish, Research and Technical Services
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518–1565

February 2024

ABSTRACT

This document contains Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence regulatory proposals for the Upper Cook Inlet finfish. These comments were prepared by the department for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, February 23–March 7, 2024, in Anchorage, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change, as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Keywords: Alaska Board of Fisheries (board), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department), staff comments, regulatory proposals, fisheries, commercial, personal use, sport, guided sport, subsistence, Upper Cook Inlet, finfish, regulations, management plans, escapement goals, stock of concern, methods, means, bag limits, allocation, herring, salmon

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals for Upper Cook Inlet finfish; Anchorage, February 23–March 5, 2024.

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
204	N	Allow hook and line attached to a rod or pole as subsistence gear to take king salmon in the Yentna River drainage
205	N	Increase waters closed to commercial fishing for salmon in the *Northen District King Salmon Management Plan*
206	N	Reduce the number of king salmon that may be commercially harvested in the Northern District of Upper Cook Inlet
207	N	Adopt additional restrictions in the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan*
208	N	Restrict the commercial king salmon fishery in the Northern District
209	N/O	Close the commercial king salmon fishery in the Northern District
210	N	Modify the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* and *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan*
211	N	Repeal certain restrictive provisions of *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*
212	N	Adopt additional restrictions in the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*
213	N	Adopt new 'paired restrictive' management measures for the Northern District commercial salmon set gillnet fishery
214	N/O	Adopt new 'paired restrictive' management measures for the commercial salmon set gillnet fishery within the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*
215	N	Provide additional commercial fishing opportunity for salmon within the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*
131	N	Modify Northern District weekly commercial fishing periods
216	O	Reduce the commercial smelt guideline harvest level in Upper Cook Inlet
217	O	Repeal the *Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan*
218	NA	Allow harvest of king salmon between 20 and 24 inches in Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.
219	O	Close fishing for all species within the confluence of Unit 2 waters when sport fishing for king salmon is closed
220	S	Open additional waters in the Big River drainage to sport fishing for coho salmon
221	O	Create a bag and possession limit of 3 coho salmon in the Susitna River Drainage

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action.

-continued-

Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals (Page 2 of 5).

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
222	S	Increase the Susitna River drainage sport fish limits for pink salmon
223	O	Redefine the special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna Drainage Area
224	O	Extend the special management areas for rainbow trout to include the portion of Willow Creek upstream of the Parks Highway
225	O	Open rainbow trout fishing in Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage year-round with a bag limit of 5 fish, 10 in possession
226	O	Allow anglers to use two artificial lures in tandem in the Susitna River Drainage waters
227	O	Remove the length restriction on Dolly Varden in Unit 4
228	S	Close dipnetting in the vicinity of Anderson Creek during the personal use fishery on the lower Susitna River
229	N	Increase the number of days the Susitna River dipnet fishery is open
230	N	Increase the open season of the Susitna River dipnet fishery
231	N	Modify dates of the Susitna River dipnet fishery
232	O	Allow Alaska residents to sport fish additional gear and take multiple limits in UCI
233	O	Establish sport fishing derby approval process
234	S	Clarify the boundary of the Knik Arm management area and the Palmer-Wasilla Zone
235	O	Reduce the size of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone
236	S	Update the stocked lakes list for the Knik Arm drainage area
237	S	Allow bow and spear as legal gear for northern pike and Alaska blackfish year round in the Palmer/Wasilla Zone
238	O	Establish a motor size restriction for the Little Susitna River
239	O	Establish a large king salmon escapement goal for the Little Susitna River
240	O	Increase the number of days bait is allowed in the Little Susitna River drainage
241	O/N	Allow use of bait in the Little Susitna sport fishery based on location of commercial fishery openings
242	O	Prohibit anglers from releasing coho salmon in the Little Susitna River
243	O/N	Create a bag and possession limit of 3 coho salmon in the Knik Arm Drainages
244	S	Define the mouth of Fish Creek
245	S	Allow sport fishing in the Fish Creek drainage 7 days a week
246	S	Update the lists of lakes where anglers may use 5 lines while fishing for northern pike through the ice in designated Northern Cook Inlet waters
247	S	Prohibit chumming in Big, Mirror, and Flat Lakes
248	S	Restrict Big Lake Arctic char to catch-and-release in the Fish Creek drainage

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action.

-continued-

Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals (Page 3 of 5).

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
249	S	Remove the effective date of regulation pertaining to sport fishing from a motor driven boat
250	S	Modify the closure date for the Ship Creek king salmon fishery
251	S	Modify the Eklutna River drainage salmon bag and possession limits
252	N	Increase the bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon
253	O	Allow anglers to use two artificial flies in tandem in a portion of Campbell Creek
254	O	Add portion of Chester Creek to Anchorage Bowl special management areas for trout
255	N/O	Create a personal use dip net fishery for salmon in the 20-Mile and Placer Rivers
80	O	Modify the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
83	O/N	Modify the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
85	O/N	Prohibit use of motorized vessels in the Kenai River if the sport fishery is closed
86	O	Prohibit bait in the Kenai River through Oct 31 if the king salmon sport fishery is closed
87	O	Prohibit guided sport fishing on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers when sport fishing for king salmon is closed
88	O	Prohibit nonresidents fishing from a guided vessel on the Kenai River if the king salmon sport fishery is closed
90	N	Expand weekly time-period "windows" where the commercial salmon fishery is closed
91	N	Amend criteria for commercial set gillnet fishing periods, in the Upper Subdistrict, after August 1
92	N	Exempt the East Foreland Section from 'paired restriction' measures in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
93	N	Exempt the East Foreland Section from paired restriction management measures within the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
94	N	Modify allowable gear when the set gillnet commercial fishery is restricted to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal
95	N	Modify the amount of set gillnet gear that can be used in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery when restricted to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG
96	N	Modify operation of set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict
97	N	Amend the *Kenai Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* to provide additional fishing opportunity in the sport and set gillnet commercial fisheries
98	N	Modify the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict when restricted to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action.

-continued-

Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals (Page 4 of 5).

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
99	O/N	Make numerous changes to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
100	N	Allow a 600-foot set gillnet commercial fishery when Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapements exceed 13,500 fish
101	N	Remove paired restrictive time and gear exemption from the 600-foot commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict
102	N	Provide additional commercial salmon fishing opportunity with set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict
103	N	Allow use of dipnets in the Upper Subdistrict commercial salmon fishery
104	N	Adopt a new Kenai River late-run king salmon management plan for the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery
105	N	Allow a 600-foot set gillnet commercial fishery when the Upper Subdistrict would be closed to conserve Kenai River late-run king salmon
106	N	Restrict legal set gillnet gear when the Upper Subdistrict commercial salmon fishery is open within 600 feet of shore
107	N	Repeal the 600-foot Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery and create a new opportunity with shallow set gillnet gear more than one half mile offshore
108	NA	Exempt the 600-foot set gillnet fishery from fishing time and gear restrictions in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
110	N/O	Provide additional commercial fishing opportunity for set gillnet gear within the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
116	N	Repeal mandatory weekly closures in the commercial set gillnet fishery
117	N	Repeal paired restrictions from Upper Cook Inlet salmon management plan
109	N/O	Create new set gillnet commercial salmon fishing opportunity based on Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement
75	N	Remove the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG
76	N	Remove the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG
77	O	Modify the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG
78	N	Modify the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG
79	N	Create additional step-down measures to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
81	N	Modify the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
82	N	Repeal portions of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* and shorten plan duration

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action.

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals (Page 5 of 5).

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
84	N	Close fishing for Kenai River late-run king salmon when forecast is below 20,000
89	O	Prohibit nonresidents participating in the Kenai River late run king salmon fishery
146	S	Align the Kenai River Drainage Area method and means provisions with the season dates for Kenai River king salmon
147	O	Modify Kenai River king salmon annual limit
148	O/N	Prohibit fishing for king salmon from a motorized vessel in the Kenai River
149	O	Require mandatory retention of Kenai River king salmon
1	S	Amend the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan*
2	O	Amend the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan*
3	O/N	Amend the management plans for the Upper Cook Inlet Summer and Kenai River late-run king salmon fisheries
4	O/N	Redefine the boundaries of the Upper Cook Inlet Area

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 1: KENAI RIVER LATE-RUN ACTION PLAN (0 PROPOSALS)

Kenai River Late-run king salmon Stock of Concern discussion and potential board action.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 2: NORTHERN COOK INLET SUBSISTENCE, NORTHERN DISTRICT COMMERCIAL, SMELT, AND SUSITNA SPORT AND PERSONAL USE FISHERIES (29 PROPOSALS)

Northern Cook Inlet Subsistence (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 204 – 5 AAC 01.593. Upper Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery. Allow hook and line attached to a rod or pole as subsistence gear to take king salmon in the Yentna River drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Lloyd McDaniels.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish hook and line attached to a rod or pole as legal subsistence salmon fishing gear throughout the Yentna River drainage. This would establish criteria for the use of hook and line attached to a rod or pole in the Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery, including providing for the use of bait, season dates, expand the area currently open to subsistence fishing, harvest limits for king and other salmon species, as well as reporting requirements. A household would not be able to hold a Yentna River permit and a Tyonek king salmon permit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for salmon in the Yentna River drainage outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area (5 AAC 01.566(a)(1)(C)). The board has determined that 400-700 salmon, other than king salmon, are reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) uses in this area. The board has not made an ANS determination for king salmon. In the Yentna River drainage outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3), salmon may be taken for subsistence purposes only in a portion of the mainstem of the river with a fish wheel. Subsistence fishing is allowed from June 1 through June 30 and July 15 through August 7, from 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The subsistence salmon permit establishes a seasonal limit of 25 salmon and 5 king salmon for the permit holder and 10 salmon and 2 king salmon for each dependent of the permit holder. A subsistence permit is required to participate in the subsistence salmon fishery and fishers must report harvested salmon to the department by noon of the day following the harvest by telephone or email.

In the Yentna River drainage, hook and line attached to a rod or pole is currently only allowed under sport fishing regulations. Sport fishing for king salmon is open January 1 – July 13. In waters open to king salmon fishing, sport fishing is not allowed from 11 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. The bag and possession limit is one king salmon, 20 inches or greater, with an annual limit of five king salmon, 20 inches or greater. A king salmon, 20 inches or greater, removed from the water becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking the fish. The bag limit for king salmon less than 20 inches is 10 fish. In some tributaries of the Yentna River, once a person harvests a king salmon, 20 inches or greater, they may not fish for king salmon for the remainder of that day. From September 1 – July 13 in all flowing waters of the Yentna River drainage, only unbaited artificial lures may be used.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Hook and line attached to a rod or pole would be legal subsistence salmon fishing gear throughout the Yentna River drainage. This would be inconsistent with other subsistence fisheries throughout the Southcentral Region. The statewide regulation prohibits subsistence fishing with rod and reel and gear permitted for salmon in the Southcentral Region includes fishwheels, gillnets, and beach seines. Alaska residents who do not have access to a fishwheel would be able to harvest salmon in the Yentna River under subsistence regulations. The harvest of king salmon in the Yentna River could increase with the expansion of opportunity. In years king salmon sport fishing is restricted or closed in Cook Inlet, the opportunity for Alaska residents to fish for king salmon under subsistence regulations in the Yentna River drainage may result in a subsistence harvest that is unsustainable. The overall change in total harvest on Yentna River king salmon stocks would be difficult to determine.

BACKGROUND: The Board of Fisheries first made a positive C&T finding for Yentna River salmon stocks in 1998. The board modified the positive C&T finding in 2011 to explicitly exclude king salmon but reevaluated the C&T criteria specific to king salmon in April of 2018 and made a positive C&T finding for all salmon including king salmon.

Subsistence salmon fishing in the Yentna River was open until 1960. After statehood, salmon fishing in the area was restricted to rod and reel under sport fishing regulations. The board first considered proposals to provide subsistence salmon fishing opportunities in 1988 and made a negative C&T finding for salmon. This board affirmed the negative finding in 1992 and again in 1996 but created a personal use fish wheel fishery in a portion of the Yentna River in 1996. In 1997, the Alaska Supreme Court ruled in *Payton et al. vs. State* that the board had erred in their determination of a negative C&T finding for salmon because of requiring transmission of fishing traditions through family lines, in focusing on the short length of time that current residents had lived in the area, and in requiring that salmon be preserved by methods similar to those used by Alaska Native communities in the Cook Inlet Area. This prompted the board to re-examine all available information after which it made a positive C&T finding for Yentna River salmon stocks in 1998, changing the personal use fishwheel fishery to a subsistence fishery. The new subsistence regulations mirrored the prior personal use regulations, which excluded the retention of king salmon. In 2011, in considering Proposal 103, the board revised the positive C&T finding and ANS for salmon to exclude king salmon. The board modified the C&T finding again in 2018 to include king salmon but did not modify the existing ANS due to the lack of king salmon harvest data. Currently there are only six years of king salmon harvest data and two of those years were restricted for subsistence.

Subsistence salmon permits for the Yentna River are available through the Division of Sport Fish offices in Palmer and Anchorage. Since 1996, an average of 23 permits have been issued annually, with 21 returned (Table 1). The average total reported harvest during this time period is 593 salmon, ranging from a low of 273 salmon in 2009 to a high of 1,046 salmon in 2011. In 2022, 18 permits were issued and 17 were returned, with 357 salmon harvested. Since 2018, between zero and 16 king salmon have been harvested annually, with 9 harvested in 2022. Subsistence permits are obtained by both local Skwentna residents as well as other Alaska residents (Table 2). In 2022, two-thirds of the permits (12) were issued to Skwentna residents, while the remainder (6) were issued to residents of Wasilla, Willow, and Eagle River. Skwentna residents harvested about half (176) of the total salmon harvested, and zero of the 9 king salmon harvested in 2022.

The department also documents harvest and use of salmon through subsistence comprehensive household harvest surveys. Surveys were conducted in Skwentna for the 2012 study year (prior to the positive C&T finding for king salmon in the Yentna River), when there were 35 households in the community. Salmon comprises 34% of the wild resource harvest in pounds usable weight. Of the total salmon harvest for that year, 7% (25 fish; 234 lb, or 4 lb per capita) were king salmon. Sixty percent of Skwentna households used king salmon, 43% of households harvested king salmon, and 100% of king salmon were caught using rod and reel. Households reported harvesting king salmon in the Susitna River, the Yentna and Skwentna Rivers, and the tributaries of Hayes River and Lake Creek.

Sport fishing occurs in the major clearwater tributaries of the Yentna River drainage, primarily Lake Creek, Talachulitna Creek, and Fish Lake Creek. Since 2012, the king salmon sport fisheries in the Susitna River drainage (including the Yentna River drainage) have been restricted or closed every year for all or a portion of the season due to poor king salmon runs.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. If adopted, the board should consider how the allowance of this new gear type could increase harvest of king salmon above sustainable levels and whether the addition of this gear type is necessary to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost for the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is this stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? The board has determined under 5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(C) that salmon in the Yentna River drainage outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3) are customarily and traditionally used for subsistence.

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? The board set an ANS of 400 - 700 salmon, other than king salmon.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 1.–Historical subsistence and personal use salmon harvests, Upper Yentna River, 1996–2022.

	Permits		Estimated salmon harvest					
Year	Issued	Returned	Chinook[b]	Sockeye	Coho	Chum	Pink	Total
1996[a]	17	17	0	242	46	51	115	454
1997[a]	24	21	0	549	83	10	30	672
1998	21	18	0	495	113	15	30	653
1999	18	16	0	516	48	13	18	595
2000	19	19	0	379	92	7	4	482
2001	16	15	0	545	50	4	10	608
2002	25	22	0	454	133	31	14	632
2003	19	15	0	553	67	8	2	630
2004	21	19	0	441	146	3	36	625
2005	18	17	0	177	42	25	24	268
2006	22	22	0	368	175	26	14	583
2007	22	22	0	367	66	18	17	468
2008	16	16	0	310	57	7	23	397
2009	17	17	0	253	14	6	0	273
2010	32	32	0	642	50	18	38	748
2011	25	25	0	598	90	21	337	1,046
2012	21	21	0	279	24	19	21	343
2013	22	19	0	160	92	32	128	412
2014	20	18	0	328	84	32	17	460
2015	29	27	0	578	151	69	47	845
2016	26	25	0	514	204	37	36	790
2017	26	26	0	454	185	10	21	670
2018	28	28	16	419	170	8	10	623
2019	28	28	0	476	107	40	18	641
2020	24	24	5	412	155	18	16	606
2021	25	25	13	549	186	5	11	764
2022	18	17	9	229	74	16	28	357
5-year average (2017–2021)	26	26	7	462	161	16	15	661
10-year average (2012–2021)	25	24	3	417	136	27	32	615
Historical average (1996–2021)	23	21	1	433	103	19	37	593

Source ADF&G Division of Subsistence, ASFDB 2022 (ADF&G 2023).

a. This fishery was classified as personal use in 1996 and 1997; it has been a subsistence fishery since 1998.

b. Regulations prohibited the retention of chinook salmon in this fishery until 2018 (5 AAC 01.595).

Table 2.–Subsistence salmon harvests by community, Upper Yentna River, 2022.

	Permits		Estimated salmon harvest					
Community	Issued	Returned	Chinook[a]	Sockeye	Coho	Chum	Pink	Total
Eagle River	1	1	0	3	4	0	0	7
Skwentna	12	11	0	146	26	2	1	176
Wasilla	3	3	9	41	21	0	1	72
Willow	2	2	0	39	23	14	26	102
Total	**18**	**17**	**9**	**229**	**74**	**16**	**28**	**357**

Source ADF&G Division of Subsistence, ASFDB 2022 (ADF&G 2023).

a. Regulations prohibited the retention of chinook salmon in this fishery until 2018 (5 AAC 01.595).

Northern District Commercial Salmon (12 proposals)

PROPOSAL 205 – 5AAC 21.366. Northern District king salmon management plan. Increase waters closed to commercial fishing for salmon in the *Northen District King Salmon Management Plan.*

PROPOSED BY: Tom Vania.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (NDKSMP) to close a portion of Northern District (ND) waters to commercial set gillnet fishing during the directed king salmon fishery (Figure 205–1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The NDKSMP regulates the directed king salmon commercial fishery in the ND of UCI. The purpose of the plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of king salmon into ND drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage ND king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon over the entire run as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions.

The directed commercial king salmon season opens the first Monday on or after May 25 and continues through June 24, unless closed earlier by emergency order (EO). Fishing periods are Mondays only from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Harvest may not exceed 12,500 king salmon, which was estimated to be 10% of the annual Susitna River king salmon run when the management plan was adopted in 1986. Permit holders are allowed only one 35-fathom set gillnet with a mesh size not to exceed six inches and may not operate nets within 1,200 feet seaward of another set gillnet.

Other provisions in the plan include:

(8) from May 25 through June 24, the area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River is open to fishing the second regular Monday period only;

(9) if the Theodore, Lewis, or Ivan River is closed to sport fishing, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the fishing periods provided for under this section;

(10) if the king salmon sport fishery on the Deshka River as described in 5 AAC 61 is

(A) conducted as a no bait fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per commercial set gillnet fishing period provided for in this section to no more than nine hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.;

(B) conducted as a catch and release fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per fishing period provided for in this section to no more than six hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.;

(C) closed, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the commercial king salmon fishery throughout the Northern District;

(11) if the Chuitna River is closed to sport fishing, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from a point at the wood chip dock to the Susitna River (~20 miles) to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the directed king salmon fishery.

(b) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could reduce the commercial harvest of king salmon bound for ND rivers, including the stocks of concern on the west side, by an unknown amount. The area from the woodchip dock to the Susitna River would be closed to commercial fishing with set gillnet gear during May and June during the directed king salmon fishery. The effect of this proposal would be minimal due to the closure of the Chuitna River king salmon sport fishery and paired restrictions in the ND NDKSMP that close these waters annually by EO (Table 205–1). Waters that have been closed by emergency order annually since 2011 would be closed by regulation.

If the Chuitna River were to reopen to king salmon sport fishing than this proposal could reduce the participation level of permit holders in the General Subdistrict of the ND.

BACKGROUND: The NDKSMP was first adopted in 1986 and has been modified at various board meetings since. In 2002, the season opening date was changed from the first Monday on or after June 1 to the first Monday on or after May 25. The number of fishing periods remained at three with only one period open in that area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of Theodore River to the Susitna River. In 2005, the number of commercial fishing periods remained the same, but the length of those periods was increased from six to 12 hours in duration. In 2008, the number of fishing periods was increased from three periods per year, to four or five, dependent on the calendar year. The season opening date remained the same, but the closing date was changed to through June 24, unless closed by EO. The area from one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River remained open to fishing for the second regular Monday period only.

Chronic inability to meet king salmon escapement goals on certain Susitna River drainage streams from 2008–2010 (Table 205-1) prompted the board to designate six king salmon stocks as stocks of concern (SOC) in 2011. In response to the SOC designation, the board closed sport fishing in the Beluga, Theodore, Lewis, and Chuitna rivers beginning with the 2011 season. The board also modified the NDKSMP to close the ND set gillnet fishery from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River (Figure 205-1) if the sport fishery was closed in the Chuitna River. This area has remained closed to commercial fishing during ND directed king salmon fishery since 2011. The board also took action to reduce the sport harvest within Unit 2 of the Susitna River drainage by removing a weekend of fishing, limiting fishing time to 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., closing Goose Creek to king salmon fishing, and closing the confluence of Alexander Creek to sport fishing for all species during the king salmon run.

Since 2012, the department has implemented numerous additional restrictive actions in both sport and commercial fisheries in response to below-average king salmon runs throughout NCI. In the commercial fishery, restrictions have included reducing 12-hour fishing periods to six hours; closing one or more fishing periods during the directed king salmon fishery; and complete season closures, as was done in 2018, 2019 and 2023 (Table 205-1). In sport fisheries, managers began to utilize a strategy that took into account harvest reductions necessary to achieve escapement goals by management area and public input from stakeholder meetings. As WCI streams with escapement goals had already been closed in regulation, the focus was on the Susitna and Little Susitna drainages, which remained open to harvest. Public meetings early during the downturn of production revealed that a full season of fishing opportunity, even though highly restrictive, was preferred over a less restrictive season that would likely be interrupted by midseason closures. Midseason closures had created a situation of less predictable fisheries 2008-2011 and harvesting out of proportion to the run. The goal became to maximize fishing opportunity while conserving stocks and decreasing the potential for midseason closures.

From 1993–2022, an average of 47 commercial permit holders have participated in the ND king salmon fishery each year, with an average annual harvest of 1,929 fish (Tables 205-2). However, in the past 10 years (2013-2022), the average harvest declined to 1,228 fish per year (36% reduction) from an average of 32 permit holders (Table 205-2). Starting in 1993 set gillnet fishermen were required to register (prior to fishing) to fish in one of three areas (ND, Upper Subdistrict, or Greater Cook Inlet) for the entire year (5 AAC 21.345). The registration requirement served to eliminate a common practice of fishing in multiple areas in UCI during the same year. Prior to the requirement to register prior to fishing, the commercial king salmon harvest cap of 12,500 king salmon was only reached one time, in 1986.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

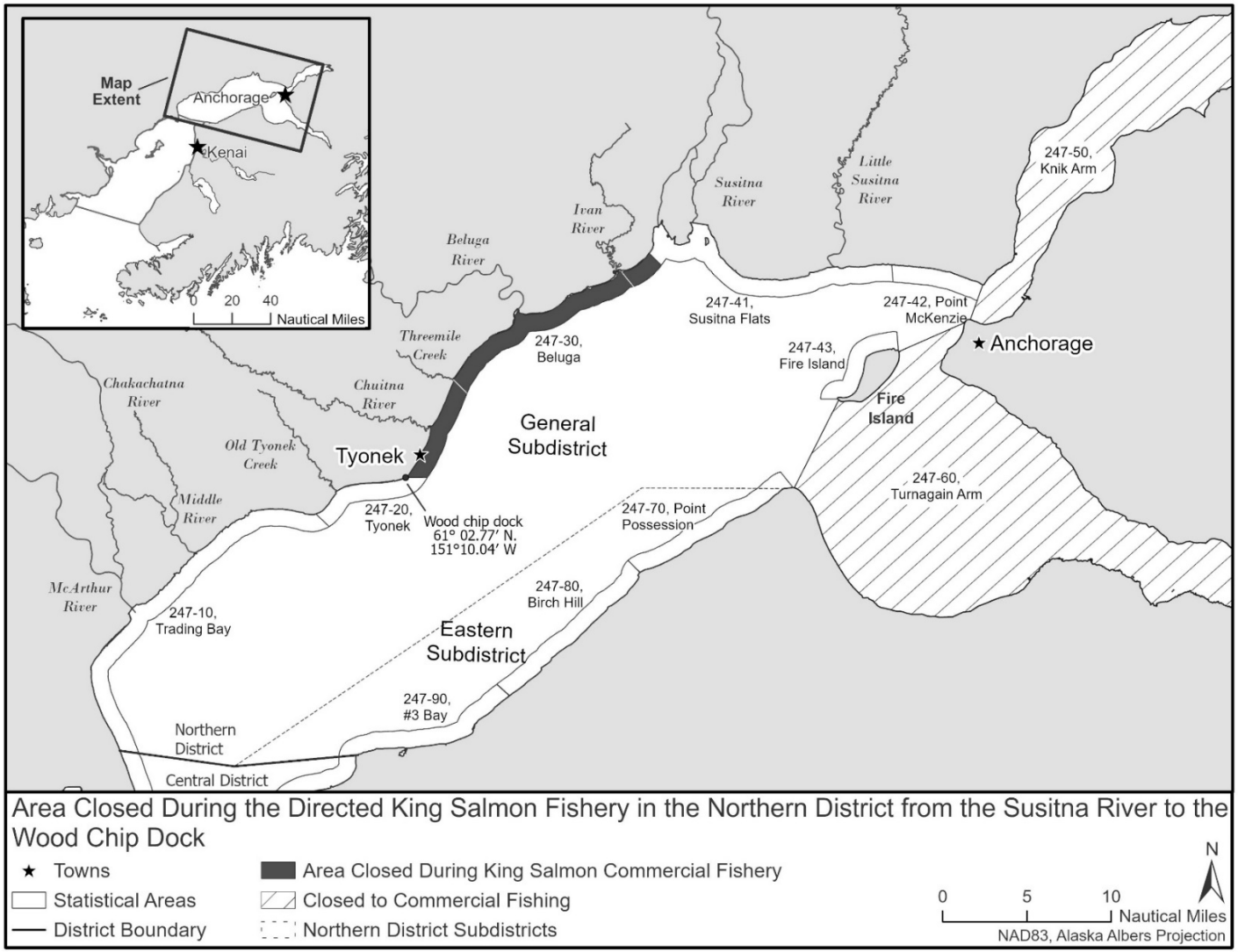

Figure 205-1.–Area closed during the directed king salmon fishery in the Northern District, 2011–2017 and 2020–2022. The entire district was closed in 2018, 2019, and 2023.

Table 205-1.–List of emergency order restrictive actions taken in the Northern District directed king salmon commercial fishery, 2008–2023.

Year	Restriction by Emergency Order
2008	Closed Last Monday period on 6/23 Closed 1st Regular period during regular season
2009	Reduced the May 25 and June 1 periods from 12 to 6 hrs. Closed the last two periods (June 15 and June 22).
2010	Closed the area 1 mile south of the Chuitna River to the Susitna River for all periods (May 31, June 7, 14, 21). Reduced fishing time to 6 hours for the June 14 period.
2011	Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all periods (May 30, June 6, 13, and 20).
2012	Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all periods (May 28, June 4, 11, and 18). Reduced fishing time from 12 to 6 hours Closed the June 25 period.
2013	Closed the May 27 fishing period Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 4 open periods Reduced fishing time to 6 hours for all four open periods
2014	Closed the May 26 period Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 4 open periods Reduced fishing time 6 hours for 1st two periods
2015	Closed the May 25 period, closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for the remaining periods (June 1, 8) reduced fishing time to 6 hours for 1st two periods
2016	Reduced hours from 12 to 6 for the first fishing period on May 30 Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 4 open periods
2017	Reduced hours from 12 to 6 for the last fishing period on June 19 Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 4 open periods
2018	Closed for entire season
2019	Closed for entire season
2020	Reduced hours from 12 to 6 for all open periods (May 25, and June 1, 8, 15, and 22) Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 5 open periods
2021	Reduced hours from 12 to 6 for all 4 open periods (May 31, and June 7, 14, and 21) Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 4 open periods
2022	Reduced hours from 12 to 6 for all 4 open periods (May 30, and June 6, 13, and 20) Closed the area from the wood chip dock to the Susitna River for all 4 open periods
2023	Closed for entire season

Table 205-2.–Permits, periods fished, and king salmon harvest in the Northern District directed king salmon commercial fishery from May 25–June 24 and harvest of king salmon in Northern District sport fisheries, 1993–2023.

	ND commercial fishery				NCI sport fishery		Total
Year	Permits	Periods	Harvest	Percent	Harvest	Percent	Harvest
1993	80	4	3,072	6%	52,089	94%	55,161
1994	73	2	3,014	9%	33,279	92%	36,293
1995	65	1	3,837	19%	20,154	84%	23,991
1996	58	1	1,690	8%	23,795	93%	25,485
1997	45	2	894	4%	27,097	97%	27,991
1998	51	2	2,240	9%	24,869	92%	27,109
1999	56	2	2,259	6%	38,313	94%	40,572
2000	47	3	2,046	6%	37,333	95%	39,379
2001	43	3	1,616	5%	34,491	96%	36,107
2002	36	3	1,747	6%	28,566	94%	30,313
2003	30	3	1,185	4%	31,547	96%	32,732
2004	44	3	1,819	6%	30,402	94%	32,221
2005	52	3	3,150	10%	32,941	91%	36,091
2006	59	3	3,887	12%	32,389	89%	36,276
2007	62	3	3,132	11%	28,592	90%	31,724
2008	74	4	3,855	19%	18,855	83%	22,710
2009	55	3	1,266	10%	11,625	90%	12,891
2010	51	4	1,674	14%	11,260	87%	12,934
2011	61	4	2,187	18%	10,313	83%	12,500
2012	38	4	1,030	25%	3,190	76%	4,220
2013	38	4	1,134	28%	3,808	77%	4,942
2014	44	4	1,377	30%	3,957	74%	5,334
2015	40	4	1,560	22%	7,342	82%	8,902
2016	41	4	2,030	22%	7,176	78%	9,206
2017	44	4	2,031	37%	3,493	63%	5,524
2018	0	0	0	0%	636	100%	636
2019	0	0	0	0%	692	100%	692
2020	41	5	1,500	74%	539	26%	2,039
2021	40	4	1,481	54%	1,237	46%	2,718
2022	35	3	1,163	82%	253	18%	1,416
2023	0	0	ND	0%	ND	0%	ND
Annual Averages							
30-yr Average (1993–2022)	47	3	1,929	18%	18,674	82%	20,604
10-yr Average (2013–2022)	32	3	1,228	34%	2,913	66%	4,141

ND = data not available

Table 205-3.–King salmon escapement and escapement goals in the Deshka River, 2002–2023.

Year	Escapement	Escapement goal range	Below, within, above esc. goal range
2002	28,535	13,000–28,000	Above
2003	39,257	13,000–28,000	Above
2004	56,659	13,000–28,000	Above
2005	36,433	13,000–28,000	Above
2006	29,922	13,000–28,000	Above
2007	17,594	13,000–28,000	Within
2008	6,416	13,000–28,000	Below
2009	11,960	13,000–28,000	Below
2010	18,594	13,000–28,000	Within
2011	19,026	13,000–28,000	Within
2012	14,088	13,000–28,000	Within
2013	18,532	13,000–28,000	Within
2014	16,335	13,000–28,000	Within
2015	24,395	13,000–28,000	Within
2016	22,874	13,000–28,000	Within
2017	11,356	13,000–28,000	Below
2018	8,549	13,000–28,000	Below
2019	9,711	13,000–28,000	Below
2020	10,638	13,000–28,000	Below
2021	18,583	13,000–28,000	Within
2022	5,436	13,000–28,000	Below
2023	3,741	13,000–28,000	Below
5-yr Average (2018-2022)	10,583		Below = 8 (36%)
10-yr Average (2013-2022)	14,641		Within = 9 (41%)
Total Average (2002-2022)	20,233		Above = 5 (23%)

PROPOSAL 206 – 5AAC 21.366 Northern District King Salmon Management Plan. Reduce the number of king salmon that may be commercially harvested in the Northern District of Upper Cook Inlet.

PROPOSED BY: Tom Vania.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the available king salmon commercial harvest from 12,500 fish to 2,000 fish in the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (NDKSMP).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See Current Regulations for Proposal 205.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The directed king salmon fishery in the ND would close when the harvest cap of 2,000 king salmon was reached. This could reduce the amount of fishing time in the ND depending on the abundance of king salmon.

BACKGROUND: Commercial king salmon 10-year average harvest is 1,228 fish (2013–2022) and has exceeded 2,000 fish two times during that time (Table 205-2). See Proposal 205 for additional background.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District king salmon stocks, several of which have been identified as stocks of concern. The board should consider the impact of existing commercial opportunity in this context.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 207 – 5 AAC 21.366 Northern District King Salmon Management Plan. Adopt additional restrictions in the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Gene Sandone.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to amend provisions of the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (*NDKSMP)* to reduce the commercial harvest of king salmon in the Northern District (ND) by changing the harvest limit to not exceed 15 percent of the total combined commercial and sport king salmon harvest. Also, this proposal seeks to amend (a)(10)(A)&(B) of the *NDKSMP* to close the commercial fishery if the sport fishery on the Deshka River is regulated to a no bait fishery and/or a catch-and-release fishery. Finally, this proposal would modify (a)(12) of the *NDKSMP* to close commercial fishing throughout the ND if the preseason or inseason run projection of king salmon is below the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 9,000 – 18,000 fish for the Deshka River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations for Proposal 205.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce commercial king salmon harvest by an unknown amount in the Northern District when it would be closed during years when the preseason or inseason run projection of king salmon for the Deshka River is less than the SEG and/or restrictions are put in place on the king sport fishery in the Deshka River. The effect of a percentage of harvest-based cap is unknown and likely could not be implemented due to a lack of timely inseason sport harvest data.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 205 for background.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. However, the department **OPPOSES** the percentage-based harvest strategy due to the information required not being available inseason.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 208 – 5 AAC 21.366 Northern District King Salmon Management Plan. Restrict the commercial king salmon fishery in the Northern District.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would expand paired restriction of the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (NDKSMP) between commercial and inriver sport fisheries to include the Susitna River Drainage Unit 2, Unit 4, Unit 5, or Little Susitna River (Figure 208-1). This would additionally close the Northern District (ND) directed king salmon commercial fishery if the Deshka River or any of the proposed additional waters were conducted as catch and release or closed in their respective sport fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations in Proposal 205.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The commercial king salmon harvest would decrease by an unknown amount when the ND directed king salmon fishery is closed during years of low king salmon abundance in the Susitna River drainage or Little Susitna River and sport fish restrictions are put in place the ND directed king salmon fishery would also be closed.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 205 for background.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District king salmon stocks, several of which have been identified as stocks of concern. The board should consider the impact of existing commercial opportunity in this context.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

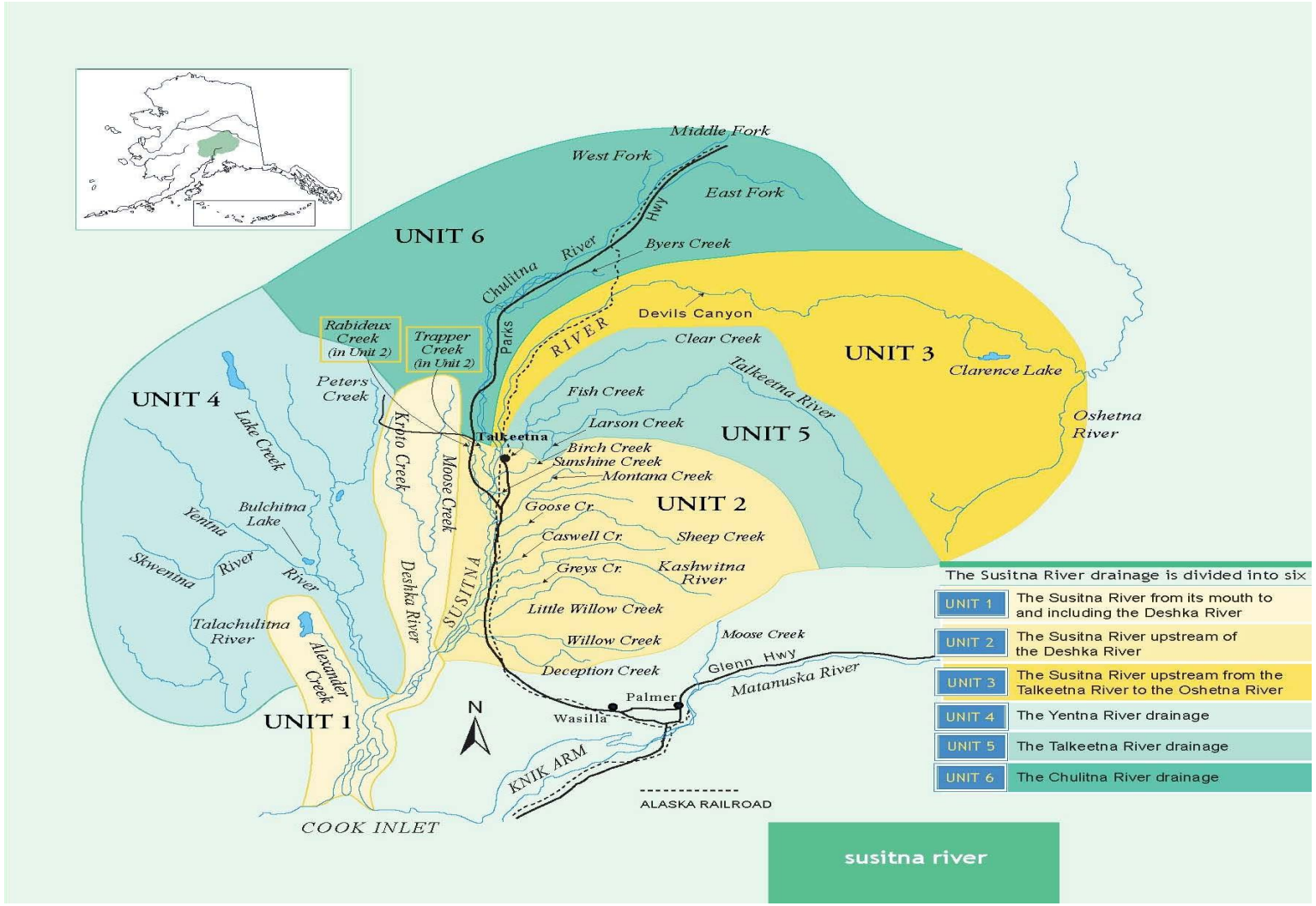

Figure 208-1.–Map of the Susitna River drainage with sport fishing units 1–6.

PROPOSAL 209 – 5 AAC 21.366 Northern District King Salmon Management Plan. Close the commercial king salmon fishery in the Northern District.

PROPOSED BY: Joe Hanes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to close the Northern District (ND) king salmon directed commercial fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations in Proposal 205.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (NDKSMP; 5 AAC 21.366) would be repealed. The directed king salmon commercial fishery would be permanently closed in the ND. This would decrease the harvest of salmon, specifically king salmon in the commercial fishery by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 205 for background.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** the closure of the Northern District king salmon fishery. The NDKSMP contains provisions for king salmon conservation and the management tools necessary for the department to manage this fishery. This said, department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District king salmon stocks, several of which have been identified as stocks of concern. The board should consider the impact of existing commercial opportunity in this context.

COST ANALYSIS:. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 210 – 5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan, and 5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan and Northern District King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Andrew Couch.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to add additional language to 5 AAC 21.358 provision (b) of the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan (NDSMP)* to base commercial management actions on the abundance of king, sockeye, and coho salmon counted through the Little Susitna River weir. This is in addition to provision (b) where Northern District (ND) commercial management actions are taken based on the abundance of sockeye salmon through the Larson, Chelatna and Judd Lake weirs. This proposal also seeks to add additional provisions under provision (b) to the *NDSMP* including.

> (1) commercial fishing within one stature mile of the Little Susitna River channel and terminus with saltwater as measured at mean lower low water may only be allowed by inseason emergency order as follows:
> (A) through July 13, when the department projects the king salmon escapement to exceed the Little Susitna River king salmon SEG, and only if more than 1,000 sockeye salmon have also migrated through Little Susitna River weir.
> (B) after July 14 when the department projects the coho salmon escapement through Little Susitna River weir to exceed the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG, and only if more than 3,000 sockeye salmon have also migrated through Little Susitna River weir.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? *5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan*. (a) The purposes of this management plan are to minimize the harvest of coho salmon bound for the Northern District of upper Cook Inlet and to provide the department direction for management of salmon stocks. The department shall manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses to provide commercial fisherman with an economic yield from the harvest of these salmon resources based on abundance. The department shall also manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, to provide sport and guided sport fisherman a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions, or as specified in this section and other regulations.
The management plan directs the department to manage the Northern District commercial salmon fisheries based on the abundance of sockeye salmon counted through the weirs on Larson, Chelatna, and Judd Lakes or other salmon abundance indices as the department deems appropriate. From July 20 through August 6, if the department's assessment of abundance indicates that restrictions are necessary to achieve the sockeye escapement goal, the commissioner may, by EO, reduce the number of set gillnets that may be used to one or two nets per permit. From July 31

through August 6, the reduction in gear is limited to two set gillnets per permit in that portion of the General District south of the Susitna River.
Commercial fishing around the mouth of the Little Susitna River is regulated by 5 AAC 21.350(i), which does not allow fishing within 500 yards of the terminus of streams or rivers. In addition, 5 AAC 39.290(a) prohibits commercial fishing (1) within the fresh water of streams and rivers of the state; (2) within 500 yards of the fresh water of a stream that is a salmon stream; and (3) over the beds or channels of fresh water of streams and rivers of the state. A salmon stream terminus is defined as a line drawn between the seaward extremities of the exposed tideland banks of any salmon stream at mean lower low water (5 AAC 39.975(14)). A salmon stream is defined as any stream used by salmon for spawning or for traveling to a spawning area (5 AAC 39.975(10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Commercial salmon fishing management in the ND would be based on several sustainable escapement goals (SEGs) for multiple species. It is unclear with the proposed addition of species and waters how the department would alter current management of the ND commercial fishery.

Closure of the area at the mouth of the Little Susitna would likely close fishing for one set gillnet operation that fishes just east of the river in years when preseason projections and or escapement of king, sockeye and coho salmon in the Little Susitna River is below the SEGs. The operator currently has two set gillnet permits and an active State of Alaska shore fishery lease (Figure 210-1). Shore fishery leases are not required to fish in Cook Inlet, but do provide lease owners the rights to fish specific areas identified in the leases. For a number of years, no one has fished with set gillnets west of the Little Susitna River all the way to the Susitna River because that area is largely unfishable due to the mud flats. This proposal would reduce the commercial harvest of Little Susitna River salmon by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: Purpose statements found in the preamble of most UCI salmon management plans provide direction to future boards, stake holders, and the department on the long-term management objectives of the board at the time that plan was adopted. Purpose statements first appeared in the *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* in 1981. These statements have changed slightly over the years as the board has deliberated extensively to balance the allocation needs and desires of various user groups. In 1999, the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* was adopted and current language directing the department to minimize the harvest of ND coho salmon has remained unchanged since.

Prior to 1978, all salmon stocks in UCI were basically managed for commercial uses, since sport use of these stocks was small at that time. In 1978, the board adopted the first rendition of the UCI salmon management plan as an uncodified policy. From 1981–1996, it remained relatively unchanged and directed the department to manage most stocks returning to UCI prior to July 1 "primarily" for sport uses. From July 1–August 15, most stocks were managed "primarily" for

commercial uses with certain exceptions. After August 15, salmon stocks moving to Kenai Peninsula drainages were managed for sport purposes, while all other stocks were managed for commercial purposes. In addition, in managing the commercial fishery, the department was instructed to "minimize" harvest of certain stocks important to sport uses, such as Kenai River king and coho salmon stocks. In 1996, the plan was changed to management priority by stocks; sockeye, pink, and chum salmon stocks were to be managed for commercial purposes with the caveat that a reasonable opportunity be provided to other users, and coho and king salmon stocks were managed for sport purposes.

There are several restrictions to reduce ND commercial set gillnet fishery harvest of coho salmon. Beginning in 1993, after August 15, the ND was restricted to two weekly regular fishing periods only, and beginning in 1997, additional fishing periods (outside regular periods) were not allowed if coho salmon were expected to be the most abundant species. These restrictions can be found in the *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* (1993–1998), the *Northern District Coho Salmon Management Plan* (1997–1998), and the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (1999–present). In 2008, when Susitna River sockeye salmon were designated a stock of yield concern, set gillnet gear reductions were implemented to reduce harvest of those stocks. These gear reduction to one or two nets per permit have likely resulted in reduced harvest of ND coho salmon stocks.

The 500-yard closed waters regulation that applies to the Little Susitna River has been in effect since at least 1977. The average sport harvest on the Little Susitna River, from 2013–2022, is 316 king salmon and 4,651 coho salmon (Table 210-1). The commercial harvest of sockeye and coho has been stable for the past 10 years with an average harvest of 2,368 and 3,047 in statistical area 247-41 (Figure 137-1) (Table 210-2).

There is one set gillnet operation that fishes just east of the Little Susitna River. The operator currently has two set gillnet permits and an active State of Alaska shore fisheries lease (Figure 210-1 & 137-1). Shore fishery leases are not required to fish commercially in Cook Inlet, but they do provide lease owners the rights to fish specific areas identified in the leases. For a number of years, no one has fished with set gillnets west of the Little Susitna River to the Susitna River because that area is largely unfishable due to the mud flats.

See proposal 239 for additional background information on sport fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does not currently have an escapement goal for Little Susitna River sockeye salmon.

COST ANALYSIS:. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

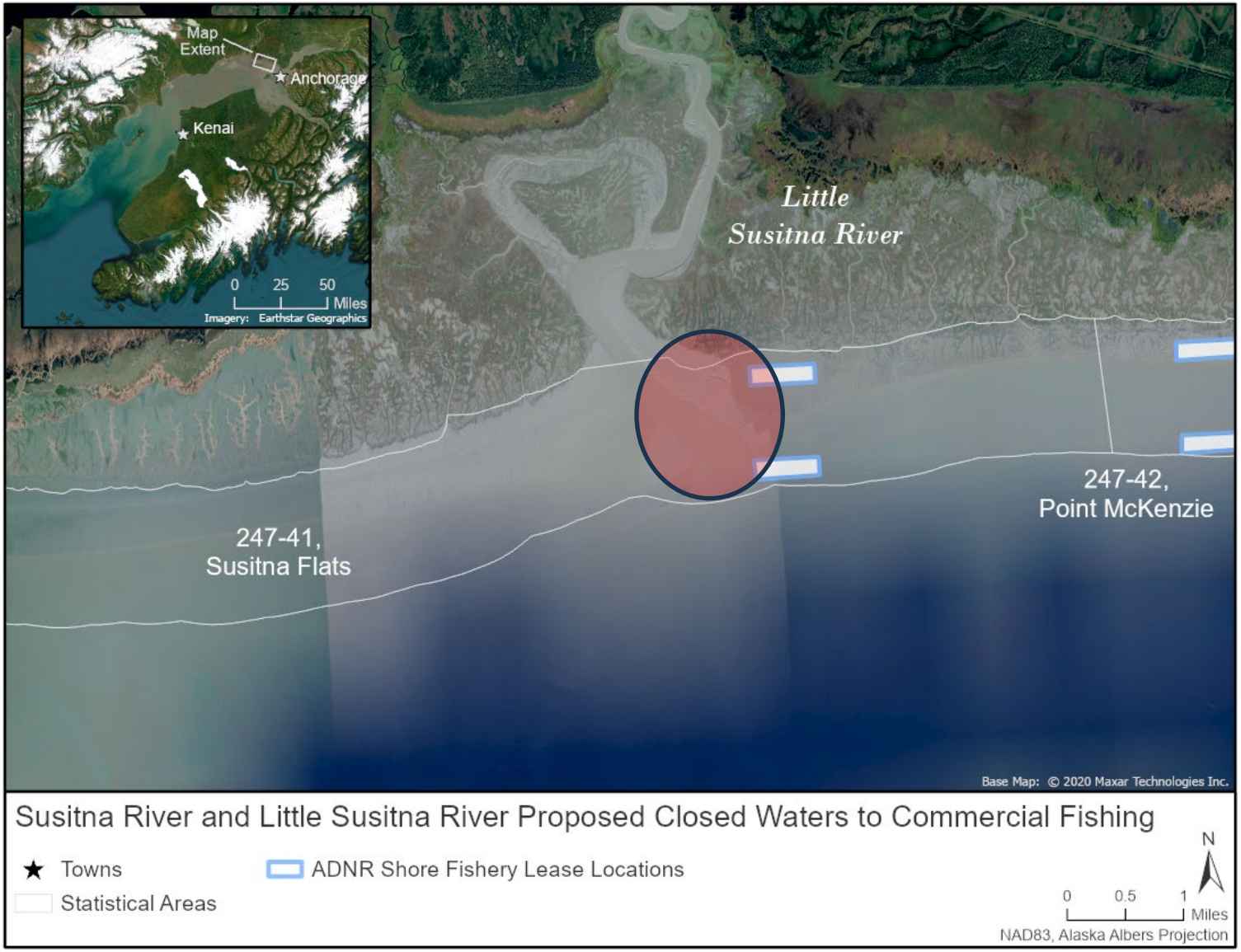

Figure 210-1.–Map of shore fisheries leases near the mouth of the Little Susitna River.

Table 210-1.–Sport harvest and escapement of coho and king salmon on the Little Susitna River, 1994–2023.

	Coho salmon		King salmon	
Year	Sport harvest	Escapement (weir count)[b]	Sport harvest	Escapement (aerial index)[a]
1994	17,665	27,820	4,204	1,221
1995	14,451	11,817	1,698	1,714
1996	16,753	15,803	1,484	1,079
1997	7,756	9,894[c]	2,938	ND
1998	14,469	15,159	2,031	1,091
1999	8,864	3,017	2,713	ND
2000	20,357	15,436	2,802	1,094
2001	17,071	30,587	2,243	1,238
2002	19,278	47,938	3,144	1,660
2003	13,672	10,877	2,138	1,114
2004	15,307	40,199	2,362	1,694
2005	10,203	16,839[c]	2,724	2,095
2006	12,399	8,786[c]	3,303	1,855
2007	11,089	17,573	3,210	1,731
2008	13,498	18,485	2,219	1,297
2009	8,346	9,523	1,653	1,028
2010	10,662	9,214	889	589
2011	2,452	4,826	828	887
2012	1,681	6,779[c]	216	1,154
2013	5,229	13,583[c]	336	1,651
2014	6,922	24,211	437	1,759
2015	8,880	12,756	672	1,507
2016	4,353	10,049	1,005	1,622
2017	3,068	17,781	351	1,192
2018	6,663	7,583*	37	530
2019	3,167	4,229*	259	ND
2020	2,557	9,779[n]	0	558
2021	3,560	10,229*[n]	43	889
2022	2,114	2,792*[n]	22	ND
2023	ND	2,949*[n]	ND	ND
10-yr Average 2013-2022	4,651	16,199[d]	316	1,155

NA = Data not available

[a] BEG from 1994–2001 was 850 king salmon; SEG from 2002–2016 was 900–1,800 king salmon; SEG from 2017–current is 700–1,500 fish

[b] BEG from 1994–1998 was 7,500 coho salmon; BEG from 1999–2001 was 9,600–19,200 coho salmon; SEG from 2002–2016 was 10,100–17,700 coho salmon; SEG from 2017–current is 9,200–17,700 fish.

Table 210-2.–Commercial salmon harvest and number of permits fished in the Northern District statistical area 247-41, (Susitna Flats) 1997–2023.

		Commercial salmon harvest				
Year	Permits Fished	King	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1997	14	119	4,239	3,843	140	896
1998	13	105	1,580	3,194	707	820
1999	10	102	1,300	1,271	17	507
2000	7	76	1,344	4,738	611	339
2001	9	64	901	5,628	4	422
2002	12	141	3,380	6,223	50	759
2003	12	305	8,884	4,917	193	1,821
2004	14	362	4,457	10,600	197	849
2005	12	438	1,963	4,483	55	214
2006	10	569	466	1,531	37	156
2007	9	301	1,129	2,033	97	166
2008	10	547	1,160	5,362	125	353
2009	7	92	1,935	2,267	6	255
2010	7	127	2,678	2,130	94	374
2011	6	163	3,208	1,990	62	1,436
2012	7	71	1,458	666	47	518
2013	9	165	798	3,115	170	469
2014	10	101	1,573	3,664	246	646
2015	13	209	2,825	4,204	104	1,737
2016	9	96	2,957	2,013	179	761
2017	8	56	2,841	2,036	434	1,178
2018	7	**	2,074	2,696	203	341
2019	8	**	3,909	2,341	265	1,199
2020	7	**	1,332	2,002	**	290
2021	6	**	3,054	4,615	**	546
2022	5	**	2,317	3,787	572	922
2023	6	**	2,011	786	**	876
10-yr Average 2013-2022	8	67	2,368	3,047	261	809

Note: Averages include the confidential harvest information.

**=Confidential harvest information.

PROPOSAL 211 – 5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan. Repeal certain restrictive provisions of *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Northern District Set Netters of Cook Inlet.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to repeal section (c)(1)(2)(3) of the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (NDSMP). These provisions regulate the amount of set gillnets that permit holders may use in the Northern District (ND) based on the department's inseason abundance estimates.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? *5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan*. (a) The purposes of this management plan are to minimize the harvest of coho salmon bound for the Northern District of upper Cook Inlet and to provide the department direction for management of salmon stocks. The department shall manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses to provide commercial fisherman with an economic yield from the harvest of these salmon resources based on abundance. The department shall also manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, to provide sport and guided sport fisherman a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions, or as specified in this section and other regulations.

The management plan directs the department to manage the Northern District commercial salmon fisheries based on the abundance of sockeye salmon counted through the weirs on Larson, Chelatna, and Judd Lakes or other salmon abundance indices as the department deems appropriate. From July 20 through August 6, if the department's assessment of abundance indicates that restrictions are necessary to achieve the sockeye escapement goal, the commissioner may, by EO, reduce the number of set gillnets as follows, except from July 31 through August 6, the reduction in gear is limited to two set gillnets per permit in that portion of the General District south of the Susitna River.

(1) three set gillnets that are not more than 105 fathoms in aggregate length;

(2) two set gillnets that are not more than 70 fathoms in aggregate length;

(3) one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length.

Unless restricted as described in the NDSMP, salmon may be taken in the Northern District from 7:00 a.m. Monday until 7:00 p.m. Monday and from 7:00 a.m. Thursday until 7:00 p.m. Thursday. A set gillnet may not be more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. A person may not operate more than four set gillnets with more than 105 fathoms of set gillnet in the aggregate, except that on Fire Island a person may operate more than four set gillnets, but the aggregate length

of the nets may not exceed 105 fathoms;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would remove the department's ability to restrict gear in the ND set gillnet fishery. This would likely increase the harvest of salmon in the set gillnet fishery by an unknown amount. In years of low abundance, the department would utilize time and area to restrict the ND set gillnet fishery to achieve escapement goals. This may occur more frequently as abundance information is limited during this part of the season regarding Susitna drainage sockeye salmon.

BACKGROUND: Prior to 1978, all salmon stocks in UCI were basically managed primarily for commercial uses, since the recreational use of these stocks was small. In 1978, the board passed the first rendition of the UCI salmon management plan as an uncodified policy. From 1981 to 1996 it remained relatively unchanged and directed the department to manage most stocks returning to UCI prior to July 1 "primarily" for recreational uses. From July 1 to August 15, most stocks were managed "primarily" for commercial uses with certain exceptions. After August 15, salmon stocks moving to Kenai Peninsula drainages were managed for recreational purposes, while all other stocks were managed for commercial purposes. In addition, in managing the commercial fishery, the department was instructed to "minimize" the harvest of certain recreationally important stocks, such as Kenai River king and coho stocks. In 1996, the plan was changed to management priority by stocks; sockeye, pink, and chum salmon stocks were to be managed for commercial purposes with the caveat that a reasonable opportunity be provided to other users, and coho and king salmon stocks were managed for recreational purposes. In 1999, the ND Salmon Management Plan was adopted and the current language directing the department to minimize the harvest of ND coho salmon has remained unchanged since.

There are several restrictions intended to reduce the ND set gillnet fishery harvest of coho salmon. Beginning in 1993, after August 15, the ND was restricted to regular periods only, and beginning in 1997, additional fishing periods (outside regular periods) were not allowed if coho salmon were expected to be the most abundant species. These restrictions can be found in the *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* (1993–1998), the *Northern District Coho Salmon Management Plan* (1997–1998), and the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (1999–present). When Susitna River sockeye salmon were designated a stock of yield concern, setnet gear reductions were implemented to reduce the sockeye salmon harvest. These gear reductions have undoubtedly also had some unquantifiable reduction in the harvest of ND coho salmon stocks.

Poor returns of coho salmon to UCI in 1997 and 1999, coupled with not meeting escapement goals, prompted the board to reduce the coho salmon sport fisheries on select NCI streams. In 2000, the board conducted a special out-of-cycle session to address Cook Inlet coho salmon. Because of the broad decline in coho salmon abundance, restrictive action was taken in a wide geographic range (i.e., Anchorage, Kenai, Susitna River, Knik Arm, and parts of Western Cook Inlet (WCI)). Coho salmon

restrictions were placed on both sport and commercial fisheries throughout most of the UCI area. The "minimize" language in the ND Plan was changed from "minimize Susitna River coho" to "minimize ND coho." In 2000, as a result of a petition to the board, there were additional restrictions put in place in many areas of Cook Inlet. In the ND, set gillnets were restricted to two nets instead of three from August 1–10.

From 2008 through 2020, the Susitna River sockeye salmon stock was classified as a stock of yield concern. An action plan describing the existing management plans and EO authority that the department was to follow to conserve Susitna River sockeye salmon was developed and adopted by the board. Further restrictions were adopted in the action plan for the ND commercial set gillnet fishery. Specifically, from July 20–August 6, if the department's assessment of abundance indicates that restrictions are necessary to achieve sockeye salmon escapement goals, the ND set gillnet fishery may be limited to no more than one 35-fathom set gillnet per permit. At the 2011 meeting, the board modified the plan by adding the option of limiting the General Subdistrict of the ND to the use of two set gillnets per permit from July 31 through August 6. At the 2020 board meeting, the Susitna River sockeye salmon stock of concern was removed, and the Susitna River personal use fishery was created. Gear restriction options remain in regulation to provide the department additional tools to manage the ND set gillnet fishery in a conservative approach. See Table 211–1 for commercial salmon harvest in the ND after the directed king salmon fishery, starting June 25 until closed by emergency order.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When the Susitna River sockeye salmon Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation. Current management plan restrictions to the Central District drift gillnet fleet and Northern District set gillnet fishery have contributed to escapement goals being increasingly achieved at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes. Implementation of Federal management in the Central District drift gillnet fishery may potentially impact management of state fisheries. In addition, the department has concerns over making king and coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 211-1.–Northern District Commercial Salmon Harvest, Excluding Harvest from the Northern District Directed King Salmon Fishery.

Year	King	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1993	163	145,410	106,293	10,468	25,401
1994	179	119,426	144,064	29,181	40,059
1995	293	108,691	89,300	11,713	43,667
1996	268	103,252	78,097	20,674	11,771
1997	239	96,377	37,369	4,268	7,881
1998	307	60,430	34,383	11,640	3,983
1999	553	58,543	31,643	593	4,002
2000	261	43,528	71,475	20,245	4,283
2001	136	48,873	45,928	4,354	2,202
2002	148	31,920	50,292	6,224	4,901
2003	498	47,756	24,015	1,564	4,483
2004	107	26,347	44,814	2,017	2,148
2005	223	24,632	30,859	823	727
2006	374	10,511	20,367	1,629	480
2007	309	16,215	21,524	3,525	608
2008	128	23,344	42,154	3,524	1,629
2009	164	39,465	37,629	6,554	3,077
2010	76	38,897	38,111	3,778	3,904
2011	112	32,927	22,113	838	6,718
2012	19	21,560	13,206	4,003	2,299
2013	193	22,610	42,412	1,984	2,237
2014	93	35,381	35,198	7,695	2,406
2015	190	53,401	46,615	2,187	6,062
2016	172	44,914	30,476	7,968	3,168
2017	199	52,463	52,701	10,109	4,814
2018	143	52,552	67,098	13,272	4,148
2019	202	73,220	51,935	6,679	7,124
2020	88	46,988	54,453	27,467	2,122
2021	412	69,836	45,825	4,712	2,659
2022	165	50,574	36,929	8,043	4,369
2023	263	62,007	23,525	7,252	6,903
10-yr Average (2013-2022)	186	50,194	46,364	9,012	3,911
20-yr Average (2003-2022)	193	39,180	37,922	5,919	3,259

PROPOSAL 212 – 5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan. Adopt additional restrictions in the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Gene Sandone.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the amount of gear to one set gillnet, no more than 35 fathoms in length, per permit, from July 25 until closed by emergency order. This would additionally apply to a harvest cap that would not exceed 30% of the total Northern District (ND) coho salmon harvest.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations for Proposal 210.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The department would be required to limit the commercial harvest of salmon to not exceed 30% of the total ND coho salmon harvest. It is unclear how the 30% of coho salmon harvest would be estimated.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 210 and Proposal 211 for background. See Table 211–1 for annual commercial harvest of all salmon species in the Northern District after the Northern District directed king salmon fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspect of this proposal. The author is unclear on what constitutes the 30% of how the Northern District coho salmon harvest is derived. It would be difficult for the department to manage for an inseason percentage of coho salmon harvest since all harvest sources are not able to be estimated inseason.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 213 – 5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan. Adopt new 'paired restrictive' management measures for the Northern District commercial salmon set gillnet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: South Central Alaska Dipnetters Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to add a provision to the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (NDSMP) under (1)(a). This paired restrictive management measure would reduce the Northern District (ND) commercial set gillnet gear to one net, no longer than 35 fathoms in length, per permit holder, starting August 1, until the department projects that both the sockeye and coho salmon abundance will be above the upper end of all Susitna River escapement goals for sockeye and coho salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations for Proposal 211.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could reduce the harvest of salmon in the ND by an unknown amount. This could lead to an increased frequency of exceeding sockeye and coho escapement goals in the Susitna River.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 210 and 211 for background. See Table 213–1 and 213–2 for the Northern Cook Inlet sockeye and coho escapement and escapement goal ranges.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does not currently have authority to decrease the amount of gear fished during an opener. Granting the department an allowance for fishing less than a full complement of gear would be a good addition to the department's management toolbox to address weak stock management concerns.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 213-1.–Northern Cook Inlet Sockeye Salmon Escapement and goal ranges, 1999–2023.

Year	Larson Lake		Chelatna Lake		Judd Lake		Fish Creek		Yentna River	
	Escapement goal	Escapement estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Escapement estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Escapement estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Escapement estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Escapement estimate
1999	-	18,943	-	-	-	-	50,000	26,667	100,000-150,000	99,029
2000	-	11,987	-	-	-	-	50,000	19,533	100,000-150,000	133,094
2001	-		-	-	-	-	50,000	43,469	100,000-150,000	83,532
2002	-		-	-	-	-	20,000 - 70,000	90,483	90,000-160,000	78,591
2003[b]	-		-	-	-	-	20,000 - 70,000	92,298	90,000-160,000	180,813
2004[b]	-		-	-	-	-	20,000 - 70,000	22,157	90,000-160,000	71,281
2005	-	9,955	-	-	-	-	20,000 - 70,000	14,215	75,000-180,000	36,921
2006[b]	-	57,411	-	-	-	40,633	20,000 - 70,000	32,566	90,000-160,000	92,896
2007[b]	-	47,924	-	-	-	57,251	20,000 - 70,000	27,948	90,000-160,000	79,901
2008	-	34,595	-	74,469	-	53,681	20,000 - 70,000	19,339	90,000-160,000	90,146
2009	15,000 - 50,000	40,933	20,000 - 65,000	17,703	25,000 - 55,000	44,616	20,000 - 70,000	83,477	-	-
2010	15,000 - 50,000	20,324	20,000 - 65,000	37,784	25,000 - 55,000	18,446	20,000 - 70,000	126,829	-	-
2011	15,000 - 50,000	12,190	20,000 - 65,000	70,353	25,000 - 55,000	39,984	20,000 - 70,000	66,678	-	-
2012	15,000 - 50,000	16,566	20,000 - 65,000	36,736	25,000 - 55,000	18,715	20,000 - 70,000	18,813	-	-
2013	15,000 - 50,000	21,821	20,000 - 65,000	70,555	25,000 - 55,000	14,088	20,000 - 70,000	18,912	-	-
2014	15,000 - 50,000	12,040	20,000 - 65,000	26,212	25,000 - 55,000	22,416	20,000 - 70,000	43,915	-	-
2015	15,000 - 50,000	23,176	20,000 - 65,000	69,897	25,000 - 55,000	47,934	20,000 - 70,000	102,296	-	-
2016	15,000 - 50,000	14,313	20,000 - 65,000	67,836	25,000 - 55,000	-	20,000 - 70,000	46,202	-	-
2017	15,000 - 35,000	31,866	20,000 - 45,000	26,986	15,000 - 40,000	35,731	15,000 - 45,000	61,469	-	-
2018	15,000 - 35,000	23,444	20,000 - 45,000	20,437	15,000 - 40,000	30,844	15,000 - 45,000	71,556	-	-
2019	15,000 - 35,000	9,699	20,000 - 45,000	26,303	15,000 - 40,000	44,145	15,000 - 45,000	76,031	-	-
2020	15,000 - 35,000	12,018	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	31,220	15,000 - 45,000	64,234	-	-
2021	15,000 - 35,000	21,987	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	49,250	15,000 - 45,000	22,271	-	-
2022	15,000 - 35,000	17,436	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	38,442	15,000 - 45,000	58,351	-	-
2023[b]	15,000 - 35,000	38,069	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	-	15,000 - 45,000	44,764	-	-

Note: Shading indicates escapement goals that were achieved or exceeded.

[a] Enumeration estimates prior to 2023 reflect minor adjustments to the escapement database.

Table 213-2.–Northern Cook Inlet Coho Salmon Escapement and goal range, 1999–2023.

Year	Deshka River (weir)	SEG	Little Susitna (weir)	SEG	Fish Creek (weir)	SEG	McRoberts Creek (foot Survey)	SEG
1999	4,563[a]		3,017	9,600- 19,200	1,766	2,700	12	
2000	26,387		15,436	9,600- 19,200	5,218	2,700	657	
2001	29,927		30,587	9,600- 19,200	9,247	2,700	1,019	
2002	24,612[a]		47,938	10,100-17,700	14,651	1,200-4,400	2,473	450-700
2003[b]	17,305		10,877	10,100-17,700	1,231	1,200-4,400	1,421	450-700
2004[b]	62,940		40,199	10,100-17,700	1,415[c]	1,200-4,400	4,652	450-700
2005	47,887		16,839[a]	10,100-17,700	3,011[c]	1,200-4,400	1,464	450-700
2006[b]	59,419[a]		8,786[a]	10,100-17,700	4,967[c]	1,200-4,400	2,389	450-700
2007[b]	10,575		17,573	10,100-17,700	6,868[c]	1,200-4,400	725	450-700
2008	12,724		18,485	10,100-17,700	4,868[c]	1,200-4,400	1,890	450-700
2009	27,348		9,523	10,100-17,700	8,214	1,200-4,400	1,331	450-700
2010	10,393		9,214	10,100-17,700	6,977	1,200-4,400	242	450-700
2011	7,508[a]		4,826	10,100-17,700	1,428[c]	1,200-4,400	261	450-700
2012	6,825		6,779	10,100-17,700	1,237	1,200-4,400	213	450-700
2013	22,341		13,583[a]	10,100-17,700	7,593[a]	1,200-4,400	663	450-700
2014	11,578		24,211	10,100-17,700	10,283	1,200-4,400	122	450-1,400
2015	10,775		12,756[b]	10,100-17,700	7,912	1,200-4,400	571	450-1,400
2016	6,820[a]		10,049	10,100-17,700	2,484[c]	1,200-4,400	106	450-1,400
2017	36,869	10,200-24,100	17,781	10,100-17,700	8,966	1,200-4,400	607	450-1,400
2018	12,962	10,200-24,100	7,583[a]	10,100-17,700	5,022	1,200-4,400	758	450-1,400
2019	10,445	10,200-24,100	4229[a]	10,100-17,700	3,025	1,200-4,400	162	450-1,400
2020	5,368	10,200-24,100	9,779	9,200-17,700	4,555[c]	1,200-6,000	735	250-700
2021	3,431	10,200-24,100	10,229[ad]	9,200-17,700	6,462[c]	1,200-6,000	1,499	250-700
2022	5,444	10,200-24,100	2,792[ad]	9,200-17,700	36[c]	1,200-6,000	1,899	250-700
2023[b]	1,817	10,200-24,100	2,949[ad]	9,200-17,700	1,534	1,200-6,000	378	250-700

Note: Shading indicates the escapement goal was achieved or exceeded.

[a] Incomplete count due to flooding

[b] Incomplete count as a result of pulling weir early due to budget restraints.

[c] Incomplete count: 2004-2008, 2011, 2016, 2020-2022 weir was removed on August 15 before the majority of the coho run.

[d] Escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir, weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023).

<u>PROPOSAL 214</u> – 5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan. Adopt new 'paired restrictive' management measures for the commercial salmon set gillnet fishery within the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*.

<u>PROPOSED BY</u>: Alaska Outdoor Council.

<u>WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?</u> This seeks to make several changes to the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (NDSMP) as follows.

- From June 25 through July 13 one set gillnet not more than 35 fathoms in length per permit may be used;

- From July 14 through 19 two set gillnets not more than 105 fathoms in aggregate length per permit may be used;

- From July 20 - until the Susitna River personal use fishery is extended and Little Susitna River sport coho salmon fishery is liberalized, by emergency order, one set gillnet not more than 35 fathoms in length per permit in the General Subdistrict and up to two set gillnets not more than 70 fathoms in aggregate length per permit in the Eastern Subdistrict may be used;

- From when the Susitna River personal use and Little Susitna River sport coho salmon fisheries are liberalized by emergency order through when the Northern District set gillnet fishery is closed by emergency order; 2 set gill nets per permit not more than 70 fathoms in aggregate length may be used.

- From June 25 through September 30 if the department's assessment of abundance indicates that restrictions are necessary to achieve the escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Northern District and immediately reopen a season during which the number of set gillnets that may be used in portions or all of the Northern District is limited to the following options selected at the discretion of the commissioner:
    (2) Two set gillnets that are not more than 70 fathoms in aggregate length;
    (3) One set gillnet that are not more than 35 fathoms in aggregate length;
    (4) Zero set gillnets – closure of specific area(s).

<u>WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS</u>?
See Current Regulations for Proposal 211 and 228.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would likely reduce the harvest of salmon in the Northern District set gillnet fishery by an unknown amount. This would likely increase the number of salmon inriver towards escapement and inriver user groups. Depending on run size this could lead to more frequent years of exceeding escapement goals as sport fishery liberalization requires the escapement goal to be projected to be exceeded prior to implementation. The Northern District set gillnet fishery would likely be restricted with no known conversation need throughout the early and middle of the season.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 211, 228, and 229, for Background. The most recent 10-year average harvest in the General Subdistrict of coho salmon was 34,456 (Table 214–1). The most recent 10-year average harvest of coho salmon taken from the sport fishery on the Susitna River is 4,651 fish (Table 210–1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** management strategy that unnecessarily restricts fisheries without a conservation need and measurable benefit. The department does not currently have authority to decrease the amount of gear fished during an opener. Granting the department an allowance for fishing less than a full complement of gear would be a good addition to the department's management toolbox to address weak stock management concerns.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 214-1.–Commercial salmon harvest General Subdistrict of the Northern District 2001–2023.

	Commercial salmon harvest in the General Subdistrict				
Year	King	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
2001	1,561	25,584	34,456	2,700	1,855
2002	1,307	22,532	36,494	4,380	4,463
2003	1,224	25,345	14,643	650	3,759
2004	1,589	14,157	32,511	532	1,988
2005	3,020	10,613	20,089	305	673
2006	3,607	3,163	10,850	147	380
2007	2,868	8,245	12,102	594	515
2008	3,331	9,578	22,034	232	1,402
2009	1,371	22,595	21,991	1,439	2,631
2010	1,500	25,126	22,251	1,614	3,380
2011	1,956	25,573	15,225	286	6,080
2012	838	11,815	7,711	267	2,145
2013	1,050	12,386	30,660	554	1,697
2014	1,137	19,759	24,555	1,687	1,851
2015	1,538	29,428	31,531	349	5,577
2016	1,645	25,717	19,995	3,989	2,702
2017	1,780	24,872	30,386	2,433	4,028
2018	97	23,619	39,107	2,114	3,730
2019	177	40,665	34,232	1,628	6,612
2020	1,368	20,711	34,554	7,503	1,884
2021	1,616	29,037	31,316	1,429	2,383
2022	1,165	20,310	23,709	2,433	3,981
2023	222	34,921	16,911	2,344	5,528
10-yr Average 2013–2022	1,561	25,584	34,456	2,700	1,855

PROPOSAL 215 – 5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan. Provide additional commercial fishing opportunity for salmon within the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Terry Jorgensen and Kevin Barkdale.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to add a provision to the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan (NDSMP)* by allowing one additional fishing period in the Trading Bay and Tyonek statistical areas (247-10 & 247-20) between July 4 and July 14. This would allow the set gillnet permit holder an additional opportunity to harvest sockeye salmon during the historical peak of the run.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations for Proposal 211.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Commercial set gillnet fishing would be allowed in statistical area 247-10 and 247-20 (Trading Bay and Tyonek) for one additional 12-hour period (7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.) on a date at the discretion of the department between July 4 and July 14. This could increase commercial salmon harvest by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: Salmon may be taken in the Northern District from 7:00 a.m. Monday until 7:00 p.m. Monday and from 7:00 a.m. Thursday until 7:00 p.m. Thursday. A set gillnet may not be more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. A person may not operate more than four set gillnets with more than 105 fathoms of set gillnet in the aggregate, except that on Fire Island a person may operate more than four set gillnets, but the aggregate length of the nets may not exceed 105 fathoms.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When the Susitna River sockeye salmon Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation. Current management plan restrictions to the Central District drift gillnet fleet and Northern District set gillnet fishery have contributed to escapement goals being increasingly achieved at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes. Implementation of Federal management in the Central District drift gillnet fishery may potentially impact management of state fisheries. In addition, the department has concerns over making coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 131 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons. and 5 AAC 21.320 Weekly Fishing periods.
Modify Northern District weekly commercial fishing periods.

PROPOSED BY: Tyonek Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the number of days per week that commercial fishing periods are allowed in the Northern District from 2 days per week to 3 days per week from June 25 through July 19.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Northern District set gillnet commercial salmon fishing season opens on June 25 until closed by emergency order. The current two weekly fishing periods are described in 5 AAC 21.320 *Weekly Fishing Periods*. and are from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays.

Additional guidance on management of the Northern District (Figure 131-1) is provided in 5 AAC 21.358. *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*. The purpose of this management plan is to minimize the harvest of coho salmon bound for the Northern District of upper Cook Inlet and to provide the department direction for management of salmon stocks. The department shall manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks for commercial and inriver uses to provide an opportunity to harvest these salmon resources based on abundance. The department shall also manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, to provide sport and guided sport fisherman and other inriver users a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions, or as specified in this section and other regulations.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the harvest of salmon in the Northern District set gillnet fishery by an unknown amount and reduce the amount of salmon available for inriver use to meet reasonable opportunities for sport and personal use fisheries.

BACKGROUND: Weekly fishing periods have been two days a week since 1971 when periods where 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays weekly. Beginning in 1999, weekly fishing periods were changed to 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays.

Commercial harvest in the Northern District set gillnet fishery after June 24 has averaged 244 king salmon, 41,224 sockeye salmon, and 39,162 coho salmon. From June 25 though July 19 the average harvest from 1999 was 229 king salmon, 20,533 sockeye salmon, and 5,274 coho salmon (Table 131-1). Approximately, 94% of harvested king salmon, 50% of harvested sockeye salmon,

and 13% of harvested coho salmon in the Northen District general salmon season are harvested between June 25 and July 19.

Beginning in 2009, the department began assessing sockeye salmon escapement via weirs in the Susitna River drainage at three individual lakes, Judd and Chelatna lakes in the Yentna River drainage, and Larson Lake in the mainstem Susitna River drainage. Since then, escapements have largely been achieved or exceeded nine of 13 years at Judd Lake and not achieved four times; were achieved or exceeded 10 of 11 years at Chelatna Lake and not achieved one time; and were achieved or exceeded 10 of 15 years at Larson Lake and not achieved five years at Larson Lake (Table 131-2).

The department believes recent sockeye salmon total returns in the Susitna River represent current capacity of this system in the presence of northern pike. This stock was designated as a stock of yield concern (SOC) from 2008–2020, restrictions were implemented in the commercial drift and ND set gillnet fisheries to reduce the harvest of this stock. Since then, average annual stock specific harvests have fluctuated (Table 131-3) and escapements in the three indicator systems (Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes) have been met in most years (Table 131-2). Chelatna weir is no longer operated due to budget cuts.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When the Susitna River sockeye salmon Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation. Current management plan restrictions to the Central District drift gillnet fleet and Northern District set gillnet fishery have contributed to escapement goals being increasingly achieved at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes. Implementation of Federal management in the Central District drift gillnet fishery may potentially impact management of state fisheries. In addition, the department has concerns over making coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon..

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 131-1.–Commercial salmon harvest and number of permits fished in the Northern District set gillnet fishery by total season harvest and harvest between the proposed June 25 and July 19.

		King		Sockeye		Coho		Pink		Chum	
Year	Permits Fished	Total	6/25–7/19	Total	6/25–7/19	Total	6/25–7/19	Total	6/25–7/19	Total	6/25–7/19
1999	101	553	532	58,542	28,201	31,567	4,387	593	144	4,002	1,469
2000	95	261	234	43,528	30,298	71,475	9,704	20,245	141	4,283	1,396
2001	89	195	182	49,390	45,418	45,767	9,795	4,355	4,022	2,200	1,158
2002	60	148	142	31,920	25,674	50,286	12,018	6,224	4,382	4,901	2,389
2003	54	498	361	47,756	22,405	24,015	1,477	1,564	669	4,483	615
2004	59	107	100	26,344	16,593	44,514	10,031	2,017	567	2,142	828
2005	61	223	218	24,630	15,006	30,660	4,343	823	810	727	452
2006	47	374	373	10,507	2,478	20,346	1,603	1,629	29	480	50
2007	59	686	685	16,389	8,253	21,529	5,714	3,527	2,557	608	217
2008	71	128	100	23,344	15,853	42,154	7,194	3,524	963	1,629	258
2009	74	365	357	40,093	23,053	37,629	1,614	6,554	3,286	3,077	353
2010	74	76	72	38,896	22,818	38,084	8,404	3,778	987	3,903	899
2011	71	112	108	32,924	18,248	22,098	2,266	838	159	6,717	873
2012	58	19	15	21,560	12,672	13,206	1,473	4,003	379	2,299	1,201
2013	66	193	176	22,610	18,106	42,412	7,451	1,984	1,133	2,237	1,114
2014	72	93	88	35,381	20,105	35,198	2,561	7,695	3,188	2,406	709
2015	74	363	356	53,979	19,515	46,068	3,971	2,191	705	6,066	1,455
2016	62	172	152	44,914	22,883	30,448	5,586	7,968	5,943	3,165	780
2017	73	199	189	52,460	23,341	51,933	2,364	10,109	4,462	4,806	1,656
2018	73	143	132	52,552	21,934	67,085	10,870	13,272	4,211	4,148	1,590
2019	75	202	192	73,220	26,814	51,893	9,882	6,679	5,050	7,124	890
2020	72	158	145	47,241	14,163	54,443	1,349	27,467	2,545	2,122	162
2021	62	412	405	69,835	25,298	45,798	5,390	4,712	1,798	2,659	546
2022	75	165	150	50,573	22,083	36,915	562	8,043	799	4,368	85
2023	74	263	260	62,007	12,101	23,525	1,834	7,252	4,488	6,903	651
Average 1999-2023	70	244	229	41,224	20,533	39,162	5,274	6,282	2,137	3,498	872

Table 131-2.–Northern Cook Inlet sockeye salmon escapement and goal ranges, 2009–2023.

	Larson Lake		Chelatna Lake		Judd Lake		Fish Creek	
Year	Escapement goal	Abundance estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Abundance estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Abundance estimate[a]	Escapement goal	Abundance estimate[a]
2009	15,000 - 50,000	40,933	20,000 - 65,000	17,703	25,000 - 55,000	44,616	20,000 - 70,000	83,477
2010	15,000 - 50,000	20,324	20,000 - 65,000	37,784	25,000 - 55,000	18,446	20,000 - 70,000	126,829
2011	15,000 - 50,000	12,190	20,000 - 65,000	70,353	25,000 - 55,000	39,984	20,000 - 70,000	66,678
2012	15,000 - 50,000	16,566	20,000 - 65,000	36,736	25,000 - 55,000	18,715	20,000 - 70,000	18,813
2013	15,000 - 50,000	21,821	20,000 - 65,000	70,555	25,000 - 55,000	14,088	20,000 - 70,000	18,912
2014	15,000 - 50,000	12,040	20,000 - 65,000	26,212	25,000 - 55,000	22,416	20,000 - 70,000	43,915
2015	15,000 - 50,000	23,176	20,000 - 65,000	69,897	25,000 - 55,000	47,934	20,000 - 70,000	102,296
2016	15,000 - 50,000	14,313	20,000 - 65,000	67,836	25,000 - 55,000	-	20,000 - 70,000	46,202
2017	15,000 - 35,000	31,866	20,000 - 45,000	26,986	15,000 - 40,000	35,731	15,000 - 45,000	61,469
2018	15,000 - 35,000	23,444	20,000 - 45,000	20,437	15,000 - 40,000	30,844	15,000 - 45,000	71,556
2019	15,000 - 35,000	9,699	20,000 - 45,000	26,303	15,000 - 40,000	44,145	15,000 - 45,000	76,031
2020	15,000 - 35,000	12,018	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	31,220	15,000 - 45,000	64,234
2021	15,000 - 35,000	21,987	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	49,250	15,000 - 45,000	22,271
2022	15,000 - 35,000	17,436	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	38,442	15,000 - 45,000	58,351
2023[b]	15,000 - 35,000	38,069	20,000 - 45,000	-	15,000 - 40,000	-	15,000 - 45,000	44,764

[a] Enumeration estimates prior to 2023 reflect minor adjustments to the escapement database.

Note* Shading indicates meeting of the escapement goal.

Table 131-3.–Susitna River drainage sockeye salmon harvest estimates based on genetic analysis of sockeye salmon harvested in the Upper Cook Inlet commercial fishery, 2005–2022.

Year	Judd-Chelatna-Larson	Susitna-Yentna	Susitna River drainage
2005	27,178	27,748	54,926
2006	16,230	28,231	44,461
2007	134,100	104,842	238,942
2008	66,315	47,092	113,407
2009	45,224	57,296	102,520
2010	55,659	58,425	114,084
2011	92,480	125,039	217,519
2012	90,128	88,826	178,954
2013	110,754	76,336	187,090
2014	56,109	67,659	123,768
2015	40,993	159,452	200,445
2016	47,868	76,548	124,416
2017	37,489	148,646	186,135
2018	52,596	50,558	103,154
2019	36,979	39,319	76,298
2020	19,455	21,556	41,011
2021	19,846	49,856	69,702
2022	47,252	91,063	138,315
Average			
2005-2008	60,956	51,978	112,934
2009-2022	54,610	77,178	131,788

Data source: Barclay 2022 (Table 3).

NOTE: This table does not include sport fish harvest, subsistence harvest, personal use harvest, or commercial harvest that could not be represented from the samples collected.

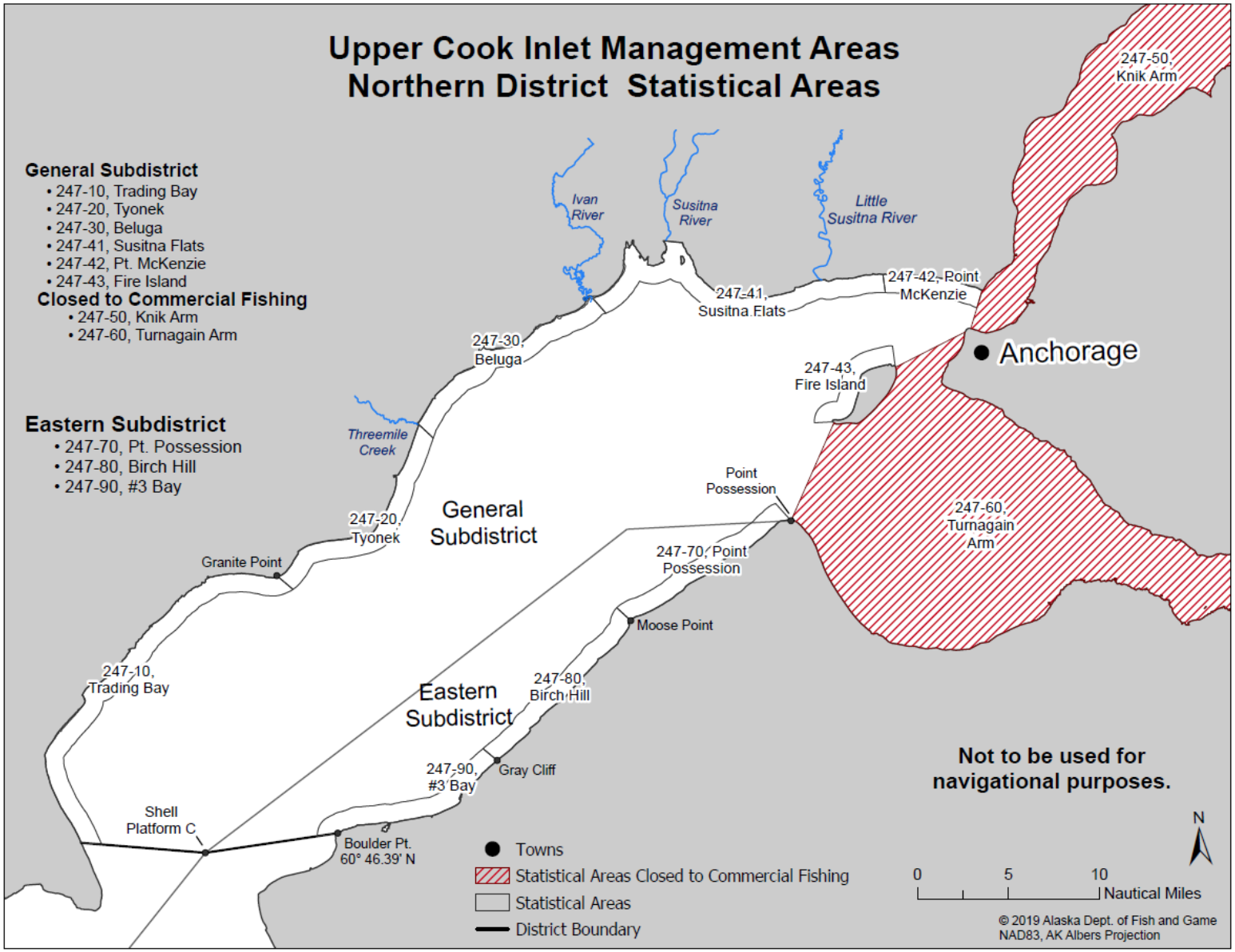

Figure 131-1.–Map of Northern District set gillnet fishing boundaries, subdistricts, and statistical areas.

Cook Inlet Smelt (2 proposals)

PROPOSAL 216 – 5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan. Reduce the commercial smelt guideline harvest level in Upper Cook Inlet.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Wildlife Alliance.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Adoption of this proposal would decrease the total allowable harvest of smelt in Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) by 100 tons.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial smelt fishery is prosecuted under 5 AAC 21.505. *Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan* and only under the conditions of a commissioner's permit. This fishery is allowed in saltwater, from May 1 to June 30, specifically in that area of Cook Inlet from the Chuitna River to the Little Susitna River. The fishery also takes place, from May 1 to June 30, in the freshwater of the Susitna River, south of 61° 21.50'N. lat. (Figure 212-1). Legal gear for the fishery is limited to a hand-operated dip net, as defined in 5 AAC 39.105, with the total harvest not to exceed 200 tons of smelt. Any salmon caught during the fishery are to be immediately returned to the water unharmed. To participate in this fishery, every fisherman must purchase a miscellaneous finfish permit (M99B) from the Commercial Fishery Entry Commission (CFEC), as well as obtaining a commissioner's permit, which can be obtained from the department's office in Soldotna. The commissioner's permit is free; the M99B permit is $75; nonresidents are required to pay an annual nonresident differential of $220 with issuance of their first permit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the total allowable harvest to half of the current level, from 200-tons to 100-tons. The inseason management of this fishery would remain the same. The 100-ton total allowable harvest level would result in a reduced annual harvest of smelt in the fishery. The department does not have sufficient information to determine if this decrease in total allowable harvest would affect the productivity of smelt returning to the Susitna River.

BACKGROUND: Smelt return to many of the larger river systems in UCI, with particularly large runs to the Susitna and Kenai Rivers. Both longfin smelt and eulachon (referred to as smelt and often identified as hooligan) are documented in Cook Inlet. Smelt begin returning to spawning areas in Cook Inlet generally from mid-May to mid-June and return in quantities large enough to support a limited commercial fishery. Longfin smelt return to Cook Inlet in the fall of the year and are not targeted because of the relatively small run size.

At the 1998 board meeting, the commercial smelt fishery was closed, but the regulation did not take effect until after the 1999 season. In 2000, as part of its draft *Forage Fish Management Plan,* the department recommended smelt fishing be restricted to the General Subdistrict of the Northern District. Legal gear would be hand-operated dip nets only, which had the benefit of eliminating the harvest of non-target species. The area opened to fishing was designed to target Susitna River smelt stocks. In this draft policy, the department recommended that active forage fish fisheries be allowed to take place in a tightly controlled and closely monitored manner through the use of a commissioner's permit, while not allowing any "new" fisheries to develop. The intent was to allow

an active, low-level fishery to continue. However, when the board adopted the current Forage Fish Management Plan, they chose to close the entire commercial smelt fishery. At the 2005 board meeting, proposals were submitted to reopen the fishery, which the board accepted, authorizing a commercial smelt fishery beginning with the 2005 season. While the intent of the commissioner's permit was to control and closely monitor the fishery, the harvest, market, and logistics to reach the fishing area inherently limits participation in the fishery.

Prior to adoption of 5 AAC 39.212. *Forage Fish Management Plan*, the entire UCI area was open to smelt fishing from October 1 to June 1. The only documented commercial harvests of smelt occurred in 1978 (300 pounds), 1980 (4,000 pounds), 1998 (18,900 pounds), and 1999 (100,000 pounds) (Table 216-1). Prior to 1998, fishermen were mistakenly advised that gillnets were the only legal gear for the harvest of smelt. Because primary markets at the time required undamaged fish for bait or marine mammal food, this harvest method was unacceptable. When the interpretation of the regulation was reviewed in 1998, and subsequently changed to allow dip nets to be used, the 1999 harvest increased to 100,000 pounds (50 tons), which was the harvest cap at the time. All smelt harvest has occurred in the brackish waters of the Susitna River. At the 2017 board meeting, the harvest cap was increased from 100 tons to 200 tons annually. From 1978–2023, commercial smelt harvests in UCI ranged from 300 lb. to 222.4 tons (Table 216–1). The amount of smelt harvested in this fishery is limited by market demand and the logistics of getting the harvest to a location where the smelt can be processed (boxed and frozen) prior to shipment, rather than abundance of fish. During a single year study, the department estimated the biomass of Susitna River eulachon in 2016 to be 48,000 tons (Willette and DeCino 2016).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not quantitatively assess smelt returning to UCI. However, the department considers the current allowable harvest level (200 tons) to be sustainable based on performance of the fishery and reports of large numbers of smelt migrating up the Susitna River. There are no biological concerns for this fishery.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

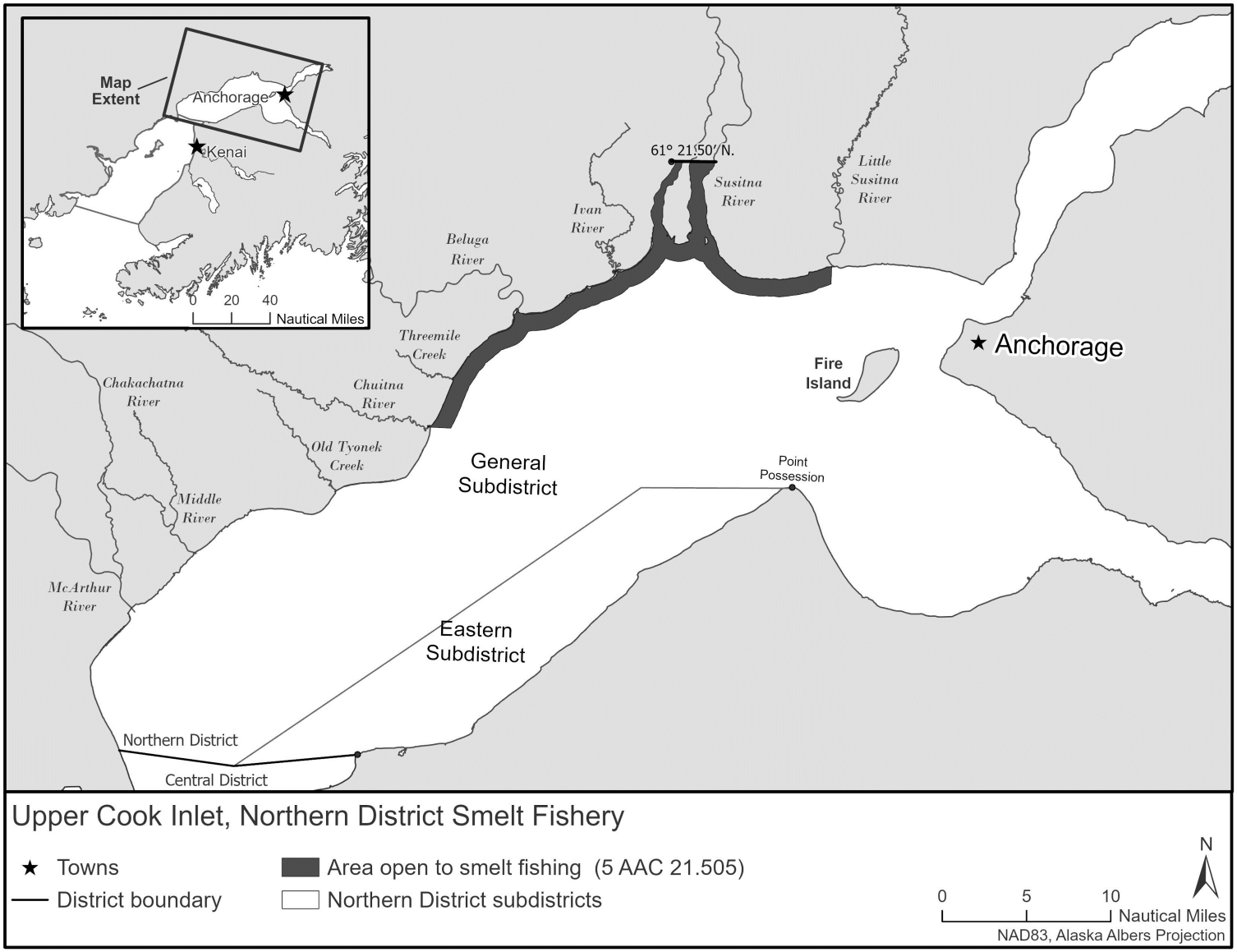

Figure 216-1.–Map of area open to commercial smelt fishing in UCI.

Table 216-1.–Cook Inlet commercial harvest of smelt, 1978, 1980, 1998–1999, and 2006–2023.

Year	Lbs.	Tons	Permits
1978	300	0.2	NA
1980	4,000	2.0	NA
1998	18,610	9.3	<3
1999	100,000	50.0	NA
2006	90,783	45.4	8
2007	125,044	62.5	11
2008	127,365	63.7	6
2009	78,258	39.1	6
2010	126,135	63.1	3
2011	201,570	100.8	5
2012	195,910	98.0	4
2013	190,830	95.4	4
2014	198,814	99.4	4
2015	213,934	107.0	4
2016	191,536	95.8	4
2017	18,685	9.3	<3
2018	382,967	191.5	4
2019	389,473	194.7	6
2020	423,613	211.8	7
2021	444,838	222.4	7
2022	335,494	167.7	7
2023	175,946	88.0	5
10-yr average (2013-2022)	279,018	139.5	5

PROPOSAL 217 – 5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan. Repeal the *Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Tyonek Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to repeal the *Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan* entirely.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial smelt fishery is prosecuted under 5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan and only under the conditions of a commissioner's permit. This fishery is allowed in saltwater only, from May 1 to June 30, specifically in that area of Cook Inlet from the Chuitna River to the Little Susitna River and in the Susitna River south of 61° 21.50'N. lat. (Figure 216-1). Legal gear for the fishery is limited to a hand-operated dip net, as defined in 5 AAC 39.105, with the total harvest not to exceed 200 tons of smelt. Any salmon caught during the fishery are to be immediately returned to the water unharmed. To participate in this fishery, every fisherman must purchase a miscellaneous finfish permit (M99B) from the Commercial Fishery Entry Commission (CFEC), as well as obtaining a commissioner's permit, which can be obtained from the department's office in Soldotna.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The *Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan* would be repealed and this would end the commercial smelt fishery in the Northern District.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 216 for background.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not quantitatively assess smelt returning to UCI. However, the department considers the current allowable harvest level (200 tons) to be sustainable based on performance of the fishery and reports of large numbers of smelt migrating up the Susitna River. There are no biological concerns for this fishery.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Susitna River Sport Fisheries (10 proposals)

PROPOSAL 218 – 5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Allow harvest of king salmon between 20 and 24 inches in Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

PROPOSED BY: Payton McHoes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow the sport harvest of king salmon between 20 and 24 inches in length with a bag limit of two fish, four in possession.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the sport fishery, one king salmon per day, two in possession is allowed for king salmon 20 inches and longer. Less than 20 inches, 10 king salmon are allowed per day and in possession.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the harvest of small, mostly male king salmon by an unknown amount. It would also increase effort on all sizes of king salmon and increase mortality of larger king salmon as they are sorted through and measured for legality. Additionally, it would reduce the likelihood of achieving the Yentna River Chinook salmon stock OEG on years of king salmon shortage as all sizes of king salmon count toward achievement of the escapement goal.

BACKGROUND: Since the beginning of the king salmon decline, the department has managed king salmon fisheries using emergency order authority to allow fishing opportunity when possible while conserving harvest to achieve escapement goals. Restrictive EOs include all sizes of king salmon as the OEG includes all sizes. When the fishery has been restricted to either catch-and-release or closed, jack kings under 20 inches have not been allowed to be retained. Effort in a catch-and-release fishery is generally lower than in a fishery where harvest is allowed. Allowing the harvest of jacks would increase effort and the mortality of larger king salmon.

During the past five years, except in 2019 when the fishery was closed throughout the season, the king salmon sport fishery on the Yentna River was restricted to catch-and-release only from the outset of the season by emergency order. A five-year average of 3,814 king salmon were caught and released with an estimated release mortality of 273 fish (Table 218-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends the board **TAKE NO ACTION** on this proposal as harvest of this size is already allowed in regulation. The department has not allowed harvest of small male king salmon when harvest of king salmon has been closed by emergency order.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 218-1.–Catch, harvest, estimated release mortality, and escapement of king salmon in Unit 4 (Yentna River) of the Susitna River, 2013–2023.

	Catch	Harvest	Released	Release Mortality[a]	Escapement[bc]	Preseason EO	Inseason EO
2013	8,825	1,340	7,485	599	28,639	Harvest Fri-Mon; C&R Tues-Thur; annual 2	
2014	6,144	689	5,455	436	27,550	Harvest Fri-Mon; C&R Tues-Thur; annual 2	
2015	14,238	1,692	12,546	1,004	40,375	Harvest Fri-Mon; C&R Tues-Thur; annual 2	
2016	7,892	1,467	6,425	514	27,409	Harvest Fri-Mon; C&R Tues-Thur; annual 2	
2017	4,754	1,158	3,596	288	12,693	Harvest Fri-Mon; C&R Tues-Thur; annual 2	Closed July 4
2018	4,798	0	4,798	384	14,892	C&R	Closed June 22
2019	2,648	0	2,648	212	21,435	Closed	
2020	3,542	0	3,542	283	14,850	C&R	
2021	4,036	0	4,036	323	18,890	C&R	
2022	2,068	0	2,068	165	16,583	C&R	Closed June 23
2023	NA	NA	NA	NA	8,294	C&R	
5-yr mean	3,418	0	3,418	273			

NA= not available.

[a] based on catch-and-release mortality rate of 8%.

[b] estimated escapement of the Yentna River king salmon stock.

[c] SEG 13,000 - 22,000; OEG 16,000 - 22,000 beginning 2020.

PROPOSAL 219 – 5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Close fishing for all species within the confluence of Unit 2 waters when sport fishing for king salmon is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Close sport fishing in confluence areas of streams within Unit 2 for all species when these waters are closed to sport fishing for king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sport fishing for all species, except king salmon, is allowed year-round. Fishing specifically for king salmon is allowed through the third Monday in June and during two long consecutive weekends (Saturdays-Mondays) following the third Monday in June.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would repeal the regulation created in 2020 that allows fishing for resident species seven days per week, including days closed to king salmon fishing in regulation. Additionally, it would decrease opportunity for anglers that float and fish the lower sections of these tributaries and increase regulatory complexity as confluence areas would be open part of week by regulation and closed part of the week. Confluence areas would need to be defined and posted for each unique stream mouth.

BACKGROUND: King salmon within Unit 2 tend to stage in the mouth and lower reaches of tributaries, such as Willow and Montana creeks, as they mature for spawning. Prior to the 2020 board meeting, regulations prohibited fishing for any species on days closed to king salmon fishing to prevent king salmon being targeted under the guise of trout fishing. The department issued preseason emergency orders closing streams within this area to fishing for king salmon in 2018 and 2019 to address king salmon shortages. These emergency orders allowed fishing for finfish species other than king salmon on days normally closed in regulation to mitigate lost opportunity to fish for king salmon. The result was 20 additional days of fishing opportunity for trout anglers with few enforcement complaints.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal to prohibit fishing for resident species on days king salmon fishing is closed. The department has emergency order authority to close these waters to all fishing when closed to king salmon fishing if needed.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 220 – 5 AAC 62.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area. Open additional waters in the Big River drainage to sport fishing for coho salmon.

PROPOSED BY: William Davis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow fishing only for coho salmon from July 20 to September 15 approximately 800 yards upstream of the current point closed to fishing for all salmon on the South Fork of Big River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The south fork of Big River is closed to sport fishing upstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the first island approximately three-fourths of a mile upstream from the confluence at Otter Lake. The limit for salmon, other than king salmon, is three per day, six in possession. A coho salmon removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person hooking it.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase opportunity to harvest coho salmon in the Big River lakes area. There would be an unknown but likely small impact to sockeye salmon spawning in the confluence area.

BACKGROUND: The Big River drainage supports popular sport fishing opportunities for sockeye and coho salmon fishing. Much of the drainage is semiglacial, infiltrated by many clearwater tributaries. One unnamed tributary enters the South Fork of Big River. Sport fishing for salmon was closed near this tributary in 2020 to protect sockeye salmon that congregate and eventually spawn in the tributary (Figure 220-1). Sockeye salmon were documented as spawning throughout the tributary during 1980–1985, including the confluence with the South Fork of Big River (Figure 220-2). However, the clearwater influence of the tributary into the South Fork provides an area to fish for coho salmon later in the season. Coho salmon harvest at Big River Lakes has ranged from 568 to 1,619 fish over the past 10 years with a 5-yr average of about 1,000 fish (Table 220-1) and an unknown proportion of this harvest has traditionally occurred near the mouth of this tributary. Most coho salmon caught in this area of the South Fork are thought to be bound for spawning areas further up the drainage. Run timing on the unnamed tributary is unknown; however, run timing data collected in the early 1980s on Wolverine Creek, a neighboring tributary in the Big River Lakes system, suggests 95% of sockeye salmon passage complete by about the end of July (Table 220-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When the Susitna River sockeye salmon Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation. Current management plan restrictions to the Central District drift gillnet fleet and Northern District set gillnet fishery have contributed to escapement goals being increasingly achieved at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes. Implementation of Federal management in the Central District drift gillnet fishery may potentially impact management of state fisheries. In addition, the department has concerns over making coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

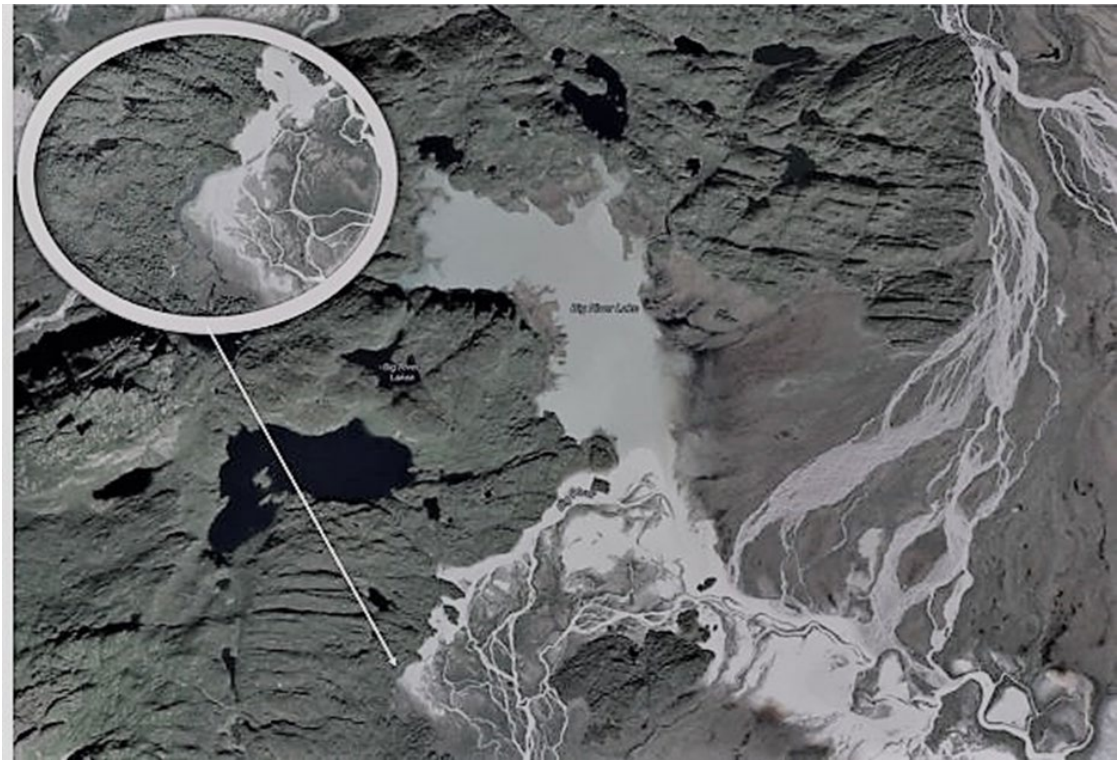

Figure 220-1.–Map of proposed area to be opened to sport fishing for coho salmon only.

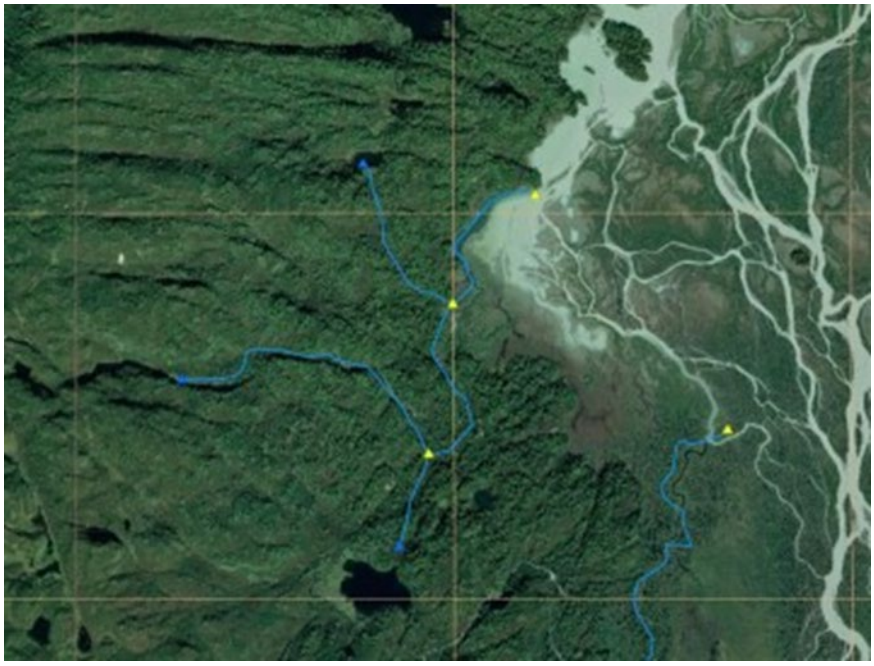

Figure 220-2.–Waters documented for spawning sockeye salmon in the Anadromous Waters Catalog in the vicinity of the area proposed for coho fishing only.

Table 220-1.–Coho salmon harvest and effort at Big River Lakes, 1998–2022.

	Harvest	Angler-days
1998	264	729
1999	463	1,341
2000	325	2,504
2001	508	902
2002	490	678
2003	2,830	3,497
2004	ND	ND
2005	ND	ND
2006	2,278	2,295
2007	1,644	2,203
2008	3,560	2,837
2009	1,757	1,755
2010	2,667	2,669
2011	1,270	2,452
2012	816	1,758
2013	1,539	2,931
2014	1,619	1,875
2015	1,376	1,786
2016	659	1,414
2017	683	2,037
2018	1,613	1,774
2019	1,514	1,620
2020	621	598
2021	568	1,495
2022	576	1,562
5-yr mean	978	1,410

ND= no data.

Table 220-2.–Sockeye salmon run timing on Wolverine Creek of Big River Lakes, 1981–1983.

Run timing	1981	1982	1983	Average
25%	5-Jul	26-Jun	20-Jun	27-Jun
50%	12-Jul	29-Jun	24-Jun	1-Jul
75%	19-Jul	5-Jul	5-Jul	9-Jul
95%	27-Jul	28-Jul	16-Jul	23-Jul

PROPOSAL 221 – 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area. Create a bag and possession limit of 3 coho salmon in the Susitna River Drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the sport bag and possession limit for coho salmon from two to three fish in Alexander Creek and Unit 2 of the Susitna River drainage.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? General regulations for the Susitna River drainage specify a bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon, of three fish, of which only two may be coho salmon. These general regulations apply to Alexander Creek and Unit 2 of the Susitna River drainage. Special regulations for Unit 1, except Alexander Creek, and Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage allow three salmon per day and six in possession, of which all may be coho salmon. Special regulations for Unit 3, Unit 5, and Unit 6 of the Susitna River drainage allow a bag and possession limit of three salmon, of which all may be a coho salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase effort and harvest of coho salmon on Alexander Creek and streams of Unit 2 (Parks Highway streams) to levels which may not be sustainable on years of average to below average return years.

BACKGROUND: Poor returns of coho salmon to UCI in 1997 and 1999, resulting in not achieving escapement objectives, prompted the board to restrict sport fisheries on select Knik Arm and Susitna River drainage streams to allow more coho salmon on the spawning grounds. In 2000, the board conducted a special out-of-cycle session to address Cook Inlet coho salmon. Because of the broad decline in coho salmon abundance, restrictive action was taken in a wide geographic range (i.e., Anchorage, Kenai, Susitna River, Knik Arm, and parts of WCI). In the sport fishery, coho salmon limits were reduced from three fish per day to two fish per day. Possession limits were reduced from six to four in some areas, while in other cases, possession limits were equal to the bag limit. In addition to these restrictions, the board took action to close Wasilla Creek to salmon fishing.

However, in remote systems that experienced relatively low angler use and that had good to above average returns, restrictions implemented in 2000 may not have been necessary. In recent years the board relaxed some of the restrictions imposed on the user groups. The Central District commercial drift gillnet fleet fishing season was extended and sport fish restrictions were relaxed on some of the Westside Susitna and WCI streams. Coho salmon bag and possession limits were increased from two per day, four in possession to three per day, six in possession. In 2011, some additional remote NCI areas that included the Talkeetna River and upper Susitna River streams

north of Talkeetna were returned to a bag and possession limit of three coho salmon. Others, such as Eastside Susitna River tributaries have remained at a bag and possession limit of two coho salmon as these streams, which are road-accessible and receive high angler use, may not be able to sustain an increase in harvest during years with average to below average returns.

Sport harvest on major streams within Unit 2 of the Susitna River (Parks Highway streams) has fluctuated with effort and coho salmon abundance over the past ten years, with an average harvest of 1,627 in Willow Creek, 565 in Little Willow Creek, 1,114 in Sheep Creek, and 1,620 fish in Montana Creek (Table 221-1). The sport fishery in this management unit, along with all other units of the Susitna River was liberalized to four coho salmon per day and eight in possession midseason in 2017 and 2018 based on very strong abundance indices. Conversely, very strong indices of a weak run in 2023 resulted in restricting Susitna River fisheries, including Unit 2, to a one coho salmon bag and possession limit midseason.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and increasing the harvest of coho salmon in Alexander Creek and streams within Unit 2 of the Susitna River drainage. The department has little data from which to manage these high-use streams inseason and must rely on angler reports, onsite staff visits, and indications of run strength from Northern District harvest and Deshka weir counts when considering inseason regulatory changes. Under these circumstances, timely emergency orders to restrict a relatively high-use fishery in times of low returns can be difficult and the department recommends retaining the more conservative regulations already in place. The department has emergency order authority under 5 AAC 61.110 to restrict or liberalize coho salmon bag limits on the Susitna River based on indices of abundance, which has been used when indices were very strong.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 221-1.–Susitna River sport fishing effort and harvest of coho salmon on select major streams restricted to a bag and possession limit of two coho salmon.

	Alexander Creek		Willow Creek		Little Willow Creek		Sheep Creek		Montana Creek	
Year	Angler-days	Harvest	Angler-days	Harvest	Angler-days	Harvest	Angler-days	Harvest	Angler-days	Harvest
2013	1,180	448	12,337	1,760	2,668	210	5,268	1,699	12,089	2,428
2014	3,119	415	13,687	1,408	4,286	807	4,887	995	9,381	1,602
2015	1,109	406	12,068	3,127	1,934	437	3,885	2,215	10,291	1,530
2016	418	126	11,968	660	3,742	398	4,060	1,037	7,280	328
2017	1,168	265	10,943	2,787	1,527	582	3,392	1,217	8,242	1,767
2018	833	445	8,573	1,375	2,230	1,201	3,092	552	6,665	991
2019	470	115	12,519	1,348	2,169	169	3,568	637	12,980	1,233
2020	1,110	382	11,798	592	3,348	901	4,787	824	8,461	1,313
2021	145	163	13,354	2,939	1,804	756	4,170	1,050	7,404	3,756
2022	163	63	9,833	271	1,034	187	3,152	912	6,631	1,249
10-yr Average	972	283	11,708	1,627	2,474	565	4,026	1,114	8,942	1,620

PROPOSAL 222 – 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area. Increase the Susitna River drainage sport fish limits for pink salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Farley Dean.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the bag and possession limit for pink salmon on the Susitna River drainage to six fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? General regulations for the Susitna River drainage specify a bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon, of three fish; all three fish may be pink salmon. Special regulations for Unit 3, Unit 5, and Unit 6 of the Susitna River drainage mimic the general regulations with respect to pink salmon limits. Special regulations for Unit 1 and Unit 4 of the Susitna drainage allow three salmon per day and six in possession; all three fish per day and six in possession may be pink salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the harvest of pink salmon in the Susitna River drainage by an unknown, but likely small amount.

BACKGROUND: There is no pink salmon stock assessment or estimate of run strength in the Susitna drainage as a whole, but pink salmon are the most abundant salmon species returning to the Susitna River and are also the least harvested species of salmon in the drainage. Historically, high abundance has been observed on even numbered years; however, in recent years, above average numbers of pink salmon have returned on some odd numbered years. Pink salmon abundance on the greater Susitna River drainage is not available. However, the Deshka River is a strong producer of pink salmon and pink salmon are counted ancillary to monitoring the escapement of king and coho salmon. Average pink salmon escapement 2003–2023 was 22,310 fish on odd years and 111,908 fish on even years with the greatest escapement of 390,087 fish occurring in 2004 (Table 222-1). About 3,200 pink salmon are harvested annually on the Susitna River regardless of run size or year, representing about 13% of salmon, other than king salmon, harvested.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** increasing opportunity to harvest pink salmon. The department has no biological concern for pink salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 222-1.–Pink salmon harvest in the Susitna River drainage and spawning escapement on the Deshka River weir.

	Susitna River sport harvest	Deshka River escapement (weir)
2003	2,224	9,214
2004	5,613	390,087
2005	3,144	7,088
2006	4,256	83,454
2007	2,616	3,954
2008	2,186	12,947
2009	5,391	26,092
2010	2,040	9,078
2011	1,696	4,490 [a]
2012	1,681	78,857
2013	3,211	27,929
2014	1,838	78,111
2015	2,785	6,328
2016	2,354	65,567 [a]
2017	2,692	25,055
2018	2,592	59,153
2019	5,528	72,821
2020	4,060	150,523 [a]
2021	6,148	23,141 [a]
2022	1,855	72,422 [a]
2023	NA	19,628 [a]
Odd year mean	3,544	22,310
Even year mean	3,117	111,908

[a] incomplete weir count due to flooding in 2011, 2016, and 2023; pulled early due to budget cuts 2020-2022.

PROPOSAL 223 – 5 AAC 61.185. Special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna River Drainage Area.
Redefine the special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna Drainage Area.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add the Susitna River mainstem, from Alexander Creek to Devils Canyon (Units 1-3 of the Susitna River), to the list of areas managed as catch-and-release special management waters during September 15 – May 15 each year. Use of bait would be prohibited when fishing for burbot in the Susitna River mainstem September 15 – May 15 in Units 1-3 of the Susitna River. This change would increase the time in which bait is allowed on the Susitna River mainstem by two weeks in the fall (bait is currently prohibited starting September 1 vs September 15) in Units 1 and 2 of the Susitna River. Mainstem Susitna waters in Unit 3 of the Susitna River would be managed as trophy management waters under 5 AAC 61.185 (b) during May 16 – September 14 and catch-and-release special management waters under 5 AAC 61.185 (c) during September 15 – May 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? General sport fish regulations prohibit the retention of rainbow trout in the Susitna River drainage April 15 – June 14. Under general regulations, retention is allowed June 15 – April 14 with a bag and possession limit of two fish, of which only one may be 20 inches or greater in length, with an annual limit of two fish 20 inches or greater in length.

Waters designated as special management waters for rainbow trout within the Susitna River drainage are split between those managed as trophy fish management waters and catch-and-release management waters. All waters within Unit 3 of the Susitna River are managed for trophy rainbow trout and are restricted to a bag and possession limit one fish over 20 inches. Waters designated for catch-and-release only related to the proposal include portions of the Deshka River and Willow Creek, North Fork of the Kashwitna River, Montana Creek, Fish Creek, and Prairie Creek. All special management waters, whether trophy fish or catch-and-release, allow the use of only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase regulatory complexity by allowing the use of bait to continue until September 15 in the mainstem Susitna River while prohibiting it September 1 in tributaries of the Susitna River. Opportunity to fish for burbot with set lines during fall and winter would be lost without use of bait. Coho salmon harvest and rainbow trout catch would increase by an unknown, but likely small amount with two weeks additional time in which bait would be allowed during the fall. Rainbow trout harvest would decrease by an unknown, but likely small amount, but this may be offset by an increase in catch-and-release mortality due to additional time that bait would be allowed.

BACKGROUND: The Susitna River drainage contains the majority of wild rainbow trout waters in the Northern Cook Inlet management area. For several years prior to 1986, the board attempted to accommodate a wide array of individual requests for regulatory reform for conservative rainbow

trout management in the Northern Cook Inlet Management Area (NCIMA). In 1984, a 13-member citizen planning team, working with department staff and the angling community, drafted a *Cook Inlet Rainbow Trout/Steelhead Management Policy* (CIRTMP) to provide guidelines for the management of rainbow trout in the NCIMA. The board officially adopted the CIRTMP as the management policy in 1986. The policy provided a systematic approach for selecting fishery regulations, as well as a process for identification of waters for special management. Part of the policy called for management under a conservative yield strategy aimed at maintaining historical size and age compositions and stock levels for wild rainbow trout. Bag and possession limits under this concept are two trout, of which only one may be 20 inches or more in length; the annual limit is two trout. Harvest is not allowed during the spawning period (April 15-June 14). This management strategy calls for the use of unbaited artificial lures in all flowing waters from September 1 through May 15 to enhance survival of released fish at the time when trout are often targeted. This regulation was implemented in 1987 and set the bait closure from September 1–December 31. Rainbow trout exit the upper reaches of tributaries in the fall (September–October) and ultimately congregate on the lower reaches or completely exit tributaries for the winter months. The bait closure was extended in 1993 to September 1–May 15 to provide further protection to trout reentering Susitna tributaries following the winter period. This regulation exists for the entire Susitna River drainage. The May 15 date was later extended through July 13, but that action was intended for king salmon conservation.

Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220), adopted by the board in 2003, currently guides wild rainbow trout regulatory changes. This policy is similar to CIRTMP with respect to protection and conservative management of wild rainbow trout to the effect that no modification of regulations was necessary on the Susitna River drainage when the plan was implemented. Presently, most major rainbow trout fisheries on the Susitna River drainage are catch-and-release, although some allow minimal harvest. The Talachulitna River was the first water designated as a special management water for rainbow trout in 1977 where only catch-and-release fishing is allowed year-round and only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure allowed as terminal gear (Figure 223-1). Other special management waters allowing only single hook only catch-and-release fishing have been designated since the late 1980s and now include most of Lake Creek, Deshka River, and Willow Creek and the entire drainages of the North Fork of the Kashwitna and Prairie, Alexander, Fish (Talkeetna River drainage), and Montana creeks, and Canyon Creek. Waters of the Susitna River upstream of Talkeetna River have been designated trophy rainbow trout waters, allowing only one trout over 20 inches per day.

Rainbow trout catch in Units 1 – 3 of the Susitna River has followed the trend in effort over the past 20 years (Figure 223-1). The reduction to catch in recent years was likely caused by lost days of fishing opportunity due to king salmon restrictions and closures. Harvest within Units 1 – 3 of the Susitna River is relatively low due in part to major fisheries, such as Willow and Montana creeks being designated catch-and-release only waters and anglers retaining fewer fish where harvest is allowed. About 8% of rainbow trout caught on Susitna River mainstem were harvested during 2013–2017. A more recent average of 1% occurred from 2018-2022, which is similar to the overall retention rate of 1% for this area of the Susitna River drainage (Table 223-1). The previous 5-year average harvest of rainbow trout in Units 1-3 of the Susitna River was 214 fish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** increasing regulatory complexity in an area already served by conservative management. Regulatory strategies have been carefully crafted and enacted by the board and the department over the past two decades to manage rainbow trout conservatively to maintain historical conditions as defined under the *Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220)* while still allowing minimal opportunity to harvest rainbow trout.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

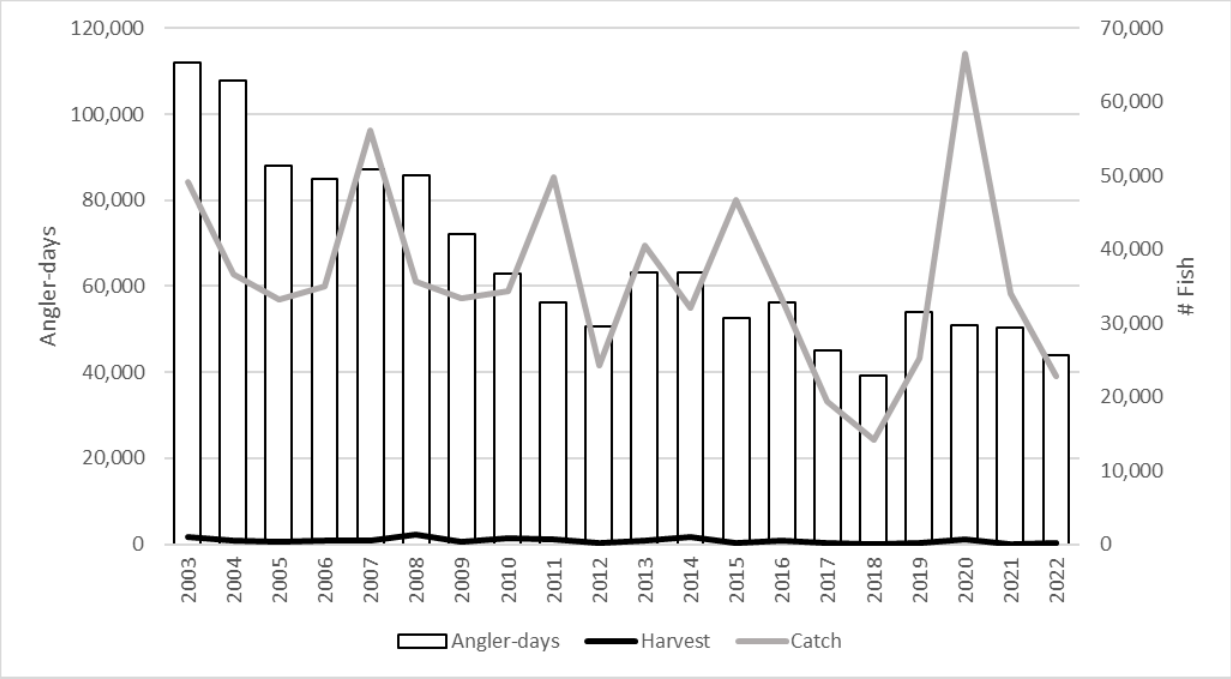

Figure 223-1.–Wild rainbow trout catch, harvest, and effort in Units 1 - 3 of the Susitna River, 2003–2022.

Table 223-1.–Wild rainbow trout catch, harvest, and percent harvest in select tributaries within Units 1-3 of the Susitna River and mainstem Susitna River, 2003–2022.

	Eastside Susitna																				
	Willow Creek[a]			Montana Creek[b]			Sheep Creek[c]			Talkeetna River[d]			Susitna mainstem[c]			Other streams[e]					
	catch	harvest	% harvest	catch	harvest	% harvest	catch	harvest	% harvest	catch	harvest	% harvest	catch	harvest	% harvest	catch	harvest	% harvest	Total Catch	Total Harvest	Total % Harvest
2003	13,750	61	0%	12,393	0	0%	5,289	163	3%	7,875	299	4%	646	54	8%	9,267	355	4%	49,220	932	2%
2004	10,920	144	1%	10,171	0	0%	1,869	58	3%	6,384	157	2%	68	0	0%	7,231	163	2%	36,643	522	1%
2005	10,863	32	0%	6,151	0	0%	2,218	51	2%	6,772	61	1%	1,379	0	0%	5,766	133	2%	33,149	277	1%
2006	10,032	103	1%	7,610	0	0%	2,716	52	2%	7,653	125	2%	1,321	0	0%	5,730	278	5%	35,062	558	2%
2007	20,905	10	0%	16,740	0	0%	4,244	157	4%	8,766	186	2%	651	26	4%	4,898	92	2%	56,204	471	1%
2008	8,235	60	1%	8,014	0	0%	1,769	79	4%	7,889	511	6%	2,541	108	4%	7,120	587	8%	35,568	1,345	4%
2009	14,700	62	0%	6,474	0	0%	1,137	0	0%	6,482	34	1%	782	65	8%	3,772	136	4%	33,347	297	1%
2010	10,689	84	1%	6,409	0	0%	5,495	288	5%	5,266	85	2%	2,131	0	0%	4,384	403	9%	34,374	860	3%
2011	19,557	0	0%	9,836	0	0%	5,709	88	2%	6,769	154	2%	2,632	40	2%	5,368	325	6%	49,871	607	1%
2012	8,207	0	0%	8,590	0	0%	870	21	2%	3,730	78	2%	239	53	22%	2,604	88	3%	24,240	240	1%
2013	8,973	0	0%	17,636	0	0%	459	69	15%	7,379	208	3%	1,106	46	4%	4,970	214	4%	40,523	537	1%
2014	13,566	0	0%	8,348	0	0%	1,830	312	17%	1,990	0	0%	270	28	10%	6,112	674	11%	32,116	1,014	3%
2015	14,168	0	0%	8,482	0	0%	2,597	44	2%	17,987	115	1%	67	0	0%	3,403	96	3%	46,704	255	1%
2016	13,238	0	0%	4,514	0	0%	931	43	5%	4,437	21	0%	403	86	21%	9,821	327	3%	33,344	477	1%
2017	7,116	0	0%	4,200	0	0%	128	23	18%	3,398	18	1%	641	20	3%	3,843	41	1%	19,326	102	1%
2018	2,643	0	0%	5,497	0	0%	2,170	0	0%	781	0	0%	159	0	0%	2,902	66	2%	14,152	66	0%
2019	7,722	0	0%	5,660	0	0%	1,172	0	0%	7,489	37	0%	816	21	3%	2,430	87	4%	25,289	145	1%
2020	18,814	0	0%	19,918	0	0%	2,078	213	10%	13,707	328	2%	3,907	9	0%	8,071	44	1%	66,495	594	1%
2021	11,689	0	0%	3,528	0	0%	1,611	0	0%	6,125	27	0%	591	0	0%	10,413	0	0%	33,957	27	0%
2022	6,308	0	0%	8,043	0	0%	281	0	0%	3,753	54	1%	462	0	0%	3,870	184	5%	22,717	238	1%
2013-2017 mean	11,412	0	0%	8,636	0	0%	1,189	98	11%	7,038	72	1%	497	36	8%	5,630	270	5%	34,403	477	1%
2018-2022 mean	9,435	0	0%	8,529	0	0%	1,462	43	2%	6,371	89	1%	1,187	6	1%	5,537	76	2%	32,522	214	1%

[a] Willow Creek designated catch-and-release special management waters in its entirety in 1997; 1 rainbow under 16" allowed upstream of the Parks Highway in 1999.

[b] Montana Creek designated catch-and-release special management waters in its entirety in 1997.

[c] Two rainbow trout allowed per day and in possession, only one of which may be 20 inches or greater in length.

[d] Two rainbow trout allowed per day and in possession, only one of which may be 20 inches or greater in length; Fish and Prairie creeks designated catch-and-release special management waters in 1997.

[e] includes but not limited to Little Willow, Caswell, Kashwitna, Goose, Birch, Indian, and Portage creeks.

PROPOSAL 224 – 5 AAC 61.185. Special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna River Drainage Area.
Extend the special management areas for rainbow trout to include the portion of Willow Creek upstream of the Parks Highway.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would align rainbow trout regulations with catch-and-release waters downstream of the Parks Highway.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Waters of Willow Creek downstream of the Parks Highway allow only catch-and-release fishing year-round. Upstream of the highway, from June 15 – April 14, bag and possession limit for rainbow trout is one fish under 16 inches in length. Rainbow trout in this area may not be retained during the spawning period, April 15 – June 14. In all waters upstream of a marker located one-half mile upstream of the mouth of Willow Creek, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure is allowed year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would have little to no effect on the harvest of rainbow trout because even though it is allowed, no harvest has been reported on Willow Creek in over the past decade. Alignment of regulations below and above the Parks Highway would reduce regulatory complexity.

BACKGROUND: From 1987 through 1996, regulations allowed harvest of two rainbow trout per day, of which only one could be 20 inches or more in length. In 1996, Willow Creek was designated as catch-and-release special management waters for rainbow trout out of concern over increased effort coupled with a perceived downward trend in catch and harvest in the early 1990s. The department conducted studies in 1997 and 1998 to estimate population size while gathering age and size structure information. Those studies indicated no conservation concern and that a limited harvest of small trout (under 16 inches in length), as was proposed at the 1999 board meeting, would likely maintain historical age and size structure. From 2000–2010, the initial years of the new size limit, harvest diminished from an average of 125 fish kept during the first part of this decade to about 60 fish kept during the second half, as fewer anglers kept fish under the 16-inch size limit. No harvest has been reported in recent years (Table 224-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Although this proposal would align regulations above and below the Parks Highway, current regulations provide diversity of angling opportunity without biological concern.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 224-1.–Wild rainbow trout catch, harvest, and percent harvest in Willow Creek, 1993–2022.

	catch	harvest	% harvest	Regulatory changes
1993	3,934	934	24%	whole creek 2 rainbows per day, only 1 over 20"
1994	4,673	1,161	25%	
1995	2,340	351	15%	
1996	4,766	551	12%	
1997	5,198	0	0%	whole creek C&R only
1998	4,487	0	0%	
1999	11,965	0	0%	
2000	8,836	91	1%	1 rainbow per day <16" above highway
2001	11,510	119	1%	
2002	22,650	209	1%	
2003	13,750	61	0%	
2004	10,920	144	1%	
2005	10,863	32	0%	
2006	10,032	103	1%	
2007	20,905	10	0%	
2008	8,235	60	1%	
2009	14,700	62	0%	
2010	10,689	84	1%	
2011	19,557	0	0%	
2012	8,207	0	0%	
2013	8,973	0	0%	
2014	13,566	0	0%	
2015	14,168	0	0%	
2016	13,238	0	0%	
2017	7,116	0	0%	
2018	2,643	0	0%	
2019	7,722	0	0%	
2020	18,814	0	0%	
2021	11,689	0	0%	
2022	6,308	0	0%	
1993-1996 mean	3,928	749	19%	
1997-1999 mean	7,217	0	0%	
2018-2022 mean	9,435	0	0%	

PROPOSAL 225 – 5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Open rainbow trout fishing in Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage year-round with a bag limit of 5 fish, 10 in possession.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open rainbow trout fishing in all waters of Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage year-round with a bag limit of five fish, ten in possession. Discontinue waters designated as special management areas for rainbow trout on the Talachulitna River, Lake Creek, and Canyon Creek.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In flowing waters, general sport fish regulations allow a bag and possession limit of two rainbow trout, only one of which may be 20 inches or longer June 15 – April 14; no retention April 15 – June 14. In lakes and ponds, retention is allowed year-round. There is an annual limit of two rainbow trout 20 inches or longer and a harvest record is required.

Special management areas for rainbow trout have been designated for the entirety of the Talachulitna River and Canyon Creek and in Lake Creek upstream of an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately one-quarter mile upstream of Bulchitna Lake. These areas allow only catch-and-release fishing and only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure may be used year-round. In lower Lake Creek from a marker located 100 yards above its mouth to a marker ¼ mile above the creek that drains Bulchitna Lake, only unbaited, artificial lures are allowed May 15-July 13; bait and multiple hooks are allowed July 14 – August 15; and only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure is allowed August 16 – May 14. In this section of Lake Creek, from June 15 – August 15, there is a bag and possession limit of two rainbow trout, of which only one may be 20 inches or longer.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This seeks to manage rainbow trout as an invasive species. This would repeal conservative regulations aligned with the statewide policy for managing wild rainbow trout. It would eliminate three designated special management areas for rainbow trout managed to maintain historical size and age distributions through catch-and-release practices. Harvest of rainbow trout within Unit 4 of the Susitna drainage and namely the Talachulitna River and Lake Creek, would increase by an unknown, but likely large amount that may not be sustainable. If adopted, it is unknown what effect this regulation would have on salmon populations in Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage, but would likely have no impact on salmon populations since rainbow trout and Pacific salmon evolved together in these drainages. This would reduce the quality of the angling experience for individuals targeting rainbow trout in these drainages.

BACKGROUND: *Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220)*, adopted by the board in 2003, currently guide wild rainbow trout regulatory changes. By policy, trout are managed conservatively in order to maintain historical conditions. Presently, most major rainbow trout fisheries on the Susitna are catch-and-release, although some allow minimal harvest. The Talachulitna River was the first river designated as special management waters for rainbow trout in 1977 to provide a diversity of angling experience (Figure 225-1). Other special management

waters allowing only single hook only catch-and-release fishing have been designated since the late 1980s and now include most of Lake Creek, Deshka River, and Willow Creek and the entire drainages of the North Fork of the Kashwitna and Prairie, Alexander, Fish (Talkeetna River drainage), and Montana creeks, and Canyon Creek.

Of the three rivers with designated special management waters within the Yentna River drainage (Lake Creek, Talachulitna, and Canyon), Lake Creek is the only fishery to allow limited harvest of rainbow trout in its lower reaches during the summer when salmon fishing is underway, but no retention is allowed in this section during the fall and spring seasonal trout migrations or during the spring spawning period.

From 2013–2022, an average of 8,416 rainbow trout were caught and 162 harvested in the Lake Creek drainage (Table 225-1). Even though harvest is allowed, only about 2% were harvested. Most harvest occurs during the king salmon fishery, when multiple hooks are allowed, and during the coho salmon fishery, when bait is allowed, both of which increase hooking mortality and result in retention of the rainbow trout caught. In other areas of the Yentna River drainage where harvest is allowed, about 7% of rainbow trout caught annually are harvested, suggesting few anglers that catch a rainbow trout are choosing to retain it.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Reversing conservative management of rainbow trout by removing these special management waters would contradict *Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220).* The department currently has no biological concerns for rainbow trout of the Yentna River drainage. Previous Alaska studies indicate that rainbow trout primarily feed on salmon eggs and carcasses, and aquatic insects. Juvenile salmon likely experience mortality from a wide variety of predators. A robust guided and unguided fishery targeting rainbow trout occurs in these drainages and this proposal would jeopardize this important angling opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

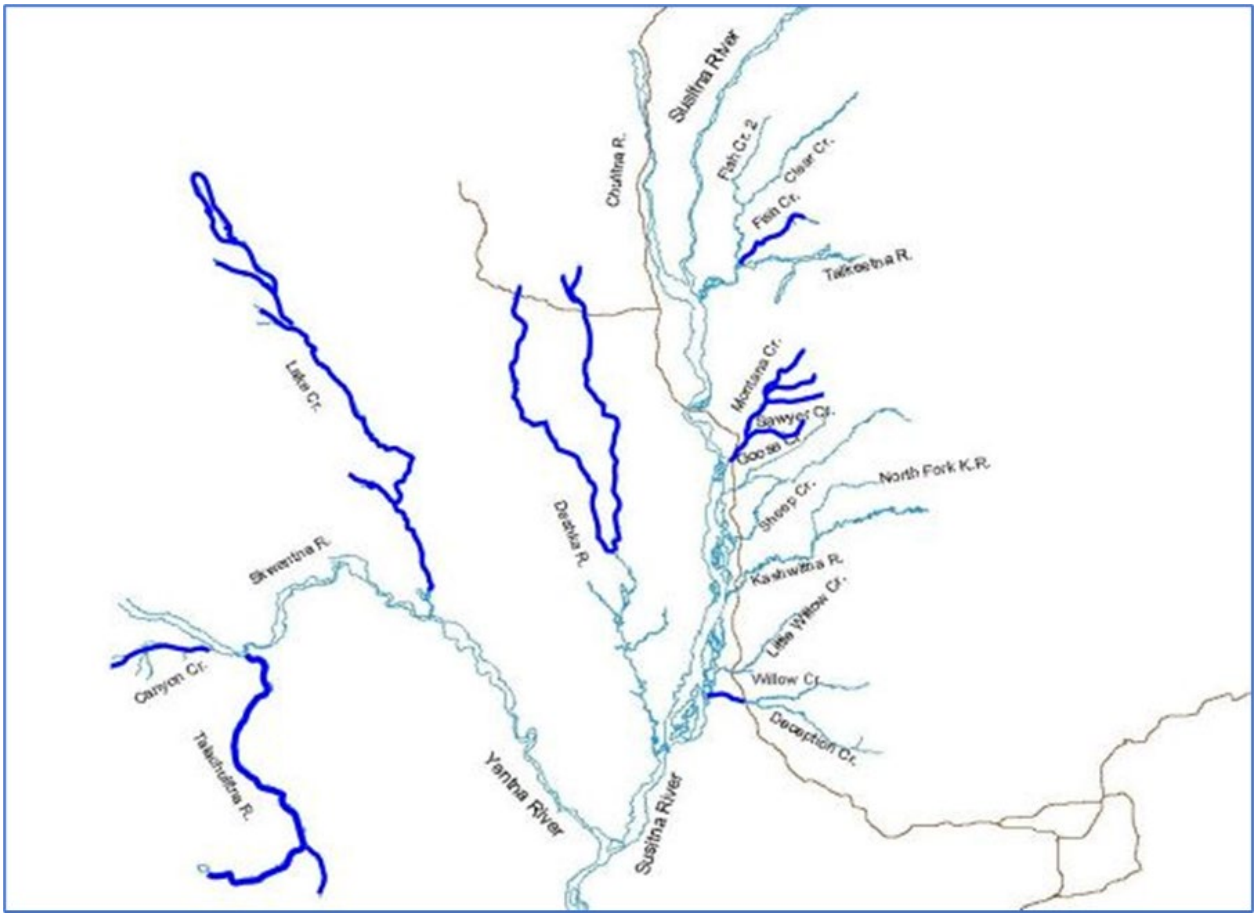

Figure 225-1.–Map of special management waters of the Susitna River drainage where catch-and-release, single hook only regulations apply.

Table 225-1.–Rainbow trout harvest, catch, and percent harvest within waters designated special management waters for rainbow trout within Unit 4 (Yentna River drainage) of the Susitna River, 2013–2022.

	Lake Creek			Talachulitna River			Other streams			Total		
	Catch	Harvest	% Harvest	Catch	Harvest	% Harvest	Catch	Harvest	% Harvest	Catch	Harvest	% Harvest
2013	9,015	174	2%	5,433	0	0%	3,703	191	5%	18,151	365	7%
2014	23,717	568	2%	11,032	0	0%	3,061	275	9%	37,810	843	11%
2015	13,955	200	1%	12,798	0	0%	9,137	128	1%	35,890	328	3%
2016	10,052	175	2%	3,914	0	0%	4,248	147	3%	18,214	322	5%
2017	2,525	40	2%	737	0	0%	1,471	81	6%	4,733	121	7%
2018	4,102	35	1%	1,646	0	0%	1,464	207	14%	7,212	242	15%
2019	6,204	57	1%	1,465	0	0%	2,136	86	4%	9,805	143	5%
2020	4,548	43	1%	2,385	0	0%	1,840	69	4%	8,773	112	5%
2021	5,669	287	5%	1,215	0	0%	5,993	85	1%	12,877	372	6%
2022	4,375	44	1%	7,583	0	0%	3,185	209	7%	15,143	253	8%
Mean	8,416	162	2%	4,821	0	0%	3,624	148	5%	16,861	310	7%

PROPOSAL 226 – 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area. Allow anglers to use two artificial lures in tandem in the Susitna River Drainage waters.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow more than one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure in areas designated Special Management areas for rainbow trout.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? General sport fish regulations on the Susitna River allow a bag and possession limit of two rainbow trout, of which only one may be over 20 inches in length. In these waters, harvest is prohibited during the spawning period April 15 – June 15. In these same waters, statewide regulations stipulate two artificial flies or two hooks allowed per line. Waters designated as special management waters for catch-and-release only fishing allow only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure per line.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase catch and harvest of rainbow trout and other resident species by an unknown amount. No effect in other waters not designated as special management waters as two hooks per line is already allowed. Regulations allowing multiple hooks in special management waters of the Susitna River would differ from single hook only regulations in other management areas of Cook Inlet and the state designated special management waters.

BACKGROUND: In 1984, a 13-member citizen planning team, working with department staff and the angling community, drafted a *Cook Inlet Rainbow Trout/Steelhead Management Policy* (CIRTMP) to provide guidelines for the management of rainbow trout in the NCIMA. The board officially adopted the CIRTMP as the management policy in 1986. The policy provided a systematic approach for selecting fishery regulations, as well as a process for identification of waters for special management. Part of the policy called for management under a conservative yield strategy aimed at maintaining historical size and age compositions and stock levels for wild rainbow trout. Bag and possession limits under this concept are two trout, of which only one may be 20 inches or more in length; the annual limit is two trout. Harvest is not allowed during the spawning period (April 15-June 14). This management strategy calls for the use of unbaited artificial lures in all flowing waters from September 1 through May 15 to enhance survival of released fish at the time when trout are often targeted. This regulation was implemented in 1987 and set the bait closure from September 1–December 31. Rainbow trout exit the upper reaches of tributaries in the fall (September–October) and ultimately congregate on the lower reaches or completely exit tributaries for the winter months. The bait closure was extended in 1993 to September 1–May 15 to provide further protection to trout reentering Susitna River tributaries following the winter period. This regulation exists for the entire Susitna River drainage. The May 15 date was later extended through July 13, but that action was intended was intended for king salmon conservation.

Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220), adopted by the board in 2003, currently guides wild rainbow trout regulatory changes. This policy is similar to CIRTMP with respect to protection and conservative management of wild rainbow trout to the effect that no modification of regulations was necessary on the Susitna River drainage when the plan was implemented. Presently, most major rainbow trout fisheries on the Susitna River are catch-and-release, although some allow minimal harvest. The Talachulitna River was the first waters designated as special management waters for rainbow trout in 1977 where only catch-and-release fishing is allowed year-round and only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure allowed as terminal gear (Figure 226-1). Other special management waters allowing only single hook only catch-and-release fishing have been designated since the late 1980s and now include most of Lake Creek, Deshka River, Willow Creek, and Clear Creek, and the entire drainages of the North Fork of the Kashwitna and Prairie, Alexander, Fish (Talkeetna River drainage), and Montana Creeks. Waters of the Susitna River upstream of Talkeetna River have been designated trophy rainbow trout waters, allowing only one trout over 20 inches per day.

Average rainbow trout catch in the Susitna River drainage 2013–2017 was 60,332 fish. A more recent average of 48,541 fish occurred 2018–2022 (Table 226-1). Average rainbow trout harvest 2013–2017 was 998 fish. A more recent average of 471 occurred 2018–2022.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Regulatory strategies have been carefully crafted and enacted by the board and the department over the past four decades to manage trout conservatively to maintain historical conditions as defined under the *Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220)*. Allowing multiple hooks in special management waters would be inconsistent with wild rainbow trout management and alter a management strategy that has been maintaining healthy trout populations since the late 1970s. Similar proposals were submitted for the Kenai and Anchorage areas.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

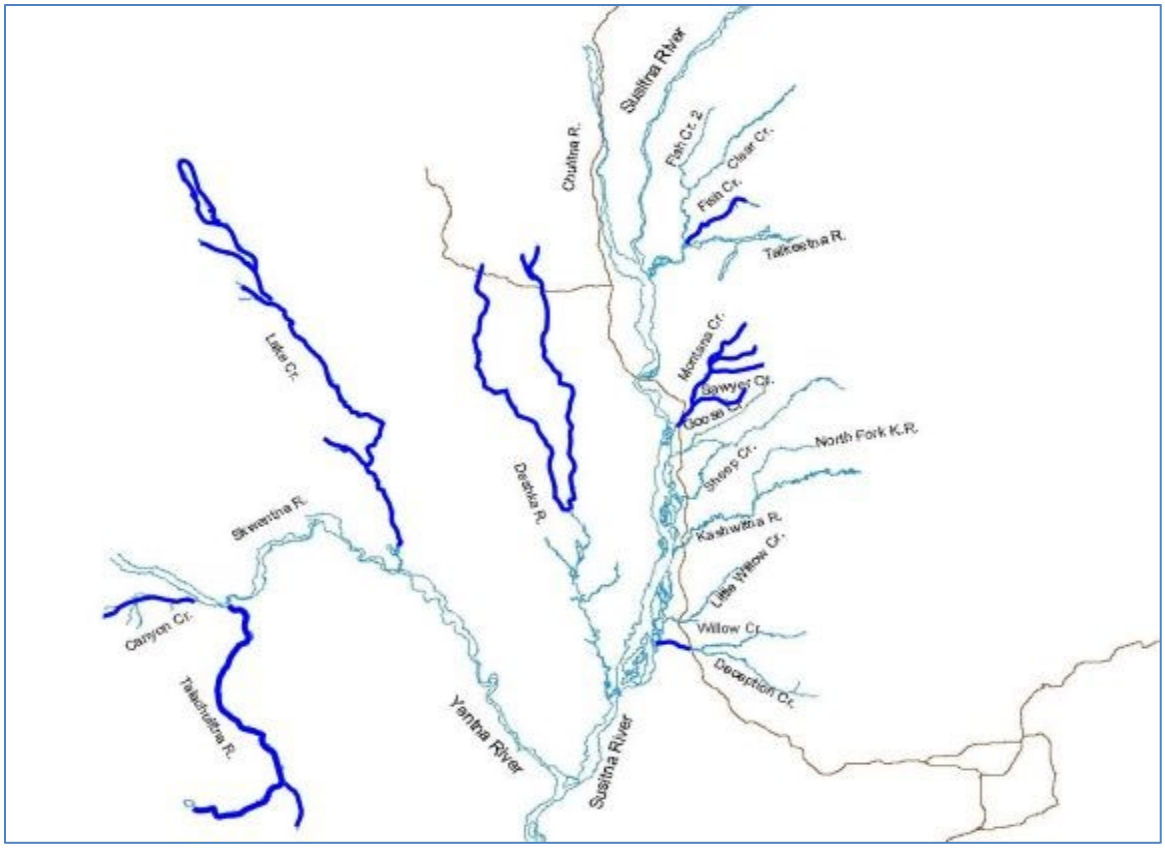

Figure 226-1.–Map of special management waters of the Susitna River drainage where catch-and-release, one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only regulations apply.

Table 226-1.–Wild rainbow trout catch and harvest in select major fisheries of the Susitna River designated in whole or in part special management waters for rainbow trout, 2003–2022.

	Westside Susitna										Eastside Susitna										Susitna River	
	Talachulitna		Lake Creek		Deshka		Other				Willow Creek		Montana Creek		Talkeetna River [a]		Other					
	catch	harvest	catch	harvest	catch	harvest	catch	harvest	Total Catch	Total Harvest	catch	harvest	catch	harvest	catch	harvest	catch	harvest	Total Catch	Total Harvest	catch	harvest
2003	9,721	0	22,460	561	5,868	368	2,278	496	40,327	1,425	13,750	61	12,393	0	7,875	299	18,557	812	52,575	1,172	92,902	2,597
2004	9,000	0	22,130	587	5,868	938	4,676	104	41,674	1,629	10,920	144	10,171	0	6,384	157	14,605	457	42,080	758	83,754	2,387
2005	17,060	0	21,197	209	3,161	60	5,116	70	46,534	339	10,863	32	6,151	0	6,772	61	8,828	249	32,614	342	79,148	681
2006	2,883	0	28,013	159	9,635	523	3,451	333	43,982	1,015	10,032	103	7,610	0	7,653	125	11,701	330	36,996	558	80,978	1,573
2007	11,846	0	11,405	236	3,905	185	4,880	198	32,036	619	20,905	10	16,740	0	8,766	186	16,921	444	63,332	640	95,368	1,259
2008	2,249	0	10,267	153	2,070	419	3,446	157	18,032	729	8,235	60	8,014	0	7,889	511	11,448	697	35,586	1,268	53,618	1,997
2009	6,331	0	10,217	27	3,093	562	7,814	251	27,455	840	14,700	62	6,474	0	6,482	34	8,120	294	35,776	390	63,231	1,230
2010	5,242	0	10,011	154	1,334	122	3,068	57	19,655	333	10,689	84	6,409	0	5,266	85	14,126	788	36,490	957	56,145	1,290
2011	8,647	0	23,420	143	2,156	0	4,093	238	38,316	381	19,557	0	9,836	0	6,769	154	18,034	493	54,196	647	92,512	1,028
2012	7,109	0	12,321	76	556	61	4,715	42	24,701	179	8,207	0	8,590	0	3,730	78	6,309	212	26,836	290	51,537	469
2013	5,433	0	9,015	174	731	103	3,826	191	19,005	468	8,973	0	17,636	0	7,379	208	8,124	355	42,112	563	61,117	1,031
2014	11,032	0	23,717	568	1,951	29	3,367	275	40,067	872	13,566	0	8,348	0	1,990	0	9,548	1000	33,452	1,000	73,519	1,872
2015	12,798	0	13,955	200	624	166	9,137	128	36,514	494	14,168	0	8,482	0	17,987	115	7,827	230	48,464	345	84,978	839
2016	3,914	0	10,052	175	924	32	4,248	147	19,138	354	13,238	0	4,514	0	4,437	21	14,203	516	36,392	537	55,530	891
2017	737	0	2,525	40	710	0	1,558	81	5,530	121	7,116	0	4,200	0	3,398	18	6,271	217	20,985	235	26,515	356
2018	1,646	0	4,102	35	1,814	26	1,583	207	9,145	268	2,643	0	5,497	0	781	0	6,672	117	15,593	117	24,738	385
2019	1,465	0	6,204	57	266	0	2,136	86	10,071	143	7,722	0	5,660	0	7,489	37	4,727	87	25,598	124	35,669	267
2020	2,385	0	4,548	43	525	0	1,840	69	9,298	112	18,814	0	19,918	0	13,707	328	24,651	266	77,090	594	86,388	706
2021	1,215	0	5,669	287	264	0	6,020	85	13,168	372	11,689	0	3,528	0	6,125	27	19,657	107	40,999	134	54,167	506
2022	7,583	0	4,375	44	848	0	3,238	209	16,044	253	6,308	0	8,043	0	3,753	54	7,596	182	25,700	236	41,744	489
2013-2017 mean	6,783	0	11,853	231	988	66	4,427	164	24,051	462	11,412	0	8,636	0	7,038	72	9,195	464	36,281	536	60,332	998
2018-2022 mean	2,859	0	4,980	93	743	5	2,963	131	11,545	230	9,435	0	8,529	0	6,371	89	12,661	152	36,996	241	48,541	471

[a] includes tributaries, such as Clear Creek.

PROPOSAL 227 – 5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Remove the length restriction on Dolly Varden in Unit 4.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Remove the length restriction on Dolly Varden in the Yentna River drainage (Unit 4 of the Susitna River) and increase the possession limit to 10 fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Bag and possession limit of five fish, of which only one may be 12 inches or greater in length year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase regulatory complexity because Dolly Varden regulations in Unit 4 of the Susitna River would differ from those of the rest of the Susitna River drainage. It would potentially increase the harvest of Dolly Varden in Unit 4 by an unknown amount that may not be sustainable.

BACKGROUND: Over the past 20 years, Dolly Varden catch within Unit 4 of the Susitna River has dropped from an average of 2,894 fish 2003–2012 to an average of 1,315 fish 2013–2022 (Table 227-1). During this time, the percentage of fish harvested also decreased from 4% to 1% with fewer anglers keeping their catch. Northern pike predation in some systems such as in Fish Lakes Creek may have negatively impacted Dolly Varden in localized areas.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** increasing regulatory complexity by increasing the possession limit and eliminating the size limit in Unit 4 that would then differ from other areas of Northern Cook Inlet without information suggesting at least a stable population size. The recent downward trend in catch should continue to be monitored. Adoption of this proposal could result in unsustainable harvests of Dolly Varden char in this area. The bag limit of five is already a liberal limit and with limited assessment and additional pressure from northern pike predation, the department does recommend increasing harvest potential.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 227-1.–Dolly Varden catch and harvest in select major fisheries of the Susitna River drainage.

	Yentna River drainage (Unit 4 of Susitna)											Susitna River		
	Talachulitna		Lake Creek		Fish Lakes Creek		Peters Creek							
	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Total Catch	Total Harvest	Total % Harvest	Catch	Harvest	% Harvest
2003	948	65	674	13	0	0	161	0	1,783	78	4%	21,053	1,772	8%
2004	1,388	98	1695	0	343	0	27	13	3,453	111	3%	15,860	1,230	8%
2005	11,025	24	683	103	0	0	0	0	11,708	127	1%	20,871	657	3%
2006	370	153	802	13	37	0	0	0	1,209	166	14%	14,274	864	6%
2007	2,528	10	528	45	9	0	0	0	3,065	55	2%	13,107	332	3%
2008	1,552	0	401	0	0	0	0	0	1,953	0	0%	11,169	498	4%
2009	456	0	133	10	118	0	32	0	739	10	1%	9,390	542	6%
2010	2,716	0	139	11	0	0	88	0	2,943	11	0%	10,655	632	6%
2011	854	26	32	0	0	0	0	0	886	26	3%	9,423	312	3%
2012	1,073	59	35	0	25	25	64	0	1,197	84	7%	6,868	261	4%
2013	1,182	31	308	31	0	0	18	0	1,508	62	4%	12,598	889	7%
2014	1,193	0	498	11	0	0	0	0	1,691	11	1%	11,489	346	3%
2015	3,955	0	514	16	0	0	0	0	4,469	16	0%	26,982	865	3%
2016	555	0	401	0	0	0	12	0	968	0	0%	9,130	237	3%
2017	1,584	0	13	0	0	0	23	0	1,620	0	0%	5,266	179	3%
2018	1,333	20	563	0	0	0	0	0	1,896	20	1%	3,754	214	6%
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		2,305	281	12%
2020	167	0	117	0	0	0	0	0	284	0	0%	2,671	101	4%
2021	24	0	0	0	0	0	568	0	592	0	0%	8,234	760	9%
2022	79	0	46	0	0	0	0	0	125	0	0%	1,696	49	3%
2003-2012 mean	2,291	44	512	20	53	3	37	1	2,894	67	4%	13,267	710	5%
2013-2022 mean	1,007	5	246	6	0	0	62	0	1,315	11	1%	8,413	392	5%

Susitna River Personal Use Fisheries (4 proposals)

PROPOSAL 228 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Close dipnetting in the vicinity of Anderson Creek during the personal use fishery on the lower Susitna River.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit dipnetting in and around the mouth of Anderson Creek, which is within the boundaries of the personal use fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The personal use dip net fishery is open 6 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 10 through July 31 between regulatory markers located approximately one mile downstream of Susitna Station downstream to regulatory markers located near the northern tip of Bell Island/Alexander Creek cutoff.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest of a small stock of coho salmon in Anderson Creek would be reduced in the personal use dip net fishery. Issuance of an annual emergency order to close this area would no longer be necessary.

BACKGROUND: A personal use dip net fishery was created on the lower Susitna River in 2020. Consideration for coho salmon returning to spawn in Anderson Creek (Figure 228-1) was overlooked when the boundaries were established. The creek supports a small stock of coho salmon and is located within the fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The small stock of coho salmon in Anderson Creek are susceptible to overharvest by the dip net fishery, a fishery intended to target mixed stocks of salmon passing through a migratory corridor for spawning destinations further upstream. The department has been issuing emergency orders to close dipnetting in the vicinity of Anderson Creek each season until a correction could be considered at a regularly scheduled board meeting.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

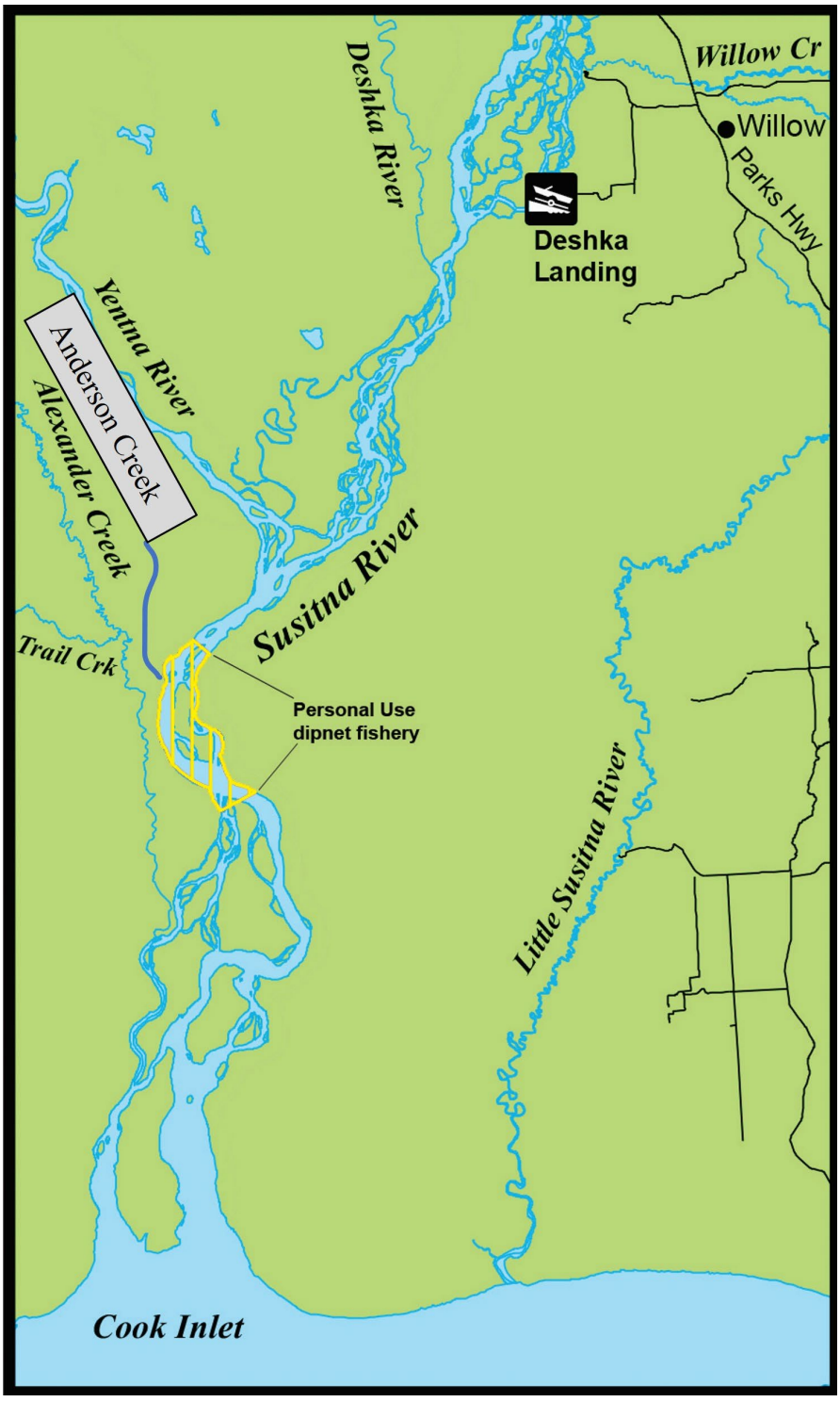

Figure 228-1.–Location of Anderson Creek relative to the lower Susitna River personal use fishery.

PROPOSAL 229 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Increase the number of days the Susitna River dipnet fishery is open.

PROPOSED BY: Kristine Ogonowski.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Add Mondays and Fridays or two additional days per week (6 to 7 additional days per season or approximately double the current fishing time) to the personal use dip net fishery in the lower Susitna River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The personal use dip net fishery is open 6 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 10 through July 31 between regulatory markers located approximately one mile downstream of Susitna Station downstream to regulatory markers located near the northern tip of Bell Island/Alexander Creek cutoff. Retention of king salmon is prohibited.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest of sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon would likely double. Species composition would stay the same.

BACKGROUND: A personal use dip net fishery was created on the lower Susitna River in 2020 (Figure 229-1). The fishery was positioned in the lower river for the least amount of impact to individual natal streams further up the drainage. Unknowns, such as remote location/access as it related to potential participation and actual harvest of salmon by species prompted initiating this fishery with a conservative approach. The new fishery was restricted to only two days per week, targeting the month of July as an earlier timeframe more conducive to the harvest of sockeye, pink, and chum salmon, and to a lesser extent, coho salmon.

The limiting factor in this fishery is its remoteness, which lends to relatively low participation and effort. Access is limited to river boats that must navigate approximately 20 miles (roughly 40-minute boat trip) of braided glacial river from the nearest landing (Figure 229-1). Some airplanes with short field performance also land on a nearby sandbar to participate. From 2020–2022, an average of 6 days of fishing yielded 274 days of fishing effort to harvest 3,276 salmon (Table 229-1). Sockeye salmon were the most predominant species harvested with an average of 1,961 (60%) fish harvested 2020–2022 followed by coho salmon, with an average of 722 (22%) fish harvested. During these years, an average of 469 pink (14%) and 117 chum (4%) salmon were harvested. Harvest increased across all species with each successive day of fishing during the first year of the fishery. A similar step wise increase occurred in 2021 and 2022, except peak harvest across all species occurred in the second to last day of fishing (Table 229-2).

Numerous streams upstream of the personal use fishery support sport fishing for coho, sockeye, chum, and pink salmon, which are harvested from about mid-July through about mid-September (Table 229-3). Coho salmon, and to a lesser extend sockeye salmon are the predominant species targeted by sport anglers. Coho salmon escapement is not monitored on Yentna River tributaries nor the majority of small streams supporting sport fishing on mainstem Susitna River. These sport

fisheries are managed under conservative regulations to ensure long-term sustainable harvest. The department has operated a weir on the Deshka River since 1995 to monitor the escapement of coho salmon and a Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) of 10,200–24,100 was initiated in 2017 to direct the management of coho salmon. The SEG was exceeded in 2017 and achieved in 2018 (Table 229-4) and on these years the sport fishery was liberalized mid-season by emergency order. Budget cuts resulted in pulling the weir early, about mid-August 2020–2022, making weir counts on these years incomplete; however, projections of escapement by the date of pulling indicated the SEG would have been achieved on these years. Flooding produced an incomplete count in 2023; however, it is likely the SEG would have been missed. The Deshka River was closed to coho salmon fishing and the rest of the Susitna River restricted to a bag limit of one coho salmon with bait use prohibited due to a weak return to the Susitna River drainage in 2023. The Deshka River weir can be used to manage the local sport fishery and has been used as a surrogate in managing other areas of the Susitna River drainage, though highly variable run timing presents challenges to assessing run size, often delaying action until around or after the mid-point of the historical run, August 10 (Table 229-4; Figure 229-2). Any actions to liberalize or restrict the personal use fishery inseason using Deshka weir counts would be untimely and come too late for meaningful effect as run timing of coho salmon passing through the dip net fishery is thought to be offset from the weir by about 10 days based on past telemetry studies. By August 10, the current personal use fishery would have already ended and 80% of coho salmon may have already passed through the area in which the fishery takes place (Figure 229-2).

Approximately 6,500 sockeye salmon are harvested in sport fisheries of the Susitna River drainage annually (Table 229-3). Weirs have been used to monitor sockeye salmon escapements on select sockeye salmon producing lakes, most notably Larson, Chelatna, and Judd Lakes (Figure 229-3). Budget cuts have prevented operating the Chelatna Lake weir for the past four years, however, the SEG was achieved in the preceding five years. Judd Lake weir was not operated in 2023; the SEG there was met or exceeded in the prior five years of operation. In the past 5 years, the SEG at Larson Lake was missed two years (2019–2020) and achieved or exceeded in three years (2021–2023). Sockeye salmon weirs are too far upstream of the personal use fishery for timely inseason management of the personal use fishery due to a delay in timing of up to two weeks based on past studies using telemetry.

Run timing for sockeye and chum salmon caught in fishwheels in the aforementioned studies using telemetry in the vicinity of the personal use fishery shows the midpoint of the sockeye salmon migration occurring on July 21 and the midpoint of the chum salmon migration occurring on August 1, which is similar to the midpoint of the coho salmon migration past this location (Table 229-5).

Drainage wide abundance estimates are available for sockeye, coho, and chum salmon (Table 229-6).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When the Susitna River sockeye salmon Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation. Current management plan restrictions to the Central District drift gillnet fleet and Northern District set gillnet fishery have contributed to escapement goals being increasingly

achieved at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes. Implementation of Federal management in the Central District drift gillnet fishery may potentially impact management of state fisheries. In addition, the department has concerns over making coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

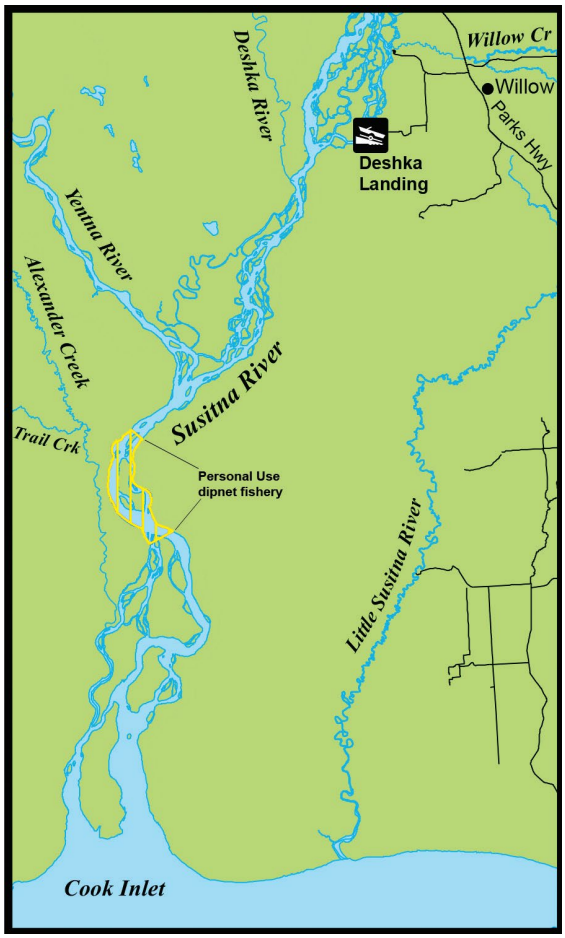

Figure 229-1.–Map depicting the location of the lower Susitna River personal use fishery.

Table 229-1.–Susitna River personal use salmon harvest, 2020–2022.

	Days Open	Days Fished	Sockeye	%	Coho	%	Pink	%	Chum	%	Total
2020	6	377	2,296	63%	538	15%	747	20%	68	2%	3,671
2021	7	210	1,385	49%	902	32%	426	15%	111	4%	2,824
2022	6	236	2,201	66%	727	22%	233	7%	172	5%	3,334
Average	6	274	1,961	60%	722	22%	469	14%	117	4%	3,276

Table 229-2.–Susitna River personal use salmon harvest by day, 2020–2022.

2020					2021				
	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum		Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
11-Jul	21	6	4	6	10-Jul	1	0	0	0
15-Jul	28	9	32	2	14-Jul	9	1	2	0
18-Jul	59	9	49	2	17-Jul	33	6	26	1
22-Jul	143	23	99	10	21-Jul	230	77	132	24
25-Jul	272	91	175	12	24-Jul	348	88	118	26
29-Jul	401	310	256	29	28-Jul	375	392	84	46
					31-Jul	261	291	56	14

2022					Average				
	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum		Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
13-Jul	14	0	0	0	11-Jul	12	2	1	2
16-Jul	9	2	0	0	15-Jul	15	4	11	1
20-Jul	191	38	12	6	18-Jul	94	18	29	3
23-Jul	636	137	43	33	22-Jul	336	79	91	22
27-Jul	712	272	56	57	25-Jul	444	150	116	32
30-Jul	354	206	55	56	29-Jul	377	303	132	44

Table 229-3.–Pacific salmon by species harvested in sport fisheries of the Susitna River drainage.

	Eastside Susitna				Westside Susitna [a]				Total Susitna drainage			
Year	Coho Salmon	Sockeye Salmon	Pink Salmon	Chum Salmon	Coho Salmon	Sockeye Salmon	Pink Salmon	Chum Salmon	Coho Salmon	Sockeye Salmon	Pink Salmon	Chum Salmon
2003	18,585	2,734	1,775	2,725	16,072	8,660	449	476	34,657	11,394	2,224	3,201
2004	20,484	3,107	3,321	2,547	17,785	3,358	2,292	520	38,269	6,465	5,613	3,067
2005	17,471	1,677	2,625	2,506	18,266	2,219	519	111	35,737	3,896	3,144	2,617
2006	22,719	1,412	3,918	1,321	20,474	626	338	113	43,193	2,038	4,256	1,434
2007	13,464	1,470	2,165	1,204	14,065	3,177	451	136	27,529	4,647	2,616	1,340
2008	24,211	2,975	1,985	1,229	15,126	1,428	201	231	39,337	4,403	2,186	1,460
2009	15,335	7,130	4,657	1,531	14,464	2,358	734	193	29,799	9,488	5,391	1,724
2010	14,291	3,914	1,455	1,399	16,245	1,505	585	223	30,536	5,419	2,040	1,622
2011	9,040	2,459	1,572	2,167	12,483	3,413	124	54	21,523	5,872	1,696	2,221
2012	7,629	4,277	1,367	2,214	9,434	1,118	314	156	17,063	5,395	1,681	2,370
2013	12,989	4,170	2,986	1,519	13,042	5,190	225	158	26,031	9,360	3,211	1,677
2014	12,462	3,325	1,188	1,590	12,972	2,759	650	1,017	25,434	6,084	1,838	2,607
2015	15,043	1,984	2,533	1,821	14,191	3,427	252	378	29,234	5,411	2,785	2,199
2016	5,939	6,042	2,132	552	4,022	4,409	222	116	9,961	10,451	2,354	668
2017	12,838	2,297	2,144	1,730	10,759	2,795	548	280	23,597	5,092	2,692	2,010
2018	9,728	3,307	2,253	847	15,093	3,483	339	428	24,821	6,790	2,592	1,275
2019	8,308	4,640	4,358	1,168	11,373	6,389	1,170	311	19,681	11,029	5,528	1,479
2020	8,830	2,719	2,976	395	5,283	656	1,084	21	14,113	3,375	4,060	416
2021	14,069	1,599	5,615	920	10,879	2,218	533	0	24,948	3,817	6,148	920
2022	6,722	2,222	1,563	1,383	8,573	1,205	292	354	15,295	3,427	1,855	1,737
2003-2012 mean	16,323	3,116	2,484	1,884	15,441	2,786	601	221	31,764	5,902	3,085	2,106
2013-2022 mean	10,693	3,231	2,775	1,193	10,619	3,253	532	306	21,312	6,484	3,306	1,499

[a] Yentna drainage, including Deshka River

Table 229-4.–Deshka River coho salmon harvest, escapement, inriver exploitation, and run timing during years a weir has been operated at river mile 7.

Year	Harvest	Escapement	Sport harvest rate	Run timing	Management action
1997	1,169	8,063	13%	7 days late	
1998	3,630	6,773 [a]			
1999	4,034	4,563 [a]			
2000	8,687	26,387	25%	5 days early	
2001	6,556	29,927	18%	5 days early	
2002	3,616	24,612 [a]			
2003	4,946	17,305	22%	7 days early	
2004	4,440	62,940	7%	14 days late	
2005	3,616	47,887	7%	10 days late	
2006	6,042	59,419 [a]			
2007	2,550	10,575	19%	4 days early	
2008	3,426	12,724	21%	12 days early	
2009	4,060	27,348	13%	4 days late	
2010	5,690	10,393	35%	11 days early	
2011	2,282	7,508 [a]			
2012	1,358	6,825	17%	7 days early	
2013	2,658	22,341	11%	1 day late	
2014	2,598	11,578	18%	4 days late	
2015	2,221	10,775	17%	1 day early	
2016	1,528	6,820 [a]			
2017	2,825	36,869	7%	6 days late	Liberalized to 4 coho per day, 8 in possession on Susitna drainage, including Deshka August 22.
2018	3,169	12,962	20%	3 days early	Liberalized to 4 coho per day, 8 in possession on Susitna drainage, including Deshka August 14.
2019	1,578	10,445	13%	17 days late	Deshka closed to retention of coho August 21.
2020	1,953	5,368 [b]			
2021	2,248	3,431 [b]			
2022	1,936	3,137 [b]			
2023		1,817 [a]			Restricted to 1 coho per day and bait prohibited on Susitna drainage, August 14; Closed Deshka only August 17.
Average	3,416	21,491 [c]	17%		

[a] Incomplete count due to weir submersion during high water events.

[b] Incomplete count. Weir pulled early due to budget cuts.

[c] Includes complete count years only.

SEG= 10,200-24,100

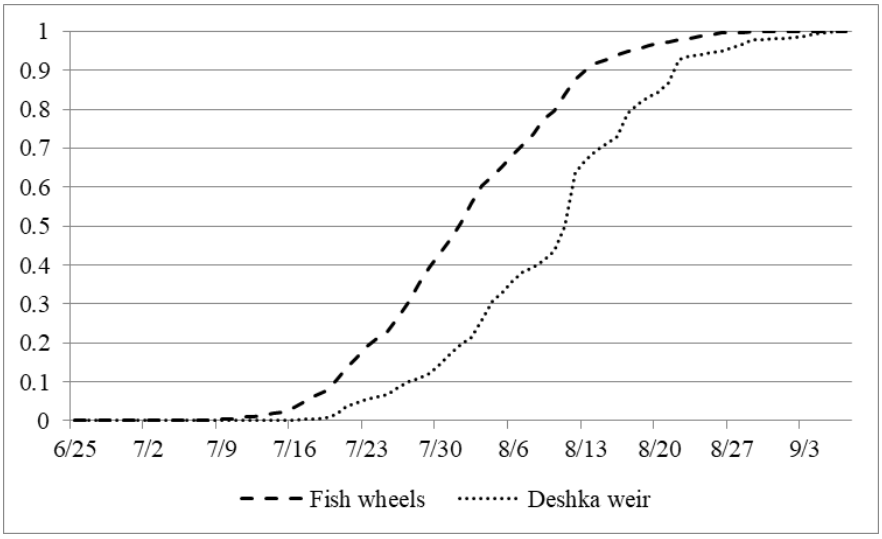

Figure 229-2.–Coho salmon run timing: mainstem Susitna fish wheels (vicinity of personal use fishery) vs. Deshka River weir.

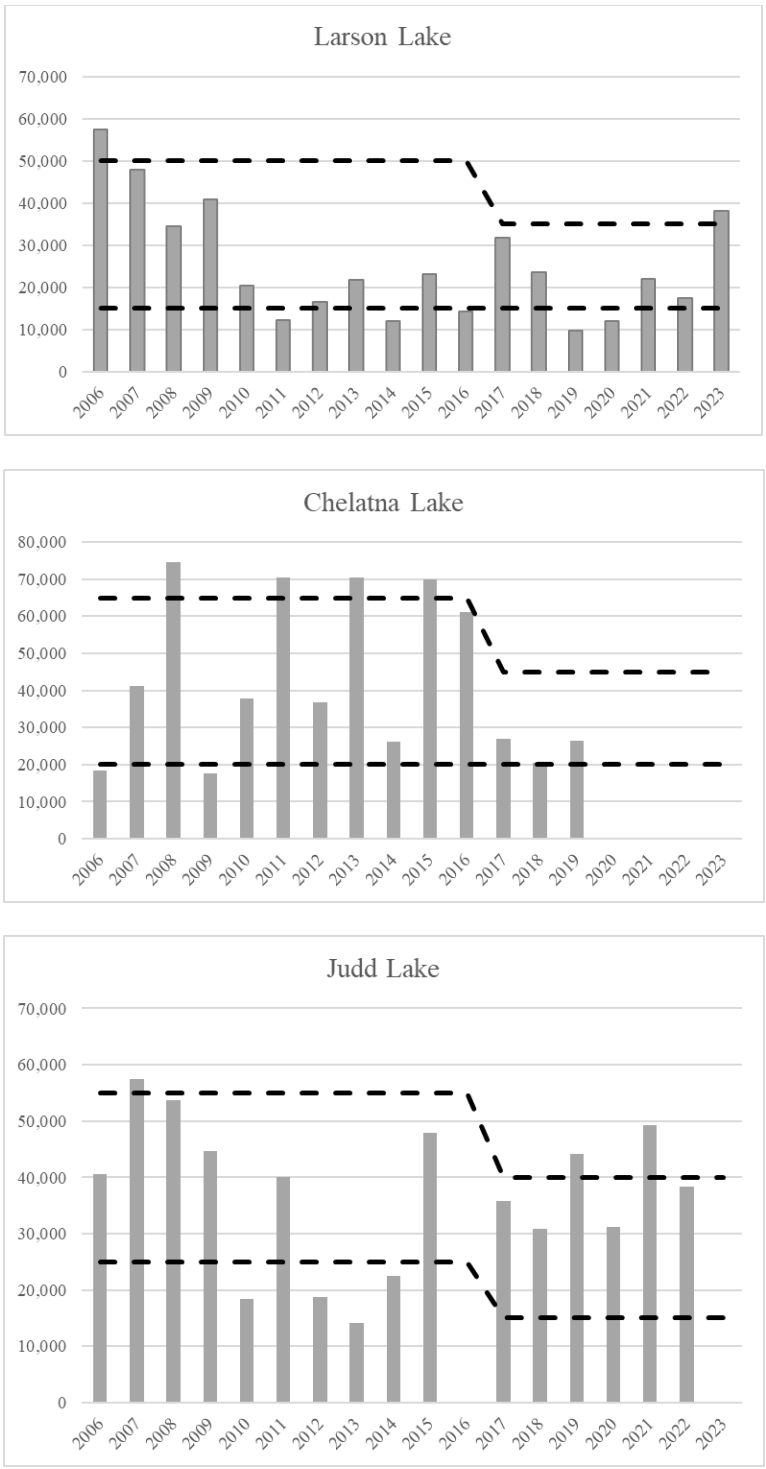

Figure 229-3.–Sockeye salmon escapement weir counts on Larson Lake (Larson Creek), Chelatna Lake (Lake Creek), and Judd Lake (Talachulitna River).

Table 229-5.–Mean run timing of salmon caught in fishwheels operated by the department near the location of the Susitna River personal use fishery as part of an abundance estimate studies conducted 2010–2014.

	Mean fishwheel catch quartiles		
	25%	50%	75%
Coho	26-Jul	2-Aug	9-Aug
Chum	24-Jul	1-Aug	10-Aug
Sockeye	16-Jul	21-Jul	1-Aug

Table 229-6.–Salmon abundance in the Mainstem Susitna and Yentna Rivers by return year.

		Abundance Estimate						
Species	Return Year	Mainstem Susitna R.	95% CI	Yentna River	95% CI	Total	95% CI	Source
Sockeye	2006	107,000	(49,180 - 164,820)	311,197	(252,000 - 391,000)	418,197	(335,448 - 500,946)	FDS 07-83
Salmon	2007	87,883	(79,712 - 96,054)	239,849	(205,955 - 273,743)	327,732	(292,867 - 362,597)	FDS 11-19
	2008	70,552	(60,882 - 80,221)	288,988	(251,436 - 326,540)	359,540	(320,763 - 398,317)	FDS 11-12
Coho	2010	73,640	(42,590 - 139,753)	122,777	(89,067 - 178,817)	196,417	(153,498 - 281,020)	FDS 13-05
Salmon	2011	131,878	(100,712 - 193,164)	84,677	(67,473 - 106,704)	216,555	(182,995 - 281,825)	FDS 16-35
	2012	90,397	(46,672 - 173,872)	93,919	(75,101 - 116,974)	184,316	(139,469 - 267,485)	FDS 16-52
	2013	130,026	(100,411 - 193,403)	Not Done				AEA 2014
	2014	84,879	(68,799 - 106,083)	73,819	(61,120 - 87,004)	158,698	(137,817 - 183,294)	AEA 2015
	2015	152,500	(120,552 - 184,448)	110,321	(97,157 - 123,869)	262,821	(228,128 - 297,514)	*FDS In prep.*
Chum	2010	151,127	(103,911 - 251,314)	205,869	(150,499 - 268,455)	356,996	(284,573 - 476,270)	FDS 13-05
Salmon	2011	1,468,231	(1,271,724 - 1,758,917)	283,801	(216,660 - 386,754)	1,752,032	(1,556,974 - 2,073,042)	FDS 16-35
	2012	229,903	(143,362 - 528,890)	99,442	(62,712 - 228,990)	329,345	(237,012 - 735,368)	FDS 16-52

Cleary, P.M., R. A. Merizon, R. J. Yanusz, and D. J. Reed. 2013. Abundance and Spawning Distribution of Susitna River chum Oncorhynchus keta and coho O. kisutch salmon, 2010. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 13-05, Anchorage.

Cleary, P. M., R. J. Yanusz, J. W. Erickson, D. J. Reed R. A. Neustel, and N. J. Szarzi. 2016 Abundance and spawning distribution of Susitna River chum Oncorhynchus keta and coho O. kisutch salmon, 2011. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 16-35, Anchorage.

Cleary, P. M., R. J. Yanusz, J. W. Erickson, D. J. Reed R. A. Neustel, J. P. Bullock and N. J. Szarzi. 2016. Abundance and spawning distribution of Susitna River chum Oncorhynchus keta and coho O. kisutch salmon, 2012. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 16-52, Anchorage.

Cleary, P. M., R. J. Yanusz, J. W. Erickson, D. J. Reed R. A. Neustel, J. P. Bullock and N. J. Szarzi. 2016. Distribution of Spawning Susitna River Chinook Oncorhynchus tshawytscyha and Pink Salmon *O. gorbuscha,* 2012. Alaska Energy Authority. Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project. Anchorage.

AEA 2014- LGL Research Associates, Inc., and Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Divison of Sport Fish. 2014. Initial Study Report Part A: Sections 1-6, 8-10. Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project, Anchorage.

AEA 2015- LGL Research Associates, Inc., and Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Divison of Sport Fish. 2015. Salmon Escapement Study, Study Plan Section 9.7. Study Completion Report. Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project, Anchorage.

PROPOSAL 230 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Increase the open season of the Susitna River dipnet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add an additional 12 days of fishing opportunity by reopening the personal use dip net fishery season in the lower Susitna River from August 20 – September 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The personal use dip net fishery is open 6 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 10 through July 31 between regulatory markers located approximately one mile downstream of Susitna Station downstream to regulatory markers located near the northern tip of Bell Island/Alexander Creek cutoff. Retention of king salmon is prohibited.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would result in a small increase in harvest, mostly in coho salmon, as the majority of salmon would have already passed through the fishing area to upstream natal streams. Dipnetting success would likely be low during the added time period.

BACKGROUND: See background on proposal 229.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When the Susitna River sockeye salmon Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation. Current management plan restrictions to the Central District drift gillnet fleet and Northern District set gillnet fishery have contributed to escapement goals being increasingly achieved at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes. Implementation of Federal management in the Central District drift gillnet fishery may potentially impact management of state fisheries. In addition, the department has concerns over making coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 231 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Modify dates of the Susitna River dipnet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Shift the Susitna River personal use dip net fishery opening one week later to start July 17 and end August 7. Two days would be removed from the start of the fishery and two days would be added to the end of the fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The personal use dip net fishery is open 6 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 10 through July 31 between regulatory markers located approximately one mile downstream of Susitna Station downstream to regulatory markers located near the northern tip of Bell Island/Alexander Creek cutoff. Retention of king salmon is prohibited.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest would increase for all targeted salmon species by an unknown amount. However, if harvest during the first week of August remains static with the average harvest documented in the last fishing day of July, harvest would increase by about 35% for sockeye, pink, and chum salmon and by about 45% for coho salmon.

BACKGROUND: See background on proposal 229.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal, but **OPPOSES** increasing sockeye and coho salmon harvest in this fishery. When the Susitna River sockeye Stock of Yield Concern designation was removed by the board the department made a commitment to not increase Sustina River drainage sockeye salmon exploitation after the Stock of Concern designation was removed. In addition, the department has consistently opposed increased coho salmon harvest opportunity targeting Susitna River drainage coho salmon because it could be unsustainable.. Weirs operated within the drainage for coho and sockeye salmon are too far upstream for timely inseason management of this fishery. Lack of inseason assessment increases the likelihood of overharvest and an increased chance of restrictions to upstream inriver fisheries on weak run years.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 3: COOK INLET AREAWIDE SPORT FISHERIES, KNIK RIVER AREA SPORT FISHERIES, AND ANCHORAGE AREA SPORT FISHERIES AND PERSONAL USE FISHERIES (24 PROPOSALS)

Cook Inlet Areawide Sport Fisheries (2 proposals)

PROPOSAL 232 – 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area; 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area; 5 AAC 58.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish; 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area; 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area; 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area; and 62.120. General provisions for seasons, bag limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.
Allow Alaska residents to sport fish additional gear and take multiple limits in UCI.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow Alaska residents to fish with additional gear and harvest multiple limits in UCI sport fisheries if they purchase an additional license.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Anglers with a valid Alaska Sport Fishing License may participate in sport fisheries across the state. Alaska residents have the opportunity for more liberal limits and methods and means through various personal use fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase harvest on some sport fisheries by an unknown amount. Since regulations are based on anglers, not licenses, regulations and definitions would have to be reviewed and possibly revised, for example sport fishing gear and bag limit. It would add to regulatory complexity and inconsistency and create a new class of resident angler.

BACKGROUND: UCI supports popular fisheries that benefit the people of the State of Alaska by providing opportunity to provide fish for their families, participate in activities that utilize the resources of the State of Alaska, and provide business opportunities and financial benefit for them and their communities. Personal use fisheries were created to allow Alaskans opportunities to harvest fish more efficiently with liberal limits and methods and means. Creating regulations that not only distinguish between resident and nonresident anglers without a conservation justification, but also between Alaskans from different economic tiers is contrary to those principles.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Alaska residents have the opportunity for more liberal limits and methods and means through various personal use fisheries.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 233 – 5 AAC 75.XXX New Section.
Establish sport fishing derby approval process.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a fishing derby approval process.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Although many organizations confer with the department while organizing a fishing event, any qualified organization can sponsor a fishing derby without approval from the department, but participants must follow existing sport regulations. The derby organizer may need a charitable gaming permit from the Alaska Department of Revenue (ADOR). ADOR defines a "fish derby" as a contest in which prizes are awarded for catching fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require a stock assessment prior to organizing a fishing derby. It is unclear from the proposal who would conduct the assessment or what that stock assessment must determine in order for a fishing derby to occur. Fishing derby would need to be defined if this proposal is adopted.

BACKGROUND: Currently, the department has no authority regarding fishing derbies, except those sponsored by fishing derby associations as defined in AS 16.05.662, that are issued commissioner permits to sell sport caught fish caught during the fishing derby. Fishing derbies that award prizes for catching fish require gaming permits that fall under the purview of the Department of Revenue.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal may result in an additional cost to the department if we are expected to do the stock assessment or implement a derby permit program.

Knik River Area Sport Fisheries (16 proposals)

PROPOSAL 234 – 5 AAC 60.105. Description of the Knik Arm Drainages Area. and 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.
Clarify the boundary of the Knik Arm management area and the Palmer-Wasilla Zone.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the definition of the northern boundary of the Knik Arm Drainages Area and the Palmer-Wasilla Zone to align with general and special regulations for the Knik Arm and Unit 2 of the Susitna River areas. This would also exclude from the Palmer-Wasilla Zone, flowing waters where northern pike populations are prolific.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Knik Arm Drainages Area consists of all freshwater drainages bounded on the north by Willow Creek, on the west by a line one-half mile east of the Susitna River, on the south by Cook Inlet and Knik Arm, and on the east by the Upper Susitna River drainage upstream of its confluence with the Oshetna River.

The Palmer-Wasilla Zone consists of all flowing waters inside a zone bounded on the north by Willow Creek, on the west by a line one-half mile east of the Susitna River, on the south by Cook Inlet and Knik Arm, and on the east by the Matanuska River and Moose Creek, but excluding Willow Creek, the Matanuska River, and Moose Creek. All flowing waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone are closed to sport fishing for all species April 15 – June 14.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would result in less confusion for the angling public since the Palmer-Wasilla Zone would no longer appear split between the Knik Arm Drainages Area and Unit 2 of the Susitna River; it would exist completely in the Knik Arm area. It would increase harvest of northern pike as anglers would be able to target them where northern pike are prolific during the two-month period in the spring when flowing waters of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone are closed to all fishing.

BACKGROUND: The Palmer-Wasilla Zone (Figure 234-1) was originally set up as conservation measure to protect rainbow trout in the core area of the Matsu Valley during the spring spawning period, roughly April 15 – June 15. The zone contains much of the areas urban sprawl where numerous lakes with interconnecting streams support populations of rainbow trout. In spring, trout migrate from lakes and become concentrated in the local streams to spawn. Many of these streams are crisscrossed by numerous roads. Trout spawning in the vicinity of these roads are more readily accessible to anglers in many different locations than trout in more remote areas. As rainbow trout are the predominant resident species in these streams during springtime, a closure of fishing for all species during the two-month period in the spring has long been an unimposing way to protect these fish. In more recent years, northern pike have spread to many waters within the zone. They are thought to be most prolific with the greatest impact to other fish species in the Nancy Lake Recreational area (Figure 234-2). Like rainbow trout, northern pike also become concentrated in the early spring to spawn and while their spawning habitat differs from that of rainbow trout, some overlap does occur.

The current description of the northern boundary of the Knik Arm Management Area and the Palmer-Wasilla Zone identifies Willow Creek as the divide between the Knik Arm management area and Unit 2 of the Susitna River. This has caused confusion for some anglers as Deception Creek and Willow chain lakes flow into Willow Creek from the south, thereby appearing to be in the Knik Arm area; however, the full Willow Creek drainage, including Deception Creek and Willow chain lakes, is contained in Unit 2 of the Susitna River area in regulation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted this proposal to modify the northern boundary of the Knik Arm area to the southern edge of the Willow Creek drainage. As the Palmer-Wasilla Zone shares the same northern boundary as the Knik Arm Management Area, its description would also need changing. The department **SUPPORTS** changing the description of the Knik Arm area; however, discussions since this proposal was submitted led the department to prefer moving the northern boundary of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone south of the Nancy Lake Recreational Lakes area, where northern pike have become prolific and the most abundant fish species, to the Little Susitna River (highlighted bold in the below map). The Little Susitna as a boundary would combine the western and northern boundaries into a northwestern boundary, which would be definable for ease of enforceability. Exclusion of Goose Creek would still be appropriate.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

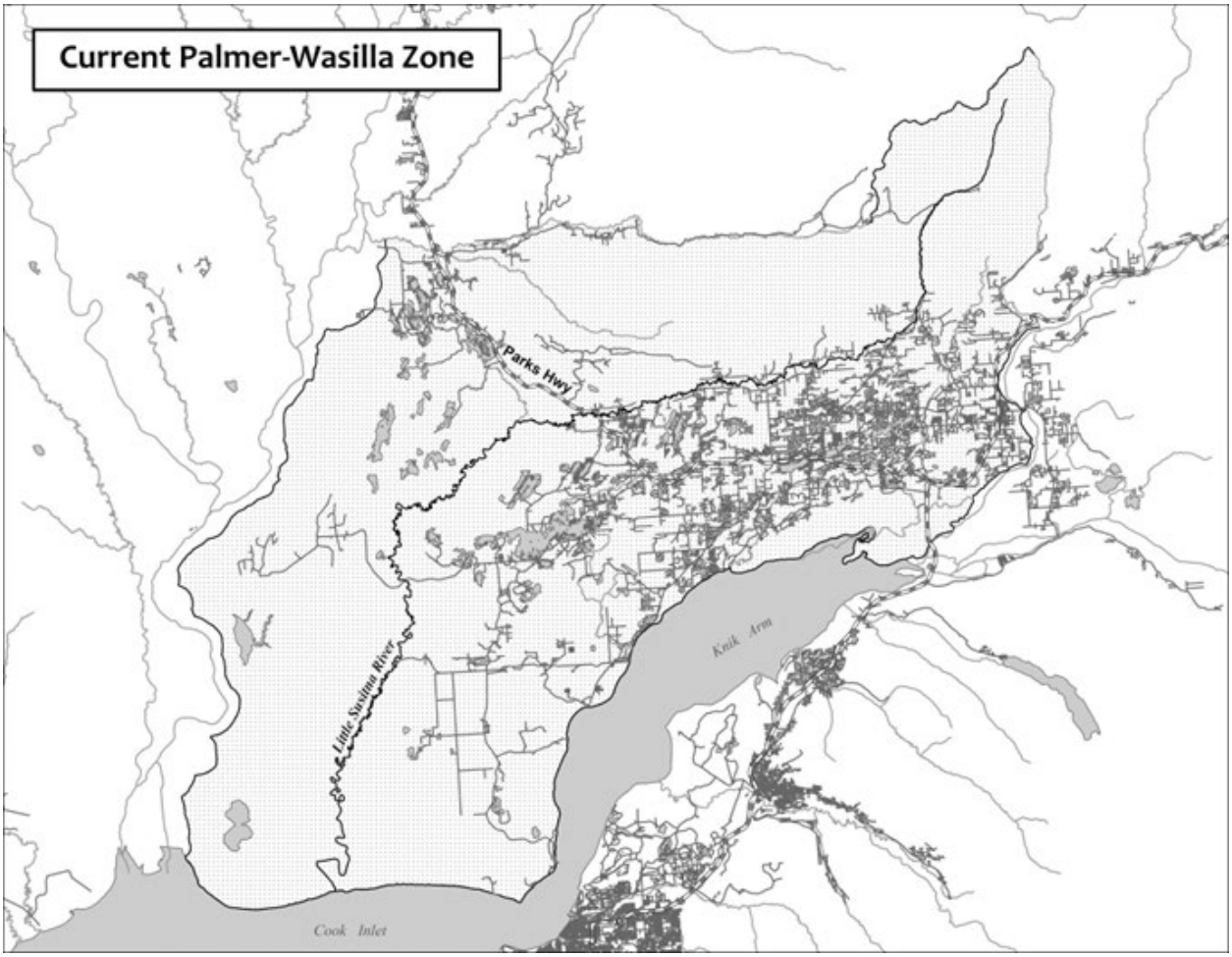

Figure 234-1.–Map of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone.

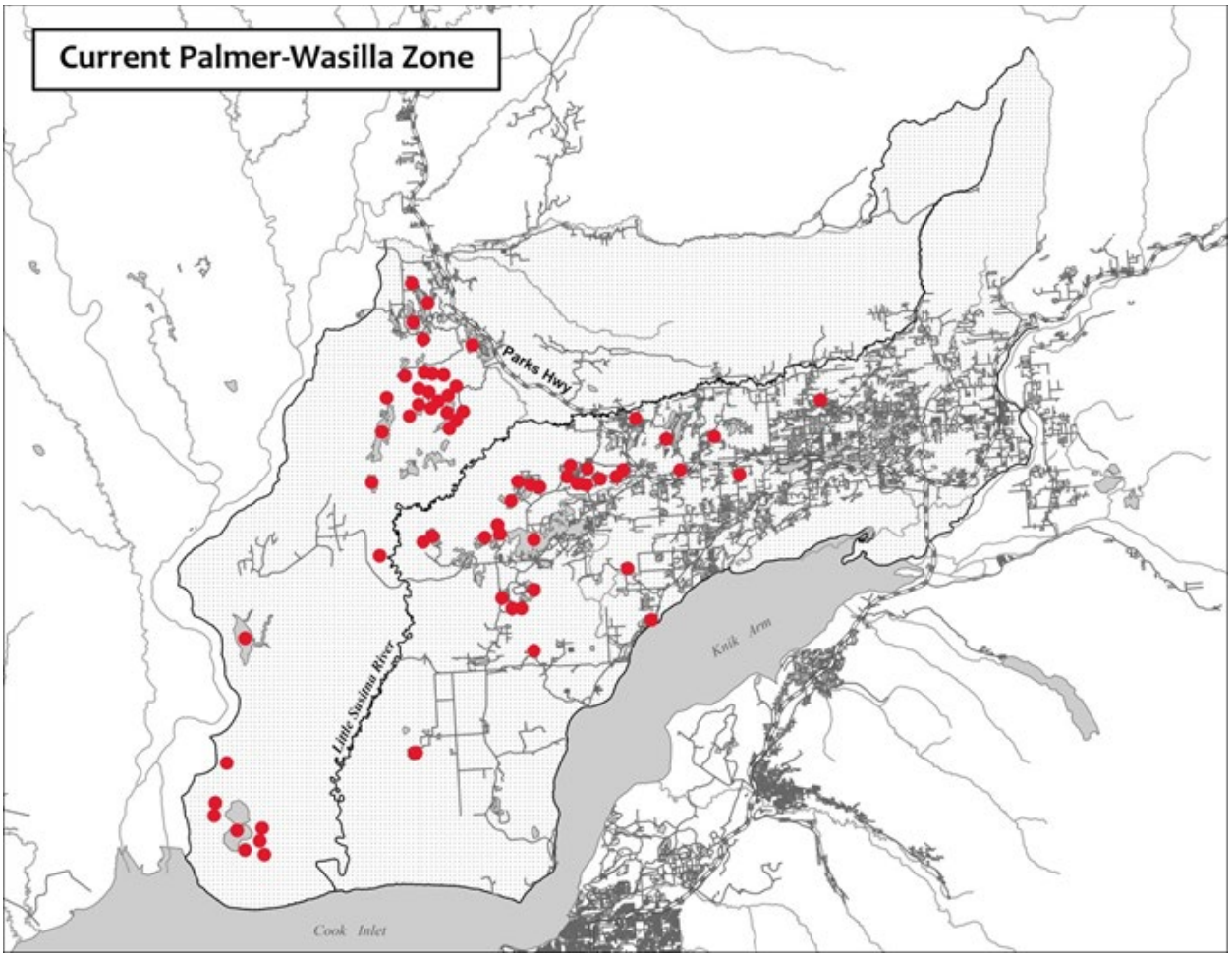

Figure 234-2.–Waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone where northern pike are present (red dots denote northern pike presence).

PROPOSAL 235 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Reduce the size of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone.

PROPOSED BY: Andrew Couch.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would move the western boundary of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone to the east side of the Big Lake drainage.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Palmer-Wasilla Zone consists of all flowing waters inside a zone bounded on the north by Willow Creek, on the west by a line one-half mile east of the Susitna River, on the south by Cook Inlet and Knik Arm, and on the east by the Matanuska River and Moose Creek, but excluding Willow Creek, the Matanuska River, and Moose Creek. All flowing waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone are closed to sport fishing for all species April 15 – June 14.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the harvest of northern pike in flowing waters of the Nancy Lake Recreational area and Big Lake drainage as flowing waters in these areas are currently part of the Palmer-Wasilla Zone, which is closed to fishing for all species for a two-month period during the spring. It would introduce regulatory complexity and complicate enforcement as the boundary landmarks chosen, except for the Parks Highway, would be difficult to follow on the ground.

BACKGROUND: The Palmer-Wasilla Zone (Figure 235-1) was originally set up as conservation measure to protect rainbow trout in the core area of the Matsu Valley during the spring spawning period, roughly April 15 – June 15. The zone contains much of the areas urban sprawl where numerous lakes with interconnecting streams support populations of rainbow trout. During spring, trout migrate from lakes and become concentrated in the local streams to spawn. Many of these streams are crisscrossed by numerous roads. Trout spawning in the vicinity of these roads are more readily accessible to anglers in many different locations than trout in more remote areas. As rainbow trout are the predominant resident species in these streams during springtime, a closure of fishing for all species during the two-month period in the spring has long been an unimposing way to protect these fish. In more recent years, northern pike have spread to many waters within the zone. They are thought to be most prolific with the greatest impact to other fish species in the Nancy Lake Recreational area (Figure 235-2). Like rainbow trout, northern pike also become concentrated in the early spring to spawn and while their spawning habitat differs from that of rainbow trout, some overlap does occur.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** the proposed new boundary as it would be confusing to follow on the ground and complicate enforcement. The Little Susitna River as the new boundary (highlighted bold in the map below) would combine the western and northern boundaries into a northwestern boundary and be definable for ease of enforceability. The department supports increasing opportunity to harvest invasive northern pike in the Matsu area while continuing to protect rainbow trout within a redefined Palmer-Wasilla Zone. However, the Little Susitna River boundary would allow pike fishing to occur in flowing waters year-round in

the Nancy Lake Recreational area lakes where pike are prolific while still providing protection for rainbow trout within the core area to the south.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

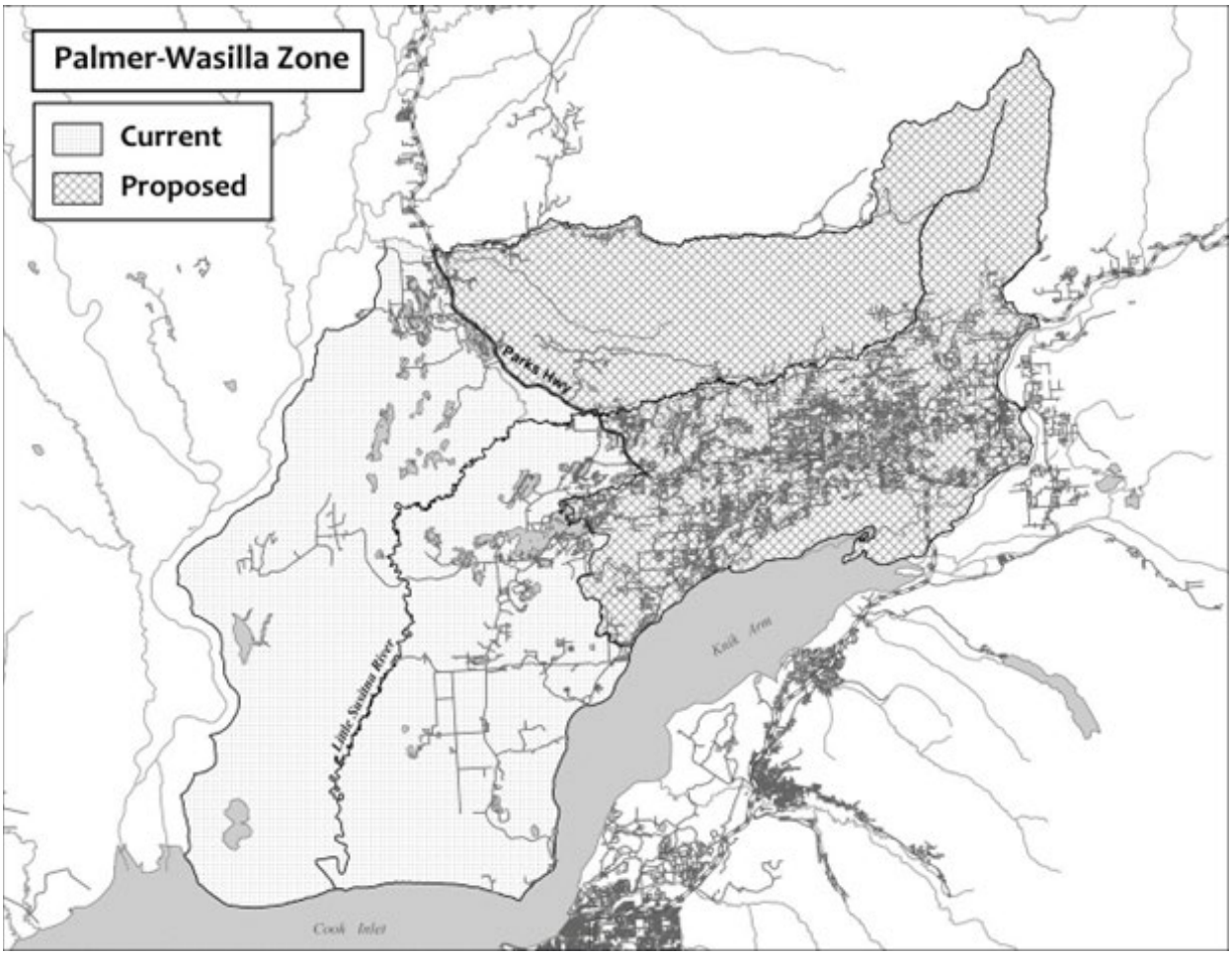

Figure 235-1.–Map of the current and proposed Palmer-Wasilla Zone.

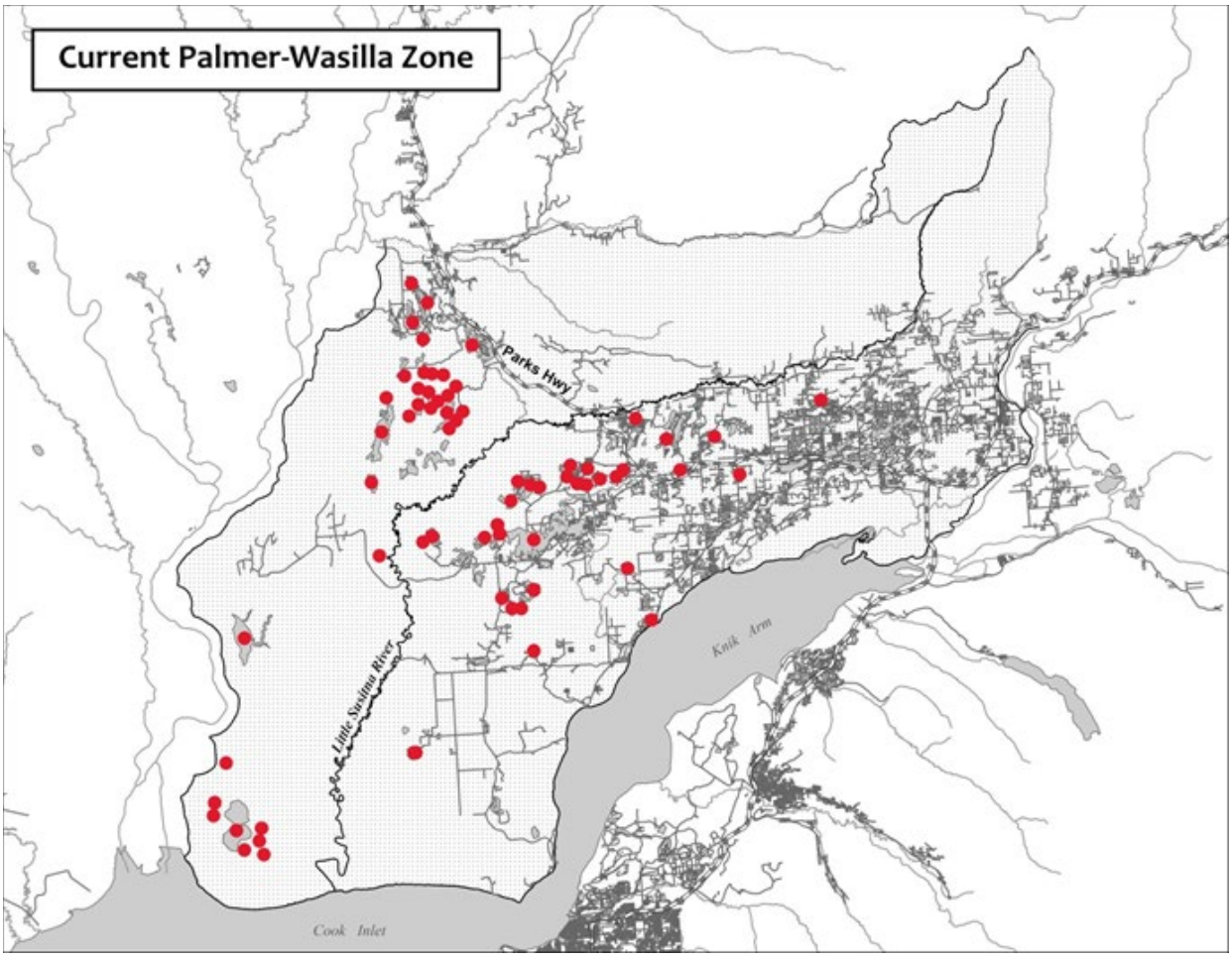

Figure 235-2.–Waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone where northern pike are present (red dots denote presence of norther pike).

PROPOSAL 236 – 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Update the stocked lakes list for the Knik Arm drainage area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would update the stocked lakes list for the Knik Arm Drainages Area by adding Anderson, Kings, Leech, Summit, and Zero lakes to the list.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The sport fish bag and possession limit for stocked lakes in Northern Cook Inlet (NCI) is five each for rainbow trout (only one over 20 inches per day with an annual limit of ten fish over 20 inches), Arctic grayling, and Dolly Varden/Arctic char. The bag and possession limits in other nonstocked lakes allow two per day and in possession for each of these species. For rainbow trout only one of the two per day may be over 20 inches; annual of two over 20 inches. The bag and possession limit for stocked salmon in lakes is ten fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers fishing lakes newly added to the list of stocked lakes would be able to harvest more fish. Regulations would accurately reflect the current stocking program.

BACKGROUND: Currently, 85 lakes in the NCI are stocked on an annual or biennial basis. These lakes are stocked with a variety of sizes and species, including rainbow trout, coho salmon, king salmon, Arctic grayling, and Arctic char. In most cases, stocked lakes represent new fisheries because game fish were not present before stocking occurred. Anglers and related businesses benefit from these diverse, year-round fishing opportunities that divert angling pressure from wild stocks. Stocked lakes are managed for full utilization and therefore regulations are more liberal than in nonstocked lakes.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Aligning regulations with the current stocking program would ensure consistency in management of stocked lakes across NCI and prevent confusion among anglers or law enforcement officials.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 237 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Allow bow and spear as legal gear for northern pike and Alaska blackfish year round in the Palmer/Wasilla Zone.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow bow and spear sport fishing for northern pike in the spring when flowing waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone are closed to sport fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All waters within the Knik Arm Drainage Area are open to spear and bow and arrow for northern pike year-round, except as precluded by special regulation governing the seasonal closure to sport fishing in the Palmer-Wasilla Zone. The Palmer-Wasilla Zone consists of all flowing waters inside a zone bounded on the north by Willow Creek, on the west by a line one-half mile east of the Susitna River, on the south by Cook Inlet and Knik Arm, and on the east by the Matanuska River and Moose Creek, but excluding Willow Creek, the Matanuska River, and Moose Creek. Flowing waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone are closed to all sport fishing April 15-June 14 to protect spawning rainbow trout.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase harvest of northern pike with minimal impact to nontarget species.

BACKGROUND: Northern pike are an invasive species in Northern Cook Inlet (NCI) waters, having been illegally introduced during the 1950s. In 1996, the board liberalized northern pike regulations throughout NCI by increasing the bag and possession limit from 10 fish to no bag limit. Additional action taken provided for the use of five lines through the ice in select NCI lakes where northern pike were prolific. Other lakes were added to this list in 2002, 2008, and 2020. Methods and means were expanded in 2002 to allow bow and spear fishing to diversify sport fishing opportunities and further encourage the harvest of northern pike. A catch-and-kill regulation was adopted in 2011 in the Susitna River drainage and West Cook Inlet area that prohibited release of live pike back into the water after being caught. That regulation was extended to the Knik Arm Management Area in 2020 as pike began to take strongholds in these waters.

Rainbow trout in the core area of Matanuska-Susitna Valley have long since been protected by regulation closing sport fishing while trout are more concentrated in flowing waters during the spawning period each spring. Rainbow trout are more easily found and are more susceptible to hooking and release mortality during spawning. As rainbow trout are the predominant resident species in these streams during springtime, a closure of fishing for all species during the two-month period in the spring has long been an unimposing way to protect these fish. In more recent years, northern pike have spread to many waters within the zone. They are thought to be most prolific with the greatest impact to other fish species in the Nancy Lake Recreational area (Figure 237-1). Like rainbow trout, northern pike also become concentrated in the early spring to spawn and while their spawning habitat differs from that of rainbow trout, some overlap does occur. Sport fishing with hook and line, using lures designed to target pike would also result in spawning

rainbow trout being incidentally hooked as they can react defensively while on the spawning grounds. This was a reason for closing the Palmer-Wasilla Zone to fishing for all species during the rainbow trout spawning season, for enforceability, to prevent anglers from targeting rainbow trout under the guise of fishing for other species. However, spear and bow fishing allow an angler to target only pike. Spear and bow fishing gear is easily distinguishable from hook and line gear.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to selectively remove northern pike during the spring when they are spawning and most vulnerable to spear and bow fishing.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

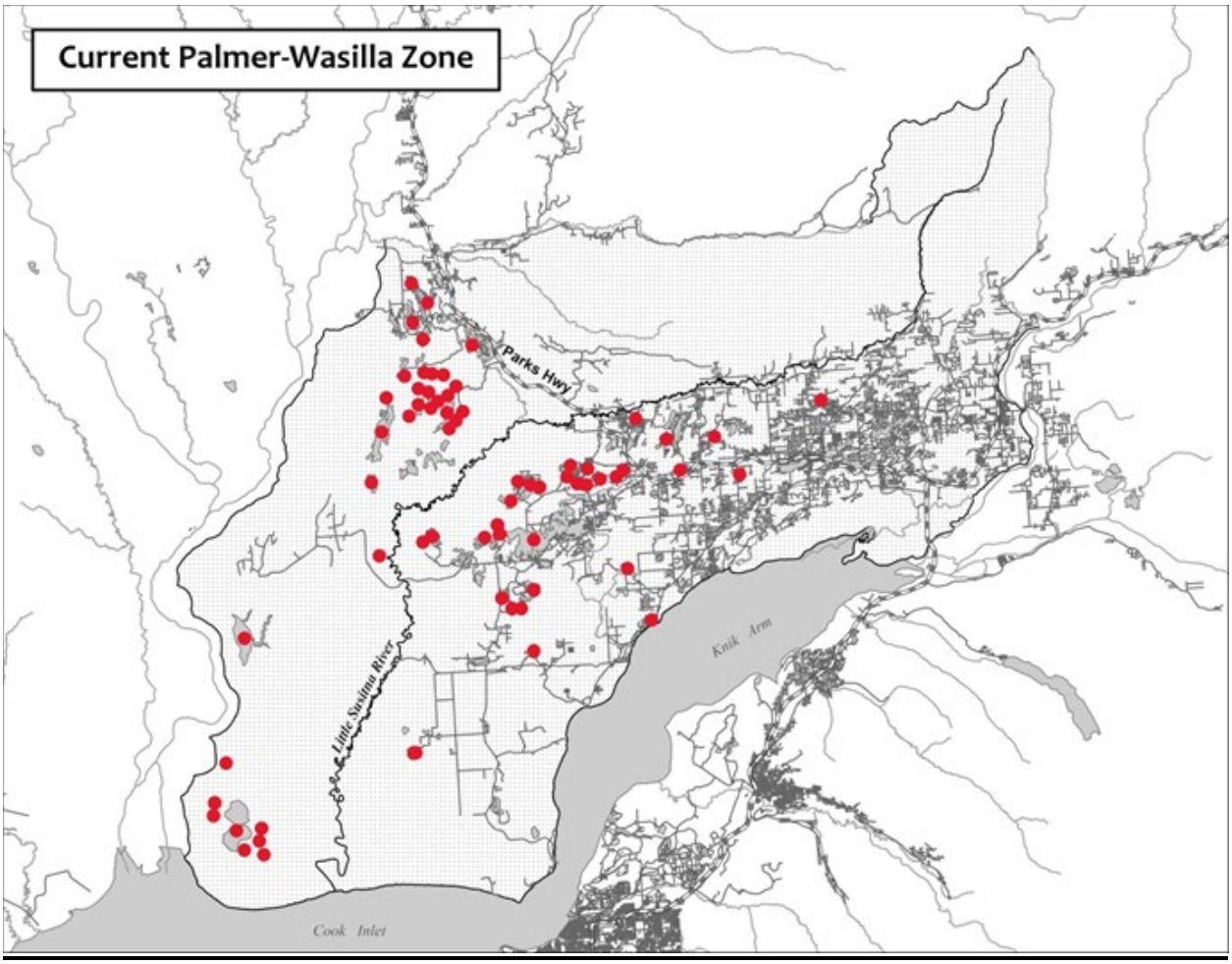

Figure 237-1.–Waters within the Palmer-Wasilla Zone where northern pike are present (red dots denote presence of northern pike).

PROPOSAL 238 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Establish a motor size restriction for the Little Susitna River.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a motor size restriction for the Little Susitna River that is similar to the one used on the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no restrictions on motor size; however, a person may not sport fish from a boat that is powered by use of a motor, unless the motor is a four-stroke motor or a direct fuel injection two-stroke motor.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Fishing from a vessel with a motor within the motor size restriction would be prohibited. The Kenai River restriction referenced in the proposal is regulated by the Department of Natural Resources, an agency with different authority than the board. Therefore powerboats of any motor size would be allowed on the river in general. It is unknown what effect a motor restriction would have on reducing bank erosion as hull design also contributes to wake size. Effort may be reduced due to restricted access.

BACKGROUND: The Little Susitna River is a fairly small, twisting river system located within the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. There are two boat access points to the Little Susitna River. One is located immediately downstream of the Parks Highway bridge and the other is a department-owned site located 40 miles downstream of the Parks Highway bridge in the vicinity of Point MacKenzie (Figure 238-1). The river is shallow, and jet-equipped boats are nearly exclusively used on the 40-mile stretch of river between the lower access and the Parks Highway bridge. Some propeller-driven boats are used downstream of the lower access.

This river system received 11,647 angler days of effort annually during the last ten years. The majority of this fishing effort is expended by anglers using power boats because foot access is limited to within the vicinity of the above access points, while power boating allows access to roughly 50 miles of river. According to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, who managed the lower access site until 2020, approximately 1,000 boats use the lower access each year; the average boat length is 18 feet, and average horsepower about 65.

In 2014, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) listed a lower section of the river in the vicinity of the lower access point as impaired for Total Aromatic Hydrocarbon levels that exceeded state water quality standards. From 2010 to 2017, DEC and community partners implemented a riverside educational campaign directed at promoting cleaner burning four-stroke and direct fuel injected motors and minimizing gas leakage or spillage in an effort to reduce the amount of petroleum. The board took action at the 2014 meeting to restrict fishing to only boats outfitted with 4-stroke or directed fuel injected 2-stroke motors. Follow up water

sampling by DEC in 2019 and 2020 found TAH levels in compliance with state standards and DEC recommended delisting the Little Susitna River as impaired in their 2022 Integrated Report.

Sport harvest averaged 316 king salmon and 4,651 coho salmon over the past decade (Table 238-1). A weir located at river mile 32.5 is used to count salmon and manage the king and coho salmon fisheries. The king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) was achieved in eight of the past ten years. The coho salmon SEG was achieved in seven of the past ten years (the count was incomplete in 2018 and 2022, but the SEG likely achieved in those years).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal as it would impact access to this fishery. If the board decides to take action on this proposal they should seek the advice of the Department of Law as they may need to tie the effects directly to fishing activity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery as anglers using outboards larger than the size restriction would need to purchase new outboards if they wished to continue fishing on the river. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

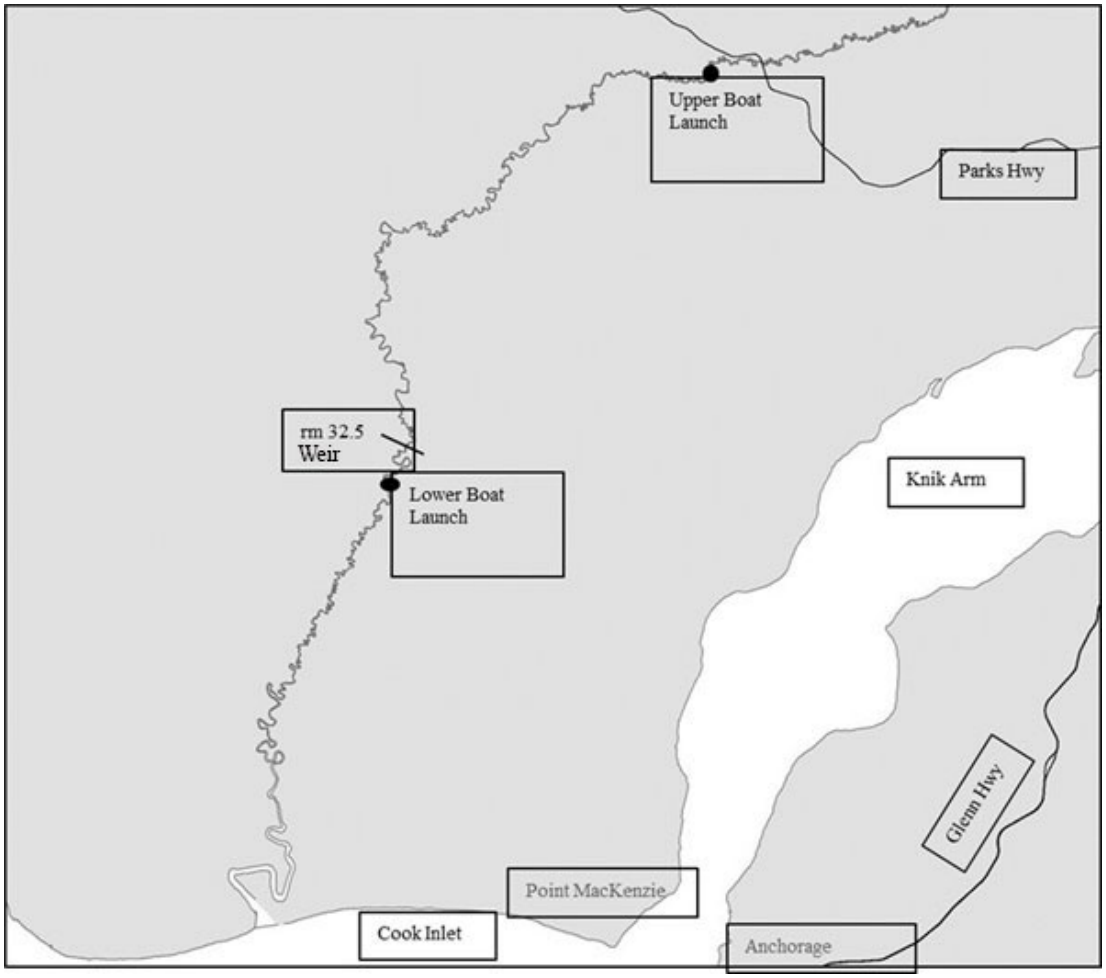

Figure 238-1.–Map depicting the location of major boat launches and fish counting weir on the Little Susitna River.

Table 238-1.–Effort, harvest, and escapement of king and coho salmon on the Little Susitna River over the past 10 years.

		King				Coho		
			Escapement					
	Angler-days	Harvest	aerial index[a]	Weir[b]		Harvest	Escapement (weir)[c]	
2013	12,012	336	1,651	2,379	[d]	5,229	13,583	[d]
2014	13,636	437	1,759	3,135		6,922	24,211	
2015	17,845	672	1,507	4,902		8,880	12,756	
2016	16,125	1,005	1,622	4,969		4,353	10,049	
2017	11,376	351	1,192	2,531		3,068	17,781	
2018	10,948	37	530	936	[f]	6,663	7,583	[d]
2019	8,851	259	[e]	3,666		3,167	4,229	[d]
2020	11,350	0	558	2,445		2,557	9,779	[g]
2021	7,759	43	889	3,121		3,560	10,229	[dg]
2022	6,563	23	[e]	2,288	[d]	2,114	2,792	[dg]
2023			[e]	799	[d]		2,949	[dg]
mean	11,647	316	1,214	3,213		4,651	14,915	

[a] SEG 900-1,800 from 2002-2019; SEG 700-1,500 beginning 2020.

[b] SEG 2,100-4,300 beginning 2017.

[c] SEG 10,100-17,700 from 2002-2019; SEG 9,200-17,700 beginning 2020.

[d] incomplete count due to high water and weir submersion.

[e] no count conducted; high or turbid water.

[f] estimated weir passage (95%CI 697-1,253) fish. Weir was down June 11 - July 1.

[g] escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir; weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023).

PROPOSAL 239 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.
Establish a large king salmon escapement goal for the Little Susitna River.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a Little Susitna River large king salmon optimal escapement goal that excludes jack king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Policy for statewide salmon escapement goals* (5 AAC 39.223) recognizes the establishment of salmon escapement goals as a joint responsibility of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) and the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) and describes the concepts, criteria, and procedures for establishing and modifying salmon escapement goals. Under the policy, the board recognizes and describes the department's responsibility for establishing and modifying biological escapement goals (BEG), sustainable escapement goals (SEG), and sustained escapement thresholds (SET). It is the board's responsibility to adopt optimal escapement goals (OEG) for salmon, when appropriate.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It is difficult to determine the effect of the proposal on future production because the proposal does not provide a recommended range for the proposed escapement goal. It would result in less timely inseason management due to time needed to estimate daily counts of large fish. While a sonar project can measure each fish daily, estimating daily counts of large fish on a weir project like the Little Susitna would require collecting a subsample and applying those samples over several days of daily counts to determine the estimate. This would likely involve technician time not currently funded in order to sample king salmon daily. Postseason estimates of large fish would likely differ from inseason counts due to the estimation process. Inseason run projections may be less accurate due to unknown differences in run timing of large fish vs run timing of all fish. Sport harvest of king salmon is not currently assessed by size, so estimates of the total run of Little Susitna River king salmon by size would be problematic.

BACKGROUND: A salmon enumeration weir has been operated on the Little Susitna River for several years in the late 1980s and in each year since 2012. The weir program has allowed for timely inseason management of the king salmon sport fishery and to set escapement goals. The current weir based SEG range of 2,100–4,300 fish, established in 2017, is based on the department's three-tier percentile algorithm used as a surrogate for bracketing Smsy when biological data is insufficient to generate an escapement goal based on production modeling. Both weir counts and expanded aerial counts from non-weir years were used in the algorithm to provide a long time series (aerial counts date back to 1979 while weir counts are limited). Aerial counts nor do weir counts differentiate sizes of fish or between large and small king salmon; the current SEG is based on and assessed via counts of fish of all sizes ages. A second aerial based SEG of 700–1,500 fish, last modified in 2020, is based on aerial count data and used to assess achievement of the goal on years when the weir count is lost to flooding, otherwise the weir based goal is the primary goal for assessment (Figure 239-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. An escapement goal that includes all sizes and ages remains an appropriate goal for the Little Susitna River and one that can be assessed with the tools now in place. While the department has developed large fish escapement goals for king salmon to improve stock assessment, they may not be appropriate for all systems and the cost-benefit should be considered.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal would likely result in an additional direct cost for the department to modify and expand its assessment program.

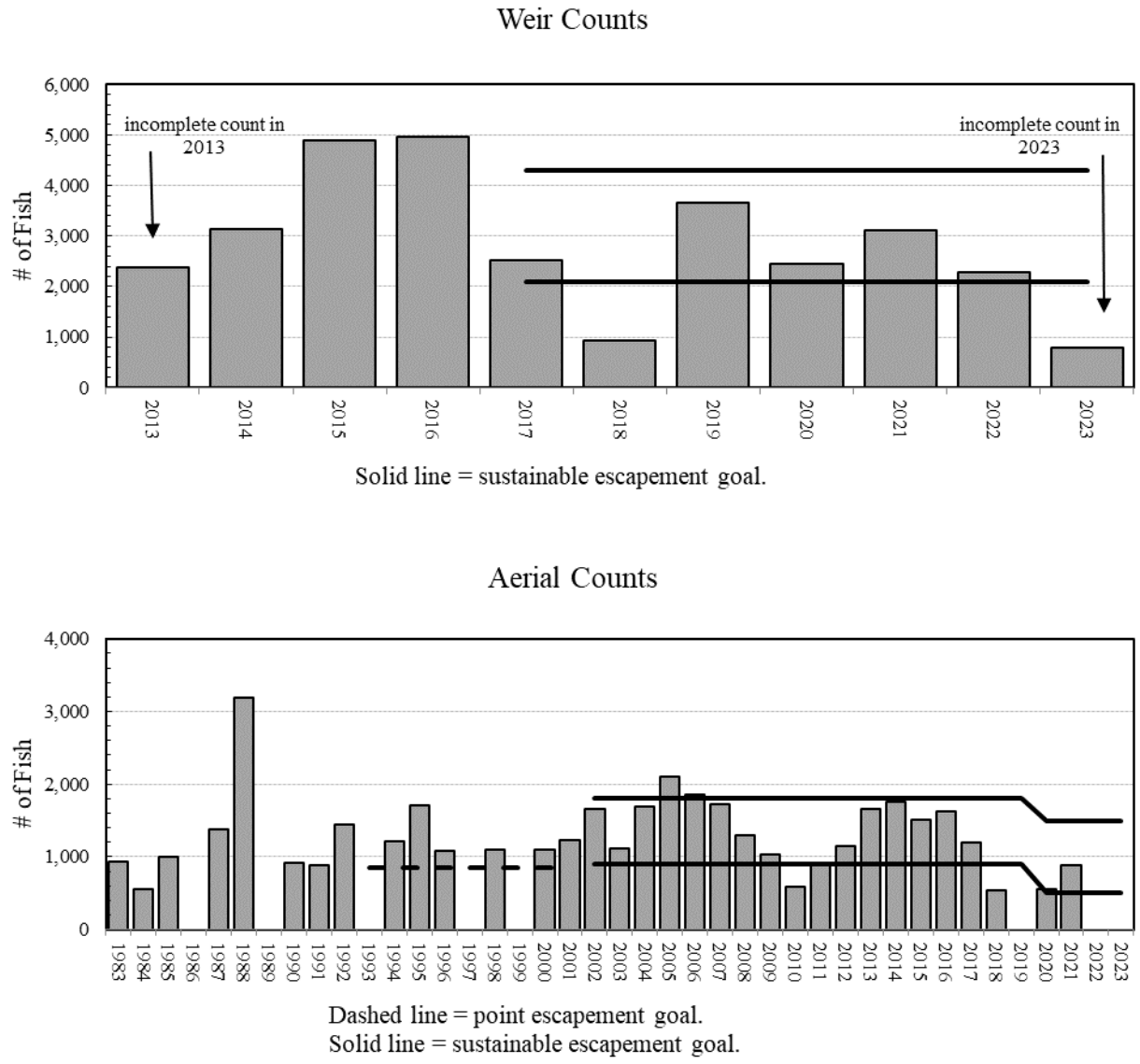

Figure 239-1.–Little Susitna River king salmon weir and aerial index counts.

PROPOSAL 240 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Increase the number of days bait is allowed in the Little Susitna River drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Suprak.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the number of days bait is allowed on the Little Susitna by 23 days by changing the starting date that bait is allowed from August 6 to July 14.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Only unbaited artificial lures are allowed October 1 – August 5; bait is allowed August 6 – September 30.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? An increased use of bait would increase catch-and-release mortality and harvest of early season coho salmon. This would also increase catch and mortality of resident species and would extend use of bait into a time period when king salmon are present.

BACKGROUND: In 1993 the department conducted a coho salmon catch-and-release mortality study in the lower reaches of the Little Susitna River using multiple hooks baited with salmon roe. Results from this study showed a much higher mortality rate (69%) than initially thought for coho salmon released by anglers in the lower river. Early in the season, coho salmon entering the estuary of the Little Susitna River are susceptible to higher mortality rates for several days until becoming fresh water adapted. There is also a tendency of these early fish to bite more aggressively, engulfing bait, and making for deep hook placement. As a result of the 1993 study the board has addressed catch-and-release mortality over several board meetings by prohibiting the use of bait until August 6, which corresponds to about the midpoint of the fishery (quarter point of run timing past the weir), requiring an angler to stop fishing after catching a limit of coho salmon in waters open to salmon fishing, and prohibiting the release of a coho salmon if removed from the water.

Over the past 10 years, an average of about 6,300 coho salmon have been caught on the Little Susitna River, of which 26% were released. The inriver harvest rate has ranged from 15% in 2017 to 43% in 2019 and averaged 22% (Table 240-1). Harvest rates can vary widely due to large variations in run size, while fishing power is more constant. A weir has been used to assess escapement since 1986. The weir was operated at approximately rm 32 from 1986–1995 and rm 71 from 1996–2011. At the upper location, timely inseason management of the fishery was difficult due to the 40-mile difference between the weir and the fishery. The weir was moved downstream to rm 32.5 in 2012 where run timing better aligns with timing of the fishery, allowing more timely assessment of run size during the season. Poor runs were experienced in 2016, 2019, 2020, 2023 and emergency orders were issued to restrict or close the sport fishery in those years. The SEG was likely achieved in three of the past five years: the SEG was not achieved in 2019, achieved in 2020 after restrictions were implemented and likely achieved 2021–2022 even though the weir count was lost to flooding (no restrictions were enacted in these years). Flooding resulted in an incomplete count in 2023, however, it is unlikely the goal would have been achieved.

Average harvest for the past 10 years was about 4,700 fish. Average weir count over the past decade was 15,445 coho salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Release mortality of coho salmon on the Little Susitna River has been addressed by multiple actions taken by the board. The department can and has used weir counts and emergency order authority to reduce harvest and conserve coho salmon on years of low abundance.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 240-1.–Effort, harvest, and escapement of coho salmon on the Little Susitna River, 1999-2019.

	Angler-days	Weir count	[a]	Catch	Harvest	Released	% Released	Inriver harvest rate	Emergency orders
2013	12,012	13,583	[b]	6,670	5,229	1,441	22%		No EOs
2014	13,636	24,211		8,663	6,922	1,741	20%	22%	Liberalized to 3 coho bag 8/16
2015	17,845	12,756	[b]	10,306	8,880	1,426	14%		Liberalized to 3 coho bag 8/6
2016	16,168	10,049		6,575	4,361	2,214	34%	30%	Prohibited bait 8/6
2017	11,376	17,781		3,885	3,068	817	21%	15%	Prohibited bait 8/6; rescinded 8/23
2018	10,948	7,583	[b]	10,851	6,663	4,188	39%		Liberalized to 3 coho bag 8/8
2019	8,851	4,229	[c]	3,913	3,167	746	19%		Prohibited bait 8/14; closed 8/21
2020	11,350	9,779	[d]	3,867	2,557	1,310	34%	21%	Prohibited bait 8/6; restrict 1 bag 8/13
2021	7,759	10,229	[bd]	5,186	3,560	1,626	31%		No EOs
2022	6,563	2,792	[bd]	2,969	2,114	855	29%		No EOs
2023	ND	2,949	[bd]	ND	ND				Prohibited bait 8/12; restricted to 1 coho 8/17; closed 8/19.
mean	11,651	15,455		6,289	4,652	1,636	26%	22%	

[a] SEG 10,100-17,700 from 2002-2019; SEG 9,200-17,700 beginning 2020.

[b] incomplete count due to high water (weir pulled early in 2015 due to budget cuts).

[c] count likely incomplete due to stalled fish movement under conditions of extreme low water prior to removal of the weir.

[d] escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir; weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023)

PROPOSAL 241 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Allow use of bait in the Little Susitna sport fishery based on location of commercial fishery openings.

PROPOSED BY: Chuck Martin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow use of bait in the Little Susitna River sport fishery each day commercial fishing is allowed within one statute mile of the mouth of the Little Susitna River. On each of these days, there would be no bag or possession limit for king, coho, sockeye, chum, or pink salmon in the sport fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From January 1–December 31, from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, sport fishing is open to king salmon with a bag and possession limit of one king salmon 20 inches or greater in length. From May 15 – July 13, in waters open to king salmon fishing, fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon, 16 inches or greater in length is three fish, of which no more than two per day and two in possession may be coho salmon; a coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a coho salmon from the water before releasing the fish; a person, after taking a bag limit of salmon, other than king salmon, 16 inches or greater in length from the Little Susitna River, may not sport fish that same day for any species of fish in waters open to sport fishing for salmon on the Little Susitna River. Only unbaited artificial lures are allowed October 1 – August 5 (bait is allowed August 6 – September 30).

The Northern District king salmon management plan allows commercial fishing with set gillnet not to exceed 35 fathoms or six-inch mesh size, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Mondays May 25 – June 24 unless closed by emergency order.

After June 24, under the Northern District salmon management plan, commercial fishing is allowed 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays with set gillnet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would result in an increase in sport harvest of salmon that may not be sustainable.

BACKGROUND: The Little Susitna River, like other areas of the state, has experienced diminished returns of king salmon since 2007 (Figure 241-1). In the past 7 years since establishment of a weir based SEG, the goal was missed in 2018 and likely missed in 2023, a year in which the weir count was lost to flooding. The sport fishery was closed midseason in both years. Emergency orders have been issued preseason since 2012 ranging from restricting days harvest can occur to catch-and-release only opportunity. The past three years started the season allowing catch-and-release only.

The Little Susitna River has traditionally supported the second largest sport fishery for coho salmon in the state in terms of harvest. The current bag limit allowing only two coho per day and in possession has been in place since 2000 after being reduced by one fish following a period of weak runs experienced in 1997 and 1999. Harvest rates can vary widely due to large variations in run size, while fishing power is more constant. The 20-year average sport harvest rate is about 35% and has ranged from 56% in 2003, a year when harvest exceeded escapement, to 15% in 2017 (Table 241-1). A weir is used to assess escapement and as a tool for inseason management of the sport fishery. Poor runs were experienced in 2016, 2019, 2020, 2023 and emergency orders were issued to restrict or close the sport fishery in those years. The SEG was likely achieved in three of the past five years: the SEG was not achieved in 2019, achieved in 2020 after restrictions were implemented and likely achieved 2021–2022 even though the weir count was lost to flooding (no restrictions were enacted in these years). Flooding resulted in an incomplete count in 2023, however, it is unlikely the goal would have been achieved. Average harvest for the ten-year period 2003–2012 was 9,931 coho salmon. A more recent average of 4,676 occurred from 2013–2022. The average escapement over the past decade was 15,445 coho salmon (Table 241-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects. Removing the bag and possession limits for salmon, particularly king and coho salmon, may increase the harvest above a sustainable level on years of average to low returns.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

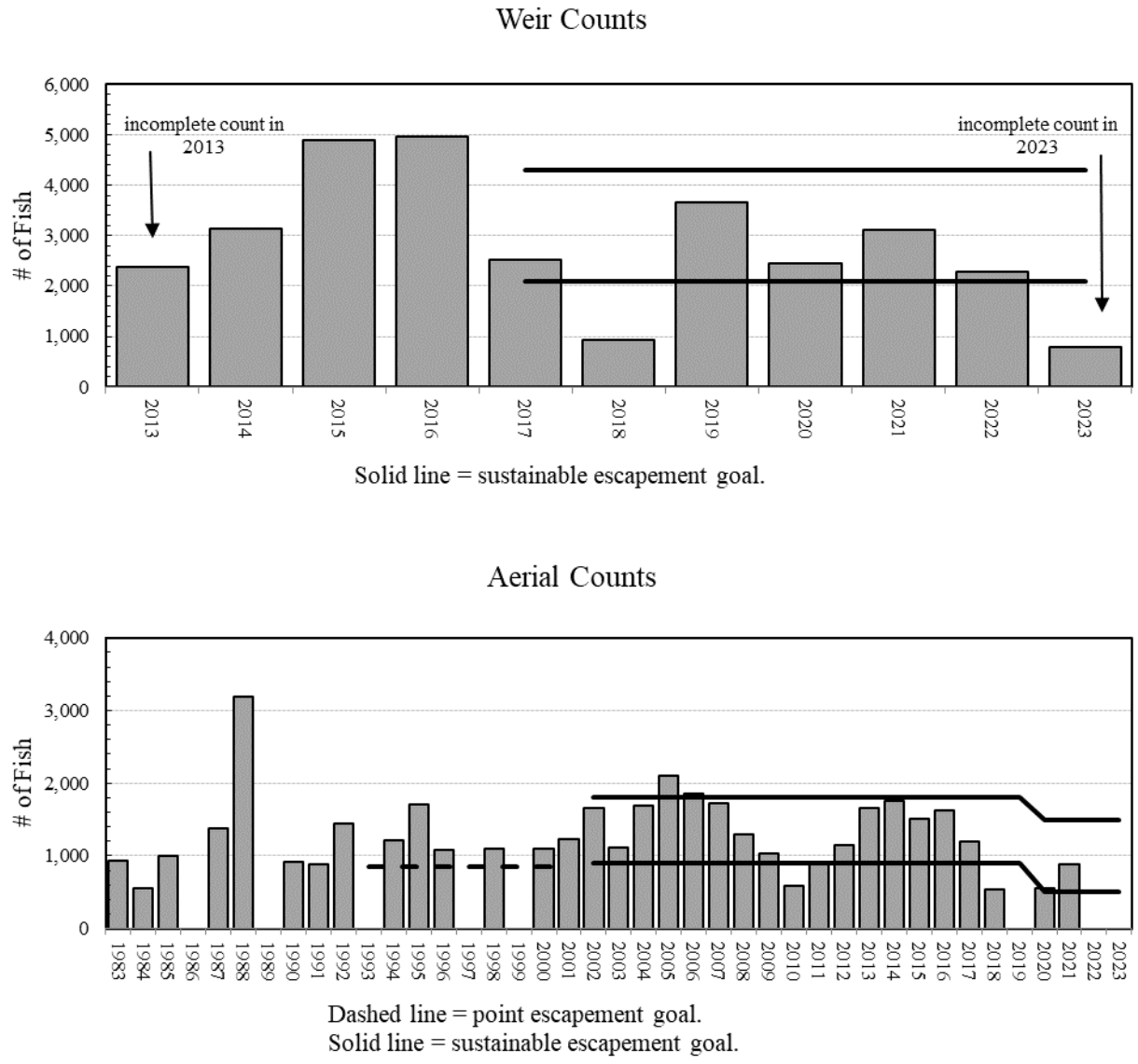

Figure 241-1.–Little Susitna River king salmon weir counts, 2013–2023.

Table 241-1.–Little Susitna coho salmon inriver run assessment and management actions.

	Harvest	Escapement		Inriver run	Sport harvest rate	Emergency orders
2003	13,672	10,877		24,549	56%	No EOs
2004	15,307	40,199		55,506	28%	No EOs
2005	10,203	16,839	[a]			No EOs
2006	12,399	8,786	[a]			Liberalized 3 coho bag August 19
2007	11,089	17,573		28,662	39%	Prohibited retention September 4, then rescinded September 11.
2008	13,498	18,485		31,983	42%	Liberalized to 3 coho bag.
2009	8,346	9,523		17,869	47%	No EOs
2010	10,662	9,214		19,876	54%	No EOs
2011	2,452	4,826		7,278	34%	prohibited bait August 6; closed August 27
2012	1,681	6,779	[a]			Prohibited bait August6; closed August 17.
2013	5,229	13,583	[a]			No EOs
2014	6,922	24,211		31,133	22%	Liberalized 3 coho bag August 16.
2015	8,880	12,756	[a]			Liberalized 3 coho bag August 6.
2016	4,361	10,049		14,410	30%	Prohibited bait August 6.
2017	3,068	17,781		20,849	15%	Prohibited bait August 6; rescinded August 23.
2018	6,663	7,583	[a]			Liberalized 3 coho bag August 8.
2019	3,167	4,229	[a]			Prohibited bait August14; closed August 21
2020	2,669	9,779	[b]	12,448	21%	Prohibited bait August 6; restricted 1 bag August 13
2021	3,560	10,229	[a,b]			No EOs
2022	2,237	2,792	[a,b]			No EOs
2023		2,949	[a,b]			Prohibited bait August 12; restricted to 1 coho August 17; closed August 19.
Mean	7,303	15,683	[c]	24,051	35%	
2003-2012 mean	9,931	15,814	[c]	26,532	43%	
2013-2022 mean	4,676	15,455	[c]	19,710	22%	

[a] incomplete or partial count due to weir submersion (weir pulled early in 2015 due to budget cuts).

[b] escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir; weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023).

[c] complete count years only.

PROPOSAL 242 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Prohibit anglers from releasing coho salmon in the Little Susitna River.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require all coho salmon caught in the Little Susitna River sport fishery downstream of the weir be retained and become part of a bag limit, no matter where hooked. However, snagging is not allowed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From January 1–December 31, salmon, other than king salmon, 16 inches or greater in length may be taken in flowing waters of the Little Susitna River from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway; bag and possession limit is three fish, of which no more than two per day and two in possession may be coho salmon; a coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a coho salmon from the water before releasing the fish; a person, after taking a bag limit of salmon, other than king salmon, 16 inches or greater in length from the Little Susitna River, may not sport fish that same day for any species of fish in waters open to sport fishing for salmon on the Little Susitna River. Only unbaited artificial lures are allowed October 1–August 5 (bait is allowed August 6–September 30).

"Snag" means to hook a fish elsewhere than in its mouth. A fish hooked elsewhere than its mouth must be released immediately.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest would increase by an unknown amount as every fish caught would have to be retained. Anglers would be required to harvest salmon of lower quality as retention would be required regardless of size, conditions of flesh and quality of meat due to net marks, naturally inflicted wounds, and sexual maturation. This would create conflict in regulations by requiring fish hooked elsewhere than its mouth to be retained, yet still prohibit snagging.

BACKGROUND: In 1993, the department conducted a coho salmon catch-and-release mortality study in the lower reaches of the Little Susitna River using multiple hooks baited with salmon roe. In those years, coho salmon were commonly removed from the water when releasing the hook. Results from this study showed a much higher mortality rate (69%) than initially thought for coho salmon released by anglers in the lower river. Early in the season, coho salmon entering the estuary are susceptible to higher mortality rates for several days until becoming fresh water adapted. There is also a tendency of these early fish to bite more aggressively and engulf bait, increasing the frequency of deep hook sets and injury. As a result of the 1993 study the board has addressed catch-and-release mortality over several board meetings by prohibiting the use of bait until August 6, which corresponds to about the midpoint of the fishery (quarter point of run timing past the weir), requiring an angler to stop fishing after catching a limit of coho salmon in waters open to salmon fishing, and prohibiting the release of a coho salmon if removed from the water.

Over the past 10 years, an average of about 6,300 coho salmon have been caught on the Little Susitna River, of which 26% were released. The inriver harvest rate has ranged from 15% in 2017 to 43% in 2019 and averaged 26% (Table 242-1). Harvest rates can vary widely due to large variations in run size, while fishing power is more constant. A weir has been used to assess escapement since 1986. The weir was operated at approximately rm 32 from 1986–1995 and rm 71 from 1996–2011. At the upper location, timely inseason management of the fishery was difficult due to the 40-mile difference between the weir and the fishery. The weir was moved downstream to rm 32.5 in 2012 where run timing better aligns with timing of the fishery, allowing more timely assessment of run size during the season. Poor runs were experienced in 2016, 2019, 2020, 2023 and emergency orders were issued to restrict or close the sport fishery in those years. The SEG was likely achieved in three of the past five years: the SEG was not achieved in 2019, achieved in 2020 after restrictions were implemented and likely achieved 2021–2022 even though the weir count was lost to flooding (no restrictions were enacted in these years). Flooding resulted in an incomplete count in 2023, however, it is unlikely the goal would have been achieved. Average harvest for the past 10 years sharing both harvest and escapement data (2009–2018), omitting incomplete count years, was about 4,700 fish. Average weir count over the past decade was 15,445 coho salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. There are many reasons anglers choose or are required to release fish and can successfully do so with best practices. Release mortality of coho salmon on the Little Susitna River has been addressed by multiple actions taken by the board. The department can and has used weir counts and emergency order authority to reduce harvest and conserve coho salmon on years of low abundance.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 242-1.–Effort, harvest, and escapement of coho salmon on the Little Susitna River, 1999–2019.

	Angler-days	Weir count	[a]	Catch	Harvest	Released	% Released	Inriver harvest rate	Emergency orders
2013	12,012	13,583	[b]	6,670	5,229	1,441	22%		No EOs
2014	13,636	24,211		8,663	6,922	1,741	20%	22%	Liberalized to 3 coho bag 8/16
2015	17,845	12,756	[b]	10,306	8,880	1,426	14%		Liberalized to 3 coho bag 8/6
2016	16,168	10,049		6,575	4,361	2,214	34%	30%	Prohibited bait 8/6
2017	11,376	17,781		3,885	3,068	817	21%	15%	Prohibited bait 8/6; rescinded 8/23
2018	10,948	7,583	[b]	10,851	6,663	4,188	39%		Liberalized to 3 coho bag 8/8
2019	8,851	4,229	[c]	3,913	3,167	746	19%		Prohibited bait 8/14; closed 8/21
2020	11,350	9,779	[d]	3,867	2,557	1,310	34%	21%	Prohibited bait 8/6; restrict 1 bag 8/13
2021	7,759	10,229	[bd]	5,186	3,560	1,626	31%		No EOs
2022	6,563	2,792	[bd]	2,969	2,114	855	29%		No EOs
2023	ND	2,949	[bd]	ND	ND				Prohibited bait 8/12; restricted to 1 coho 8/17; closed 8/19.
mean	11,651	15,455		6,289	4,652	1,636	26%	22%	

[a] SEG 10,100-17,700 from 2002-2019; SEG 9,200-17,700 beginning 2020.

[b] incomplete count due to high water (weir pulled early in 2015 due to budget cuts).

[c] count likely incomplete due to stalled fish movement under conditions of extreme low water prior to removal of the weir.

[d] escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir; weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023)

PROPOSAL 243 – 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Create a bag and possession limit of 3 coho salmon in the Knik Arm Drainages.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the bag and possession limit for coho salmon from two to three in all Knik Arm streams.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The sport fish limits for coho salmon are two per day, two in possession.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase sport effort and harvest of coho salmon in Knik Arm drainages. Popular streams include the Little Susitna River and Jim, Fish, Wasilla, and Cottonwood Creeks, as well as numerous clearwater side tributaries of the Knik and Matanuska Rivers. These tributaries are all within proximity to major population centers and therefore the harvest of coho salmon would likely increase substantially. The increased harvest may not be sustainable on most of these streams during years of average to low returns.

BACKGROUND: Poor returns of coho salmon to Upper Cook Inlet in 1997 and 1999 and failure to achieve escapement goals prompted the board to meet out of cycle in 2000 to take restrictive action to reduce coho salmon harvest. In the sport fishery, coho salmon limits were reduced from three fish per day to two fish per day. Possession limits were reduced from six to four in some areas, while in other cases, possession limits were equal to the bag limit.

Sport restrictions have since been returned to a bag limit of three coho salmon during the 2005 and 2011 board meetings in areas of the Susitna River where effort and harvest rate are lower due to remoteness and higher production. Some road accessible areas that receive greater effort and higher harvest rates, such as the Little Susitna River and Jim Creek of the Knik Arm area have remained at a bag limit of two coho salmon.

In 2014, even further restrictions were passed by the board to address a series of missed escapement goals on Jim Creek of Knik Arm with the intent to reduce harvest to more historical levels (fishing for salmon was closed on Mondays and Tuesdays during the coho season). With this change, the SEG has been achieved since 2017, except in 2019, when drought conditions resulted in high prespawning mortality (Table 243-1). It is unlikely the SEG would have been met in 2023 had the sport fishery not been closed midseason.

The Little Susitna River has traditionally supported the second largest sport fishery for coho salmon in the state in terms of harvest. The current bag limit allowing only two coho per day and in possession has been in place since 2000 after being reduced by one fish following a period of weak runs experienced in 1997 and 1999. Harvest rates can vary widely due to large variations in run size, while fishing power is more constant. The 20-year average sport harvest rate is about 35% and has ranged from 56% in 2003 to 15% in 2017 (Table 243-2). A weir is used to assess escapement and as a tool for inseason management of the sport fishery. Poor runs were experienced

in 2016, 2019, 2020, 2023 and emergency orders were issued to restrict or close the sport fishery in those years. The SEG was likely achieved in three of the past five years: the SEG was not achieved in 2019, achieved in 2020 after restrictions were implemented and likely achieved 2021–2022 even though the weir count was lost to flooding (no restrictions were enacted in these years). Flooding resulted in an incomplete count in 2023, however, it is unlikely the goal would have been achieved. Average harvest for the ten-year period 2003–2012 was 9,931 coho salmon. A more recent average of 4,676 occurred 2013–2022. The average escapement over the past decade was 15,445 coho salmon (Table 243-2).

The small streams of Knik Arm, including Fish, Cottonwood, and Wasilla creeks, produce smaller runs of coho salmon and have been open to salmon fishing on weekends only (Saturdays and Sundays) since 1971. These streams have been held at a bag limit of two coho salmon to reduce exploitation. Fish, Cottonwood, and Wasilla creeks are managed together as a past study found coho salmon weir counts on these streams to be significantly correlated. Therefore, Fish Creek weir counts have been used to affect inseason management on all three streams. However, in recent years, Fish Creek has stood out from other Knik Arm streams. The low end of the Fish Creek SEG range of 1,200–6,000 coho salmon has been achieved over the past 20 years and not included in emergency orders to reduce harvest, even on years weak runs in 2011–2012, 2019, and 2023 in which other Knik Arm streams, notably Little Susitna and Jim Creek, were closed midseason. The coho salmon sport fishery has been liberalized in 11 of the past 20 years and in six of those years liberalized to a seven day per week fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects. Increasing the coho bag limit on Knik Arm streams that are road-accessible and receive relatively high angler use, may increase coho salmon harvest above a sustainable level on years of average to low returns. In addition, the department has concerns over making coho salmon escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet and as a result has managed conservatively for coho salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 243-1.–Coho salmon harvest and escapement from Knik Arm sport fisheries, 2003–2023.

	Little Susitna River		Other Knik Arm						Jim Creek		
			Wasilla Creek		Cottonwood Creek		Fish Creek			Escapement (foot survey)	
Year	Harvest	Escapement (weir)	Harvest	Escapement (foot survey)	Harvest	Escapement (foot survey)	Harvest	Escapement (weir)	Harvest	McRoberts Creek	Jim Creek Drainage
2003	13,672	10,877	261	294	665	229	112	1,231 [c]	6,415	1,421	1,814
2004	15,307	40,199	488	1,148	532	430	774	1,415 [bc]	11,766	4,652	5,697
2005	10,203	16,839 [a]	347	130	668	619	535	3,011 [bc]	10,114	1,464	3,347
2006	12,399	8,786 [a]	857	737	789	912	281	4,967 [bc]	19,259	2,389	4,139
2007	11,089	17,573	324	430	856	1,024	120	6,868 [bc]	11,848	725	1,875
2008	13,498	18,485	1,086	1,536	308	1,821	993	4,868 [bc]	17,545	1,890	2,919
2009	8,346	9,523	1,002	978	1,503	942	1,178	8,214 [c]	18,414	1,331	2,524
2010	10,662	9,214	2,149	1,223	301	756	805	6,977 [c]	8,442	242	420
2011	2,452	4,826	372	576	619	698	414	1,428 [bc]	3,132	261	229
2012	1,681	6,779 [a]	191	NC	616	467	274	1,237	1,858	213	495
2013	5,229	13,583 [a]	1,286	460	297	1,618	356	7,593 [a]	3,258	663	1,029
2014	6,922	24,211	853	1,067	275	1,698	622	10,283	3,045	122	618
2015	8,880	12,756 [a]	1,471	375	53	1,068	2,041	7,912	2,910	571	374
2016	4,361	10,049	293	306	224	373	496	2,484 [b]	1,343	106	307
2017	3,068	17,781	395	848	580	1,388	358	8,966	750	607	874
2018	6,663	7,583 [a]	276	339	136	616	1,916	7,244	2,924	758	1,215
2019	3,167	4,229 [a]	97	133	300	293	892	3,025	2,856	162	632
2020	2,557	9,779 [d]	0	250	50	462	1,916	4,555 [b]	2,406	735	877
2021	3,560	10,229 [ad]	50	218	105	NC	297	6,462 [b]	3,082	1,499	274
2022	2,114	2,792 [ad]	46	NC	77	NC	533	NC [a]	3,717	1,899	595
2023		2,949 [ad]		NC		NC		1,534		378	479
10-yr Average	4,652	15,455	477	442	210	843	943	6,494	2,629	684	625
SEG 2002-2019		10,100-17,700						1,200-4,400		450-700	
SEG 2014-2019										450-1,400	
SEG 2020-present		9,200-17,700						1,200-6,000		250-700	

[a] Incomplete or partial count due to weir submersion (weir pulled July 29 in 2022).

[b] 2004-2008, 2011, 2016, 2020, and 2021 weir was removed on August 15 at the historical 35th percentile of the coho run.

[c] Coho salmon counted below weir after it was pulled:

2000-2011: 761 (2000), 800 (2001), 536 (2002), 911 (2003), 1,840 (2004), 825 (2005),

756 (2006), 2,750 (2007), 4,735 (2008), 452 (2009), 57 (2010), 872 (2011).

[d] escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir; weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023).

Table 243-2.–Little Susitna coho salmon inriver run assessment and management actions.

	Harvest	Escapement		Inriver run	Sport harvest rate	Emergency orders
2003	13,672	10,877		24,549	56%	No EOs
2004	15,307	40,199		55,506	28%	No EOs
2005	10,203	16,839	[a]			No EOs
2006	12,399	8,786	[a]			Liberalized 3 coho bag August 19
2007	11,089	17,573		28,662	39%	Prohibited retention September 4, then rescinded September 11.
2008	13,498	18,485		31,983	42%	Liberalized to 3 coho bag.
2009	8,346	9,523		17,869	47%	No EOs
2010	10,662	9,214		19,876	54%	No EOs
2011	2,452	4,826		7,278	34%	prohibited bait August 6; closed August 27
2012	1,681	6,779	[a]			Prohibited bait August6; closed August 17.
2013	5,229	13,583	[a]			No EOs
2014	6,922	24,211		31,133	22%	Liberalized 3 coho bag August 16.
2015	8,880	12,756	[a]			Liberalized 3 coho bag August 6.
2016	4,361	10,049		14,410	30%	Prohibited bait August 6.
2017	3,068	17,781		20,849	15%	Prohibited bait August 6; rescinded August 23.
2018	6,663	7,583	[a]			Liberalized 3 coho bag August 8.
2019	3,167	4,229	[a]			Prohibited bait August14; closed August 21
2020	2,669	9,779	[b]	12,448	21%	Prohibited bait August 6; restricted 1 bag August 13
2021	3,560	10,229	[a,b]			No EOs
2022	2,237	2,792	[a,b]			No EOs
2023		2,949	[a,b]			Prohibited bait August 12; restricted to 1 coho August 17; closed August 19.
Mean	7,303	15,683	[c]	24,051	35%	
2003-2012 mean	9,931	15,814	[c]	26,532	43%	
2013-2022 mean	4,676	15,455	[c]	19,710	22%	

[a] incomplete or partial count due to weir submersion (weir pulled early in 2015 due to budget cuts).

[b] escapement equals weir count minus harvest (Statewide Harvest Survey) upstream of the weir; weir count 10,751 (2020), 10,923 (2021), 3,162 (2022), 3,726 (2023).

[c] complete count years only.

PROPOSAL 244 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Define the mouth of Fish Creek.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would define the mouth of Fish Creek to ensure regulations specific to Fish Creek are applied to the entire stream channel as it enters waters of the Knik Arm.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Fish Creek is a weekend fishery open from its mouth upstream to a regulatory marker located one quarter mile upstream of Knik Goose Bay Road. The bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon, is 3 of which only 2 may be coho salmon.

Sport fishing under saltwater regulations is allowed seven days per week, with six salmon allowed per day, seven days per week.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would define the saltwater and freshwater boundary of Fish Creek to provide clarity to anglers and enforcement staff. It would likely reduce the unintended harvest of Fish Creek coho salmon currently harvested under the more liberal saltwater regulations at the outlet of Fish Creek and keep harvest at the level intended by the freshwater regulations.

BACKGROUND: Regulatory markers have long been used to mark the mouth of Fish Creek without issue. However, in recent years some anglers have begun targeting Fish Creek salmon downstream of the markers under more liberal saltwater regulations that allow fishing during days the sport fishery above the markers is closed and with an increased bag limit of salmon. Regulatory markers posted at the mouth of Fish Creek are no longer sufficient in delineating fresh vs. salt water because the markers, due to large tidal fluctuations, must be posted at a higher elevation, well upstream of mean low tide that distinguishes fresh from salt water in statewide regulations (Figure 244-1). Special regulations that restrict salmon harvest in the Fish Creek sport fishery to three salmon per day of which only two may be coho salmon and limit fishing to weekend only, currently do not apply to the Fish Creek channel downstream of the markers where sport fishing under saltwater regulations is allowed seven days per week, with six salmon allowed per day, seven days per week.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Returning to the definition for stream mouth given within the statewide definition of fresh waters and adding a quarter-mile radius to the freshwater determination, will ensure special regulations developed for Fish Creek salmon conserve all salmon entering the Fish Creek channel that are bound for Fish Creek and provide consistency in enforcement.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Figure 244-1.–Mouth of Fish Creek.

PROPOSAL 245 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Allow sport fishing in the Fish Creek drainage 7 days a week.

PROPOSED BY: Stephanie Nowers.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase fishing time on Fish Creek from weekend only to seven days per week during the dates the sport fishery is open in regulation. The youth-only fishery would still be designated for the first Saturday-Sunday in August.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Fish Creek is open from its mouth upstream to a regulatory marker located one quarter mile upstream of Knik Goose Bay Rd to fishing on Saturdays and Sundays June 15 – July 14, and beginning the second Saturday in August through December 31on Saturdays and Sundays from 5 a.m. – 10 p.m. A youth-only fishery is open the first Saturday and Sunday in August from 5 a.m. – 10 p.m.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest level of sockeye salmon would increase by an unknown amount and harvest of coho salmon may double. Additional harvest of sockeye and coho salmon is not expected to impair the department's ability to achieve established escapement goals.

The anticipated increase in sport harvest would be sustainable on most years and be at a consistent rate throughout the season due to fewer midseason EOs issued to liberalize the fishery. Having a seven day per week fishery would also allow continued harvest of sockeye salmon immediately upon ending the personal use fishery at the end of July, without issuance of an emergency order, which can be difficult to justify following the high fishing power personal use fishery that can drop the projected escapement below the level needed to liberalize the sport fishery even though a large sockeye salmon run is at hand.

BACKGROUND: The small streams of Knik Arm, including Fish, Cottonwood, and Wasilla Creeks, have been open to salmon fishing on weekends only (Saturdays and Sundays) since 1971 to reduce exploitation and provide regulatory consistency. Fish, Cottonwood, and Wasilla Creeks are managed together as a past study found coho salmon weir counts on these streams to be significantly correlated. Therefore, Fish Creek weir counts are often used to affect inseason management on all three streams.

Fish Creek differs from other small streams of Knik Arm in that it supports a major personal use fishery targeting sockeye salmon runs. Fish Creek has the potential to produce large runs of sockeye salmon (56,883; 20-year average escapement) relative to moderate to small runs of coho salmon (5,838; 20-year average escapement) (Table 245-1). A personal use dipnet fishery has evolved through the years as the primary harvester of sockeye salmon as they enter Fish Creek during July. This fishery has high fishing power and when opened, harvests an average 17,856 sockeye salmon (Table 245-2) over a weeklong period while reducing daily weir counts by 95%. As some overlap between the two runs exists, efforts have been made to ensure separation between the two fisheries, by time, to prevent user conflicts as both fisheries occur within the same

relatively small area (Figure 245-2) and to minimize overexploitation of coho salmon. On years sockeye salmon abundance can support a PU fishery, the fishery is typically opened by emergency order about July 24 and runs through July 31. The sport fishery is structured to target smaller runs of coho salmon during August where about 1,700 angler-days of fishing effort is expended to harvest an average of 750 coho salmon. In 2020, the board increased sport opportunity to target sockeye salmon early in the season by allowing weekend only fishing early in July leading up to the date the personal use fishery may be opened by EO, July 15. The sport fishery targeting coho salmon opens in August with a two-day youth only fishery occurring the first Saturday and Sunday in August. The sport fishery for all ages begins the following Saturday and Sunday and continues through the end of the coho salmon season.

The low end of the Fish Creek SEG range of 1,200–6,000 coho salmon has been achieved over the past 20 years without being restricted, even on years weak runs of 2011–2012, 2019, and 2023 in which other Knik Arm streams, notably Little Susitna and Jim Creek, were closed midseason. The coho salmon sport fishery has been liberalized in 11 of the past 20 years and in six of those years liberalized to a seven day per week fishery (Table 245-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Past harvest and escapement data indicate Fish Creek sockeye and coho salmon can sustain additional harvest.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 245-1.–Fish Creek sport fishing effort and sockeye and coho salmon escapement and sport harvest, 2003-2023.

		Sockeye salmon		Coho salmon			
	Effort (Angler-days)	Escapement (weir count) [a]	Harvest	Escapement (weir count) [b]	Harvest	Sport harvest rate	EOs
2003	758	91,952	57	1,231 [d]	112	8%	
2004	2,029	22,157	400	1,415 [cd]	774		
2005	1,461	14,215	79	3,011 [cd]	535		
2006	948	32,562	0	4,967 [cd]	281		liberalize 3 coho bag limit August 19
2007	907	27,948	289	6,868 [cd]	120		
2008	1,343	19,339	26	4,868 [cd]	993		liberalize 3 coho bag limit August 16
2009	2,050	83,480	647	8,214 [d]	1,178	13%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit & add Mondays August 19
2010	2,161	126,836	632	6,977 [d]	805	10%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit August 7
2011	970	66,678	87	1,428 [cd]	414		
2012	1,220	18,823	548	1,237	274	18%	
2013	1,000	18,912	193	7,593 [e]	356	4%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit & add Mondays August 17; extend to 7d/wk August 22
2014	2,068	43,915	242	10,283	622	6%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit & 7d/wk August 14
2015	2,587	102,367	180	7,912	2,041	21%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit & 7d/wk August 17
2016	1,629	46,202	308	2,484 [c]	496		liberalize 3 coho bag limit & add Mondays August 13
2017	1,250	63,882	0	8,966	358	4%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit & 7d/wk August 22
2018	2,896	72,157	968	7,244	1,916	21%	liberalize 3 coho bag limit & 7d/wk August 8
2019	2,401	76,264	848	3,025	892	23%	
2020	4,154	64,234	1,746	4,555 [e]	1916		liberalize 3 coho bag limit & 7d/wk August 22
2021	621	99,324	113	6,462 [c]	297		
2022	2,465	58,333	2,795	NC [e]	533		
2023		44,960		1,534			
Average	1,746	56,883	508	5,838 [f]	746	11.6%	

[a] SEG 50,000 from 2000-2001; 20,000-70,000 from 2002-2016; 15,000-45,000 since 2017.

[b] SEG 2,700 from 2000-2001; 1,200-4,400 from 2002-2019; 1,200-6,000 since 2020.

[c] 2004-2008, 2011, 2016, 2020, and 2021 weir was removed on August 15 at the historical 35th percertile of the coho run.

[d] Coho salmon counted below weir after it was pulled:
2000-2011: 761 (2000), 800 (2001), 536 (2002), 911 (2003), 1,840 (2004), 825 (2005), 756 (2006), 2,750 (2007), 4,735 (2008), 452 (2009), 57 (2010), 872 (2011).

[e] Incomplete or partial count due to weir submersion (weir pulled July 29 in 2022).

[f] average includes complete count years only of fish counted through the weir.

Table 245-2.–Fish Creek personal use salmon harvest and escapement, 2009–2022.

	Harvest (dip net)						Escapement	
Year	Sockeye	Coho	Chum	Pink	Chinook	Total	Sockeye	SEG
2013	No fishery						18,912	20,000-70,000
2014	5,829	1,895	227	4,218	0	12,169	43,915	20,000-70,000
2015	19,260	3,321	329	1,329	0	24,239	102,367	20,000-70,000
2016	No fishery						46,202	20,000-70,000
2017	4,894	281	54	273	1	5,503	63,882	15,000-45,000
2018	18,659	1,779	208	880	5	21,531	72,157	15,000-45,000
2019	15,886	1,508	195	1,110	2	18,701	76,264	15,000-45,000
2020	28,109	1,736	337	1,369	7	31,558	64,234	15,000-45,000
2021	14,558	1,029	63	604	3	16,257	99,324	15,000-45,000
2022	35,656	650	261	1,067	0	37,634	58,330	15,000-45,000
Average	17,856	1,525	209	1,356	2	20,949	64,559	

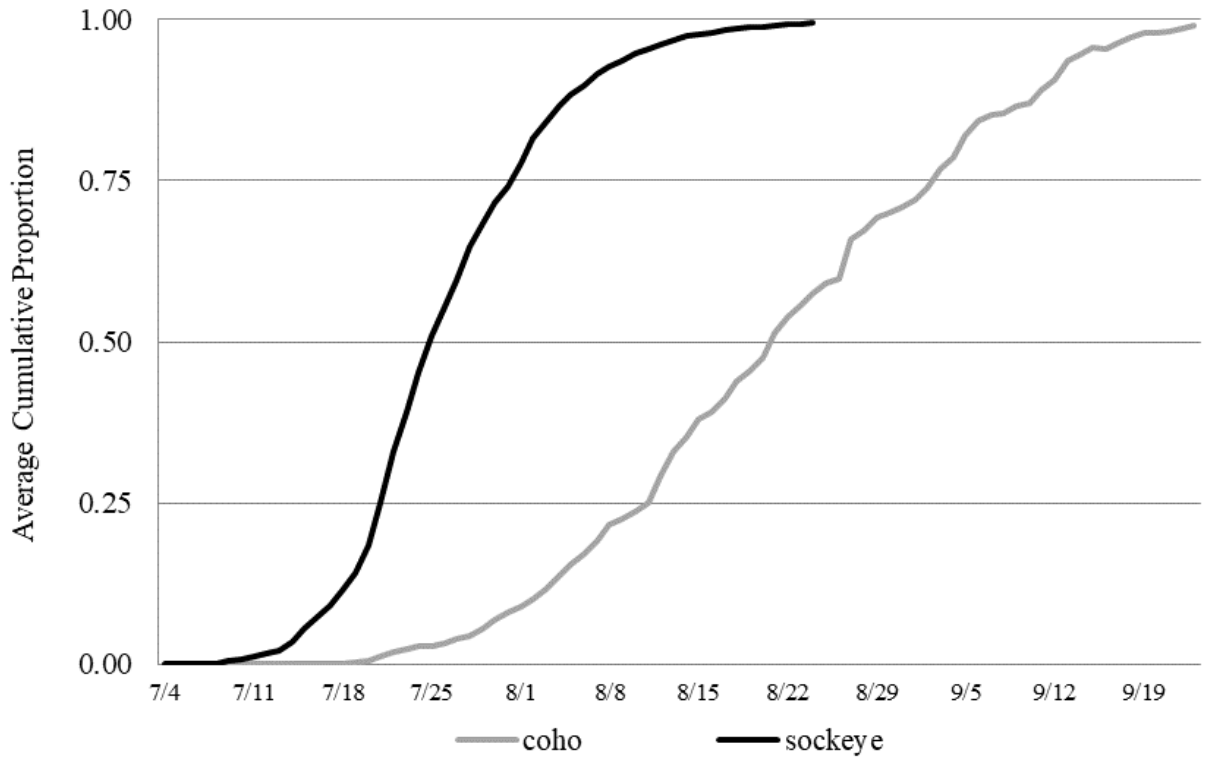

Figure 245-1.–Average cumulative proportion of coho and sockeye salmon counted through the weir at Fish Creek.

PROPOSAL 246 – 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. and 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area. Update the lists of lakes where anglers may use 5 lines while fishing for northern pike through the ice in designated Northern Cook Inlet waters.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow anglers to use five lines while fishing for northern pike through the ice in designated Northern Cook Inlet waters, including Bulchitna Lake, Eightmile Lake, Fish Lakes, Little Bulchitna Lake, and Scotty Lake (Yentna Drainage), Anna Lake, Beaverhouse Lake, Cow Lake, East Papoose Lake, Gerry Lake, Horseshoe Lake, Hourglass Lake, Loonsong Lake, Lynda Lake, Sevenmile Lake, Stephan Lake, West Beaver Lake, West Horseshoe Lake, and West Papoose Lake (Knik Arm area), and all waters east of the Susitna River, west of the Little Susitna River and south of the Enstar Gas Pipeline right-of-way (Figure Eight area lakes).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sport fishing through the ice is permitted with the use of two closely attended lines, provided only one hook or artificial lure is used on each line. Two lines per angler are allowed when fishing through the ice; two hooks are allowed per line, provided that both hooks are attached to one single piece of bait.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the harvest of northern pike with minimal to no impact to nontarget species.

BACKGROUND: Northern pike are an invasive species in Northern Cook Inlet (NCI) waters, having been illegally introduced during the 1950s. Growth in the fishery during the mid-1980s and 1990s indicated a period of rapid range expansion by northern pike throughout area waters where salmon and northern pike habitats overlapped and increased angler interest (Figure 246-1 harvest graph). In 1996, the board liberalized northern pike regulations throughout NCI by increasing the bag and possession limit from 10 fish to no bag limit. Additional action taken provided for the use of five lines through the ice in select NCI lakes where northern pike were prolific. On these select lakes, five lines are allowed, provided standard ice fishing gear is used, the fishing gear is closely attended, and all other fish caught are release immediately. In waters where five lines are allowed, anglers may use two hooks on a single line, provided that both hooks are attached to one single piece of bait. During the 2002 board meeting, seven lakes were added to this list and during the 2008 board meeting, eight lakes and four more streams were added. Currently, all lakes and streams designated for use of five lines contain nearly only northern pike. The proposed waters have been recently surveyed by the department and observed to contain nearly only pike (Figures 246-2 and 246-3 map of proposed waters).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal to encourage anglers to harvest northern pike. Other systems that primarily contain northern pike

have regulations allowing anglers to use five lines through the ice. Expanding that list to include the proposed waters may encourage anglers to fish these areas and harvest northern pike.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

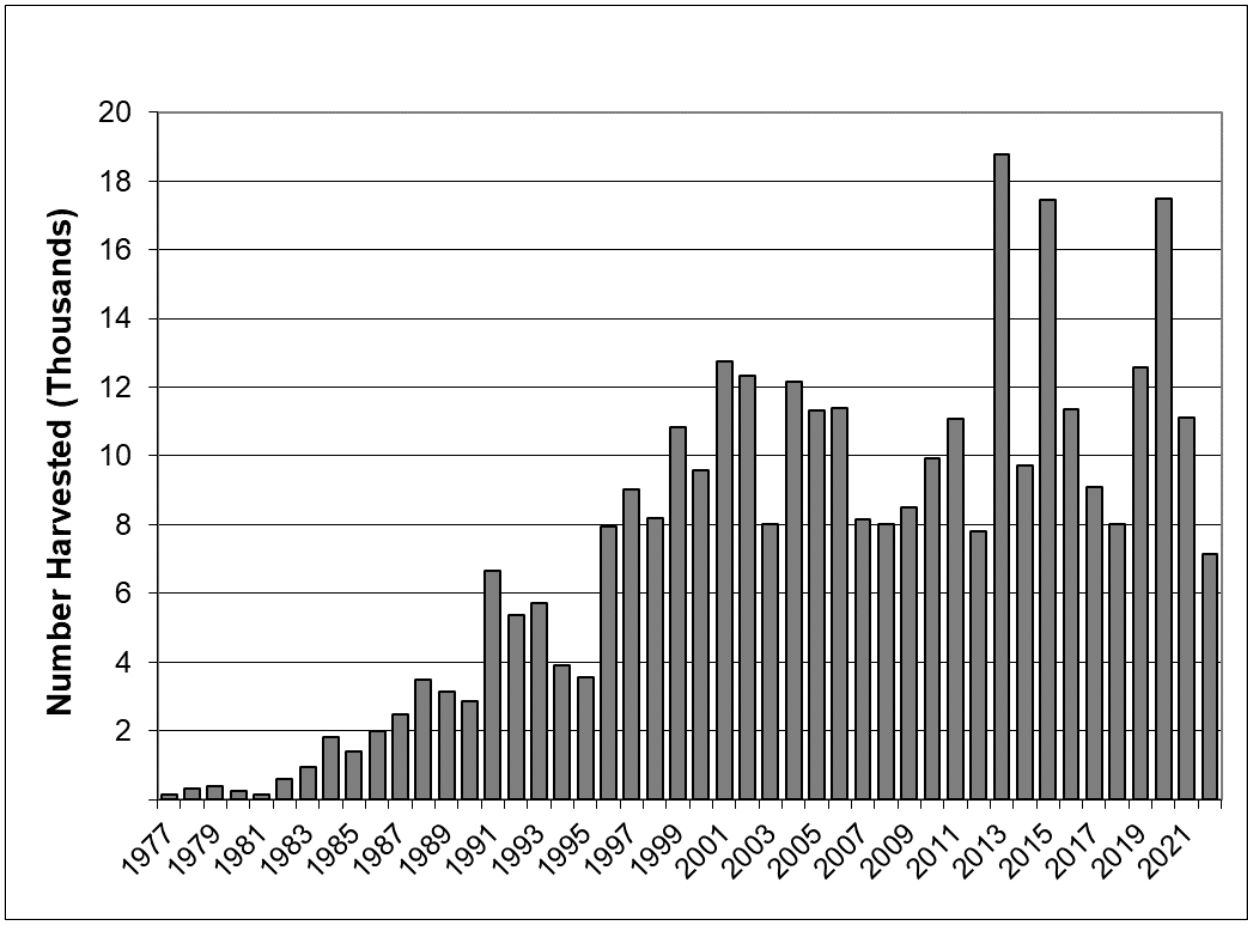

Figure 246-1.–Northern Cook Inlet sport harvest of northern pike.

Figure 246-2.–Map of proposed 5-line lakes in the Knik Arm and southern Susitna River areas.

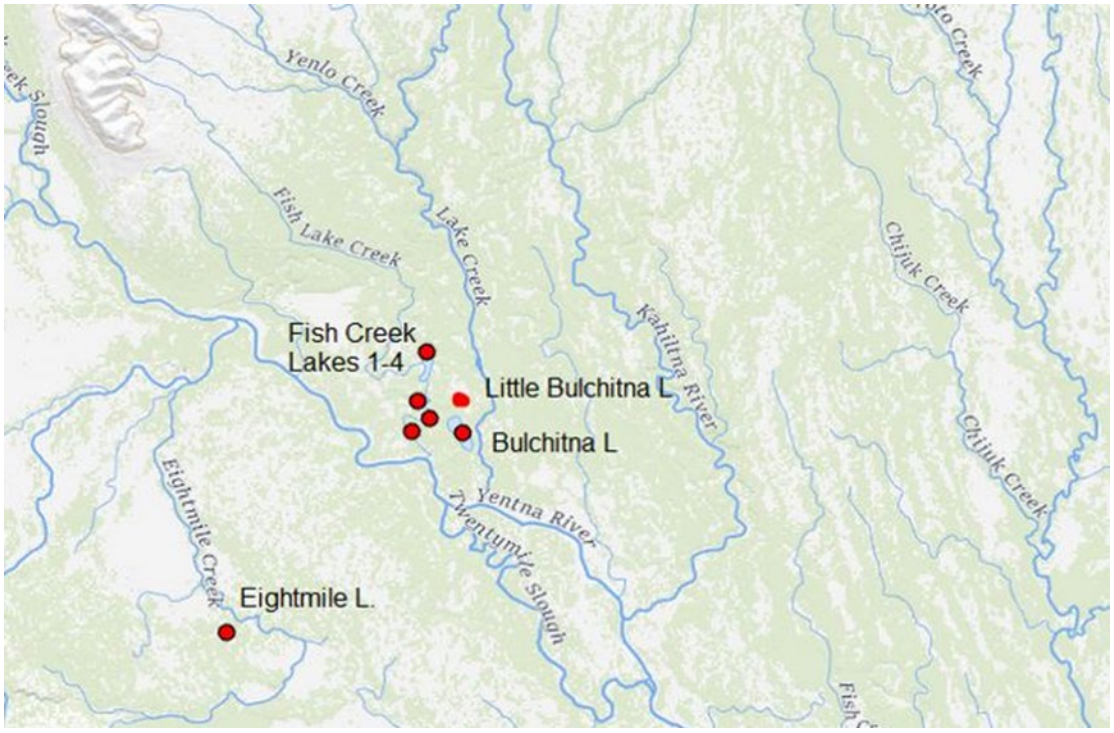

Figure 246-3.–Map of proposed 5-line lakes in the Yentna drainage, Lake Creek area.

PROPOSAL 247 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Prohibit chumming in Big, Mirror, and Flat Lakes.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit chumming in Big, Mirror, and Flat lakes. In addition, it would group Mirror and Flat lakes, both sharing connection to Big Lake, with regulations for Big Lake that restrict gear to only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures during the winter sport fishery, stipulates gear and bait use when targeting northern pike through the ice, and sets a seasonal bag limit for burbot.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Big Lake, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure is allowed during ice covered months November 1 – April 30. From November 1 – March 15, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., bait may be used to target northern pike through the ice provided a three-quarter inch or greater single hook is used and only a whole and intact bait fish used, which must be set above the bottom of the lake. From November 1 – March 14, the bag and possession limit for burbot is two fish; from March 15 – April 30 burbot may not be retained.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce mortality of fish hooked with scented hooks and provide consistency in regulation for these three connected lakes.

BACKGROUND: A decline in harvest and catch of Big Lake Arctic char in the 1990s, as indicated by the Statewide Harvest Survey estimates, prompted the board to reduce the bag and possession limit in 1998 from two per day/two in possession to one per day/one in possession with a minimum size limit of 20 inches. During the same meeting, regulations were established to prohibit bait use during the ice-covered months to provide further protection for Arctic char during a time when they are most targeted.

Mirror and Flat lakes have direct connections with Big Lake, allowing migration and sharing of fish between lakes. Resident species such as Arctic Char and burbot in Big Lake are not protected by conservative regulations in place on Big Lake to protect these species when they migrate to neighboring Mirror and Flat lakes (Figure 247-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Regulations prohibiting use of bait during the ice fishery on Big Lake are difficult to enforce because determining whether an angler is using bait or chumming is difficult; an angler may be scenting hooks under the guise of chumming to attract fish. Big Lake, Mirror Lake, and Flat Lake are chain lakes sharing the same resident species that can migrate between lakes. Conservation of resident species in Big Lake should also be applied to Mirror and Flat lakes.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

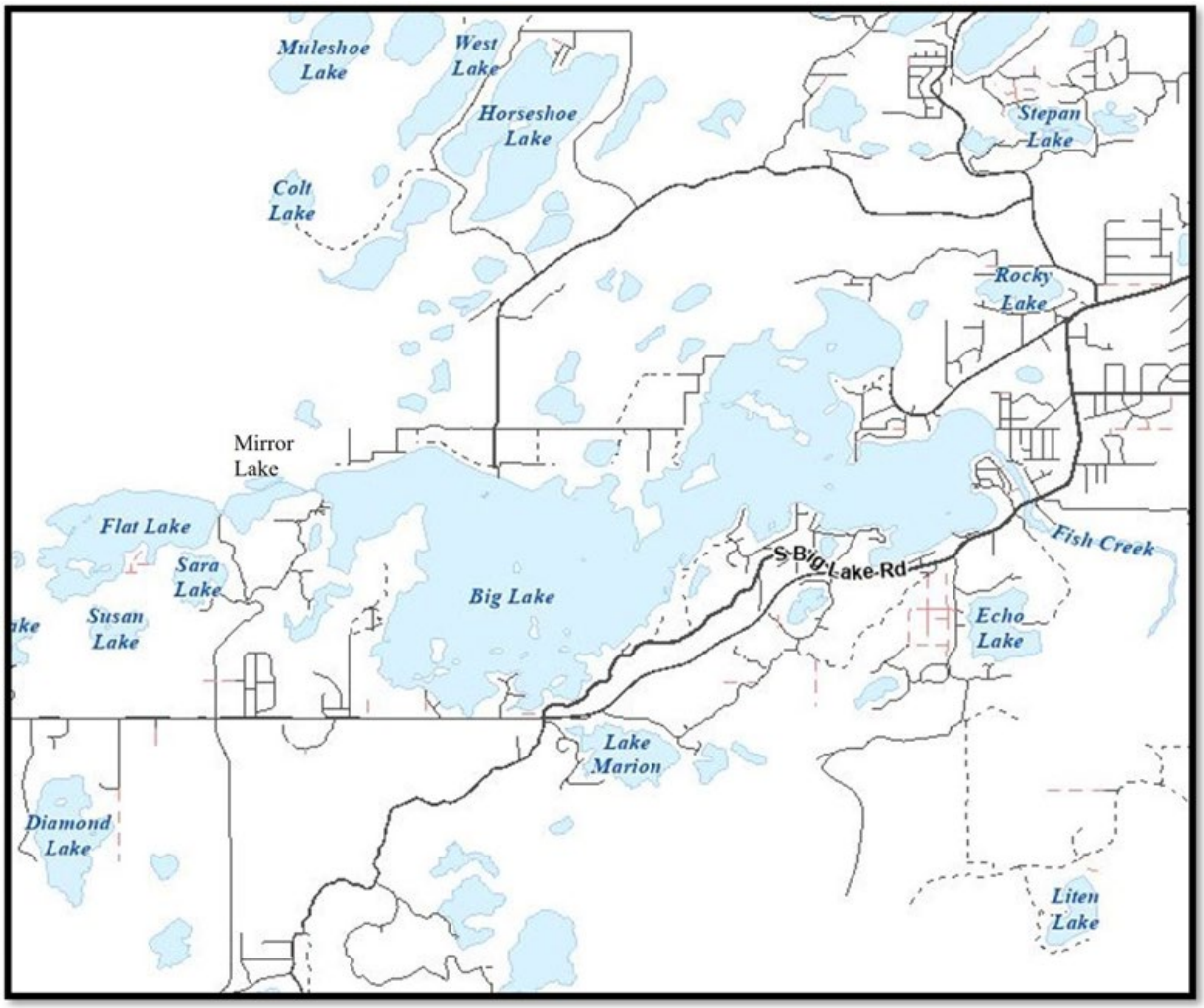

Figure 247-1.–Big Lake in relation to Mirror and Flat lakes.

PROPOSAL 248 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Restrict Big Lake Arctic char to catch-and-release in the Fish Creek drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would restrict Big Lake Arctic char to catch-and-release in the Fish Creek (Big Lake) drainage.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? One Arctic char over 20 inches per day and in possession.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the abundance of large sized Arctic Char to maximize production and rebuild the stock.

BACKGROUND: A decline in harvest and catch of Big Lake Arctic char in the 1990s, as indicated by the Statewide Harvest Survey estimates, prompted the board to reduce the bag and possession limit in 1998 from two per day/two in possession to one per day/one in possession with a minimum size limit of 20 inches. During the same meeting, regulations were established to prohibit bait use during the ice-covered months to provide further protection for Arctic char during a time when they are most targeted. The 20-inch minimum size limit was selected to provide Arctic char the opportunity to spawn once or twice before reaching a harvestable size. A 1990 study on Big Lake indicated Arctic char reach 20 inches in length at about eight years of age and are thought to become mature up to several years before this age and size. A review of catch and harvest data in recent years indicates a continued decline in the overall abundance of Arctic char, particularly for fish larger than 20 inches in length, and this has been supported by reports from anglers. Since the regulatory change in 1998, all Arctic char reported as harvested in the SWHS are assumed to be fish over 20 inches in length. Since implementation of the last regulatory change beginning in 1999, the harvest of Arctic char over 20 inches in length has decreased from an average of 400 fish from 1999 – 2008 to 80 fish from 2009 – 2022, a decrease of about 80% (Figure 248-1). Anecdotal information suggests more and more anglers are opting to release Arctic char in recent years rather than retain them; however, catch per unit effort has also decreased by about 60% between the same time periods (Figure 248-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Continued harvest of this stock does not appear to be sustainable. Arctic char are a species with slow growth rates that spawn every other year. Catch-and-release fishing is necessary to prevent further decline in abundance by maximizing recruitment of fish into mature age classes and maximizing spawning events of large fish to allow the stock to rebuild. The department has been issuing emergency orders to restrict sport fishing for Arctic char in Big Lake to catch-and-release only for the past two years leading up to this board meeting.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

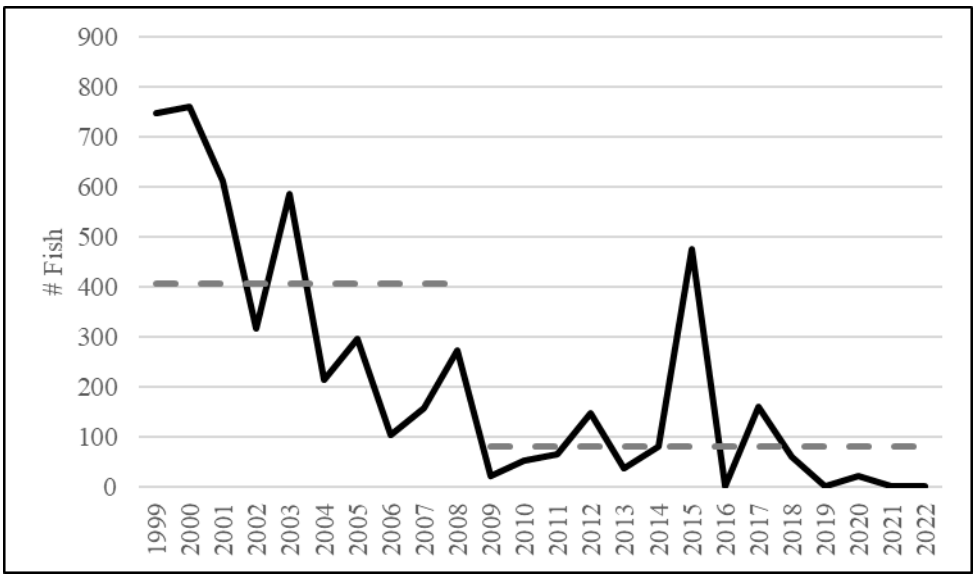

Figure 248-1.–Sport harvest of large Arctic char (>20 inches) in Big Lake, 1999–2023.

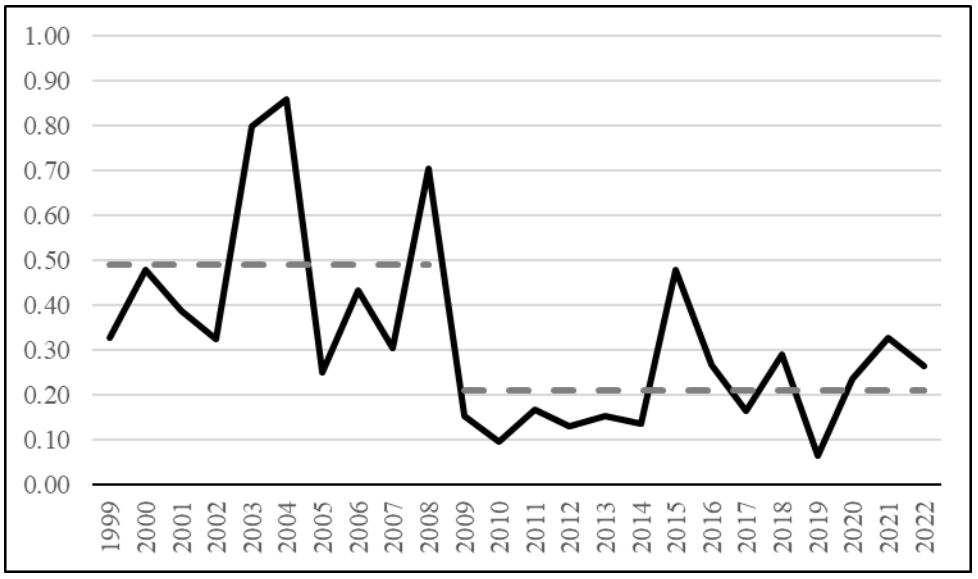

Figure 248-2.–Catch of Arctic char per angler-day of sport fishing effort in Big Lake, 1999–2023.

PROPOSAL 249 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Remove the effective date of regulation pertaining to sport fishing from a motor driven boat.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove the effective date of regulation pertaining to sport fishing from a motor driven boat on the Little Susitna River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Beginning January 1, 2017, a person may not sport fish from a boat that is powered by use of a motor, unless the motor is a four-stroke motor or a direct fuel injection two-stroke motor.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Remove superfluous language from regulation.

BACKGROUND: The board took action at the 2014 meeting to restrict fishing on the Little Susitna River to only boats outfitted with 4-stroke or directed fuel injected 2-stroke motors with an effective date of January 1, 2017.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. An implementation date for this regulation is no longer necessary.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Anchorage Area Sport and Personal Use Fisheries (6 proposals)

PROPOSAL 250 – 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.
Modify the closure date for the Ship Creek king salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the king salmon sport fish season in Ship Creek and allow year-round retention of king salmon in the sport fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Ship Creek king salmon sport fishery opens by regulation on January 1 and closes to retention of king salmon on July 14. From May 15–July 13, Ship Creek is open to fishing between 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. each day. Any king salmon 20 inches or longer harvested in Ship Creek applies to the combined annual sport fish limit of five fish in Cook Inlet. Anglers that retain a king salmon 20 inches or longer from Ship Creek are prohibited from sport fishing in waters open to king salmon on the same day.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow king salmon to be retained in the Ship Creek sport fishery for the entire year instead of closing to retention on July 14, allowing for additional harvest opportunities.

BACKGROUND: King salmon have been successfully stocked in Ship Creek since 1987 to provide fishing opportunities for sport anglers near the urban center of Anchorage. Annual returns of king salmon at Ship Creek contribute to the largest sport fishery in the Anchorage Management Area and provide broodstock for the king salmon enhancement and lake stocking programs. From 2013–2022, these stockings have produced an average catch of 1,482 king salmon in Ship Creek, of which 1,068 are harvested (Table 250-1). Over this time period, the average annual effort at Ship Creek has been 17,041 angler-days with a majority occurring during the king and coho salmon season.

The department monitors the Ship Creek king salmon returns to ensure 750 adult salmon are available for natural spawning, fish viewing, and meeting hatchery egg-take needs. The department conducts weekly foot surveys to count king salmon beginning in early June and concluding in late July. These survey counts, in combination with the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery raceway counts, represent a total number of king salmon available for spawning and escapement above the fishery. Since 2013, the inriver needs have been achieved every year except one (2018). During this timeframe (2013–2022), the average king salmon escapement was 1,626 fish with a low of 351 fish in 2018 and high of 3,294 fish in 2016 (Table 250-1).

Using inseason information, the Ship Creek sport fishery has been restricted and liberalized through emergency orders to achieve broodstock and other inriver needs (Table 250-2). During the 2017 and 2021 seasons, the king salmon season closure date was delayed to July 31 and bag limits were increased by emergency order to allow additional harvest because it was anticipated that the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery had adequate fish to meet the broodstock

goals and other inriver needs. By emergency order, the sport fishery has been closed prior to July 14 in two of the last ten years to achieve broodstock and meet inriver needs of Ship Creek (2014 and 2018; Table 250-2).

King salmon egg-takes at the hatchery typically begin during the third week of July, therefore any king salmon that enters Ship Creek after July 14 will only contribute to inriver needs and not to broodstock, except for in years of weak returns. It is not uncommon for anglers to catch king salmon between the current closure date and the first week of August. Currently, king salmon caught after July 13 would be released and are likely not needed for broodstock or inriver needs.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. By extending the king salmon season, this would provide an opportunity to harvest surplus hatchery-produced king salmon after July 13. There are no biological concerns with the king salmon season remaining open year-round and this regulatory change does not impact how the department currently manages the Ship Creek king salmon sport fishery. This proposal would also align regulations for the king salmon season on Ship Creek with the other stocked fisheries such as the Eklutna Tailrace.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 250-1.–King salmon catch, harvest, and escapement data from Ship Creek, 2002–2022.

	Angler data		Escapement		
Year	Catch	Harvest	Survey	Raceway	Total Run
2002	5,967	2,287	1,492	467	4,246
2003	8,667	3,588	2,198	535	6,321
2004	6,840	2,790	1,606	468	4,864
2005	7,578	4,081	1,485	343	5,909
2006	5,464	3,060	1,431	458	4,949
2007	4,888	2,615	1,475	371	4,461
2008	4,279	2,540	833	468	3,841
2009	1,869	884	916	379	2,179
2010	1,918	1,095	368	30	1,493
2011	1,171	600	896	408	1,904
2012	154	113	227	569	909
2013	1,265	824	468	571	1,863
2014	1,245	882	423	1,048	2,353
2015	3,002	1,761	1,161	1,286	4,208
2016	2,540	1,922	1,106	2,188	5,216
2017	910	635	596	1,256	2,487
2018	451	411	78	273	762
2019	1,412	1,333	497	898	2,728
2020	1,207	879	298	654	1,831
2021	2,210	1,601	983	561	3,145
2022	582	429	1,380	539	2,348
Average					
2002–2012	4,436	2,150	1,175	409	3,734
2013–2022	1,482	1,068	699	927	2,694

Table 250-2.–Emergency orders (EO) issued for Ship Creek king salmon (2014–2023).

Year	Effective dates	Emergency order number	Regulatory change
2014	July 7–July 31	2-KS-2-34-14	Closed sport fishing for all species on all of Ship Creek for the remainder of the king salmon season to protect king salmon.
2015			No action
2016			No action
2017	July 11–July 31	2-KS-2-26-17	Increased the bag and possession limit from 1 to 2 for king salmon in Ship Creek and extended the sportfishing season for king salmon on Ship Creek through July 31, 2017.
2018	June 29–July 13	2-KS-2-26-18	Closed sport fishing for all species on all of Ship Creek for the remainder of the king salmon season to protect king salmon.
2019			No action
2020			No action
2021	July 14–July 31	2-KS-2-44-21	Increased the bag and possession limit from 1 to 2 for king salmon in Ship Creek and extended the sportfishing season for king salmon on Ship Creek through July 31, 2021.
2022			No action
2023			No action

PROPOSAL 251 – 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. and 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Modify the Eklutna River drainage salmon bag and possession limits.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eklutna.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit the retention of coho and sockeye salmon in the Eklutna River sport fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Eklutna River drainage (including the lake) is open to sport fishing for nonsalmon species year-round. From its mouth upstream to the Glenn Highway Bridge, fishing is open to all species, except king salmon. Upstream of the Glenn Highway Bridge, fishing is open to salmon, except king salmon, from January 1–September 30. The current bag and possession limit for salmon, 16 inches or longer, is three fish, of which only two fish may be coho salmon. For salmon less than 16 inches in length, the limit is 10 fish per day in combination. Even though the Eklutna Tailrace has the same water source, it has separate regulations from Eklutna River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest of sockeye and coho salmon would be reduced by an unknown amount. Spawning escapement of coho and sockeye salmon would likely increase.

BACKGROUND: The Eklutna River is located 17 miles northeast of Anchorage. The Eklutna River is approximately 22 miles in length, and it was first dammed in the 1920s to provide power. The Eklutna Lake dam separates and limits flow into the Eklutna River. The Eklutna River drainage contains all five species of salmon and Dolly Varden. Eklutna Lake was stocked by the department with rainbow trout from 1992 to 1996. The department does not currently have any assessment projects or surveys in the Eklutna River drainage. Surveys by other entities occurred in 2002, 2003, and 2007 and more recently in 2021 and 2022 with low numbers of salmon being reported from these surveys.

The Eklutna River has minimal public access and sport fishing access is mainly located near the lake. The current sport fishing regulations were adopted over 30 years ago for the Eklutna River. The lack of respondents from the annual Statewide Harvest Survey for the Eklutna River makes estimating harvest difficult; however, it does indicate that there is low effort and harvest of salmon from the Eklutna River drainage. It is assumed that the majority of the salmon harvest comes from the educational fisheries which require a permit from the department and detailed reporting on harvest (Table 251-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal with modification to close the Eklutna River drainage to sport fishing for all salmon species.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

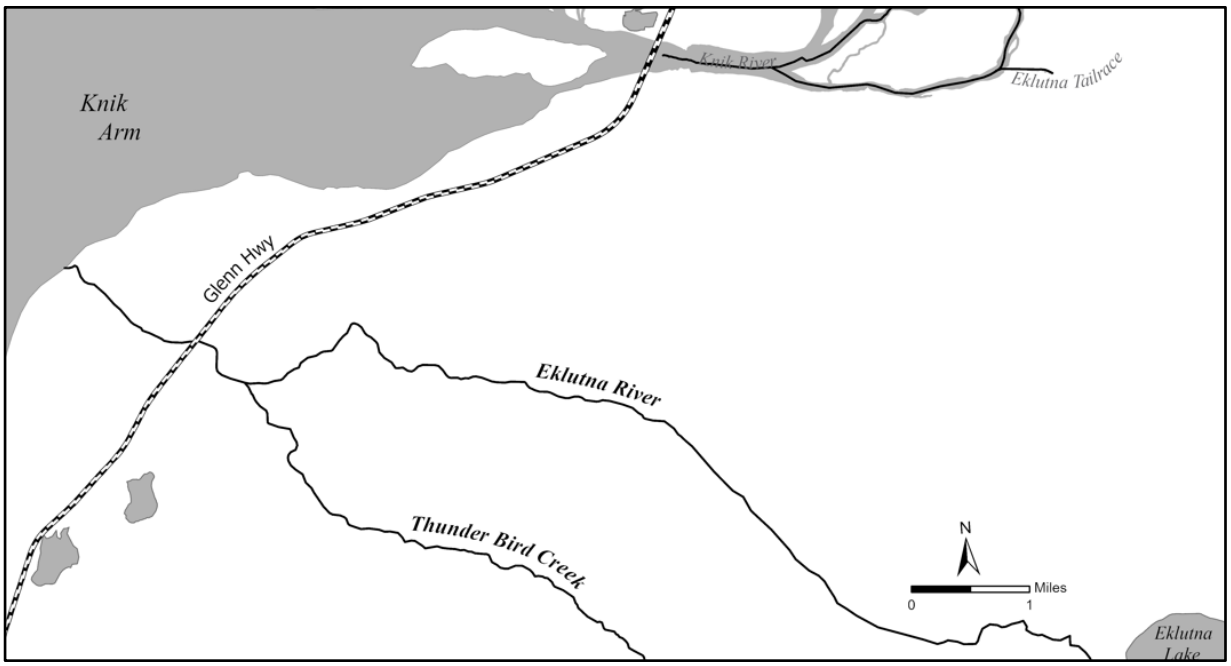

Figure 251-1.–Map of Eklutna River drainage.

Table 251-1. Native Village of Eklutna educational fishery harvested by site for 1999–2022.

	Eklutna Village (AMA) - Knik River harvest							Fish Creek Site (NCIMA) - Knik River							Total Eklutna tribal harvest						
	Salmon						Tota	Salmon						Tota	Salmon						Total
Year	Ck	Co	So	Pk	Cm	Other	l fish	Ck	Co	So	Pk	Cm	Other	l fish	Ck	Co	So	Pk	Cm	Other	fish
1999	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	11	25	80	3	20	0	139
2000	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	17	85	76	21	51	0	250
2001	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	58	95	52	56	34	0	295
2002	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	58	156	220	40	76	0	550
2003	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	69	49	160	14	21	0	313
2004	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	50	297	311	4	71	0	733
2005	11	210	128	2	25	0	376	61	32	38	6	4	0	141	72	242	166	8	29	0	517
2006	2	148	41	6	4	0	201	41	51	18	5	3	0	118	43	199	59	11	7	0	319
2007[a]	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
2008	16	177	19	3	0	9[b]	215	8	200	23	0	17	0	248	24	377	42	3	17	9[b]	472
2009	0	196	124	18	18	0	356	0	25	11	2	5	0	43	0	221	135	20	23	0	399
2010	0	75	144	5	0	0	224	0	30	25	0	3	0	58	0	105	169	5	3	0	282
2011	0	51	44	1	12	0	108	0	184	271	31	35	0	521	0	235	315	32	47	0	629
2012	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	0	242	218	10	63	0	533
2013	0	40	109	0	10	0	159	0	12	15	2	8	0	37	0	52	124	2	18	0	196
2014	0	41	193	11	18	0	263	0	7	55	2	6	0	70	0	48	248	13	24	0	333
2015	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	0	15	43	1	21	0	80
2016	0	48	26	6	12	0	92	0	38	68	4	4	0	114	0	86	94	10	16	0	206
2017	0	9	84	9	11	0	113	0	15	44	0	20	0	79	0	24	128	9	31	0	192
2018	0	48	77	0	11	6[c]	136	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	77	0	11	6[c]	142
2019	0	39	22	6[d]	9	0	72	0	33	27	0	7	0	67	0	72	49	6	16	0	143
2020	0	118	83	12	13	0	226	0	76	41	0	0	0	117	0	194	124	12	13	0	343
2021	0	47	77	1	12	0	137	0	10	80	5	5	0	100	0	57	157	6	17	0	237
2022	0	37	34	4	2	2	77	0	40	112	18	3	0	173	0	77	146	22	5	0	250
Average[e]																					
1999–2018	3	95	90	6	11	–	204	10	54	52	5	10	–	130	21	137	143	14	31	–	346
2018–2021	0	68	61	7	11	–	145	0	40	49	2	4	–	95	0	108	110	8	15	–	241

Note: Ck is Chinook salmon, Co is coho salmon, So is sockeye salmon, Pk is pink salmon, Cm is chum salmon. ND means data not reported. An en dash means value cannot be calculated due to limitations of the data. Only total harvest is reported for some years.

[a] Permit issued but harvest data are not on file.

[b] Eulachon.

[c] Unknown.

[d] Includes 4 pink salmon harvested in Eklutna River by spear.

[e] Average calculated with years available.

PROPOSAL 252 – 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. and 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area. Increase the bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? In Turnagain Arm drainages south of Bird Creek and continuing along the Turnagain Arm and Cook Inlet's eastern shoreline to the Northern District boundary, at Boulder Point, it would allow sport anglers to retain a bag limit of salmon, other than king salmon, of three fish of which all three could be coho salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In streams south of Bird Creek, along Turnagain Arm that are open to salmon sport fishing, the bag and possession for salmon (greater than 16 inches in length), other than king salmon, is three fish of which only two may be coho salmon. The bag and possession limit for other salmon, except king salmon, under 16 inches in length is 10 fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase harvest and possibly effort for coho salmon in Turnagain Arm and Northern Kenai Peninsula drainages south of Bird Creek and north of Boulder Point (Figure 252-1).

BACKGROUND: Poor returns of coho salmon to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) in the late 1990s and the failure to achieve escapement goals prompted the board to meet out of cycle in 2000 to take restrictive action to reduce coho salmon harvest in sport and commercial fisheries. In the UCI sport fishery, coho salmon bag limits were reduced from three fish to two fish and possession limits were reduced from six to four in some areas, while some areas like the area described in this proposal, possession limits were equal to the bag limit. Commercial restrictions included reducing fishing time, net length, and number of nets in selected areas as described in *5 AAC 21.358 Northern District Salmon Management Plan*.

However, in remote systems that experience relatively low angler use and that had good to above average returns, restrictions implemented in 2000 may not have been necessary. In 2005, sport fish restrictions were relaxed on some Westside Susitna River streams where coho salmon bag and possession limits were increased from two per day and four in possession to three per day and six in possession. In 2011, sport bag limits were returned to three coho salmon in other remote areas that could support additional harvest, such as in West Cook Inlet, Talkeetna River, streams of the upper Susitna River north of Talkeetna, and of the Chulitna River. Others, such as streams crossing the Parks Highway within Unit 2 of the Susitna River and Knik Arm and Turnagain Arm drainages, which are road-accessible and have the potential for high angler use, are susceptible to more fishing effort and high exploitation during years of average to low returns. In these areas, the bag and possession limit has been kept at two coho salmon.

There are no formal salmon assessment projects in place for Turnagain Arm streams south of Bird Creek. Catch and harvest information comes from the Statewide Harvest Survey but due to the low

number of respondents, information is not available on a reliable basis except for Swanson River, Resurrection Creek, and Twenty Mile River. In the Anchorage Bowl, Ship, Campbell, and Bird creeks have enhanced coho salmon populations as these streams are stocked annually with coho salmon. These enhanced streams are assessed annually and there has been no obvious increase in escapement observed in these systems over the last 20 years.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of the proposal and **OPPOSES** the biological aspects. Increasing the coho salmon bag limit on Turnagain Arm streams that are road-accessible and within close proximity to major population centers may increase the harvest above a sustainable level on years of average to low returns. There are similar regulatory changes proposed in the Mat-Su area.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

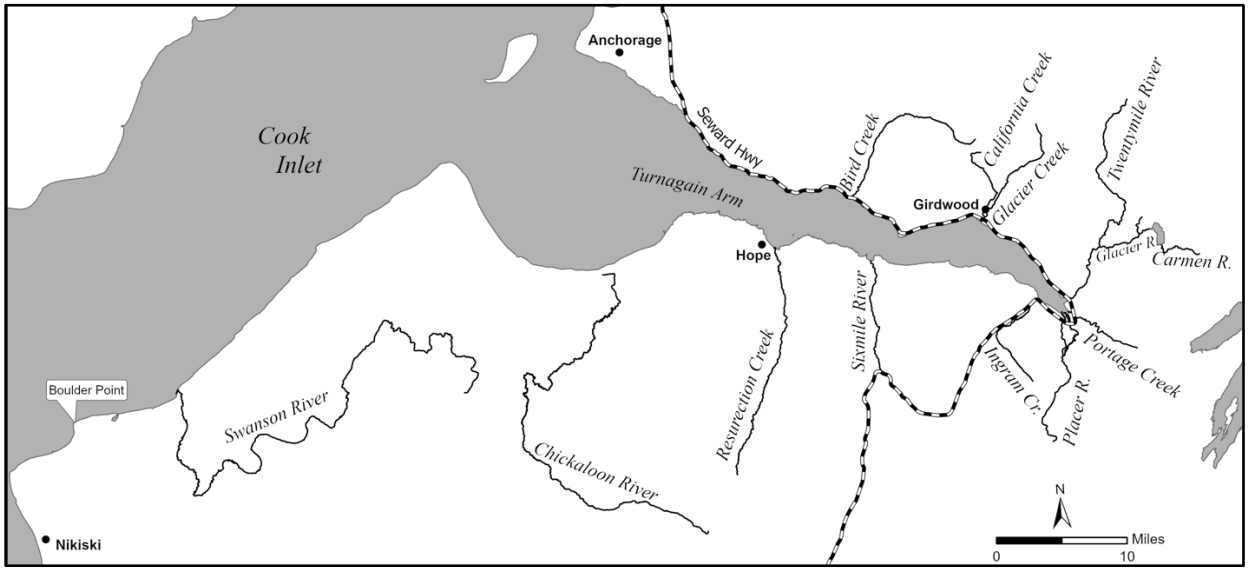

Figure 252-1.–Map of Turnagain Arm streams south of Bird Creek.

PROPOSAL 253 – 5 AAC 59.185. Special management areas for rainbow trout in the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.
Allow anglers to use two artificial flies in tandem in a portion of Campbell Creek.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick P McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the use of two unbaited, single-hook, artificial flies on Campbell Creek upstream of ADF&G markers near the forks at Piper Street.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulation is one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure or fly is allowed on Campbell Creek upstream of ADF&G markers near the forks at Piper Street. In this section, rainbow trout may not be retained and must be released immediately. Downstream of the ADF&G markers at Piper Street, the bag and possession limits are five rainbow trout, of which only one may be 20 inches or longer. Sport fishing is closed for the entire Campbell Creek drainage to protect spawning rainbow trout from April 15–June 14.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the catch of rainbow trout and may increase the catch and harvest of Dolly Varden.

BACKGROUND: Campbell Creek originates in the Chugach Mountains as two main tributaries, the North and South Forks, which converge near Piper Street to form the mainstem (Figure 253-1). Currently, lower Campbell Creek is stocked annually with rainbow trout and historically, unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a return of steelhead trout. Campbell Creek continues to support a rainbow trout and Dolly Varden sport fishery (Table 253-1).

Campbell Creek drainage produces the highest catch and harvest of rainbow among streams in the Anchorage Management Area. Historically (2002–2018), nearly 1,100 rainbow trout were caught with approximately 84 fish harvested on average, annually. In recent years (2019–2021), annual catch and harvest of rainbow trout has been 313 fish and 39 fish, respectively (Table 253-1). Any harvest of rainbow trout on Campbell Creek occurs downstream of the forks at Piper Street (Figure 253-1), where retention is allowed.

In 1985, the board adopted a proposal that closed sport fishing on both forks of Campbell Creek upstream of Piper Street. During the following board cycle, the board reopened this section of Campbell Creek, allowing anglers to fish for resident species with restricted gear and catch-and-release only for rainbow trout. When the forks of Campbell Creek reopened to sport fishing, only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure was allowed. In 2006, the board recognized this section of Campbell Creek as a *Special Management Area for Rainbow Trout (5 AAC 59.185)*. The purpose of this was to maintain historical size and age distributions for the population of rainbow trout in this urban stream by reducing harvest and catch-and-release mortality. In 2011, the board adopted a spawning closure for rainbow trout on Campbell Creek from April 15–June 14, during this time sport fishing is closed throughout the entire Campbell Creek drainage.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This would add regulation complexity for a regulation that have been carefully crafted and enacted by the board and the department to manage trout conservatively in this section of Campbell Creek drainage in order to maintain historical conditions as defined under the *Statewide management standards for Wild Trout (5 AAC 75.220)*. Special management waters allowing only catch-and-release fishing are restricted to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure per line, a regulation that minimizes release mortality. Allowing multiple hooks in special management waters would be inconsistent with wild rainbow trout management and alter a management strategy that has been established to maintain a healthy trout population since the late 1970s. Similar proposals were submitted for the Kenai and Mat-Su areas.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

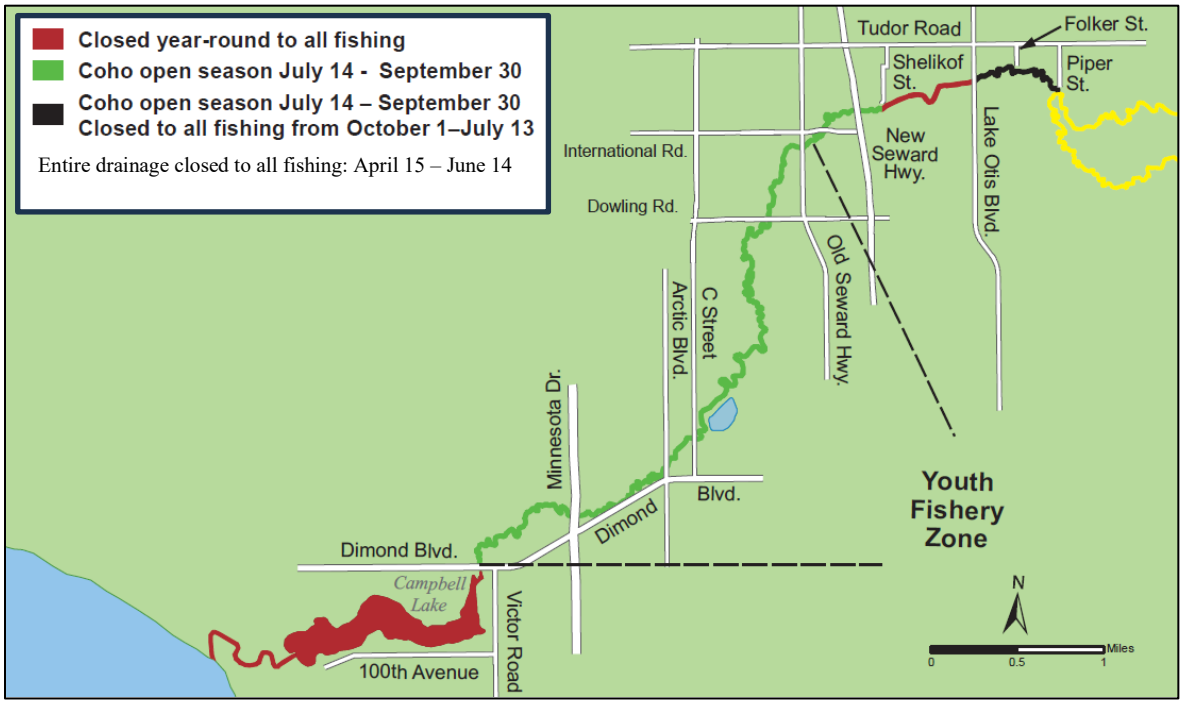

Figure 253-1.–A map of Campbell Creek showing summary of regulations.

Table 253-1.–Rainbow/steelhead trout sport catch and harvest in Campbell Creek, 2002–2022.

	Rainbow trout		Dolly Varden	
	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest
2002	2,950	418	2,339	369
2003	3,177	257	2,568	228
2004	2,032	117	3,386	200
2005	1,455	99	4,116	35
2006	720	24	701	0
2007	888	11	710	15
2008	740	0	379	76
2009	310	0	198	0
2010	495	0	969	51
2011	920	0	504	0
2012	318	0	211	0
2013	646	140	1,542	35
2014	559	0	718	0
2015	1,636	82	385	41
2016	300	12	418	0
2017	770	257	85	17
2018	409	14	438	13
2019	605	0	167	17
2020	181	75	103	0
2021	153	42	106	28
2022	364	0	0	0
Average				
2002–2018	1,078	84	1,157	64
2019–2021	313	39	125	15

PROPOSAL 254 – 5 AAC 59.185. Special management areas for rainbow trout in the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area.
Add portion of Chester Creek to Anchorage Bowl special management areas for trout.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick P McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add Chester Creek and its tributary to the *Special Management Areas for Rainbow Trout in the Anchorage Bowl Drainage Area*, (except for University Lake and the section of Chester Creek downstream of University Lake to Elmore Road). By doing so, this would restrict sport fishing to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure and prohibit the retention of rainbow trout in those sections of the Chester Creek drainage.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Chester Creek drainage is open from June 15–April 14 to the retention of rainbow trout. Bait and multiple hooks are allowed throughout the drainage. The bag and possession limit are five per day, five in possession, of which only one fish maybe 20 inches or longer.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This will add regulatory complexity and reduce the opportunities for anglers to harvest rainbow trout in the Chester Creek drainage. This may also decrease the catch and harvest of rainbow trout by restricting the use of bait and multiple hooks.

BACKGROUND: Chester Creek is fed by a tributary from Reflection Lake as well as rain and snowmelt from the Chugach mountains. Upper Chester Creek flows into University Lake, also known as Behn Lake or "APU Lake" near the Alaska Pacific University (APU) campus. After exiting University Lake, Chester Creek flows through many neighborhoods for approximately 5 miles until it enters Chester Lagoon. Chester Creek flows from Westchester lagoon for approximately one-tenth of a mile to the mud flats of Knik Arm (Figure 254-1).

The Chester Creek drainage has been stocked with rainbow trout since 1971; however, since 1999, it has only been stocked with triploid (sterile) rainbow trout. In recent years (2020–2022) it has been stocked annually with approximately 1,005 catchable rainbow trout. Stocking the Chester Creek drainage provides additional sport fishing opportunities for rainbow trout in streams within the Anchorage Management Area. In 2011, a closure on Chester Creek from April 15–June 14 was adopted by the board to provide protection to wild rainbow trout during spawning. Catch and harvest data for Chester Creek rainbow trout are not available due to insufficient responses on the Statewide Harvest Survey.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This proposal limits the opportunities for anglers to harvest stocked rainbow trout and adds regulatory complexity. Current bag and possession limits align with regulations for stocked waters in the Anchorage Management Area and provide protection for wild rainbow trout during vulnerable times of the year. There are no biological concerns with the current regulations on Chester Creek.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 255 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Create a personal use dip net fishery for salmon in the 20-Mile and Placer Rivers.

PROPOSED BY: South Central Alaska Dipnetters Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management plan by establishing a new personal use, shore-based dip net fishery for salmon, other than king salmon, on the Placer and Twenty Mile rivers. These fisheries would occur from each river's mouth, which would need to be defined, to one mile upstream of the Seward Highway. These personal use fisheries would occur 3 days per week, from July 1 – July 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Placer and Twenty Mile rivers are open to sport fishing for salmon, other than king salmon. These drainages are closed to fishing for king salmon. The bag and possession limit in the proposed areas is three salmon, of which only two may be coho salmon (16 inches or longer). Under 16 inches, the bag and possession limits for salmon, other than king salmon, is 10 fish. There is no retention of king salmon in these waters.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? There would be a significant increase of salmon, other than king salmon, harvested in these streams. Harvest levels could exceed sustainable levels of these unmonitored stocks.

BACKGROUND: Twenty Mile and Placer rivers are the two largest drainages in Turnagain Arm and are located approximately 50 miles from Anchorage and near the community of Girdwood. Portage Creek is located between these two river drainages, and all three together contribute to a majority of the freshwater input at the head of Turnagain Arm (Figure 255-1). On low tide, the mouths of these three drainages may extend for several miles into Turnagain Arm due to the bathymetry and low gradient of Turnagain Arm. Owing to the densely vegetated banks and extreme tide changes, a boat is typically required to access Twenty Mile and Placer Rivers above the Seward Highway, which crosses near the mouth of all three drainages. Currently, there is minimal access via trail systems and parking is often congested at both Twenty Mile and Placer rivers. At these two locations most sport fishing occurs upstream from Seward Highway bridge and majority of sport fishermen use a boat to access the fishery. These drainages are also popular locations for other users such as hunters and recreational boaters. Below the Seward Highway bridge is the Turnagain Arm mud flats with strong tidal influences and safety is a concern for individuals wanting to fish from the shore.

Coho salmon are the dominant species harvested by sport anglers in Twenty Mile and Placer Rivers. Twenty Mile River supports the largest wild coho fishery in the Anchorage Management Area (AMA) with a recent average harvest (2019–2021) of over 2,000 fish (Table 255-1). Coho salmon returns to streams at the head of Turnagain Arm from mid-July through mid-October with peak returns in between August and September. Conservative bag limits for coho salmon have been adopted by the board due to limited information available and in part to the proximity to Anchorage. Currently information that is available is limited regarding the size and productivity of the coho salmon returns in streams at the head of Turnagain Arm. Aerial surveys

were conducted to index coho salmon escapement in Twenty Mile, Placer, and Portage drainages from 1994–2006 (except for 2001). During those years the average aerial coho salmon counts were 1,586 fish, 1,789 fish, and 252 fish for Twenty Mile, Placer, and Portage drainages, respectively. Peak counts for all three drainages were observed in 2004 with Twenty Mile River producing an aerial index of 5,858 coho salmon (Table 255-2).

Chum, pink, and sockeye salmon escapements have not been quantified in the Twenty Mile or Placer River drainages. While Twenty Mile River is known to be one of the main producers of sockeye salmon in the AMA, the scale of this sockeye salmon return is unknown. Carmen Lake and its inlet tributaries are the primary sockeye salmon spawning areas in the Twentymile River drainage; however, some mainstem spawning has been documented. Sockeye salmon returning to Placer River spawn in Luebner Lake. Placer River does not receive enough respondents from the Statewide Harvest Survey to produce reliable estimates of catch or harvest for any salmon species. From 2019–2021, the average sport catch in the Twenty Mile River drainage was 120 chum salmon, 462 pink salmon, and 101 sockeye salmon.

Twenty Mile River supports a popular personal use dipnet fishery for eulachon, which primarily occurs during the month of May. During this time, the Department of Transportation reduces the speed limit on the Seward Highway to 45 mph for approximately four miles to accommodate this fishery and improve safety. However, while this eulachon fishery occurs, other popular fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula (i.e., Russian River and Kenai River), which significantly increase southbound traffic on the Seward Highway, have not opened or peaked yet.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of the proposal and **OPPOSES** the biological aspects. There is no known surplus of salmon available to harvest outside of the existing sport fishery and this proposal may negatively impact the sustainability of salmon returns to these drainages due to the potentially high level of effort to be expected, given the proximity to Anchorage. The development of this personal use fishery will also create the need for additional infrastructure (e.g. parking) to accommodate this fishery. Additionally, establishing a lower boundary for this fishery may prove to be challenging and unclear due to the tidal nature of both rivers.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

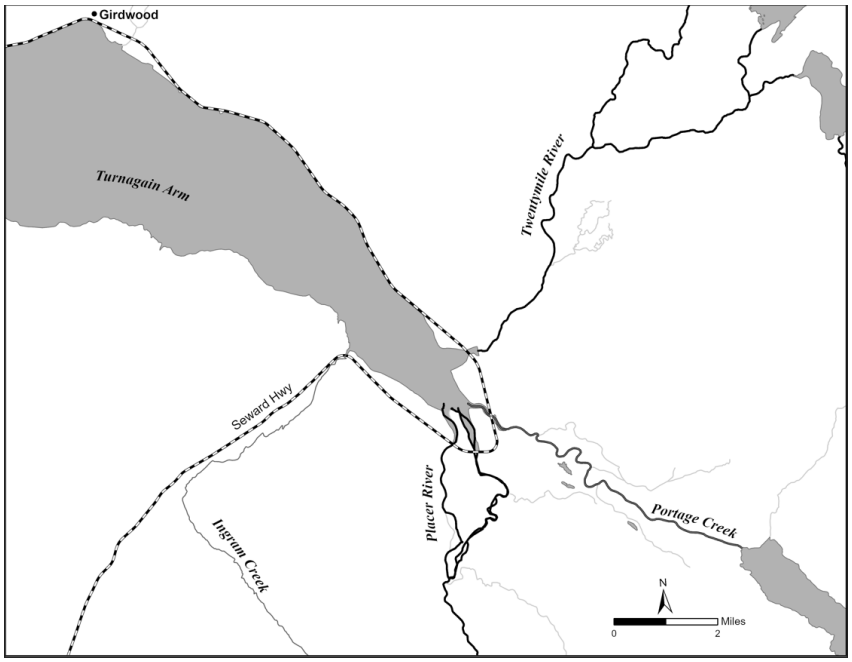

Figure 255-1.–A map of rivers and creek in Turnagain Arm.

Table 255-1.–Sport catch and harvest of all salmon, except king salmon, in the Twenty Mile River drainage.

	Chum salmon		Coho salmon		Pink salmon		Sockeye salmon		All salmon	
Year	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest
1999	81	14	1,457	1,051	80	0	42	10	1,660	1,075
2000	48	0	5,025	3,094	297	10	42	0	5,412	3,104
2001	357	35	5,724	2,742	234	23	176	97	6,491	2,897
2002	1,400	0	4,101	2,672	709	29	288	95	6,498	2,796
2003	357	25	3,039	2,116	109	0	84	36	3,589	2,177
2004	103	70	5,048	3,012	163	16	291	88	5,605	3,186
2005	0	0	1,632	1,334	93	46	139	106	1,864	1,486
2006	253	0	2,299	1,739	384	0	22	11	2,958	1,750
2007	102	0	998	719	299	88	172	81	1,571	888
2008	926	0	7,336	4,116	2,043	63	275	0	10,580	4,179
2009	69	11	2,052	1,329	185	0	156	48	2,462	1,388
2010	903	32	1,358	1,214	450	27	180	32	2,891	1,305
2011	22	0	1,281	1,087	292	56	0	0	1,595	1,143
2012	342	0	939	639	432	134	66	33	1,779	806
2013	58	0	1,304	895	60	0	0	0	1,422	895
2014	0	0	1,116	784	287	0	155	0	1,558	784
2015	19	0	685	503	58	0	83	83	845	586
2016	45	0	1,260	1,181	36	0	35	0	1,376	1,181
2017	123	18	2,349	1,249	2,190	19	676	0	5,338	1,286
2018	59	0	2,805	2,474	567	31	20	20	3,451	2,525
2019	93	44	2,449	2,393	1,055	0	0	0	3,597	2,437
2020	251	0	2,451	1,991	332	9	45	0	3,079	2,000
2021	16	16	2,419	1,763	0	0	259	259	2,694	2,038
2022	229	161	521	521	309	0	0	0	1,059	682
Average										
2009–2018	164	6	1,515	1,136	456	27	137	22	2,272	1,190
2019–2021	120	20	2,440	2,049	462	3	101	86	3,123	2,158

Table 255-2.–Turnagain Arm coho salmon aerial survey escapement estimates, 1994–2006.

Drainage	1994	1995	1996	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	1997–2006 Average	2002–2006 Average
Twentymile River																
Ahjo Creek	75	65	0	0	0	60	0	0	NS	6	12	34	6	10	14	14
NE Fork	75	210	275	0	140	260	110	975	NS	110	238	NC	168	141	268	164
Mainstem	780	560	940	0	770	2,500	470	1,920	NS	77	NC	5,070	121	212	1,393	1,370
Beaver Pond	NC	120	30	0	90	80	260	110	NS	NC	0	NC	NC	42	97	21
Glacier River	50	0	NC	NC	NC	40	NC	NC	NS	208	12	NC	49	0	62	67
Upper Carmen River	0	0	0	0	NC	14	NC	0	NS	25	20	NC	2	NC	12	16
South Fork Carmen River	6	0	0	0	NC	0	NC	0	NS	50	0	754	149	532	212	297
Total	986	955	1,245	0	1,000	2,954	840	3,005		476	282	5,858	495	937	2,058	1,949
Portage Creek																
Mainstem	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NS	NC	0	NS	10	25	12	12
Upper Railroad Slough	0	210	120	0	NC	540	NC	50	NS	NS	0	453	80	280	234	203
Lower Railroad Slough	0	40	60	0	75	330	NC	180	NS	150	10	NS	10	NS	126	57
Placer Creek	0	57	10	0	5	NC	0	0	NS	107	16	159	48	NC	48	83
Total	0	307	190	0	80	870	0	230		257	26	612	148	305	419	354
Placer River																
Sloughs and Mainstem	55	90	45	0	110	370	70	280	NS	2,283	492	3,620	1,758	1,850	1,204	2,001
Skookum Creek	750	720	410	0	420	1,480	310	1,225	NS	1,820	200	2,170	720	1,620	1,107	1,306
Total	805	810	455	0	530	1,850	380	1,505		2,698	692	5,790	2,478	3,470	2,311	3,307

NS- No Survey

NC- No Count

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 4: KENAI RIVER KING SALMON, AND UPPER COOK INLET SALT WATER KING SALMON SPORT FISHERY PLAN (46 PROPOSALS)

Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon (38 proposals)

PROPOSAL 80 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to modify restrictions to ESSN fishery that would allow opportunity for commercial harvest at escapement levels below the lower bound of the OEG but above 11,750 Kenai River king salmon of all sizes.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This seeks to provide commercial harvest opportunity when Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement is below the lower end of the OEG range but above 11,750 fish. The Department's established SEG is above the requested management trigger of 11,750 king salmon of all sizes. The Department's established SEG range will not change, establishing a conflict between the necessity of the department to manage for sustainability under its SEG and the desire of users to harvest below sustainable levels as defined by the Department's SEG. Managing to achieve a level of escapement below the lower bound of the OEG may mean fewer restrictions to commercial and sport fisheries if king salmon run strengths are projected to be below 15,000. Managing for a lower escapement goal may increase exploitation of all Kenai River salmon by allowing more opportunity in Cook Inlet fisheries and would likely reduce the number of king and sockeye salmon spawning in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

BACKGROUND: The *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Fisheries* directs the department to manage stocks to achieve escapement goals established by the department unless an OEG has been established by the board. When an OEG has been adopted by the board, the department is charged with managing to maintain evenly distributed escapements within the bound of the OEG range. Managing for a SEG or another number would require the board to repeal the OEG.

In 2014, the department was in the process of moving the Kenai River king salmon sonar site from RM 9 up to RM 14. The Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal was an SEG for fish of all sizes of 15,000 – 30,000. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large

fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Figure 75-1). At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Table 75-1). The higher OEG directs the department to take a more conservative stance when managing the fisheries that harvest late-run king salmon and increase the probability of achieving escapements that are greater than the lower end of the SEG.

The department reviewed the late-run king salmon SEG in the 2023 escapement goal review process and did not change this goal. The department does not evaluate OEGs as they are set by the board and can incorporate non-biological factors.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: It is the purview of the board to establish OEGs that consider biological and allocative factors, but the department **OPPOSES** establishing escapement goals lower than the SEG range other than for subsistence purposes.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 83 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons; 5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan; 5 AAC 21.365. Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan; and 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Modify the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Francis Estalilla.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks multiple modifications to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish). Management actions to various fisheries are prescribed based on abundance. Full management plan is found in Figure 79.1.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This requests multiple changes to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan,* the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan, Fishing Seasons* and *Weekly Fishing Periods* described in 5 AAC 21.310 and 21.320, and General Provisions for sport fishing in the Kenai River Drainage in 5 AAC 57.120. The effect of this proposal on the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock is difficult to assess, although the proposed changes would generally result in less fishing opportunity than status quo. Regulatorily it would add a complex series of actions and tiers intended to mimic the more prescriptive *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan*. If adopted, the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* would require actions to be taken by default without consideration of whether they were biologically and scientifically defensible. For example, the proposal calls for the Kenai River late-run king salmon fishery to start July 1 closed if the early-run king salmon fishery is closed on June 30 despite the lack of correlation between early run and late run performance. The proposal also dictates inseason action shall occur no later than the historic quarter point (around July 16) although, for a number of reasons, inseason projections may not be a reliable basis for management actions by that point.

BACKGROUND: In 2014, the department was in the process of moving the Kenai River king salmon sonar site from RM 9 up to RM 14. The Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal was an SEG for fish of all sizes of 15,000 – 30,000. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 to reflect that change. At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Table 75-1).

Prior to 2014, the only paired restriction was to close the king salmon sport fisheries in the Kenai River and salt waters of Cook Inlet north of Bluff Point; the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and

within one-half miles south of the Kenai River; and the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict. In 2014, to share the burden of conservation of Kenai River late-run king salmon, the board modified the plan to include the step-down restrictions in sport, commercial, and personal use fisheries during periods of low Kenai River king salmon abundance. At the 2017 UCI meeting the board made changes allowing ESSN more time (48 hours rather than 36 hours when the sport fishery is restricted to no bait, and 36 hours rather than 12 hours when the sport fishery is restricted to nonretention). At the 2020 meeting the paired restrictions were further modified to allowing ESSN 36 hours per week with a 36-hour window when the inriver sport fishery was prohibiting from harvesting king salmon 34 inches or greater in length. Additionally paired restrictions included preseason actions and expanded the plan into August based on inriver restrictions in effect July 31; and gear size restrictions for set gillnets.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects. This complex proposal seeks very prescriptive actions that may not be appropriate or scientifically defensible.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 85 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Prohibit use of motorized vessels in the Kenai River if the sport fishery is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Nyce.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit use of motorized vessels in all Kenai River sport fisheries if the king salmon sport fishery is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Kenai River, downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge, no one may fish from any motorized vessel on Mondays (except Memorial Day) during May, June, and July. For purposes of this regulation, a motorized vessel is one that has a motor on board. From the Sterling Highway Bridge downstream to the mouth of the Kenai River, no one may fish on Mondays (except Memorial Day) during May, June, and July from a vessel that has on board no more than one motor that does not exceed 10 horsepower (HP), and it may only be used between the mouth of the Kenai River and ADF&G regulatory markers located at Cunningham Park, and only after fishing from the vessel has ceased for that day; a person may not deploy sport fishing gear from a vessel after a motor has been used to propel that vessel on the same day.

Under DNR regulations, no one may operate a boat on the Kenai River (except Skilak and Kenai Lakes) upstream of mile 4.2 with a motor or combination of motors with a propeller shaft rating greater than 50 HP. No one may operate a boat on the Kenai River upstream of river mile 4.2 unless the motor is a four-stroke motor or a direct fuel injection motor. This includes boats operating on both Kenai and Skilak Lakes. The maximum length of vessels for the Kenai River (except Skilak and Kenai Lakes) is 21 feet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would eliminate fishing opportunity by anglers fishing from power boats and shore anglers transported by a power boat. It would increase the opportunity to fish for anglers with access to a drift boat or shore access but would overall significantly reduce the level of participation in Kenai River sockeye, coho and rainbow trout fisheries by limiting access to the resource.

BACKGROUND: There are several Kenai River seasonal and reach-specific boat fishing restrictions that have been implemented over the past 20 years. Prior to the 2002 season, fishing on Mondays in May and June was prohibited from any vessel. In February 2002, the board allowed fishing on Mondays from unguided nonmotorized vessels.

Power boats, often in high numbers, are transiting on the river each Monday even though fishing from a motorized vessel is restricted each Monday downstream of Skilak Lake. In July, for example, shore-based anglers (particularly those targeting sockeye salmon) travel to various shore locations and fish from shallow waters or riverbanks throughout the lower river. From July 10–31, personal use dip net anglers transit the lower river both to and from the lower river area downstream of the Warren Ames Bridge open to dipnetting. Point of origin for river users transiting the river on Mondays in July include state-, city-, and privately-owned boat launches

and campgrounds, commercial businesses (e.g., lodges), as well as privately-owned residences throughout the lower river.

In 2008, the board adopted a regulation prohibiting the taking of fish in the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery from a boat powered by a two-stroke motor, other than direct fuel injection. In 2008–2010, these new outboard motor type restrictions reduced hydrocarbon concentrations in the Kenai River that had been in excess of the Department of Environmental Conservation standard of 10 parts per billion during peak use in July.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to limit access to fisheries with a harvestable surplus and is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. New boats would need to be purchased to participate in fishing the Kenai River from a nonmotorized vessel. If the prohibition applied to department vessels, approval of this proposal would result in a significant additional cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 86 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Prohibit bait in the Kenai River through Oct 31 if the king salmon sport fishery is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Nyce.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit bait in the Kenai River through October 31 if the king salmon sport fishery is closed by EO.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The provisions of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359) are in effect from June 20 through August 15 and direct the department to restrict the Kenai River sport fishery by prohibiting the use of bait or by prohibiting the use of bait and retention of king salmon to achieve the optimal escapement goal (OEG). Bait has been prohibited in the Kenai River coho salmon fishery due to low king salmon abundance through August 15 from 2019-2022 and through August 31 in 2023.

Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area (5 AAC 57.121(1)) lists numerous special provisions for additional bait restrictions by date and area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Prohibiting bait for all sport fisheries in the Kenai River through October would reduce release-related mortality of incidentally caught king salmon by an unknown amount. It would reduce catch rates in other fisheries, primarily the Kenai River coho salmon fishery, by approximately 50% and reduce effort by discouraging anglers who don't participate in those fisheries without bait.

BACKGROUND: The mortality of released fish is dependent mostly on hook placement. Hooking mortality is often higher for fish that have been hooked in vital areas, such the esophagus or gills. Other factors, such as fish size, gear type, bleeding, and elapsed time to unhook the fish, can influence survival to a lesser degree than hook location. Fish caught by bait have a higher likelihood to be hooked in vital areas.

Catch rates and subsequent release mortality of Kenai River king salmon by anglers fishing for coho salmon and resident species after July 31 is reported to be low. However, years of poor performance of returning late-run king salmon to the Kenai River (Table 75-1) and failure to achieve the OEG has prompted the department to take actions to consider all sources of potential mortality and maximize the number of king salmon returning to the spawning grounds.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department has taken action by emergency order to remove bait consistent with inseason information of run strength and other actions.

COST ANALYSIS Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 87 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Prohibit guided sport fishing on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers when sport fishing for king salmon is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit guided sport fishing on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers when sport fishing for king salmon is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no provisions in the *KRLRKSMP* prohibiting guiding for other salmon or resident species on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers when fishing for king salmon is closed.

5 AAC 57.140. *Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area* describes several restrictions for guides on the Kenai River: During May, June, and July, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. In addition, downstream of the outlet of Skilak Lake, a person may not sport fish from a registered guide vessel on any Sunday from May 1 through July 31. Guided anglers may fish from shore for any species when fishing from guided vessels is prohibited between 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. On any Monday in May through July, except for Memorial Day, a person may not fish from a boat in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the mouth of the river, except that unguided sport fishing from a nonmotorized vessel is allowed on Mondays in May through July. In July, registered guide vessels may carry no more than five persons, including the guide, clients, and other passengers.

5 AAC 56.122(8) *Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area* lists the following restriction for guides on that portion of the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge: on any Sunday in July, a person may not sport fish from a registered sport fishing guide vessel.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the guided sport harvest of fish in the Kenai and Kasilof Rvers. This would eliminate fishing opportunity by anglers relying on guides to provide access to the sockeye and coho salmon and resident species fisheries on the Kenai River. It would increase the opportunity for anglers with access and experience to participate in unguided trips but would overall significantly reduce the level of participation in Kenai River sockeye and coho salmon and rainbow trout fisheries by limiting access to the resource.

BACKGROUND: From 2018–2022, Kenai River anglers harvested an average 399,321 sockeye salmon. The most recent year of SWHS data (2022) estimates anglers harvested 465,194 sockeye salmon in the Kenai River. The sockeye salmon escapement goal has been achieved six of the past ten years (2013-2022) and exceeded four times (Table 87-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to limit access to fisheries with a harvestable surplus.

COST ANALYSIS Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 87-1.–Kenai River sockeye salmon personal use or subsistence, educational, and sport harvest and escapement goals 2003–2023.

Year	Personal use and educational harvest [a]	Sport harvest below sonar [b]	Kenai River sonar count [c]	Sport harvest above sonar	Total sport harvest	Total inriver harvest	Spawning escapement	Actual run size (millions)	Inriver goal (thousands)	BEG/SEG (thousands)	OEG (thousands)
2003	227,207	60,722	1,181,309	253,734	314,456	541,663	927,575	3.8	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2004	266,937	62,397	1,385,981	254,836	317,233	584,170	1,131,145	5.0	850-1,100	500-800	**500-1,000**
2005	300,105	58,017	1,376,452	254,818	312,835	612,940	1,121,634	5.6	850-1,100	500-800	**500-1,000**
2006	130,486	30,964	1,499,692	172,638	203,602	334,088	1,327,054	2.5	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2007	293,941	60,623	867,572	265,718	326,341	620,282	601,854	3.4	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2008	236,355	46,053	614,946	208,526	254,579	490,934	406,420	2.3	650-850	500-800	**500-1,000**
2009	343,302	45,868	745,170	241,999	287,867	631,169	503,171	2.4	650-850	500-800	**500-1,000**
2010	393,317	59,651	970,662	256,624	316,275	709,592	714,038	3.3	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2011	543,043	92,225	1,599,217	318,542	410,767	953,810	1,280,675	6.2	1,100-1,350	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2012	530,128	102,376	1,581,555	368,720	471,096	1,001,224	1,212,835	4.7	1,100-1,350	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2013	350,302	78,837	1,359,893	379,685	458,522	808,824	980,208	3.5	1,000-1,200	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2014	384,018	78,057	1,520,340	301,998	380,055	764,073	1,218,342	3.3	1,000-1,200	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2015	384,095	83,112	1,709,051	309,004	392,116	776,211	1,400,047	3.9	1,000-1,200	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2016	264,901	79,465	1,383,692	263,704	343,169	608,070	1,119,988	3.5	1,000-1,350	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2017	304,632	67,233	1,308,498	237,434	304,667	609,299	1,071,064	4.6	1,000-1,300	**700-1,200**	Repealed
2018	169,553	41,122	1,035,761	149,000	190,122	359,675	886,761	1.6	900-1,100	**700-1,200**	
2019	338,952	103,700	1,849,054	392,023	495,723	834,675	1,457,031	3.9	1,000-1,300	**700-1,200**	
2020	263,133	62,665	1,814,252	208,625	271,290	534,423	1,605,627	2.5	1,000-1,200	**700-1,300**	
2021	335,396	138,740	2,441,825	435,535	574,275	909,671	2,006,290	3.8	1,000-1,200	**700-1,300**	
2022	288,455	100,802	1,570,395	364,392	465,194	753,649	1,206,003	2.5	1,000-1,400	**700-1,300**	
2023	ND	ND	2,343,976	ND	ND	ND	ND	3.8	1,000-1,400	**700-1,300**	
5yr avg											
2008-2013	409,229	69,235	1,102,310	278,882	348,117	757,346	849,558	3.8			
2013-2017	337,590	77,341	1,456,295	298,365	375,706	713,295	1,157,930	3.8			
2018-2022	279,098	89,406	1,742,257	309,915	399,321	678,419	1,432,342	2.9			

Note: ND = no data available. **Bold** font indicates the escapement goal for management, and shading indicates that the goal was achieved.

[a] From 1999 to present, personal use harvest is from Kenai River dipnet fishery and the educational harvest is from the Kenaitze educational fishery after July 1.

[b] In 1994 and 1995 a creel survey was conducted to estimate harvest below the sonar. In 1994, 49.7% of the harvest below Soldotna Bridge was taken below the sonar. In 1995, 68.6% was taken below the sonar. The average of these 2 percentages is applied to all other years' below-bridge harvest to estimate the harvest below the sonar.

[c] Bendix sonar counts for 1999–2010; DIDSON counts beginning in 2011.

PROPOSAL 88 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Prohibit nonresidents fishing from a guided vessel on the Kenai River if the king salmon sport fishery is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Nyce.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit nonresidents from sport fishing from a guide vessel on the Kenai River when sport fishing for king salmon is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no provisions in the *KRLRKSMP* prohibiting nonresidents from fishing from a guided vessel on the Kenai River when fishing for king salmon is closed.

5 AAC 57.140. *Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area* describes several restrictions for guides on the Kenai River: During May, June, and July, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. In addition, downstream of the outlet of Skilak Lake, a person may not sport fish from a registered guide vessel on any Sunday from May 1 through July 31. Guided anglers may fish from shore for any species when fishing from guided vessels is prohibited between 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. On any Monday in May through July, except for Memorial Day, a person may not fish from a boat in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the mouth of the river, except that unguided sport fishing from a nonmotorized vessel is allowed on Mondays in May through July. In July, registered guide vessels may carry no more than five persons, including the guide, clients, and other passengers.

5 AAC 56.122(8) *Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area* lists the following restriction for guides on that portion of the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge: on any Sunday in July, a person may not sport fish from a registered sport fishing guide vessel.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would eliminate fishing opportunity by anglers relying on guides to provide access to the sockeye and coho salmon and resident species fisheries on the Kenai River. It would increase the opportunity for resident anglers to participate in unguided trips but would overall significantly reduce the level of participation in Kenai River sockeye salmon fishery by limiting access to the resource.

BACKGROUND: From 2018-2022, Kenai River anglers harvested an average 399,321 sockeye salmon. The most recent year of SWHS data (2022) estimates anglers harvested 465,194 sockeye salmon in the Kenai River. The sockeye salmon escapement goal has been achieved six of the past ten years (2013-2022) and exceeded four times (Table 87-1). Other guided fisheries occur in the Kenai River for resident species including rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to limit access to fisheries with a harvestable surplus.

COST ANALYSIS Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 90 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. and 5 AAC 21.360 Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan. Expand weekly time-period "windows" where the commercial salmon fishery is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sport Fishing Association

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the mandatory weekly closure window in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery from 36 hours to 48-hours and establish a 48-hour closure window in the lower Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon tier of less than 2.3 million fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The preamble of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359; KRLRKSMP) (a) reads, "The department shall manage the late-run Kenai River king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses in order to provide the sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions."
The preamble to the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (*5 AAC 21.360; KRLRSSMP) reads, "The department shall manage Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses based on abundance. The department shall also manage commercial fisheries to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho, late-run Kenai River king, and Kenai River coho salmon stocks in order to provide personal use, sport, and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources."
When the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted under the KRLRKSMP, then the ESSN must close for a continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, including post July 31 if the sport fishery ends the season restricted.
When the KRLRKSMP is not in effect, the ESSN fishery is managed primarily under provisions found in KRLRSSMP and *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (*5 AAC 21.365; *KRSMP).* Under the KRLRSSMP closure windows are implemented based on the tier that Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon abundance is assessed to be at as follows:

- When sockeye salmon abundance is in the middle tier (2.3 million–4.6 million fish) the ESSN must close for a continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday and close for one continuous 24-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Monday and 7:00 a.m. Wednesday.
- When sockeye salmon run strength is in the Upper tier (>4.6 million fish) the ESSN must close for a continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday.

Under provisions in the KRSMP, the 36-hour "Friday" windows are implemented from the start of the season which may begin as early as June 20 if >30,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River or June 25, whichever comes first through July 7. After July 7, management of the fishery is under the KRLRSSMP.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may reduce the ESSN fishery sockeye salmon harvest and increase the number of sockeye salmon entering the Kenai River. Adding hours to the current closed fishing windows would reduce the department's ability to manage sockeye salmon escapements and increase the likelihood that the Kenai River late-run and

Kasilof River sockeye salmon goals would be exceeded. The current 36-hour window prohibits commercial fishing in the ESSN fishery on Fridays and by extending to 48 hours this would prohibit commercial opportunity on Saturdays. Recent practice has extended the window from fishery closure on Thursday through Sunday so it is not clear if closing Saturday by regulation would increase the amount of salmon moving inriver.

BACKGROUND: Mandatory no-fishing periods ("windows") were first adopted in the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* in 1999 (Table 90-1). Since the adoption of closure windows as a tool it has taken many different forms. From 1999–2002, only one 24-hr "floating" window per week was in the plan and only for runs greater than 2 million sockeye salmon. From 2002–2005, there was a 48-hr window for runs between 2 and 4 million fish and a 36-hr window for runs greater than 4 million fish, both were floating windows. From 2005–2011, a second 24-hour floating weekly window was adopted for runs between 2 and 4 million fish and the 48-hr floating window was changed to a "fixed" 36-hr Friday window. For runs greater than 4 million fish, the floating 36-hr window also became a fixed Friday window. In 2011, the tiers changed numerically to reflect changes in sonar technology and the board changed the 24-hour floating weekly window to a Tuesday fixed window. In 2014, the duration of the windows stayed the same, except the Tuesday fixed window was modified to either a Tuesday or Wednesday 24-hr window.

Since this stock was designated primarily for commercial uses (1999–2023), the ESSN and drift gillnet combined average annual sockeye salmon harvest has decreased by 28% from 78% to 50%. The sport and personal use fisheries proportions have increased respectively from 13% and 9% to 30% and 20% for a combined 50% of total harvest (Figure 81-4 and Table 112-4). This shift in harvest patterns is attributed to incremental regulatory restrictions to commercial fisheries associated with weak stock management and board allocation actions. At the same time personal use and sport fisheries under current management structure and does not appear to be capable of harvesting the surplus number of fish beyond inriver goals that would be needed to within the SEG. Combined Kenai personal use and sport inriver harvest has declined from a high 5-year average (2008-2013) of 757,346 to a low 5-year average (2018-2022) of 678,459 as inriver abundance increased during those same time periods (Table 81-3, Figure 81-5). The decreased commercial harvest and saturation of inriver fisheries contributes to the Kenai River exceeding escapement goals 30% of years since 1999, with 4 of the last 5 years exceeding the SEG. The Kasilof River has been exceeding escapement goals 80% of years since 1999 and has exceeded the SEG/BEG each year since 2018 (Table 81-4). This is occurring even as the average Kenai River sockeye salmon total run decreased by 15% from an average of 3.9 million fish (2003–2012) to 3.3 million (2013–2022) (Table 81-3). In recent years, low abundance of Kenai River king salmon resulted in less commercial fishing time for the ESSN fishery, which reduces sockeye salmon harvest. In 2023, the ESSN fishery did not open due to paired restrictions linked to low Kenai River late-run king salmon abundance. The potential impacts of consistently exceeding sockeye salmon escapement goals since 2019 will be seen when fish spawned from these years return over the next 2-6 years.

While the sockeye salmon SEGs have been exceeded, and resulted in lost yield in these years, it is unknown if it will result in a long-term loss of yield. The potential impacts of consistently exceeding sockeye salmon escapement goals since 2019 will be seen when fish spawned from these years return over the next 2-6 years. In converse, the results of not attaining the lower end of a weaker stock, in this case Kenai River late-run king salmon are known.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 90-1.–History of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon tiers, windows, EO hour limitations, and escapement goals.

Year	Tier	Window	EO Limitation	Inriver Goal (1,000s)	BEG/SEG (1,000s)	OEG (1,000s)
1999	< 2 million	None	none	600 - 850	500 - 800	500 - 1,000
	2 to 4 million	>July 20, 24 hour window start 12 noon Fri in Kenai/E.F. Sections	none	750 - 950		
	> 4 million	None; extra time for Kenai sockeye only in Kenai/E.F. Sections	none	850 - 1,100		
2002	< 2 million	None	24 hour	600 - 850	500 - 800	500 - 1,000
	2 to 4 million	48 hours floating	36 hour	750 - 950		
	> 4 million	36 hours floating	60 hour	850 - 1,100		
2005	< 2 million	None	24 hour	650 - 850	500 - 800	500 - 1,000
	2 to 4 million	36 hour "Friday window" & 24 hour floating	51 hour	750 - 950		
	> 4 million	36 hour "Friday window"	84 hour	850 - 1,100		
2008	< 2 million	None	24 hour	650 - 850	500 - 800	500 - 1,000
	2 to 4 million	36 hour "Friday window" & 24 hour floating	51 hour	750 - 950		
	> 4 million	36 hour "Friday window"	84 hour	850 - 1,100		
2011[a]	< 2.3 million	None	24 hour	900 - 1,100	700 - 1,200	700 - 1,400
	2.3 to 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window & 24 hour fixed "Tuesday Window"	51 hour	1,000 - 1,200		
	> 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window"	84 hour	1,100 - 1,350		
2014	< 2.3 million	None	24 hour	900 - 1,100	700 - 1,200	700 - 1,400
	2.3 to 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window" & 24 hour floating "Tue or Wed Window"	51 hour	1,000 - 1,200		
	> 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window"	84 hour	1,100 - 1,350		
2017	< 2.3 million	None	24 hour	900 - 1,100	700 - 1,200	eliminated
	2.3 to 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window" & 24 hour floating "Tue or Wed Window"	51 hour	1,000 - 1,300		
	> 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window"	84 hour	1,100 - 1,500		
2020	< 2.3 million	None	24 hour	1,000 - 1,200	750 - 1,300	eliminated
	2.3 to 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window" & 24 hour floating "Tue or Wed Window"	51 hour	1,100 - 1,400		
	> 4.6 million	36 hour "Friday window"	84 hour	1,200 - 1,600		

[a] Tiers and goals adjusted from Bendix sonar to DIDSON units.

PROPOSAL 91 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. Amend criteria for commercial set gillnet fishing periods, in the Upper Subdistrict, after August 1.

PROPOSED BY: Travis Every.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow commercial set gillnet fishing as prescribed in the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* after August 1 if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is projected to be met.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery is managed primarily under provisions found in *Kenai River Late Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRSSMP) and *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* (KSRMP). However, per the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP), if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted on July 31, when the fishery closes, then beginning August 1, ESSN commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week; if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is not restricted under the provisions of this section, or, after August 1, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is **met** the ESSN will be managed under the provisions of (KRLRSSMP).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow harvest of salmon in the ESSN after August 1 if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is projected to be met rather than requiring that the OEG is achieved. This could increase ESSN harvest of salmon in August by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: At the 2020 board meeting, the provisions guiding management of the ESSN after July 31 were modified to carry Kenai River large king-salmon conservation measures into August and through the end of the ESSN fishing season which is August 15 unless the 1% rule closes the fishery earlier. Prior to 2020, management after July 31 reverted to the KRLRSSMP and KRSMP and provisions within to manage sockeye salmon bound for the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. Under the KRLRKSMP, if restrictions or closure of the inriver king salmon sport fishery occurs then the ESSN fishery is restricted or closed until the large king salmon OEG is achieved, meaning at least 15,000 large fish have been estimated to be in escapement before ESSN fishery restrictions are lifted in August.

Approximately 35% of the large late-run king salmon pass the sonar site after July 31 (Figure 91-1). Run timing for sockeye salmon from the commercial fishery to the sockeye salmon sonar at Rm 19 is approximately 4 days but does vary from year to year. Sockeye salmon run timing averaged one day late during the 1990s; near the historical midpoint from 2000–2009 and 2010–2019; and two days late from 2020–2023. (Figure 123-3).

Since 1980, the number of sockeye salmon enumerated in the Kenai River in August has steadily increased from 23% in the 1990s to 48% since 2020 (Figure 123-1, Figure 123-2, and Table 123-4). In numbers of fish that equates to an average August sockeye salmon passage of 283,000 fish per year in the 1990s, to nearly 472,000 fish per year for the following two decades. Since 2020, the average has increased to 1.0 million fish returning in August. The average day that sonar operations ceased each year has also increased from August 15 in the 1990s to August 23 since 2020. Sonar operations typically cease when less than 1% of the season's total sockeye salmon passage has occurred for three consecutive days. The number of sockeye salmon enumerated in the Kenai River in August is affected not only by run-

timing of this stock, but it is also impacted by restrictions to commercial fisheries in late July and August, thereby increasing passage of sockeye salmon in August. Commercial fisheries restrictions increased during the recent years of high August inriver abundance.

UCI sockeye salmon run size and run timing are estimated inseason via an Offshore Test Fishery that is conducted at the southern boundary of the UCI management area. Sockeye salmon run timing averaged one day late during the 1990s; near the historical midpoint from 2000–2009 and 2010–2019; and two days late from 2020–2023 (Figure 123-3).

The board adopted one-percent rules that can close or restrict commercial fisheries in August if sockeye salmon catches are declining. These rules were adopted to reduce the commercial harvest of UCI coho salmon in those years where harvest of sockeye salmon late in the season has diminished to less than 1% of the total season harvest for two consecutive fishing periods.

See background of proposal 81-1 for further specifics on king and sockeye salmon escapements and ESSN harvest statistics.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

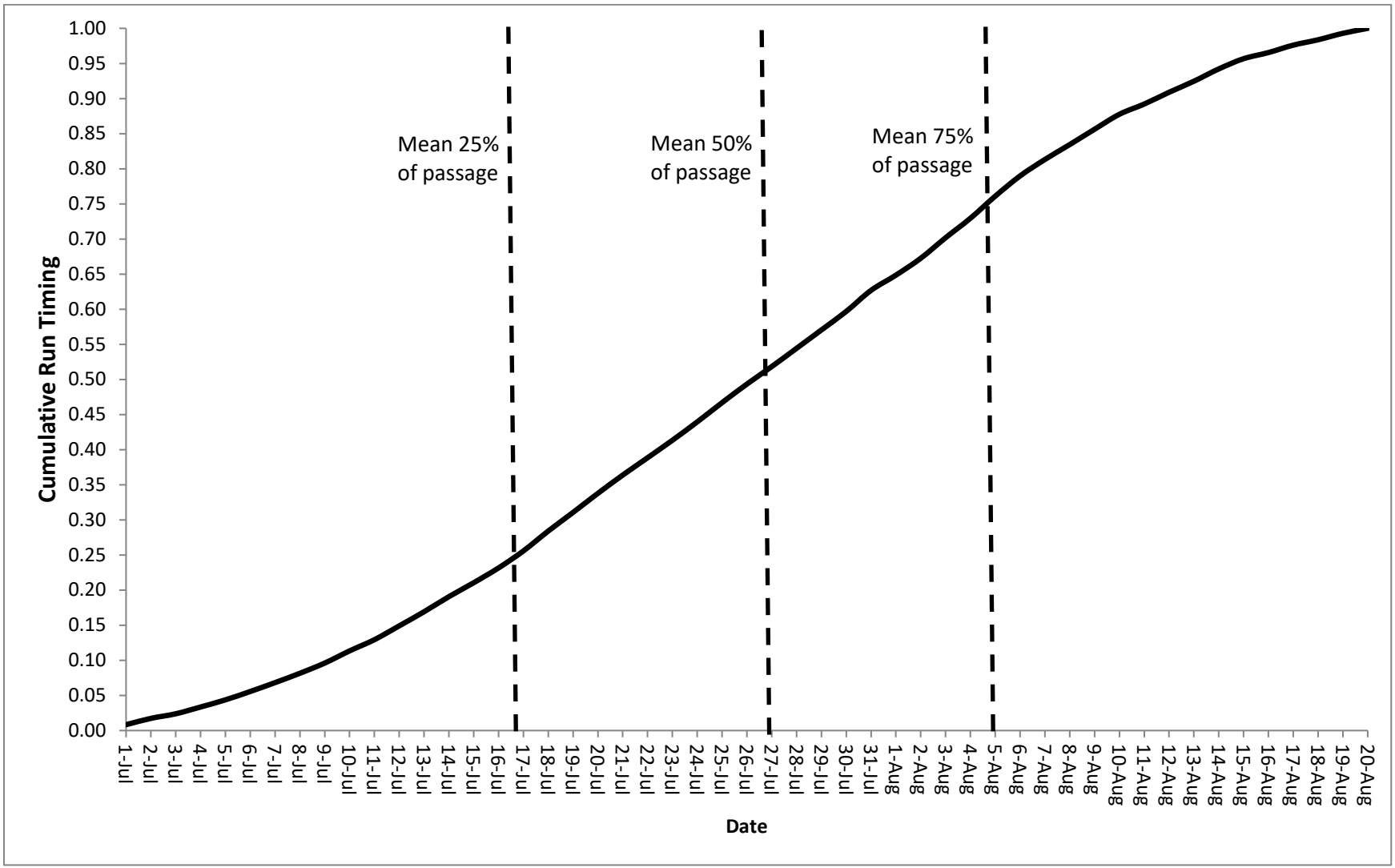

Figure 91-1.–Mean run timing of Kenai River large late-run king salmon as measured at RM14 sonar site 2013–2022.

PROPOSAL 92 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. Exempt the East Foreland Section from 'paired restriction' measures in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Lance Alldrin, Mary Alldrin, Richard Hilleary, Rick Jewell, Merrill Mcgahan, Chris Monfor, Christine Monfor, Chris Parker, Amanda Waggoner, Chad Waggoner, Brenda Vincent, Mark Vincent, Dan Wysocki.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow commercial set gillnet fishing in the East Foreland Section of the Upper Subdistrict when the Kenai and Kasilof Sections are restricted or closed under provisions in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLKSMP).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery consists of the Kasilof, Kenai, and the East Foreland Sections. The ESSN is managed primarily under provisions found in *Kenai River Late Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* and *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan*. If the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted in order to achieve the optimal escapement goal (OEG), the ESSN fishery is then managed per provisions found in the KRLRKSMP.

See current regulations for Proposal 81.

The East Foreland Section is defined as all waters from the northern boundary of the Upper Subdistrict to the latitude of the base of Colliers Dock at 60° 40.35' N. lat. (the southernmost of the pile-supported docks at Nikiski) and within one nautical mile of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline (Figure 92-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would exempt the East Foreland Section from paired restrictions and increase harvests of salmon in the East Foreland Section set gillnet fishery. Stock specific harvest in the East Foreland Section is unknown, but based on harvest in adjacent reporting groups this would likely increase harvest of mainly Kenai River sockeye salmon and to a lesser extent Kasilof and Northern bound stocks. It would also increase, to an unknown degree, the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon.

BACKGROUND: Since 2014, when paired restrictions were adopted, low king salmon abundance in the Kenai River has occurred every year except 2017, and some or all the restrictive provisions of the management plan have been implemented each year (Table 81-1). In 2017, the board exempted the East Foreland Section from the paired restrictive provisions in the management plan due to the low harvest of Kenai River king salmon in this statistical area, 244-42 (Figure 92-1). In 2020, the board removed the exception of the East Foreland section so that it would be restricted along with the rest of the ESSN fishery. Harvest trends from 2017-2019 did not substantially change for king or sockeye salmon in the East Foreland Section as those years were not significantly restricted for the ESSN. From 2010–2022, the East Foreland Section harvest averaged 50 king salmon (all sizes) and 49,326 sockeye salmon (Table 92-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. If the board were allow such opportunity it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 92-1.–Upper Subdistrict set gillnet harvest of salmon by sections, 2010–2023.

King salmon [a]							
	Kasilof		Kenai		E. Foreland		
Year	Section	Percent	Section	Percent	Section	Percent	Total
2010	4,069	58%	2,921	41%	69	1%	7,059
2011	5,125	67%	2,489	32%	83	1%	7,697
2012	372	53%	319	45%	14	2%	705
2013	1,275	48%	1,297	49%	58	2%	2,630
2014	1,076	64%	582	35%	18	1%	1,676
2015	2,965	40%	4,239	58%	151	2%	7,355
2016	3,001	44%	3,678	54%	75	1%	6,754
2017	2,314	48%	2,414	51%	51	1%	4,779
2018	1,574	68%	706	31%	32	1%	2,312
2019	1,173	52%	1,018	45%	55	2%	2,246
2020	548	64%	296	35%	8	1%	852
2021	707	55%	559	43%	26	2%	1,292
2022	254	74%	77	23%	10	3%	341
2023	Fishery Did Not Open						
Average	1,881	57%	1,584	42%	50	2%	3,515

Sockeye salmon							
	Kasilof		Kenai		E. Foreland		
Year	Section	Percent	Section	Percent	Section	Percent	Total
2010	517,590	48%	502,357	46%	65,842	6%	1,085,789
2011	1,016,987	54%	758,357	40%	102,595	5%	1,877,939
2012	30,723	32%	59,827	62%	6,125	6%	96,675
2013	473,778	55%	352,309	41%	31,296	4%	857,383
2014	387,458	74%	121,538	23%	17,271	3%	526,267
2015	794,951	58%	476,954	35%	107,771	8%	1,379,676
2016	377,745	38%	527,754	53%	92,269	9%	997,768
2017	560,102	67%	235,319	28%	36,799	4%	832,220
2018	222,086	77%	56,089	19%	11,666	4%	289,841
2019	335,664	43%	341,243	43%	107,636	14%	784,543
2020	186,925	63%	84,245	29%	24,171	8%	295,341
2021	217,692	54%	152,944	38%	34,943	9%	405,579
2022	81,591	78%	20,234	19%	2,853	3%	104,678
2023	Fishery Did Not Open						
Average	400,253	57%	283,782	37%	49,326	6%	733,361

[a] Harvest represents all king salmon stocks of all sizes.

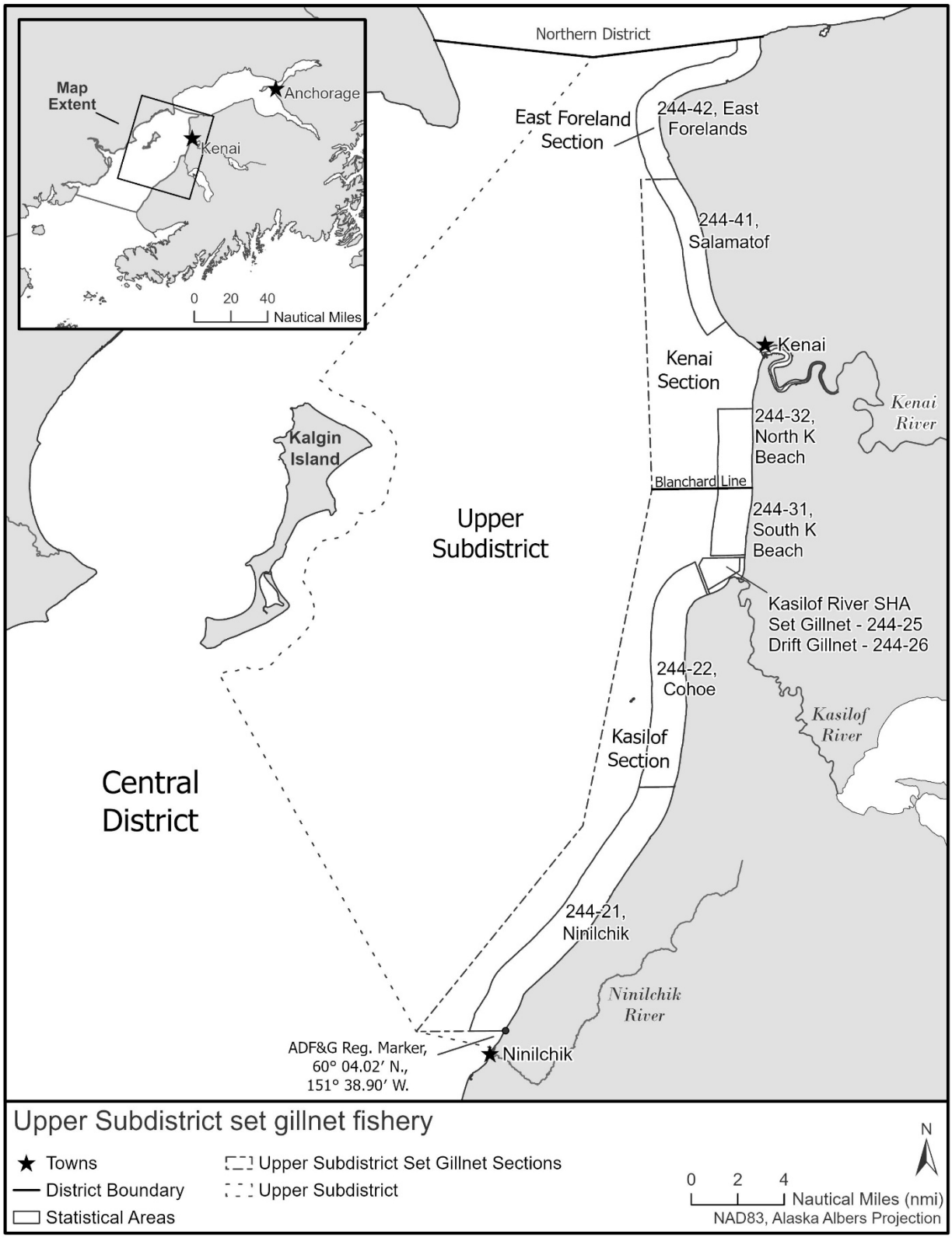

Figure 92-1.–Map of the Kasilof, Kenai, and East Foreland sections, with statistical areas.

PROPOSAL 93 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Exempt the East Foreland Section from paired restriction management measures within the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Rick Jewell.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow commercial set gillnet fishing in the East Foreland Section of the Upper Subdistrict on from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays when the Kenai and Kasilof Sections are restricted or closed under provisions in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan (KRLKSMP)*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery consists of the Kasilof, Kenai, and the East Foreland Sections. The ESSN is managed primarily under provisions found in 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* and 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan.* However, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted in order to achieve the Optimal escapement goal (OEG), the ESSN fishery is then managed per provisions found in the *KRLRKSMP 5 AAC 21.359*.

Specifically, the management plan states that if the use of bait is prohibited in the sport fishery, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 48 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, during which the number of set gillnets operated may also be restricted.

If the use of bait and the retention of king salmon greater than 34" in length are prohibited in the sport fishery, the ESSN fishery is open for no more than 36 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, during which the number of set gillnets operated may also be restricted.

If the use of bait and the retention of king salmon are prohibited in the sport fishery, the ESSN fishery is open for no more than 24 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, during which the number of set gillnets operated may also be restricted.

If the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted on July 31, then, beginning August 1, Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week; if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is not restricted under the provisions of this section, or, after August 1, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is met the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will be managed under the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*.

If the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer, the department shall close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon; and close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula

shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

The East Foreland Section is defined as all waters from the northern boundary of the Upper Subdistrict to the latitude of the base of Colliers Dock at 60° 40.35' N. lat. (the southernmost of the pile-supported docks at Nikiski) and within one nautical mile of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline (Figure 81-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would exempt the East Foreland Section from paired restrictions and increase harvests of salmon in the East Foreland Section set gillnet fishery. Stock specific harvest in the East Foreland Section is unknown but based on harvest in adjacent reporting groups this would likely increase harvest of mainly Kenai River sockeye salmon and to a lessor extent Kasilof and Northern bound stocks. It would also increase, to an unknown degree, the harvest of late run Kenai River king salmon.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposal 92.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. If the board were allow such opportunity it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 94 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify allowable gear when the set gillnet commercial fishery is restricted to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the number of set gillnets that may be used in the ESSN commercial salmon fishery, if the Kenai River sport fishery is restricted to allow for additional shorter nets that maintain current aggregate lengths for 29 mesh and 45 mesh depth nets.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? If the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted in order to achieve the optimal escapement goal (OEG), the ESSN fishery is then managed per provisions found in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP) 5 AAC 21.359(e)(3)(A–G). Specifically, the management plan states that if commercial fishing is limited under (e)(3), the operation of setnets operated by a CFEC permit holder shall be restricted to:

i) up to four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length, 105 fathoms in aggregate length, and 29 meshes in depth, or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter; or

(ii) up to two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth or one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

BACKGROUND: At the 2014 UCI board meeting, a regulation was adopted that restricted set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict for individuals who own and operate two Cook Inlet CFEC permits; the restriction limited 105 fathoms of the 210 fathoms of gear for dual permit operators to nets no deeper than 29 meshes. In 2014, in an effort to share the burden of conservation of Kenai River late-run king salmon, the board modified the KRLKSMP to include the step-down restrictions in sport, commercial, and personal use fisheries during periods of low Kenai River king salmon abundance. The paired restrictions included an option for the department to restrict

the number of nets in the ESSN fishery or the depth of the nets to no more than 29-meshes deep. The option to reduce gear in the ESSN fishery when the sport fishery is restricted to no bait was first provided to the department in 2014. The gear restriction is an option for the permit holder to choose from, either less gear per permit (35 fathoms or 70 fathoms) at standard depth (up to 45 meshes deep) or more gear (either up to 70 fathoms or 105 fathoms in length per permit) that may be no deeper than 29 meshes. In 2020, the board made it mandatory that if the paired restrictions are in effect, then the department will use one the two net restrictions. The department does not track net configuration in ESSN.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:. The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were allow such opportunity it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 95 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Modify the amount of set gillnet gear that can be used in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery when restricted to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the length and depth of set gillnets that may be used in the ESSN commercial salmon fishery under mandatory gear restrictions, if the Kenai River sport fishery is restricted. It would allow for optional use of longer (50 fathoms) shallower nets (22 meshes) and increase the aggregate length (200 fathoms) of net that may be used.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See current regulations for Proposal 94.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom. Increasing the aggregate length to 200 fathoms would be approximately 50% longer than the 105 fathoms of aggregate set gillnet currently allowed and increasing the length per set gillnet from 35 fathoms to 50 fathoms may result in an increase in harvest of salmon in the ESSN fishery under the KRLKSMP.

BACKGROUND: At the 2014 UCI board meeting, a regulation was adopted that restricted set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict for individuals who own and operate two Cook Inlet CFEC permits; the restriction limited 105 fathoms of the 210 fathoms of gear for dual permit operators to nets no deeper than 29 meshes. In 2014, in an effort to share the burden of conservation of Kenai River late-run king salmon, the board modified the KRLKSMP to include the step-down restrictions in sport, commercial, and personal use fisheries during periods of low Kenai River king salmon abundance. The paired restrictions included an option for the department to restrict the number of nets in the ESSN fishery or the depth of the nets to no more than 29-meshes deep. The option to reduce gear in the ESSN fishery when the sport fishery is restricted to no bait was first provided to the department in 2014. The gear restriction is an option the fishermen choose from, either less gear per permit (35 fathoms or 70 fathoms) at standard depth (up to 45 meshes deep) or more gear (either up to 70 fathoms or 105 fathoms in length per permit) that may be no deeper than 29 meshes. In 2020, the board made it mandatory that if the paired restrictions are in effect then the department will use one of the two net restrictions. The department does not track net configuration in ESSN.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The proposer references the 600 ft fishery in their comments but it is unclear how modifying allowable amounts of gear would lead to additional use of the 600 ft fishery. If adopted the proposal would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were allow such opportunity it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 96 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify operation of set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict.

PROPOSED BY: Lance Alldrin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to allow the use of set gillnets in a "flagged" orientation, in the Upper Subdistrict, when Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement is projected to be less than 15,000 large fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is managed primarily under provisions found in 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRSMP), and 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* (KRSMP). However, if Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement is projected to be below the optimal escapement goal (OEG), the Upper Subdistrict fishery is restricted per paired restrictions provisions found in 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKMP).

From June 20 to August 15, if the projected escapement of large Kenai River late-run king salmon is less than 15,000 large fish, the department shall close the king salmon sport fisheries in the Kenai River and salt waters of Cook Inlet north of Bluff Point; the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles south of the Kenai River; and the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict. In addition, the retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use fishery is prohibited.

The current regulatory definition of a set gillnet is a gillnet that has been intentionally set, staked, anchored, or otherwise fixed (5AAC 39.105 (d) (2)). No definition for a "flagged gillnet" exists in regulation.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase harvest of salmon in the ESSN fishery by an unknown amount when provisions of the KRLRKSMP would have closed the ESSN fishery under the current regulation. Additionally, a "flagged gillnet" would need to be defined by the board. The efficacy of "flagged" nets is unknown in relation to harvest rates of king and sockeye salmon.

BACKGROUND: In February 2020 the board made changes to several management plans that regulate sockeye salmon commercial harvest in the ESSN during times of low king salmon abundance. Additionally, in October 2020, four ACRs were submitted to the board to change ESSN fishery regulations and allow some increased harvest opportunity of sockeye salmon in that fishery during low abundance of king salmon.

The ESSN commercial salmon fishery occurs along approximately 60 miles of beach from Ninilchik to Boulder Point. The fishery harvests sockeye, coho and king salmon that primarily return to both the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. The ESSN regulatory fishing area is within 1.5 miles

of shore ("shore" is defined in regulation as the mean highwater mark for this fishery). For salmon conservation, the management plans have restrictive management options to focus harvest on Kenai and/or Kasilof sockeye salmon through limitations to fishing area down to within one-half mile of shore (for Kasilof section only) or down to within 600 feet of shore (for all Upper subdistrict areas). However, when fishing in the Kasilof Section within one-half mile of shore, the hours used count toward the maximum number of hours that the entire ESSN fishery may be open. Fishing hours used within 600 feet of shore are exempt from weekly hour limitations in the ESSN fishery found in the management plans.

Although all Kasilof section set gillnets can fish when restricted to .5 miles from shore, not all ESSN fishery sites are able to fish extensively during openings limited to within 600 feet of shore. The topography of some sites leaves much of the area within 600 feet of shore with no water at most tide levels. As such these sites are exposed mudflats out to 600 feet for most of the open fishing time, and the water may never be deep enough for very effective set gillnetting during an opening limited to 600 feet from shore in some sites. Additionally, some ESSN set gillnetters do not have shore-based sites and they fish only in offshore areas beyond 600 feet. As such these offshore set gillnetters cannot fish at all when openings are limited to within 600 feet of shore.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 97 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the *Kenai Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* to provide additional fishing opportunity in the sport and set gillnet commercial fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Hollier.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLKSMP) and allow commercial set gillnet fishing for 24 hours per a week, with one net no more than 29 meshes in depth per permit, in the Upper Subdistrict (ESSN) of Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) and prohibit the use of bait, multiple hooks, and retention of king salmon in the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery when escapement of late-run Kenai River king salmon projects to achieve the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) and is less than the optimal escapement goal (OEG) through July 20. After July 20, if the OEG is not projected to be met then the ESSN and king salmon sport fishery would close until the OEG is projected to be met.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase harvest of salmon in the ESSN fishery and would provide additional sport fishing opportunity in the Kenai River for late-run king salmon. There would be some level of mortality in the sport fishery related to hooking mortality.

Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

BACKGROUND: See background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 98 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict when restricted to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?: This allows restricted set gillnet fishing opportunity in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery, when Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement is projected to be less than 15,000 large fish. This proposal would replace closure of the ESSN with provisions to prosecute set gillnet fishing with 29 mesh depth set gillnets and within 1,200 ft of shore in the Kasilof Section and within 600 ft of shore in the Kenai Section on Mondays and Thursdays. The proposal would impact the current paired restriction framework in that the inriver sport fishery would remain closed while allowing the harvest of king salmon in the eastside side setnet fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase harvest of salmon in the ESSN fishery by an unknown amount when provisions of the KRLRKSMP would have closed the ESSN fishery under the current regulation. Additionally, this allows harvest of Kenai River king salmon when the OEG is not projected to be met.

Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 99 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Make numerous changes to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Paul A. Shadura II.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?: This would revise aspects of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP) including:

- Establish a Kenai River late-run king salmon all sized fish optimal escapement goal of 15,000–30,000 fish with an inseason management target if 22,500 fish.
- Remove preamble language clarifying effective dates of the KRLRKSMP.
- Remove paired restriction prior to July 1 in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery (ESSN).
- Remove the department's ability to close the commercial and sport fisheries until July 17–July 27.
- Modify criteria delineating ESSN fishery restrictions in August based on projections of all sized king salmon escapement between 16,500–22,500 fish
- Exclude the Kasilof Special Harvest Area (KSHA) from paired restrictions.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See current regulations for Proposal 81

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require the department to change inseason abundance estimation methods for Kenai River late-run king salmon and establish an all-size king salmon optimal escapement goal. The department transitioned to a new SEG based on escapement of king salmon 75 cm (mid-eye to fork) and greater in length at the 2017 UCI board meeting.

BACKGROUND: The department manages Kenai River early- and late- run king salmon utilizing the large fish metric developed over the last decade to provide a more timely and accurate measure of king salmon abundance in the Kenai River. The department does not intend to change this metric in the near future as former methodologies that estimated all size fish abundance contain known biases around apportionment that a method to correct has not been identified.

See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This proposal would require changing the current king salmon assessment methodology and inhibit the department's ability to adaptively manage inseason for king and sockeye salmon. The *Policy for statewide salmon escapement goals* (policy) specifies that establishment of SEGs and BEGs is a responsibility of the department, not the board. This proposal requests a change to the Kenai River late-run king salmon SEG and under the policy the board could make this change by adopting an Optimal Escapement Goal. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late run Kenai River king salmon.

If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal **would** result in direct costs to the department to modify assessment methodology.

PROPOSAL 100 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Allow a 600-foot set gillnet commercial fishery when Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapements exceed 13,500 fish.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Hollier.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLKSMP) and allow commercial set gillnet periods within 600 feet of mean high tide for 24 hours per week in the Upper Subdistrict (ESSN) of Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) when escapement of late- run Kenai River large king salmon is below the lower bound of optimal escapement goal (OEG,15,000 large fish) and is above the lower bound Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG, 13,500 large fish) and Kenai and Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement objectives are being met. This proposal restricts gear during the proposed periods to one set gillnet, per permit, that is not more than 35 fathoms in length, and 29 meshes in depth.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the commercial harvest of all salmon by an unknown amount when king salmon conservation closures are in effect and create disparity between which king salmon escapement goals user groups are being managed under. When the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery would be closed due to the department projecting the late-run king salmon OEG of 15,000–30,000 large fish will not be met, the ESSN would have restricted openings when the Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapement exceeds 13,500 fish and Kenai and Kasilof sockeye salmon objectives are being met. . Harvesting sockeye salmon in the set gillnet fishery would increase the departments' ability to maintain sockeye salmon abundances within escapement and inriver goals for the Kenai and Kasilof rivers.

Available data are not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 101 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Remove paired restrictive time and gear exemption from the 600-foot commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Professional Guide Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would count hours fished in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) 600 ft fishery towards weekly hour limits outlined in the paired restrictions of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan (KRLRKSMP)*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could reduce the harvest of salmon in the ESSN fishery by an unknown amount and subsequently increase the number of salmon inriver and available to sport and personal use fisheries by reducing the amount of time that 600 ft commercial periods could be opened. This could decrease the department's ability to meet inriver and escapement goals for sockeye salmon in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers depending on abundance. This could increase the probability that Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapement goal will be achieved in years of low abundance.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposal 81 for additional details regarding history of the KRLRKSMP, ESSN harvest, and utilizations of the 600 ft commercial fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSALS 81 and 102 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Provide additional commercial salmon fishing opportunity with set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict.

PROPOSED BY: Travis Every.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP) and allow commercial set gillnet fishing periods, in the Upper Subdistrict of Upper Cook Inlet (UCI; ESSN) within 600 feet of mean high tide for 24 hours per week when escapement of Kenai River late-run large king salmon is below the lower bound of optimal escapement goal (OEG,15,000-30,000 large fish) and is above the lower bound sustainable escapement goal (SEG, 13,500-27,000 large fish) and Kenai and Kasilof Rivers sockeye salmon escapement objectives are being met.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The ESSN fishery is managed primarily under provisions found in 5AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (*KRLRSSMP) and 5AAC 21.365 *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (KRSMP).* However, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted in order to achieve the established management objective (currently the OEG), the ESSN fishery is then managed per provisions found in the *KRLRKSMP*.

The *KRLRKSMP* outlines paired restrictive actions for the department to implement in the Kenai River sport fishery and ESSN fishery during times of low king salmon abundance, as follows from June 20 through August 15:

5 AAC 21.359
(d) If the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer, the department shall

(1) close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon;
(2) close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and
(3) close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

(e) In order to achieve the optimal escapement goal and provide reasonable harvest opportunity, the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish fishing seasons as follows:

(1) in the Kenai River sport fishery,
(A) the use of bait is prohibited;
(B) the use of bait is prohibited and retention of king salmon 34 inches or greater in length as defined in 5 AAC 75.995(a) is prohibited; or
(C) the use of bait and retention of king salmon are prohibited;

(2) in the Kenai River personal use fishery, if the use of bait is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1) of this subsection, the retention of king salmon is prohibited in the personal use fishery;

(3) in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery, notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360(c)(1)(B), (2)(B), and (3)(B), based on the abundance of sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers,

(A) if the use of bait is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1)(A) of this subsection, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 48 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(B) if the use of bait and the retention of king salmon greater than 34 inches in length as defined in 5 AAC 75.995(a) are prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1)(B) of this subsection, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(C) if the use of bait and the retention of king salmon are prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1)(C) of this subsection, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 24 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(D) if preseason restrictions are issued for the late-run Kenai River king salmon sport fishery, then all Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fisheries are restricted;

(E) if restrictions for the late-run Kenai River king salmon sport fishery are in effect on July 31, then, beginning August 1, Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week; if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is not restricted under the provisions of this section, or, after August 1, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is achieved, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will be managed under the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360, Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan;

(F) Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishing periods that are limited under this section may be limited to fishing within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark and are exempt from hour and gear limitations identified under (e)(3)(A)-(E) of this section;

(G) if commercial fishing is limited under (e)(3) of this section, the operation of setnets operated by a CFEC permit holder shall be restricted to:

(i) up to four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length, 105 fathoms in aggregate length, and 29 meshes in depth, or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter; or

(ii) up to two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth or one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and

45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter.

The provisions of this section do not apply to provisions of the KRSMP that pertain to the Kasilof Special Harvest Area. Area reduction options for the ESSN fishery are also established in the KRSMP. The KRSMP stipulates that the Kasilof Section may be opened and restricted to half mile of shore after July 15, or to within 600 feet of shore if the Kenai and East Foreland sections are closed. Additionally, any ESSN open periods may be restricted to the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) on or after July 8, or if of the Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement projection exceeds 365,000 fish. Finally, by regulation, the KRSHA is a part of the ESSN fishery, and subject to paired restrictions under the KRLKSMP, including closure if the Kenai River Late Run King Salmon OEG is not projected to be met.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the commercial harvest of salmon by an unknown amount when king salmon conservation measures are in effect and potentially create disparity between which king salmon escapement goals user groups are being managed under. Harvesting sockeye salmon in the set gillnet fishery would increase the department's ability to maintain sockeye salmon abundances within escapement and inriver goals for the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers but would come at a cost of harvesting some late-run Kenai River king salmon compromising attainment of the OEG.

BACKGROUND: The current regulatory framework used to manage fisheries throughout Cook Inlet is the result of years of work by various boards, the public, and the department. This includes the paired restrictions regulatory framework described above. The management of these fisheries is complex with subsistence, sport, personal use, and commercial stakeholders competing for an allocation of multiple different stocks. Many fisheries harvest mixed stocks that may include strong stocks but also some listed as stocks of concern.

As stated, salmon management plans that govern the fisheries that take Kenai and Kasilof River salmon in UCI are interconnected, and most fisheries are to some degree mixed stock in nature. Both the KRLSMP and the KRSMP, contain provisions to manage sockeye salmon based on sockeye salmon abundance that are specifically preempted by the KRLKSMP when preseason or inseason Kenai River king salmon abundance is projected to not be sufficient to meet established king salmon escapement goals.

The KRLKSMP has contained regulations to restrict and close sport king salmon fisheries and ESSN commercial fisheries for all species since its inception in 1988. Prior to 2014, the only paired restriction was to close the king salmon sport fisheries in the Kenai River and salt waters of Cook Inlet north of Bluff Point; the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one-half miles south of the Kenai River; and the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict. In 2014, in an effort to share the burden of conservation of Kenai River late-run king salmon, the board modified the KRLKSMP to include the step-down restrictions in sport, commercial, and personal use fisheries during periods of low Kenai River king salmon abundance (Table 81-1). The current OEG (15,000-30,000) for Kenai River late-run king salmon was established by the board in 2020. The

current SEG (13,500-27,000) was established by the department in 2017. The SEG was reviewed by the department in preparation for the 2024 meeting and no change was made.

The ESSN fishery occurs along approximately 60 miles of beach (Figure 81-1). The fishery primarily harvests sockeye, coho, pink, and king salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. Area and/or gear restriction options were first enacted in the ESSN fishery in 2011. Changes to gear, time, and the area open to fishing have occurred in area regulation (5 AAC 21.310 and 21.320) and in management plans. The board modified the *KRSMP* in 2011 to include potential area restrictions of the Kasilof section commercial fishery to prescribe restricted fishing options within half mile from shore, within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline, and/or to within the Kasilof River Special Harvest area (*KRSHA)*(Figure 81-2). In 2017, the ability to restrict the North Kalifornsky Beach (NKB) statistical area stat area to within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline was also added to regulation. In 2020, restrictions for potential 600-foot openings were added for the Kenai and East Foreland sections into the KRLKSMP. This was added under the assumption that most Kenai River king salmon migrate offshore and nets fishing within 600 feet of shore would have reduced harvest of king salmon.

Currently, any potential ESSN 600-foot opening is also gear restricted with one of two available options discretionarily available to the Commissioner. The hours used while restricted to 600 feet of the mean high tide mark on the Kenai Peninsula shoreline are not included towards the weekly hour restrictions of the KRLKSMP. The available gear restrictions limit gillnet gear in the ESSN fishery by approximately 1/3 or 2/3 depending on which is option is implemented. Also, failing to project achieving the OEG closes the ESSN fishery in its entirely, including the Kasilof Section. Finally, in 2020, the paired restrictions of the KRLKSMP were extended to affect the Kasilof Section as early as June 20 and continue as late as August 15.

Not all ESSN fishery sites are able to fish during openings limited to within 600 feet of shore. The topography of some sites leaves much of the area within 600 feet of shore with no water at most tide levels. As such these sites are exposed mudflats out to 600 feet for most of the open fishing time, and the water may never be deep enough for effective set gillnetting during an opening limited to 600 feet from shore in some sites. Additionally, some ESSN set gillnetters do not have shore-based sites and they fish in offshore areas beyond 600 feet. As such these offshore set gillnetters cannot fish at all when openings are limited to within 600 feet of shore.

Inseason escapement projections of king salmon and management actions are based upon sonar passage estimates and inriver mortality estimates obtained from creel surveys. Between June 20 and August 15, once restrictions to the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery are announced, a restriction to the ESSN fishery is required under the paired restriction regulatory framework. Inseason management decisions are based on current run entry that is used to project if the OEG will be met and management actions are implemented if harvest reductions are needed to ensure the OEG is met. From 2017 to 2023, the late-run king salmon SEG was met in 4 of 7 years whereas the OEG has not been met since its establishment in 2020 (Table 81-2, Figure 81-3).

Since this stock was designated primarily for commercial uses (1999–2023), the ESSN and drift gillnet combined average annual sockeye salmon harvest has decreased by 28% from 78% to 50%.

The sport and personal use fisheries proportions have increased respectively from 13% and 9% to 30% and 20% for a combined 50% of total harvest (Figure 81-4 and Table 112-4). This shift in harvest patterns is attributed to incremental regulatory restrictions to commercial fisheries associated with weak stock management and board allocation actions. At the same time personal use and sport fisheries under current management structure do not appear to be capable of harvesting the surplus number of fish beyond inriver goals that would be needed to achieve the SEG. Combined Kenai River personal use and sport inriver harvest has declined from a high 5-year average (2008-2013) of 757,346 to a low 5-year average (2018-2022) of 678,459 as inriver abundance increased during those same time periods (Table 81-3, Figure 81-5). The decreased commercial harvest and saturation of inriver fisheries contributes to the Kenai River exceeding escapement goals 30% of years since 1999, with 4 of the last 5 years exceeding the SEG. The Kasilof River has been exceeding escapement goals 80% of years since 1999 and has exceeded the SEG/BEG each year since 2018 (Table 81-4). This is occurring even as the average Kenai River sockeye salmon total run decreased by 15% from an average of 3.9 million fish (2003–2012) to 3.3 million (2013–2022) (Table 81-3). In recent years, low abundance of Kenai River king salmon resulted in less commercial fishing time for the ESSN fishery, which reduces sockeye salmon harvest. In 2023, the ESSN fishery did not open due to paired restrictions linked to low Kenai River late-run king salmon abundance. The potential impacts of consistently exceeding sockeye salmon escapement goals since 2019 will be seen when fish spawned from these years return over the next 2-6 years.

The department's ability to estimate king salmon stock composition of ESSN harvest in 600-foot fisheries is limited due to many inconsistent annual variables that affect stock specific resolution and accuracy. Due to small sample sizes, the calculation of the stock composition of large king salmon harvested during individual ESSN openings, or during ESSN openings that are restricted to 600 feet of shore is unknown. The numbers of king salmon harvested in the ESSN fishery is estimated from fish tickets. This likely underestimates the total mortality of king salmon in that drop-outs and delayed mortality of released fish is not accounted for. Post season estimation of the stock composition of large king salmon harvest in the ESSN fishery has been available when calculated for timeframes and areas that allow for appropriate sample sizes. There are 12 years of annual stock composition and stock-specific harvest estimates for large king salmon relative to all-fish harvest in the ESSN fishery dating back to 2010 (Table 81-5). Overall, Kenai River mainstem fish have comprised the greatest proportion of the large fish harvest every year, averaging 30% of the annual harvest of all fish sizes, ranging from 12% (2022) to 63% (2017). The average harvest of large Kenai River mainstem was 1,381 fish (range: 41–2,998 fish) with the lowest harvests occurring in 2018–2022, when management of the ESSN fishery was restricted by low king salmon abundance. ESSN harvest of all salmon species has declined since 2011 (Table 81-6). Harvest of king salmon during openings of the ESSN fishery is variable but tends to decrease as the area open to fishing decreases. (Table 81-7). Harvest of all species of salmon is variable in 600 ft fisheries as success is dependent on several factors including abundance, areas utilized, run timing, and early vs. late season use (Table 81-8).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. If the board were allow such opportunity it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

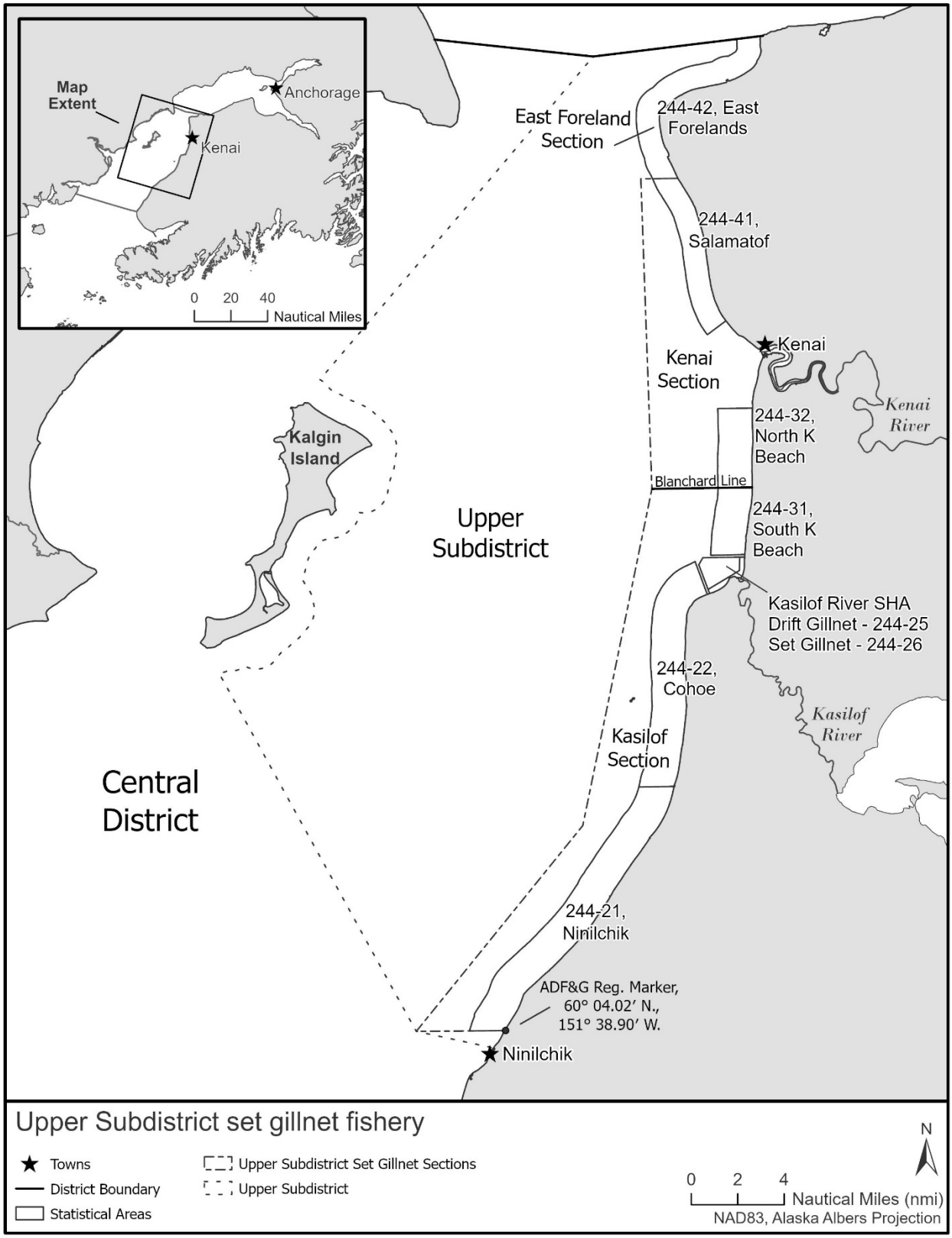

Figure 81-1.–Map of the Kasilof, Kenai, and East Foreland sections, with statistical areas.

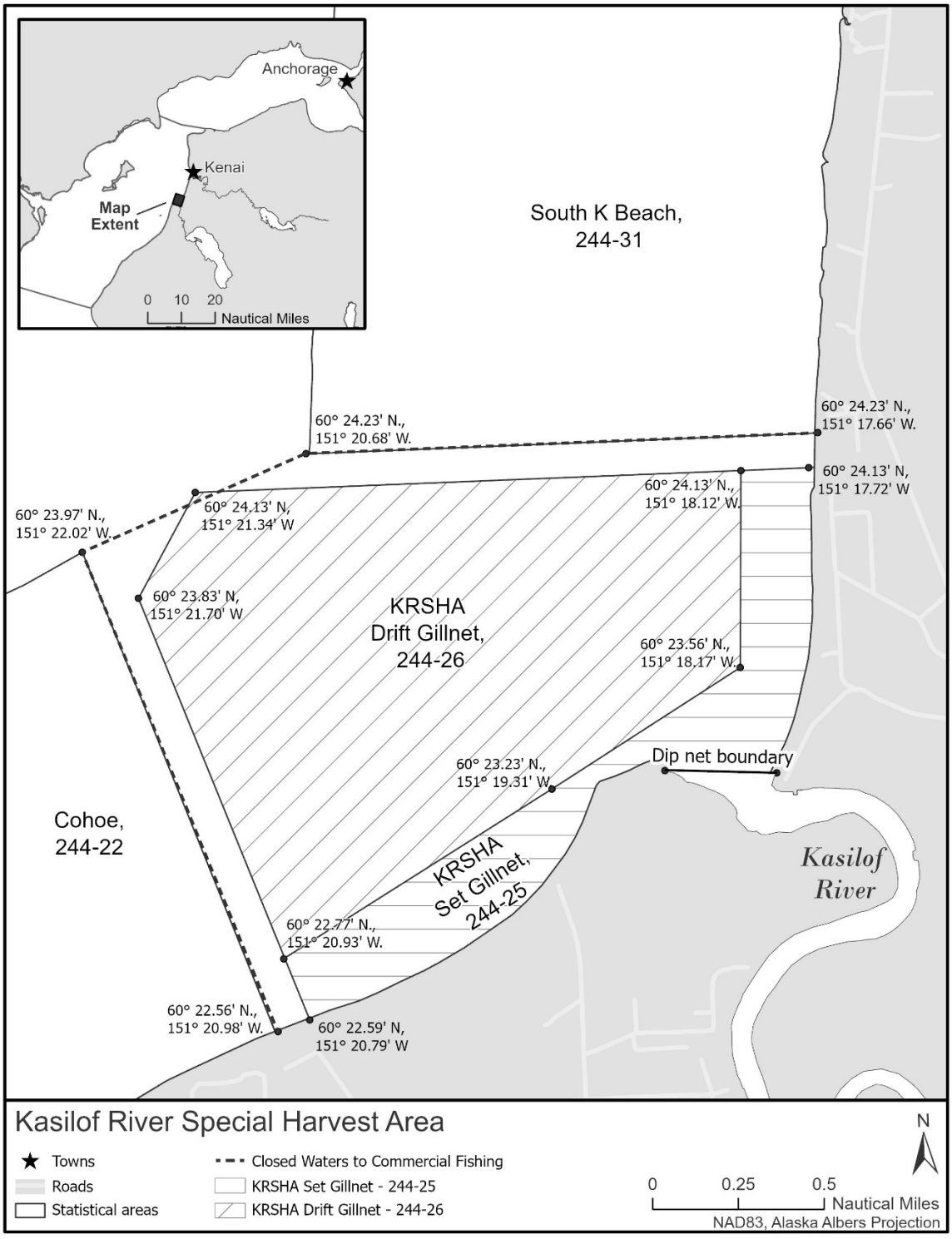

Figure 81-2.–Map of the Kasilof Special Harvest Area.

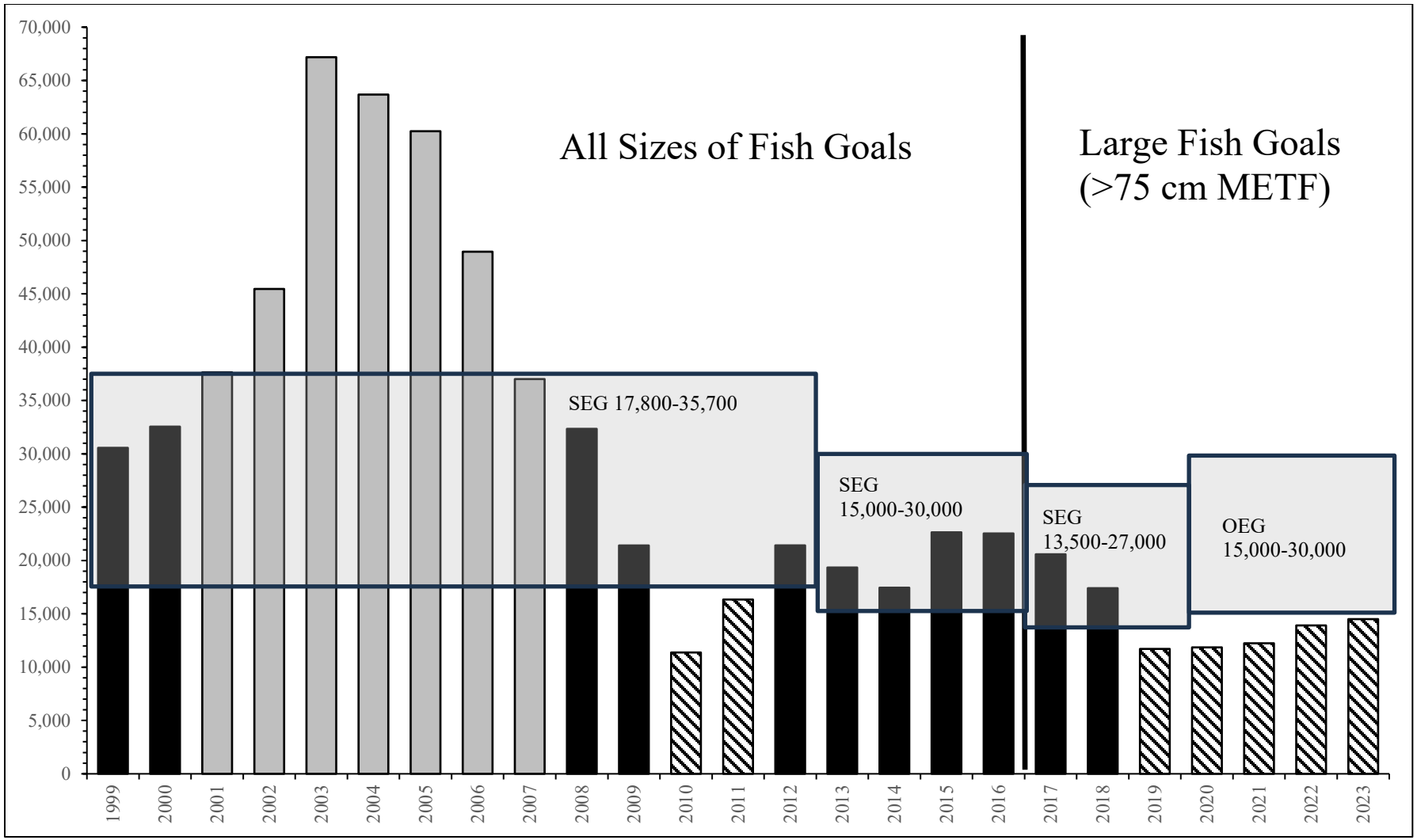

Figure 81-3.–Escapement of Kenai River late-run king salmon, 1999–2023.

Note: METF = mid eye to tail fork length

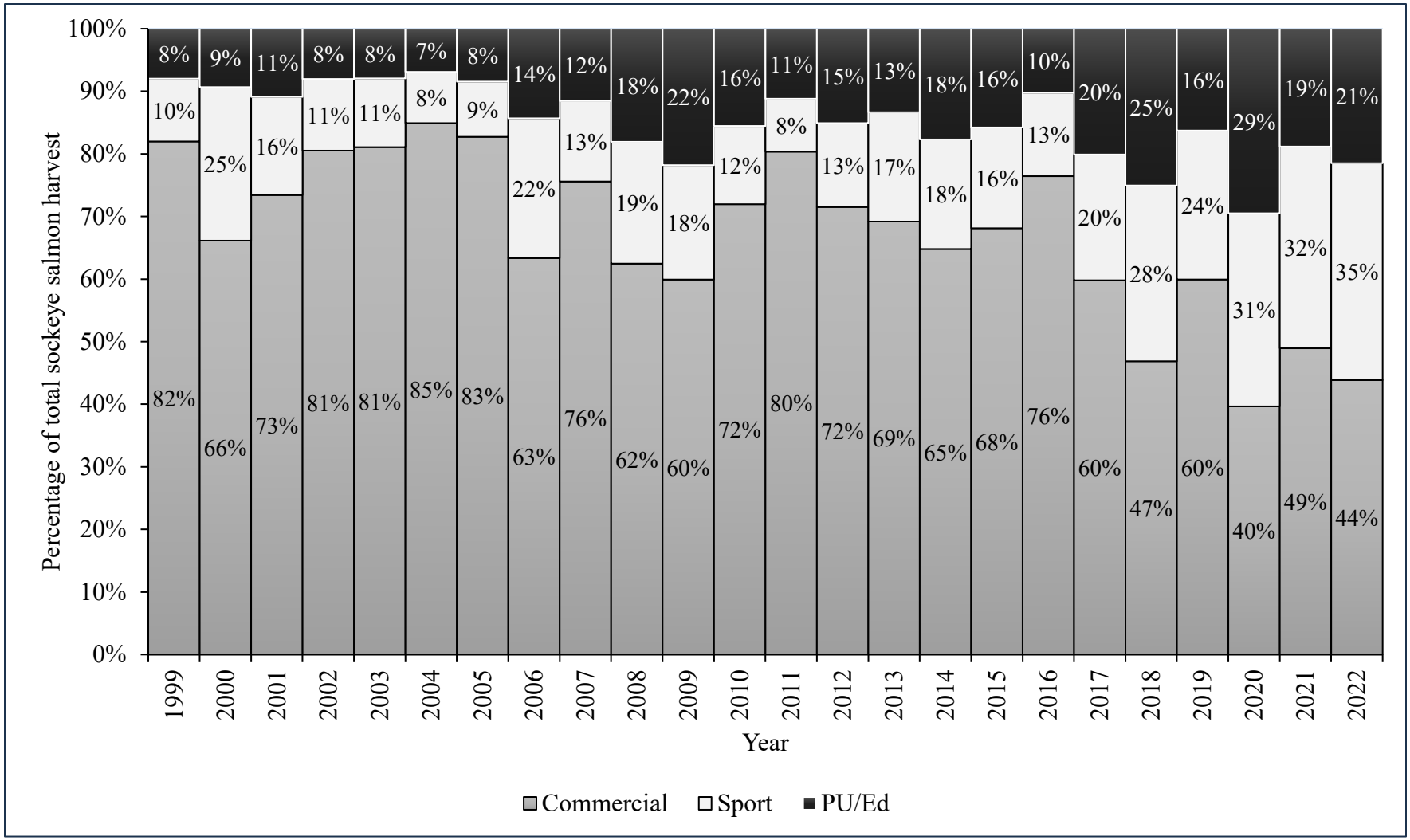

Figure 81-4.–Percentage of total Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon harvest in commercial, sport, personal use fisheries, 1999–2022.

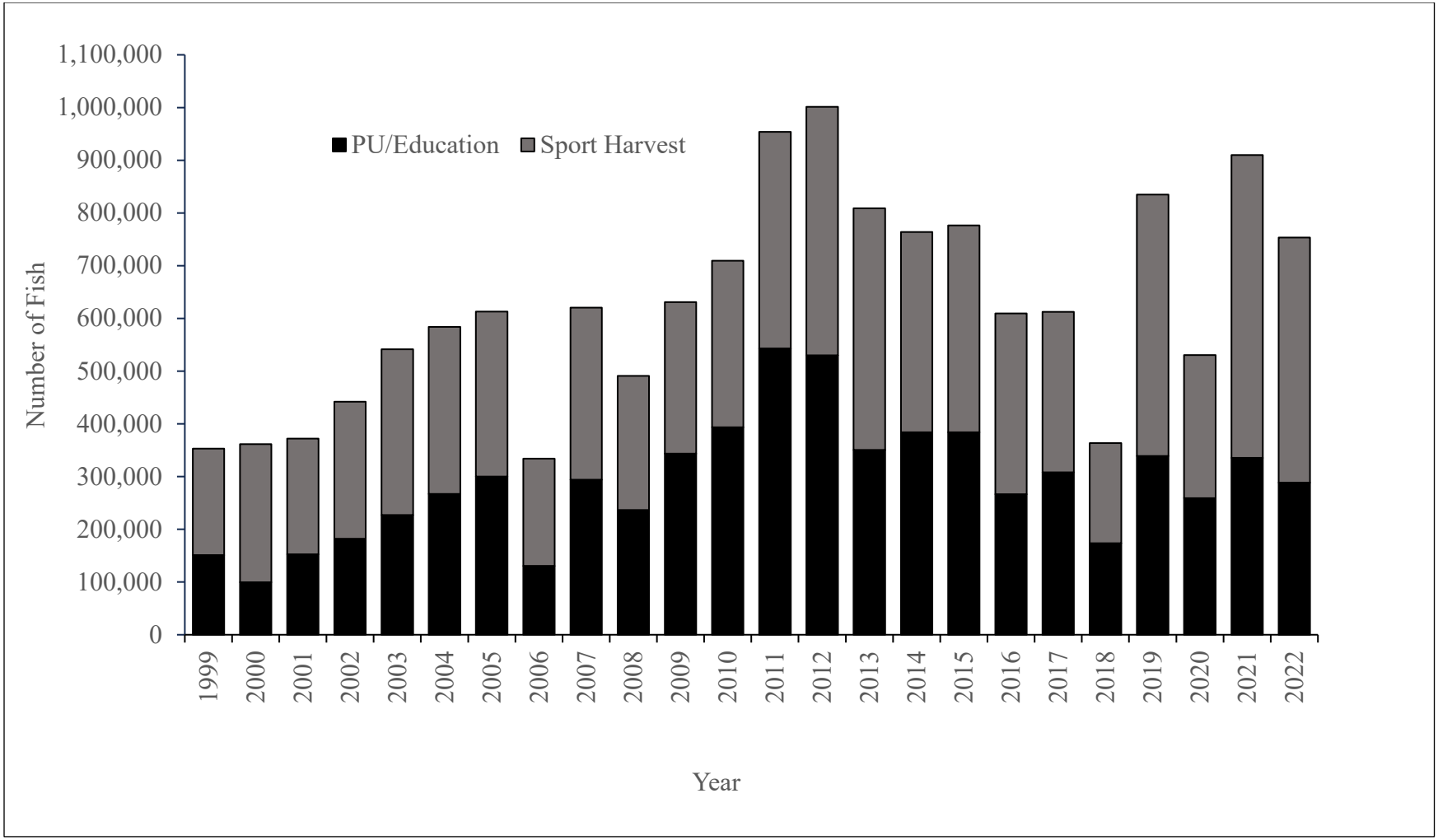

Figure 81-5.–Personal Use (PU)/Education, sport and total inriver harvest of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon.

Table 81-1.–Paired restrictive actions implemented in the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery and the ESSN commercial fishery from 2014–2023.

Year	Restriction to sport fishery	Restriction to commercial fishery
2014	No Bait and No Retention	Limited hours to 36 per week; Gear reduction for one fishing period
2015	No Bait	Limited hours to 36 per week
2016	No Bait	Limited hours to 36 per week
2017	No restrictions	No restrictions
2018	No Bait and No Retention	Limited hours to 48 per week and then 24 hours per week
2019	No Bait	Limited to 48 hours per week; Gear reduction for numerous fishing periods
2020	No Bait and No Retention of fish 34" or greater in length then Closed, No bait for coho salmon continued to 8/15	Limited to 36 hours then 24 hours and Gear Reduced then Closed
2021	No Bait and No Retention then Closed, No bait for coho salmon continued to 8/15	Limited to 48 hours then 24 hours and Gear Reduced then Closed
2022	No Bait and No Retention then Closed, No bait for coho salmon continued to 8/15	Limited to 24 hours and Gear Reduced then Closed
2023	Closed, No bait for coho salmon continued to 8/31	Closed

Table 81-2.–Kenai River Late-run king salmon escapement goal history, 1998–2023.

Year		Escapement	SEG/BEG	OEG
1998		39,000	**15,500–22,300**	
1999		30,563	**17,800–35,700**	
2000		32,550	**17,800–35,700**	
2001		37,641	**17,800–35,700**	
2002		45,457	**17,800–35,700**	
2003		67,187	**17,800–35,700**	
2004		63,683	**17,800–35,700**	
2005	**All Sizes of Fish**	60,246	**17,800–35,700**	
2006		48,950	**17,800–35,700**	
2007		37,010	**17,800–35,700**	
2008		32,342	**17,800–35,700**	
2009		21,410	**17,800–35,700**	
2010		11,375	**17,800–35,700**	
2011		16,340	**17,800–35,700**	
2012		21,417	**17,800–35,700**	
2013		19,342	**15,000–30,000**	
2014		17,451	**15,000–30,000**	
2015		22,642	**15,000–30,000**	
2016		18,790	**15,000–30,000**	
2017		20,583	**13,500–27,000**	
2018		17,405	**13,500–27,000**	
2019		11,709	**13,500–27,000**	
2020	**Large Fish**	11,854	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
2021		12,238	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
2022		13,911	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
2023[a]		14,502	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
Average				
2010–2016		33,863		
2017–2023		15,701		

Note: Large fish are king salmon that are 75 cm from mideye to tail fork in length or longer. Shaded areas indicate that the goal was achieved for that year. **Bold font** indicates the management objective goal.

[a] These estimates are preliminary until biometrically reviewed and published. 2023 sonar was extended seven days.

Table 81-3.–Kenai River sockeye salmon personal use/subsistence, educational, and sport harvest and escapement goals, 1999-2023.

Year	Personal use and educational harvest [a]	Sport harvest below sonar [b]	Kenai River sonar count [c]	Sport harvest above sonar	Total Sport Harvest	Inriver Harvest	Spawning escapement	Actual run size (millions)	Inriver goal (thousands)	BEG/SEG (thousands)	OEG (thousands)
1999	150,993	46,043	803,379	155,905	201,948	352,941	647,474	2.5	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2000	99,571	57,978	624,578	203,801	261,779	361,350	420,777	1.4	600-850	500-800	**500-1,000**
2001	152,580	51,374	650,036	168,104	219,478	372,058	481,932	1.8	600-850	500-800	**500-1,000**
2002	182,229	46,693	957,924	213,066	259,759	441,988	744,858	3	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2003	227,207	60,722	1,181,309	253,734	314,456	541,663	927,575	3.8	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2004	266,937	62,397	1,385,981	254,836	317,233	584,170	1,131,145	5	850-1,100	500-800	**500-1,000**
2005	300,105	58,017	1,376,452	254,818	312,835	612,940	1,121,634	5.6	850-1,100	500-800	**500-1,000**
2006	130,486	30,964	1,499,692	172,638	203,602	334,088	1,327,054	2.5	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2007	293,941	60,623	867,572	265,718	326,341	620,282	601,854	3.4	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2008	236,355	46,053	614,946	208,526	254,579	490,934	406,420	2.3	650-850	500-800	**500-1,000**
2009	343,302	45,868	745,170	241,999	287,867	631,169	503,171	2.4	650-850	500-800	**500-1,000**
2010	393,317	59,651	970,662	256,624	316,275	709,592	714,038	3.3	750-950	500-800	**500-1,000**
2011	543,043	92,225	1,599,217	318,542	410,767	953,810	1,280,675	6.2	1,100-1,350	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2012	530,128	102,376	1,581,555	368,720	471,096	1,001,224	1,212,835	4.7	1,100-1,350	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2013	350,302	78,837	1,359,893	379,685	458,522	808,824	980,208	3.5	1,000-1,200	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2014	384,018	78,057	1,520,340	301,998	380,055	764,073	1,218,342	3.3	1,000-1,200	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2015	384,095	83,112	1,709,051	309,004	392,116	776,211	1,400,047	3.9	1,000-1,200	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2016	266,506	79,465	1,383,692	263,704	343,169	609,675	1,119,988	3.5	1,000-1,350	700-1,200	**700-1,400**
2017	308,017	67,233	1,308,498	237,434	304,667	612,684	1,071,064	4.6	1,000-1,300	**700-1,200**	Repealed
2018	173,609	41,122	1,035,761	149,000	190,122	363,731	886,761	1.6	900-1,100	**700-1,200**	
2019	338,952	103,700	1,849,054	392,023	495,723	834,675	1,457,031	3.9	1,000-1,300	**700-1,200**	
2020	259,282	62,665	1,814,252	208,625	271,290	530,572	1,605,627	2.5	1,000-1,200	**750-1,300**	
2021	335,396	138,740	2,441,825	435,535	574,275	909,671	2,006,290	3.8	1,000-1,200	**750-1,300**	
2022	288,453	100,802	1,570,395	364,392	465,194	753,647	1,206,003	2.5	1,000-1,400	**750-1,300**	
2023	ND	ND	*2,343,976*	ND			ND	3.8	1,000-1,400	**750-1,300**	
5yr avg											
2008-2012	409,229	69,235	1,102,310	278,882	348,117	757,346		3.8			
2013-2017	338,588	77,341	1,456,295	298,365	375,706	714,293	1,157,930	3.8			
2018-2022	279,138	89,406	1,742,257	309,915	399,321	678,459	1,432,342	2.9			

Note: ND = no data available. Bold font indicates the escapement goal for management, and shading indicates that the goal was achieved.

[a] From 1999 to present, Personal use harvest is from Kenai River dipnet fishery and the educational harvest is from the Kenaitze Educational fishery after July 1.

[b] In 1994 and 1995 a creel survey was conducted to estimate harvest below the sonar. In 1994, 49.7% of the below Soldotna Bridge harvest was taken below the sonar. In 1995, 68.6 % was taken below the sonar. The average of these two percentages is applied to all other year's below-bridge harvest to estimate the harvest below the sonar.

[c] Bendix sonar counts for 1999-2010; DIDSON counts beginning in 2011.

Table 81-4.–Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement data, 2003–2023.

Year	Escapement	BEG or OEG	Goal range	% Above	Result
2003	359,633	BEG	150,000–250,000	44%	Above
2004	577,581	BEG	150,000–250,000	131%	Above
2005	348,012	BEG	150,000–250,000	39%	Above
2006	368,092	OEG	150,000–300,000	23%	Above
2007	336,866	BEG	150,000–250,000	12%	Above
2008	301,469	OEG	150,000–300,000	0%	Above
2009	297,125	OEG	150,000–300,000	NA	Within
2010	267,013	BEG	150,000–250,000	7%	Above
2011[a]	245,721	BEG	160,000–340,000	NA	Within
2012	374,523	BEG	160,000–340,000	10%	Above
2013	489,654	BEG	160,000–340,000	44%	Above
2014	439,997	BEG	160,000–340,000	29%	Above
2015	470,677	BEG	160,000–340,000	38%	Above
2016	239,981	BEG	160,000–340,000	NA	Within
2017	358,724	OEG	160,000–390,000	NA	Within
2018	394,309	OEG	160,000–390,000	1%	Above
2019	378,416	BEG	160,000–340,000	11%	Above
2020	545,654	BEG	140,000–320,000	71%	Above
2021	521,859	BEG	140,000–320,000	63%	Above
2022	968,148	BEG	140,000–320,000	203%	Above
2023	932,896	BEG	140,000–320,000	192%	Above
Average					
2003–2010	356,974				
2011–2023	489,274				

Comparison of escapement-to-escapement goals

	Years	%
Below goal	0	0%
Within goal	4	19%
Above goal	17	81%
Totals	21	

Note: NA means not applicable.

[a] 2002–2010 are Bendix sonar estimates; 2011–2023 are DIDSON estimates.

Table 81-5.– Large fish (≥75 cm METF) stock compositions relative to all fish harvested and stock-specific large fish harvest estimates by year forking salmon harvested in the Eastside set gillnet fishery, Upper Cook Inlet, Alaska, 2010, 2011, and 2013–2022.

	Reporting group							
	Kenai River tributaries		Kenai River mainstem		Kasilof River mainstem		Cook Inlet other	
Year	Stock comp.[a]	Stock-specific harvest	Stock comp.[a]	Stock-specific harvest	Stock comp.[a]	Stock-specific harvest	Stock comp.[a]	Stock-specific harvest
2010	0.01	44	0.34	2,384	0.21	1,466	0.01	96
2011	0.00	3	0.32	2,499	0.19	1,445	0.00	10
2013	0.00	1	0.23	679	0.09	279	0.00	8
2014	0.00	2	0.31	706	0.19	439	0.00	2
2015	0.00	8	0.36	2,808	0.10	764	0.01	48
2016	0.00	14	0.43	2,906	0.15	1,039	0.01	34
2017	0.01	29	0.63	2,998	0.15	730	0.01	44
2018 [b]	0.01	16	0.24	555	0.06	141	0.00	10
2019	0.01	12	0.27	613	0.18	393	0.00	6
2020	0.01	6	0.19	166	0.06	49	0.03	24
2021	0.00	1	0.17	217	0.06	79	0.02	31
2022	0.00	0	0.12	41	0.05	18	0.01	4
Average	0.00	12	0.30	1,381	0.12	570	0.01	26
Minimum	0.00	0	0.12	41	0.05	18	0.00	2
Maximum	0.01	44	0.63	2,998	0.21	1,466	0.03	96

Note: The 90% credibility intervals of stock compositions and stock specific-harvest estimates for prior years can be found in previous reports (Eskelin et al. 2013; Eskelin and Barclay 2015, 2021, 2022) and Table 3 of this report for 2022.

[a] "Stock comp" means stock composition relative to the total harvest.

[b] Stock composition and stock-specific harvest estimates for 2018 do not include fish harvested from Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA).

Table 81-6.–Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery salmon harvest, 1999–2023.

Year	King	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1999	9,463	1,092,946	11,923	9,357	373
2000	3,684	529,747	11,078	23,746	325
2001	6,009	870,019	4,246	32,998	248
2002	9,478	1,303,158	35,153	214,771	1,790
2003	14,810	1,746,841	10,171	16,474	1,933
2004	21,684	2,235,810	30,154	107,838	2,019
2005	21,597	2,534,345	19,543	13,619	710
2006	9,956	1,301,275	22,167	184,990	347
2007	12,292	1,353,407	23,610	69,918	521
2008	7,573	1,303,236	21,823	59,620	433
2009	5,588	905,853	11,435	55,845	319
2010	7,059	1,085,789	32,683	121,817	3,035
2011	7,697	1,877,939	15,560	15,527	1,612
2012	705	96,675	6,537	159,003	49
2013	2,988	921,533	2,266	14,671	102
2014	2,301	724,398	5,908	213,616	548
2015	7,781	1,481,336	17,948	22,983	2,248
2016	6,759	997,853	11,606	103,503	1,203
2017	4,779	832,220	29,916	59,995	601
2018	2,312	289,841	4,705	21,822	78
2019	2,246	784,543	6,511	32,746	528
2020	852	295,341	372	11,604	31
2021	1,297	407,007	883	5,944	50
2022	341	104,678	28	317	8
2023	Fishery did Not Open				
Averages					
2003-2012	10,896	1,444,117	19,368	80,465	1,098
2013-2022	3,166	683,875	8,014	48,720	540

Table 81-7.–Harvest of king salmon in those periods limited to within 600 feet from shore, those limited to within 1.5 miles of shore, and openings open to 1.5 miles from shore, in the ESSN fishery.

Area open*	Year	# Openings	King salmon harvested	King salmon harvested per opening
Within 600 feet of shore	2015	6	224	37
Within 600 feet of shore	2018	6	115	19
Within 600 feet of shore	2019	3	21	7
Within 600 feet of shore	2020	7	44	6
Within 600 feet of shore	2021	8	139	17
Within 600 feet of shore	2022	1	0	0
Within .5 miles of shore	2000	2	238	119
Within .5 miles of shore	2001	10	1,629	163
Within .5 miles of shore	2002	2	611	306
Within .5 miles of shore	2003	2	456	228
Within .5 miles of shore	2006	6	1,310	218
Within .5 miles of shore	2007	4	830	208
Within .5 miles of shore	2008	7	1,544	221
Within .5 miles of shore	2009	9	1,294	144
Within .5 miles of shore	2010	4	604	151
Within .5 miles of shore	2011	1	312	312
Within .5 miles of shore	2013	1	114	114
Within .5 miles of shore	2014	2	244	122
Within .5 miles of shore	2015	1	146	146
Within .5 miles of shore	2018	3	347	116
Within .5 miles of shore	2019	2	179	90
Within 1.5 miles	2000	13	3,446	265
Within 1.5 miles	2001	13	4,380	337
Within 1.5 miles	2002	24	8,867	369
Within 1.5 miles	2003	35	14,354	410
Within 1.5 miles	2004	36	21,616	600
Within 1.5 miles	2005	41	20,968	511
Within 1.5 miles	2006	24	7381	308
Within 1.5 miles	2007	27	11,298	418
Within 1.5 miles	2008	19	4,865	256
Within 1.5 miles	2009	20	4,294	215
Within 1.5 miles	2010	29	6,455	223
Within 1.5 miles	2011	27	7,385	274
Within 1.5 miles	2012	7	705	101
Within 1.5 miles	2013	11	2,516	229
Within 1.5 miles	2014	13	1,432	110
Within 1.5 miles	2015	30	6,985	233
Within 1.5 miles	2016	27	6,759	250
Within 1.5 miles	2017	23	4,779	208
Within 1.5 miles	2018	9	1,822	202
Within 1.5 miles	2019	16	2,046	128
Within 1.5 miles	2020	16	808	51
Within 1.5 miles	2021	12	1,160	97

Note: * = which stat areas and the number of stat areas open during these openings is not consistent.

Table 81-8.–Commercial harvest of salmon in the ESSN set gillnet fishery from periods limited to within 600 feet of mean high tide, 2018–2023.

Year	Date	King	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Areas open to 600 FT
2018	18-Jul	32	12,428	43	229	0	Kasilof Section
	19-Jul	5	6,885	11	32	0	North K-Beach
	21-Jul	6	2,172	22	31	0	North K-Beach
	22-Jul	27	7,714	160	940	0	Kasilof Section
	26-Jul	20	6,644	364	1,941	0	Kasilof Section
	28-Jul	25	4,614	434	2,308		Kasilof Section
	Average	19	6,743	172	914	0	
2019	13-Jul	4	3,100	13	150	0	North K-Beach
	21-Jul	13	8,076	6	83	5	North K-Beach
	2-Aug	4	3,804	149	19	3	Kasilof Section, North K-Beach
	Average	7	4,993	56	84	3	
2020	2-Jul	1	1,879	0	1	0	North K-Beach
	4-Jul	0	676	0	3	0	North K-Beach
	6-Jul	1	2,182	0	2	0	North K-Beach
	7-Jul	21	8,437	0	25	0	Kasilof Section, North K-Beach
	8-Jul	0	623	1	2	0	North K-Beach
	16-Jul	11	6,098	5	110	0	Kasilof Section, North K-Beach
	21-Jul	10	3,846	20	241	3	Kasilof Section
	Average	6	3,392	4	55	0	
2021	1-Jul	0	2,162	0	3	0	North K-Beach
	3-Jul	1	3,072	0	0	0	North K-Beach
	5-Jul	2	3,110	1	10	0	North K-Beach
	6-Jul	5	8,746	2	45	1	Kasilof Section, North K-Beach
	7-Jul	1	2,728	0	6	0	North K-Beach
	13-Jul	23	7,365	19	523	6	Kasilof Section, North K-Beach
	14-Jul	27	8,440	15	239	0	Kasilof Section, North K-Beach
	20-Jul	74	38,318	145	716	9	Full ESSN
	Average	17	9,243	23	193	2	
2022	7-Jul	0	2942	0	3	0	North K-Beach
2023	No ESSN Fishery						

PROPOSAL 103 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Allow use of dipnets in the Upper Subdistrict commercial salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Chris Little.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add dip nets as legal gear to Upper Subdistrict and allow use of dip nets in the waters of the Upper subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) 600 ft fishery from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. when commercial periods for set gillnets are not open from June 20 through August 15. Set gillnet permit holders would be limited to two dip nets per vessel, require the permit holder to be onboard, and limit vessel size to not exceed 25 ft in overall length. Retention of king salmon would be prohibited.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See current regulations for Proposal 81 for more information on the ESSN and paired restrictions.

Dip nets are not currently a legal commercial gear type for the taking of salmon in Upper Cook Inlet. Legal commercial gear types are drift and set gillnets in the Central and Northern Districts. Purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines may be used in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict of the Central District.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the harvest of salmon in the ESSN fishery by an unknown amount and allow for the live release of king salmon. This could increase the department's ability to meet inriver and escapement goals for sockeye salmon in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers dependent upon abundance and successful implementation of the new gear type. This could increase the probability that Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapement goal will be achieved in years of low abundance. Time and area specifications for the commercial use of dip nets was not provided which makes determining effects difficult.

This would require the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission to modify current S04H permits or establish a new permit to allow dip nets as a legal gear type.

BACKGROUND: Within the Upper Cook Inlet Management area, dip nets are currently only allowed in personal use fisheries under the Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Permit.

As proposed dip nets in the ESSN fishery would be as defined in 5 AAC 39.105. *Types of legal gear*. (a) All gear shall be operated in a manner conforming to its basic design.

(24) a dip net is a bag-shaped net supported on all sides by a rigid frame; the maximum straight-line distance between any two points on the net frame, as measured through the net opening, may not exceed five feet; the depth of the bag must be at least one-half of the greatest straight-line distance, as measured through the net opening; no portion of the bag may be constructed of webbing that exceeds a stretched measurement of 4.5 inches; the frame must be attached to a single rigid handle and be operated by hand;

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does encourage the development of methods and gear types that would allow harvest of more abundant species during times of conservation for weak stocks.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 104 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Adopt a new Kenai River late-run king salmon management plan for the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Nathon Hoff.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a new Kenai River late-run king salmon management plan that includes a total allowable catch (TAC), new gear types, redefined harvest areas, and a fishermen's memorandum of understanding (MOU).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The ESSN fishery is managed primarily under provisions found in *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (*KRLRSSMP) and *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (KRSMP).* However, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted in order to achieve the optimal escapement goal (OEG), the ESSN fishery, is then managed per provisions found in the *KRLRKSMP*.

The *KRLRKSMP* outlines paired restrictive actions for the department to implement in the Kenai River sport and ESSN fisheries during times of low king salmon abundance, from June 20 through August 15.

Dip nets are not currently a legal gear type for the taking of salmon in Upper Cook Inlet under commercial fishery regulations. Legal gear types are drift and set gillnets in the Central and Northern Districts. Purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines maybe used in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict of the Central District.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It is unclear how this proposal may affect the department's ability to meet inriver and escapement goals for king and sockeye salmon in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. Development and successful implementation of the new gear types could increase the probability that Kenai River late-run large king salmon escapement goal will be achieved in years of low abundance. It is unclear if dipnets would open daily during the proposed season dates and thus possibly open 7 days a week which makes determining effects difficult for specific stocks and species. Establishment of a king salmon TAC based on preseason forecasts may limit the department's ability to manage inseason based on actual run strength. It is also unclear what the implications would be if an area reaches the TAC for that area.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does encourage the development of methods and gear types that would allow harvest of more abundant species during times of conservation for weak stocks. The portions of this proposal describing TAC and a 'Fishermen Memorandum'' likely lie outside the board's authority because they seek to allocate within a fishery.

The department has concerns with establishing pre-season TAC to manage a salmon fishery. Instead, the department supports the use of inseason run strength data, when it is available, to manage fisheries. Managing to a pre-season TAC jeopardizes long term sustainability if pre-season TACs are not achieved.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 105 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Allow a 600-foot set gillnet commercial fishery when the Upper Subdistrict would be closed to conserve Kenai River late-run king salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Phillip Sheridan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLKSMP) and allow commercial set gillnet periods within 600 feet of mean high tide for two 12-hour periods per week in the Upper Subdistrict (ESSN) of Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) when escapement of late-run Kenai River large king salmon is below the lower bound of optimal escapement goal (OEG,15,000-30,000 large fish). This proposal restricts gear during the proposed periods to one set gillnet, per permit, that is not more than 35 fathoms in length, and 29 meshes in depth.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the commercial harvest of all salmon by an unknown amount when king salmon conservation closures are in effect and create disparity between which king salmon escapement goals user groups are being managed under. When the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery would be closed due to the department projecting the late-run king salmon OEG of 15,000–30,000 large fish will not be met, the ESSN would have restricted openings. Harvesting sockeye salmon in the set gillnet fishery would increase the departments' ability to maintain sockeye salmon abundances within escapement and inriver goals for the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department **OPPOSES** regulations that would harvest fish when the SEG is not projected to be achieved. It would increase, to an unknown degree, the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon if the OEG is not attained. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 106 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Restrict legal set gillnet gear when the Upper Subdistrict commercial salmon fishery is open within 600 feet of shore.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require gear restrictions as prescribed in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP) to be implemented during commercial periods in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery when restricted to fishing within 600 ft of mean high tide.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 107 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Repeal the 600-foot Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery and create a new opportunity with shallow set gillnet gear more than one half mile offshore.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Professional Guide Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery 600 ft fishery by prohibiting set gillnetting within one half mile of the mean high tide mark and allowing set gillnet fishing outside of that boundary. Gear during the proposed commercial periods would be limited to 29 mesh depth set gillnets.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Available data is not sufficient to quantifiably estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths or fishing more than one half mile off shore on the harvest rates of king and sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease harvest by an unknown amount and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. That said, it appears that the closer a net, regardless of mesh size, is fished near the bottom increases the likelihood of king salmon harvest. Set gillnet fishing would be allowed from one half mile out to one and one half miles from the mean high tide mark. The proposer does not specify the number of nets that would be allowed which could provide additional effects if the proposal was adopted. The effects of 600-foot limitations will vary across the ESSN fishery as some sites are fishable within 600 ft of the mean hightide mark for greater durations of time while others may be dry for the majority of an open period.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 108 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Exempt the 600-foot set gillnet fishery from fishing time and gear restrictions in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Brian J. Koski.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would exempt commercial fishing periods limited to within 600 ft of mean high tide in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery from fishing time and gear restrictions in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would not change current regulation. Commercial fishing periods within 600-ft of mean high tide in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery are exempt from restrictions under the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* 5 AAC 21.359 (e)(3)(A)-(E).

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends the board **TAKE NO ACTION** on this proposal since it would not change current regulations.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 110 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Provide additional commercial fishing opportunity for set gillnet gear within the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Ted Crookston and Alan Crookston.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow commercial fishing within 1,500 ft from the mean high tide mark in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, when the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal (OEG, 15,000-30,000 large fish) is not projected to be achieved and the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers sockeye salmon escapement goals are projected to be achieved or exceeded.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?
See Current Regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the commercial harvest of all salmon, including late-run Kenai River king salmon by an unknown amount when king salmon conservation closures are in effect and create disparity between which king salmon escapement goals user groups are being managed. When the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery would be closed due to the department projecting the late-run king salmon OEG of 15,000–30,000 large fish will not be met, the ESSN would have restricted openings. Harvesting sockeye salmon in the set gillnet fishery would increase the departments' ability to maintain sockeye salmon abundances within escapement and inriver goals for the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon. The department **OPPOSES** regulations that would harvest fish when the SEG is not projected to be achieved.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 116 – 5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan; 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan; and 5 AAC 21.365. Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan. Repeal mandatory weekly closures in the commercial set gillnet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove mandatory closed fishing periods or "windows" from all management plans in Upper Cook Inlet.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The preamble to the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (*5 AAC 21.360; KRLRSSMP) currently reads, "The department shall manage Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses based on abundance. The department shall also manage commercial fisheries to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho, late-run Kenai River king, and Kenai River coho salmon stocks to provide personal use, sport, and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources."
When the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted under the KRLRKSMP, then the ESSN must close for a continuous 36-hour 'window' per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, including post July 31 if the sport fishery ends the season restricted. When the KRLRKSMP is not in effect, the ESSN fishery is managed primarily under provisions found in KRLRSSMP and *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (*5 AAC 21.365; *KRSMP).* Under the KRLRSSMP closure windows are implemented based on the tier that Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon abundance is assessed to be at as follows:

- When sockeye salmon abundance is in the middle tier (2.3 million–4.6 million fish) the ESSN must close for a continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday and close for one continuous 24-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Monday and 7:00 a.m. Wednesday.
- When sockeye salmon run strength is in the upper tier (>4.6 million fish) the ESSN must close for a continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday.

Under provisions in the KRSMP, the 36-hour "Friday" windows are implemented from the start of the season which may begin as early as June 20 if more than 30,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River or June 25, whichever comes first through July 7. After July 7, management of the fishery is under the KRLRSSMP.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would likely increase the commercial harvest of all salmon, including late-run Kenai River king salmon, by an unknown amount, depending on abundance. Removal of mandatory closed "window" periods and limitations on the number of EO hours that may be fished each week could result in Kenai and Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement objectives being exceeded less often than under current management. Removing "windows" and EO hour limitations may also result in less predictability to Kenai and Kasilof River personal use and sport fishermen trying to gauge when

salmon may be entering each river. Removing windows would also increase the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon by an unknown amount. It is not possible to project if additional fishing time would occur if this proposal were adopted because the department would continue to manage all fisheries to achieve established escapement and inriver goals, but adoption of this proposal would provide greater discretion in determining when commercial fishing time is allowed.

BACKGROUND: Mandatory no-fishing periods ("windows") were first adopted in the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* in 1999 (Table 112-2). From 1999–2002, only one 24-hr "floating" window per week was in the plan and only for runs greater than 2 million sockeye salmon. From 2002–2005, there was a 48-hr window for runs between 2 and 4 million fish and a 36-hr window for runs greater than 4 million fish, both floating windows. From 2005–2011, a second 24-hour floating weekly window was adopted for runs between 2 and 4 million fish and the 48-hr floating window was changed to a "fixed" 36-hr Friday window. For runs greater than 4 million fish, the floating 36-hr window also became a fixed Friday window. In 2011, the tiers changed numerically and the board changed the 24-hour floating weekly window to a Tuesday fixed window. In 2014, the duration of windows stayed the same, except the Tuesday fixed window was modified start between 7:00 p.m. on Monday and 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday. No significant modifications were made to the window structure at the 2017 or 2020 board meetings.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 117 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. and 5 AAC 21. 366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan. Repeal paired restrictions from Upper Cook Inlet salmon management plans.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove all "paired" restrictive provisions in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan (KRLRKSMP) and the Northern District King Salmon Management plan* (NDKSMP).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The UCI commercial set and drift gillnet fisheries are managed primarily under provisions found in 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*, 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* and 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan.* However, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted to achieve the OEG, the ESSN fishery is then managed per provisions found in the *KRLRKSMP* (5 AAC 21.359). Specifically, the management plan states that if the use of bait is prohibited in the sport fishery, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 48 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, during which the number of set gillnets operated may also be restricted. If the use of bait and the retention of king salmon greater than 34" in length are prohibited in the sport fishery, the ESSN fishery is open for no more than 36 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, during which the number of set gillnets operated may also be restricted. If the use of bait and the retention of king salmon are prohibited in the sport fishery, the ESSN fishery is open for no more than 24 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday, during which the number of set gillnets operated may also be restricted. If the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is restricted on July 31, then, beginning August 1, Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week; if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is not restricted under the provisions of this section, or, after August 1, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is met the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will be managed under the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*.

The *KRLRKSMP* also states that if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is projected to be less than 15,000 fish, the department is to close the sport fishery in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon, close the entire ESSN fishery, and close the drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the shoreline on the Kenai Peninsula north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles south of the Kenai River.
In the Kenai River personal use dipnet fishery, if the use of bait is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery, then the retention of king salmon is prohibited in the personal use fishery.

The *NDKSMP* regulates the directed king salmon commercial fishery in the ND of UCI. The purpose of the plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of king salmon into ND drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage ND king salmon

stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon over the entire run as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions.

The directed commercial king salmon season opens the first Monday on or after May 25 and continues through June 24, unless closed earlier by emergency order (EO). Fishing periods are Mondays only from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Harvest may not exceed 12,500 king salmon, which was estimated to be 10% of the annual Susitna River king salmon run when the management plan was adopted in 1986. Permit holders are allowed only one 35-fathom set gillnet with a mesh size not to exceed six inches and may not operate nets within 1,200 feet seaward of another set gillnet. Other provisions in the plan include:

(8) from May 25 through June 24, the area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River is open to fishing the second regular Monday period only;

The "Paired Restrictions":

(9) if the Theodore, Lewis, or Ivan River is closed to sport fishing, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from an ADF&G regulatory marker located one mile south of the Theodore River to the Susitna River to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the fishing periods provided for under this section;

(10) if the king salmon sport fishery on the Deshka River as described in 5 AAC 61 is
(A) conducted as a no bait fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per commercial set gillnet fishing period provided for in this section to no more than nine hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.;
(B) conducted as a catch and release fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per fishing period provided for in this section to no more than six hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.;
(C) closed, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the commercial king salmon fishery throughout the Northern District;

(11) if the Chuitna River is closed to sport fishing, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from a point at the wood chip dock located approximately at 61° 02.77' N. lat., 151° 10.04' W. long., to the Susitna River to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the directed king salmon fishery;

(12) if the inseason Deshka River run projection is below the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial salmon set gillnet fishery throughout the Northern District.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the commercial harvest of all salmon in the Central District drift gillnet, ESSN, and Northern District set gillnet fisheries. The effects on harvest would be dependent upon sockeye salmon abundance. Paired restrictions were implemented by the board to share the burden of king salmon conservation and provide framework so the department was not in the position of making

highly allocative decisions inseason. Repealing the paired actions would increase the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon and would remove guidance to the department on how to manage interrelated allocative fisheries.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposals 81, 205, and 210.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department would continue to manage all fisheries to meet established escapement and inriver objectives and this would result in restrictions to commercial fisheries in years of reduced king salmon abundance.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 109 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Create new set gillnet commercial salmon fishing opportunity based on Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement.

PROPOSED BY: David Blanchard II

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow commercial fishing in a new set gillnet area from Humpy Point to the Blanchard line and within one half mile from the mean high tide mark in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery when the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal (OEG, 15,000-30,000 large fish) is not projected to be achieved and the Kasilof River OEG (140,000-370,000 fish) is projected to be exceeded.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

See current regulations for Proposal 81.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the commercial harvest of all salmon by an unknown amount when king salmon conservation closures are in effect and create disparity between which king salmon escapement goals user groups are being managed. When the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery would be closed due to the department projecting the late-run king salmon OEG of 15,000–30,000 large fish will not be met, the ESSN would have restricted openings. Harvesting sockeye salmon in the set gillnet fishery would increase the departments' ability to maintain sockeye salmon abundances within escapement and inriver goals for the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. It would, however, increase the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon to an unknown degree.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposal 81.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. It would increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon. If the board were to allow such opportunity under the OEG it should consider enacting mechanisms to ensure full accounting of any harvested king salmon. The department **OPPOSES** regulations that would harvest fish when the SEG is not projected to be achieved.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 75 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Remove the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 and require the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 13,500 – 27,000 fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Managing to achieve the SEG may mean fewer restrictions to commercial and sport fisheries if king salmon run strengths are projected to be below 15,000 large king salmon yet above 13,500 (the lower ends of the OEG and SEG ranges, respectively). Managing for a lower escapement goal may increase exploitation of all Kenai River salmon by allowing more opportunity in Cook Inlet fisheries and would likely reduce the number of king and sockeye salmon spawning in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

BACKGROUND: The *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Fisheries* directs the department to manage stocks to achieve escapement goals established by the department unless an OEG has been established by the board. When an OEG has been adopted by the board, the department is charged with managing to maintain evenly distributed escapements within the bounds of the OEG range. Managing for an SEG would require the board to repeal the OEG.

In 2014, the department was in the process of moving the Kenai River king salmon sonar site from RM 9 up to RM 14. The Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal was an SEG for fish of all sizes of 15,000 – 30,000. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Figure 75-1). At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Table 75-1). The higher OEG directs the department to take a more conservative stance when managing the fisheries that harvest late-run king salmon and increase the probability of achieving escapements that are greater than the lower end of the SEG.

The department reviewed the late-run king salmon SEG in the 2023 escapement goal review process and did not change this goal. The department does not evaluate OEGs as they are set by the board and can incorporate non-biological factors.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The SEG remains in place, and it is the purview of the board to establish OEGs that consider biological, rebuilding, and allocative factors.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

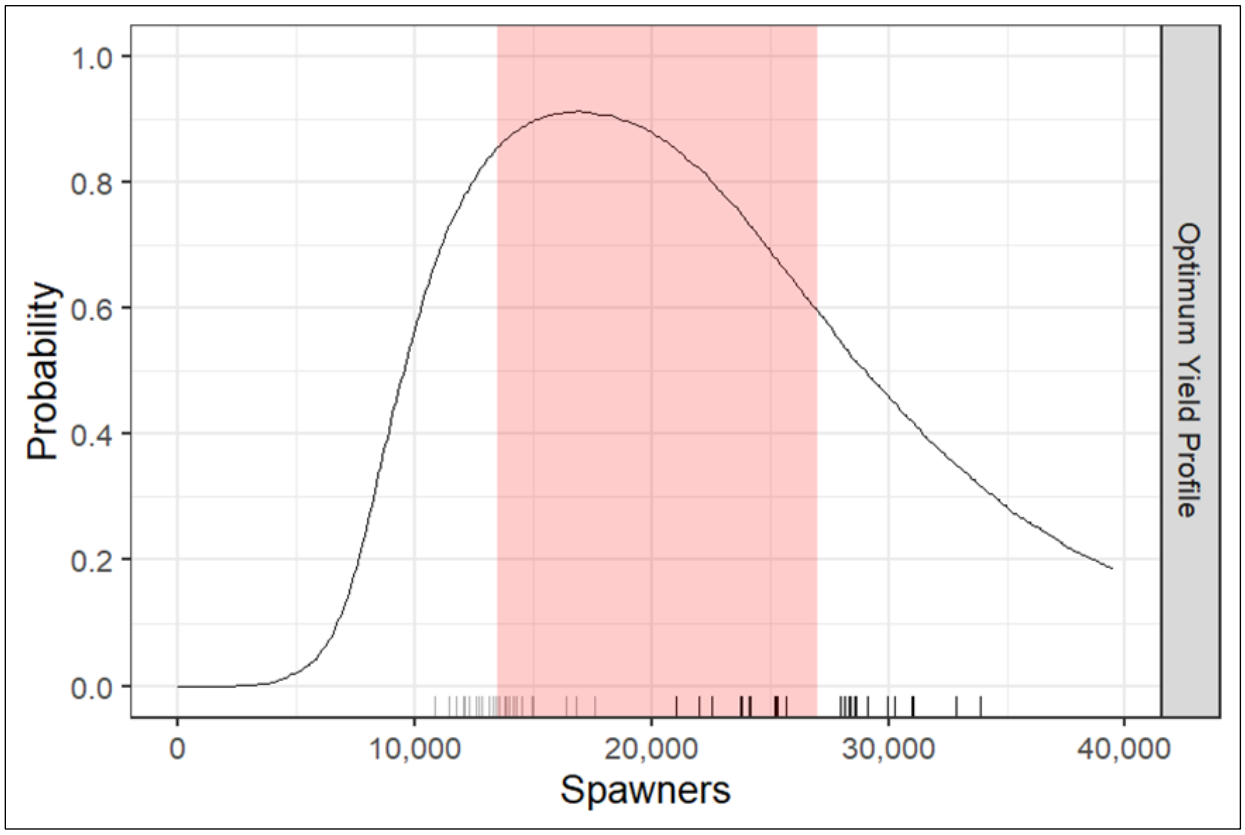

Figure 75-1.– Optimal yield profiles (OYP) plots for Kenai River late-run Chinook salmon 75 cm METF and longer. OYPs show probability that a specified spawning abundance will result in 80% of maximum sustained yield. The goal range shown is the SEG.

Note: Shaded areas bracket the current goal range; grey and black marks along the *x*-axis show comparable lower and upper bounds, respectively, scaled by S_{MSY} ratios for other Alaskan Chinook salmon stocks.

Table 75-1.–Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal history, 1998–2023.

Year		Escapement	SEG/BEG	OEG
1998	All Sizes of Fish	39,000	**15,500–22,300**	
1999		30,563	**17,800–35,700**	
2000		32,550	**17,800–35,700**	
2001		37,641	**17,800–35,700**	
2002		45,457	**17,800–35,700**	
2003		67,187	**17,800–35,700**	
2004		63,683	**17,800–35,700**	
2005		60,246	**17,800–35,700**	
2006		48,950	**17,800–35,700**	
2007		37,010	**17,800–35,700**	
2008		32,342	**17,800–35,700**	
2009		21,410	**17,800–35,700**	
2010		11,375	**17,800–35,700**	
2011		16,340	**17,800–35,700**	
2012		21,417	**17,800–35,700**	
2013		19,342	**15,000–30,000**	
2014		17,451	**15,000–30,000**	
2015		22,642	**15,000–30,000**	
2016		18,790	**15,000–30,000**	
2017	Large Fish	20,583	**13,500–27,000**	
2018		17,405	**13,500–27,000**	
2019		11,709	**13,500–27,000**	
2020		11,854	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
2021		12,238	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
2022		13,911	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
2023[a]		14,502	13,500–27,000	**15,000–30,000**
Average 2017–2023		14,583		

Note: Large fish are king salmon that are 75 cm from mideye to tail fork in length or longer. Shaded areas indicate that the goal was achieved for that year. **Bold font** indicates the goal that was management objective.

[a] These estimates are preliminary until biometrically reviewed and published. 2023 sonar was extended seven days.

PROPOSAL 76 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Remove the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG.

PROPOSED BY: Philip Sheridan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 and require the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve the sustainable escapement goal (SEG).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Refer to effects on Proposal 75

BACKGROUND: Refer to background on Proposal 75

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The SEG remains in place and it is the purview of the board to establish OEGs that consider biological, rebuilding, and allocative factors.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 77 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery to the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 13,500 – 27,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer and the commercial fishery to an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 12,000 king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create two escapement goals for one fish stock and establish an OEG lower than the SEG. Establishing a goal below the SEG may negatively impact future productivity of this stock.

BACKGROUND: Refer to background on Proposal 75.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: It is the purview of the board to establish OEGs that consider biological and allocative factors, but the department **OPPOSES** establishing escapement goals lower than the SEG other than for provision of subsistence. Managing one stock for an SEG and another for an OEG rebuilding goal raises allocative issues the Board should consider.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 78 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Modify the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon OEG.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the Kenai River late-run king salmon optimal escapement goal.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Refer to the effects on Proposal 75

BACKGROUND: Refer to the background on Proposal 75.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The SEG remains in place, and it is the purview of the board to establish OEGs that consider biological, rebuilding, and allocative factors.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 79 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Create additional step-down measures to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create additional step-down measures to the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.*

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* provides direction to the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish). Management actions to various fisheries are prescribed based on abundance. The full management plan is presented in Figure 79.1.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This seeks to provide limited sport and commercial harvest opportunity when Kenai River late-run king salmon abundance is projected below the lower end of the OEG but above the lower end of the SEG. Managing to achieve the SEG may mean fewer restrictions to commercial and sport fisheries if king salmon run strengths are projected to be below 15,000 large king salmon yet above 13,500 (the lower ends of the OEG and SEG ranges respectively). Managing for a lower escapement goal may increase exploitation of all Kenai River salmon by allowing more opportunity in Cook Inlet fisheries and would likely reduce the number of king and sockeye salmon spawning in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

BACKGROUND: The *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Fisheries* directs the department to manage stocks to achieve escapement goals established by the department unless an OEG has been established by the board. When an OEG has been adopted by the board, the department is charged with managing to maintain evenly distributed escapements within the bound of the OEG range.

In 2014, the department was in the process of moving the Kenai River king salmon sonar site from RM 9 up to RM 14. The Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal was an SEG for fish of all sizes of 15,000 – 30,000. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Figure 75-1). At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Table 75-1). The higher OEG directs the department to take a more conservative stance when managing the fisheries that harvest late-run king salmon and increase the probability of achieving escapements that are greater than the lower end of the SEG.

The department reviewed the late-run king salmon SEG in the 2023 escapement goal review process and did not change this goal. The department does not evaluate OEGs as they are set by the board and can incorporate non-biological factors.

Available data is not sufficient to estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvest rates of king versus sockeye salmon. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number of deeper nets would decrease salmon harvest by an unknown amount. The amount of reduction and the precise effect on the harvest of various species is unknown and would vary greatly depending on the location of the net. Fish that escape harvest in offshore shallow nets may end up being harvested in nearshore nets where a 29-mesh deep net would reach the bottom, or nearer the bottom.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The SEG remains in place, and it is the purview of the board to establish OEGs that consider biological, rebuilding, and allocative factors.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Figure 79-1.– 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan. (a) The purposes of this management plan are to ensure an adequate escapement of late-run king salmon into the Kenai River system and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the late-run Kenai River king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses in order to provide the sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The provisions of this management plan are in effect from June 20 through August 15.

(b) The department shall manage the late run of Kenai River king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal of 15,000 — 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer as described in this section.

(c) In the sport fishery,

1. if the optimal escapement goal is projected to be exceeded, the commissioner may, by emergency order, extend the sport fishing season up to seven days during the first week of August;
2. from July 1 through July 31, a person may not use more than one single hook in the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake;
3. that portion of the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake is open to unguided sport fishing from a nonmotorized vessel on Mondays in July; for purposes of this paragraph, a nonmotorized vessel is one that does not have a motor on board.

(d) If the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer, the department shall

1. close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon;
2. close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and

3. close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

(e) In order to achieve the optimal escapement goal and provide reasonable harvest opportunity, the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish fishing seasons as follows:

1. in the Kenai River sport fishery,
   A. the use of bait is prohibited;
   B. the use of bait is prohibited and retention of king salmon 34 inches or greater in length as defined in 5 AAC 75.995(a) is prohibited; or
   C. the use of bait and retention of king salmon are prohibited;
2. in the Kenai River personal use fishery, if the use of bait is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1) of this subsection, the retention of king salmon is prohibited in the personal use fishery;
3. in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery, notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360(c)(1)(B), (2)(B), and (3)(B), based on the abundance of sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers,
   A. if the use of bait is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1)(A) of this subsection, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 48 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;
   B. if the use of bait and the retention of king salmon greater than 34 inches in length as defined in 5 AAC 75.995(a) are prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1)(B) of this subsection, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;
   C. if the use of bait and the retention of king salmon are prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery under (1)(C) of this subsection, commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 24 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;
   D. if preseason restrictions are issued for the late-run Kenai River king salmon sport fishery, then all Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fisheries are restricted;
   E. if restrictions for the late-run Kenai River king salmon sport fishery are in effect on July 31, then, beginning August 1, Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishing periods are open for no more than 36 hours per week; if the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery is not restricted under the provisions of this section, or, after August 1, if the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG is achieved, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will be managed under the provisions of 5 AAC 21.360, Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan;
   F. Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishing periods that are limited under this section may be limited to fishing within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark and are exempt from hour and gear limitations identified under (e)(3)(A)-(E) of this section;
   G. if commercial fishing is limited under (e)(3) of this section, the operation of setnets operated by a CFEC permit holder shall be restricted to:
      i. up to four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length, 105 fathoms in aggregate length, and 29 meshes in depth, or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the

gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter; or

ii. up to two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth or one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter.

(f) Repealed 6/8/2017;

(g) Repealed 6/8/2017;

(h) The provisions of (e)(3)(G) of this section do not apply to provisions of the Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan contained in 5 AAC 21.365(f) that pertain to the Kasilof Special Harvest Area. The provisions of (e)(3)(A) — (C) of this section apply to provisions of the Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan contained in 5 AAC 21.365 (f) that pertain to the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area.

(i) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. If the assessments demonstrate a net loss of riparian habitat caused by noncommercial fishermen, the department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of this plan.

(j) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

PROPOSAL 82 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Repeal portions of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* and shorten plan duration.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to repeal portions of the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* that directs the department to manage to achieve the OEG, adopt a new OEG of 12,500 king salmon (all sizes), repeals paired restrictions and shorten the duration of the plan.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish). The provisions of this management plan are in effect from June 20 through August 15.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?
Managing for an SEG would require the board to repeal the OEG.

The Department's established SEG is above the requested management trigger of 12,500 king salmon of all sizes. The Department's established SEG range will not change, establishing a conflict between the necessity of the department to manage for sustainability under its SEG and the desire of users to harvest below sustainable levels as defined by the Department's SEG.

Managing to achieve the SEG may mean fewer restrictions to commercial and sport fisheries if king salmon run strengths are projected to be below 15,000 large king salmon yet above 13,500 (the lower ends of the OEG and SEG ranges respectively). Managing for a lower escapement goal may increase exploitation of all Kenai River salmon by allowing more opportunity in Cook Inlet fisheries and would likely reduce the number of king and sockeye salmon spawning in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

Repealing the paired restrictions listed in the plan (Figure 79-1) would eliminate the shared burden of conservation of Kenai River late-run king salmon stocks (Table 82-1). Reducing the effective period of the plan to July 31 would fail to protect about half the run as the mid-point of the late run has historically been around July 28 (Figure 82-1). Reducing the effective date of the plan to end July 31 makes justification for actions to reduce the harvest of Kenai River late-run king salmon more allocative inseason.

BACKGROUND: The *Policy for the Management of Sustainable Fisheries* directs the department to manage stocks to achieve escapement goals established by the department unless an OEG has been established by the board. When an OEG has been adopted by the board, the department is charged with managing to maintain evenly distributed escapements within the bound of the OEG. Managing for a SEG would require the board to repeal the OEG.

In 2014, the department was in the process of moving the Kenai River king salmon sonar site from RM 9 up to RM 14. The Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal was an SEG for fish of all sizes of 15,000 – 30,000. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Figure 75-1). At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Table 75-1). The higher OEG directs the department to take a more conservative stance when managing the fisheries that harvest late-run king salmon and increase the probability of achieving escapements that are greater than the lower end of the SEG.

The department reviewed the late-run king salmon SEG in the 2023 escapement goal review process and did not change this goal. The department does not evaluate OEGs as they are set by the board and can incorporate non-biological factors.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The decision to create or remove an OEG is the purview of the board as is the decision on how to share the burden of conservation among the user groups. The Department's established SEG range will not change, establishing a conflict between the necessity of the department to manage for sustainability under its SEG and the desire of users to harvest below sustainable levels as defined by the Department's SEG.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 82-1.–Kenai River late-run large ≥75 cm king salmon harvest, catch-and-release mortality, inriver run, escapement, total run and harvest rate, 1986–2023.

Year	Cook Inlet marine harvest[a]	Eastside setnet harvest[b,h]	Drift gillnet harvest[c]	Subsis. or Educ. harvest[d]	Personal use dipnet harvest[e]	Inriver sport harvest[f]	Inriver sport catch-and-release mortality[f]	Inriver run[g]	Spawning escapement[g]	Total run[g]	Harvest rate
1986	45	9,750	902	0	0	8,940	286	58,428	49,197	69,188	0.29
1987	93	11,760	2,530	0	187	12,801	121	61,051	48,096	75,846	0.37
1988	114	7,526	1,309	0	0	19,417	174	61,638	42,003	70,691	0.41
1989	105	6,034	0	17	0	9,505	87	36,430	26,852	42,598	0.37
1990	107	1,688	253	8	0	5,886	59	30,471	24,496	32,514	0.25
1991	123	2,409	121	203	0	7,334	14	36,442	29,076	39,342	0.26
1992	158	5,604	322	300	0	7,255	225	45,289	37,788	51,689	0.27
1993	214	8,022	436	22	0	17,207	463	56,042	38,346	64,711	0.41
1994	139	9,005	268	325	0	17,051	547	49,005	31,400	58,798	0.47
1995	144	6,002	295	2	506	11,218	420	42,697	31,022	49,767	0.38
1996	147	5,993	202	1	218	7,525	313	38,309	30,453	44,874	0.32
1997	218	5,913	327	15	271	12,151	543	37,445	24,734	44,260	0.44
1998	116	2,173	143	1	155	6,289	498	40,218	33,381	42,828	0.22
1999	67	4,446	270	3	328	11,556	580	40,912	28,769	46,006	0.37
2000	73	1,856	136	4	295	13,611	446	40,441	26,331	42,826	0.39
2001	61	1,952	201	4	296	13,974	700	42,675	27,895	45,147	0.38
2002	30	3,522	154	3	322	11,278	595	54,878	42,940	58,965	0.27
2003	13	4,546	381	5	446	13,713	1,459	66,994	51,862	72,422	0.28
2004	109	10,021	510	7	523	14,622	858	86,094	70,617	97,329	0.27
2005	76	9,909	884	7	643	17,153	1,193	74,315	55,764	85,879	0.35
2006	63	3,173	887	5	471	13,602	714	55,247	40,911	59,872	0.32
2007	53	4,196	310	3	733	9,759	572	41,629	31,276	46,981	0.33
2008	36	3,535	301	10	896	10,015	333	40,468	30,001	45,202	0.34
2009	16	1,336	205	1	405	7,460	517	28,807	20,807	30,785	0.32
2010	35	2,384	193	11	444	5,774	212	19,403	13,425	22,502	0.40
2011	56	2,499	243	3	728	5,964	388	22,880	16,541	26,411	0.37
2012	0	334	103	0	27	86	79	23,571	23,427	24,038	0.03
2013	25	679	104	2	3	821	41	13,727	12,719	14,542	0.13
2014	41	706	112	0	0	287	38	11,903	11,584	12,776	0.09
2015	92	2,808	184	5	31	2,997	154	20,010	16,857	23,139	0.27

-continued-

Table 82-1.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Cook Inlet marine harvest[a]	Eastside setnet harvest[b,h]	Drift gillnet harvest[c]	Subsis. or Educ. harvest[d]	Personal use dipnet harvest[e]	Inriver sport harvest [f]	Inriver sport catch and release mortality [f]	Inriver run [g]	Spawning escapement [g]	Total run [g]	Harvest rate
2016	80	2,906	242	3	364	5,576	228	21,422	15,652	25,023	0.37
2017	61	2,998	144	7	928	5,857	196	26,595	20,583	30,734	0.33
2018	11	555	106	0	2	97	198	17,691	17,405	18,364	0.05
2019	34	613	58	0	14	857	92	12,637	11,709	13,360	0.12
2020	0	166	35	1	6	0	163	12,014	11,854	12,226	0.03
2021	28	217	40	0	13	141	117	12,489	12,238	12,794	0.04
2022	0	41	53	0	2	0	92	13,981	13,911	14,078	0.01
2023 [i]	0	0	35	0	0	0	0	14,502	14,502	14,537	0.00
Average											
1986–2023	73	3,876	342	-	244	8,099	361	37,072	28,590	41,659	0.27
2016–2023	27	937	89	2	166	1,566	136	16,416	14,732	17,640	0.12

[a] Estimates derived from SWHS, mean values of Kenai mainstem proportion (0.078; Schuster et al. 2021) and percent large in lower Kenai River late run creel survey by year.

[b] 1986–2009 estimates derived from mean 2010–2021 Kenai River mainstem proportion in ESSN (0.70; Eskelin and Barclay 2022) and fraction large in ESSN samples by year; 2010–2022 are point estimates from Eskelin and Barclay (2016–2023).

[c] Estimates derived from mean Kenai River mainstem proportion in ESSN (0.70; Eskelin and Barclay 2022), fraction large in ESSN samples by year and reported commercial drift gillnet harvest by year.

[d] Kenaitze education and federal subsistence fisheries; estimates derived from total reported harvest and fraction large in ESSN samples by year.

[e] Estimates derived from fraction large in ESSN samples by year and reported Kenai River personal use harvest.

[f] Creel survey estimates used for RM 5-21, SWHS and or guide logbook estimates used for RM 21-50 and fraction large from RM 5-21 creel survey by year. Assumes 0.76 catch and release mortality rate (Bendock and Alexandersdottir 1992).

[g] 1986–2021 posterior medians of state space model; 2022 and 2023 are point estimates.

[h] Harvest estimate does not include Kasilof River terminal fishery.

[i] These estimates are preliminary until biometrically reviewed and published.

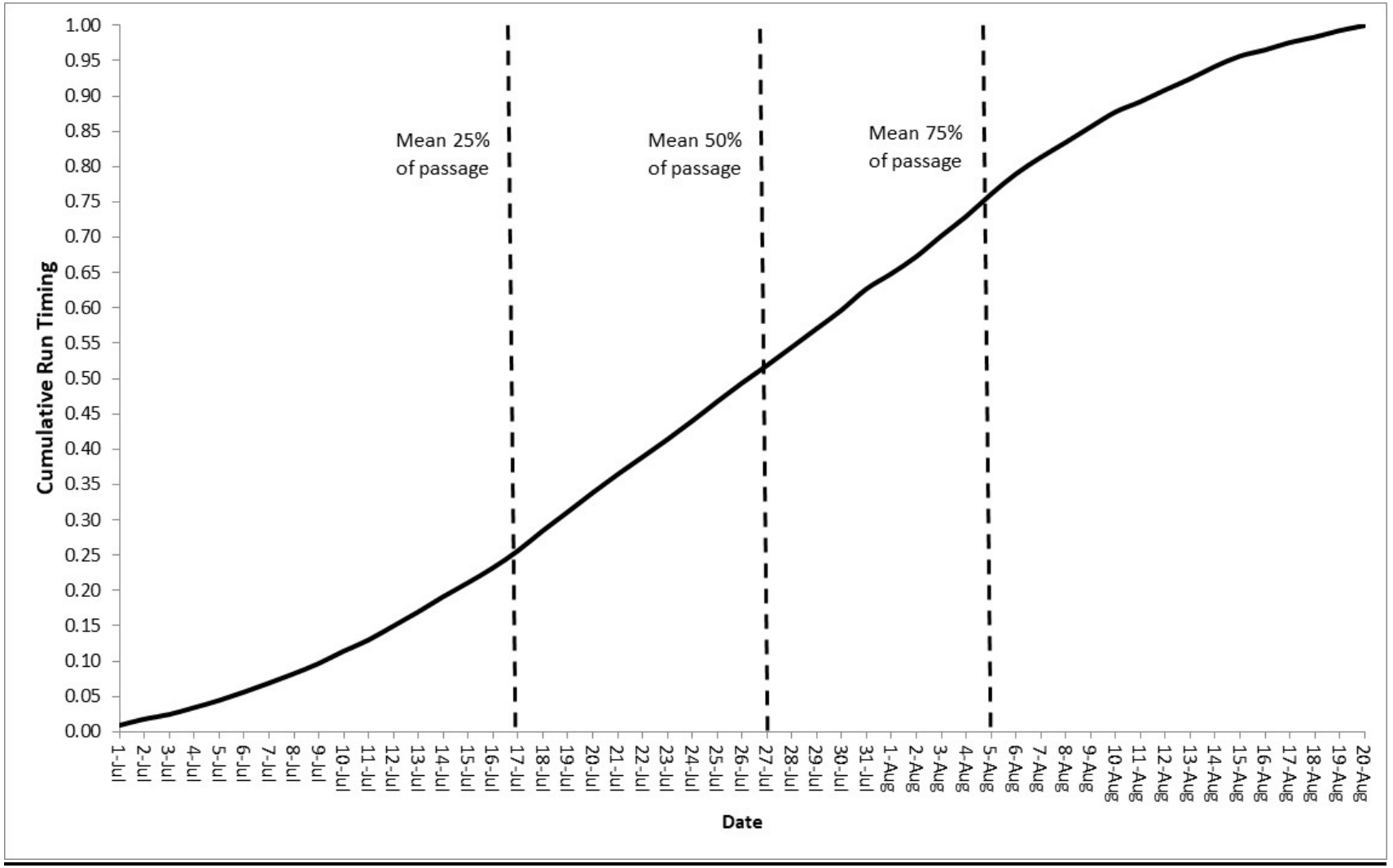

Figure 82-1.–Kenai River late-run run timing

PROPOSAL 84 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Close fishing for Kenai River late-run king salmon when forecast is below 20,000.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close sport fishing for Kenai River late-run king salmon upstream of river mile 14 when the preseason forecast is below 20,000 fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to manage Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (large fish). Management actions to various fisheries are prescribed based on abundance. Preseason actions are often taken based on the preseason forecast and recent stock performance. Full management plan is found in Figure 79.1.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It is unclear from the proposal if, based on a preseason forecast below 20,000, the intent is to start the Kenai River late-run king salmon season July 1 closed or if it is to close the entire season (including the early run). If the season is open below river mile 14 (Figure 84-1) it is unlikely to provide a significant reduction in Kenai River late-run king salmon mortality as anglers wanting to fish for king salmon will move to the lower river.

BACKGROUND: In 2014, the department was in the process of moving the Kenai king salmon sonar site from RM 9 up to RM 14. The Kenai River late-run king salmon escapement goal was an SEG for fish of all sizes of 15,000 – 30,000. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 to reflect that change. At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer (Table 75-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. Although the decision to create or remove an OEG or management trigger is the purview of the board, the 20,000 trigger is arbitrary and not defensible and only affects one user group. Prohibiting fishing above the king salmon sonar at river mile 14 but allowing harvest downriver is not likely to reduce the mortality of Kenai River late-run king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

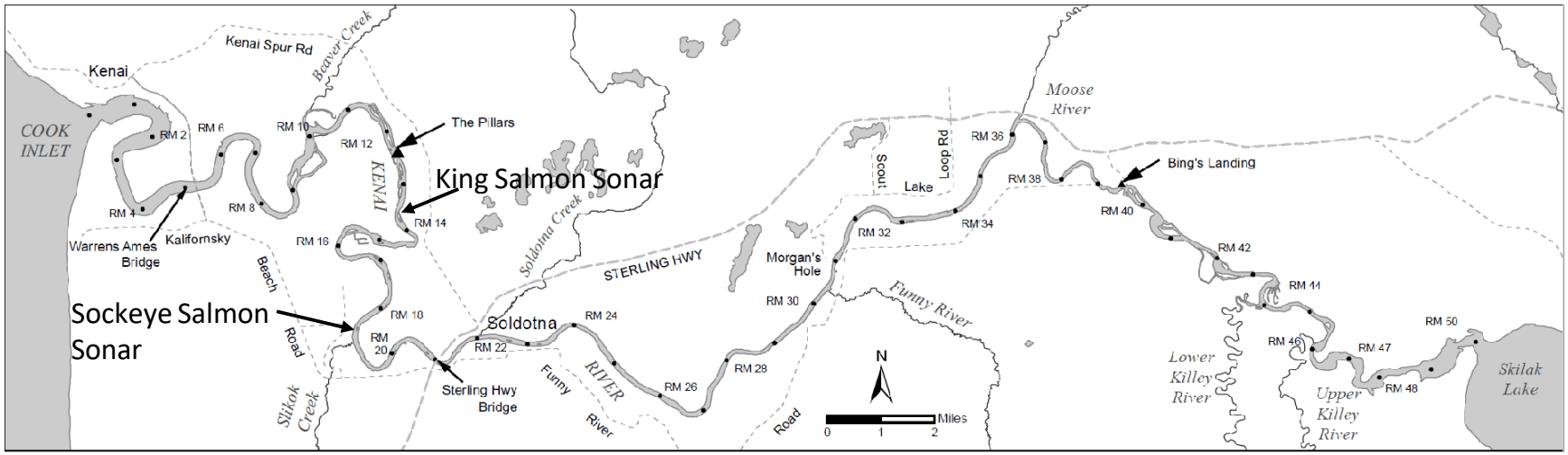

Figure 84-1.–Map of the Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 89 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Prohibit nonresidents participating in the Kenai River late run king salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit nonresidents from participating in the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no provisions in the *KRLRKSMP* prohibiting nonresidents from participating in the Kenai River late-run king salmon sport fishery if escapement goals are projected to be achieved. The department uses escapement-based management for the Kenai River late-run king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would eliminate fishing opportunity by nonresidents in years when the Kenai River late-run OEG was projected to be achieved. Eliminating this group of anglers would reduce effort and king salmon harvest, but negatively impact guides and local businesses who provide services to nonresident anglers.

BACKGROUND: The department uses escapement-based management for the Kenai River late-run king salmon. By the 2017 UCI board meeting the department completed the move to RM 14, progressed to an escapement goal for Kenai River king salmon based on large fish and revised the SEG to 13,500 – 27,000 to reflect that change. At the 2020 UCI board meeting the department did not change the SEG, and the board adopted an OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon of 15,000 – 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer. The OEG has been used as the management target since its inception and the department has taken actions to try and achieve it (Table 75-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to limit opportunity and economic benefit to communities when goals are projected to be achieved.

COST ANALYSIS Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Kenai River King Salmon (4 proposals)

PROPOSAL 146 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Align the Kenai River Drainage Area method and means provisions with the season dates for Kenai River king salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would align the Kenai River drainage methods and means provisions with the season dates for Kenai River king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The regulations prohibiting a person from possessing a king salmon that has been filleted, headed, mutilated, or otherwise disfigured are in effect from January 1–July 14. The Kenai River king salmon season is January 1–July 31.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The dates in regulation regarding possessing king salmon would align with the Kenai River king salmon season.

BACKGROUND: 5 AAC 57.120. *General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage* states king salmon may be taken January 1–July 31. Additionally, it provides language prohibiting possession of a king salmon that has been filleted or otherwise disfigured in a manner that doesn't allow the length of the fish to be measured until it is removed from the fishing site from January 1–July 14.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 147 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Modify Kenai River king salmon annual limit.

PROPOSED BY: Francis Estalilla.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the Kenai River king salmon annual limit from five fish 20 inches or greater in length to five fish 20 inches or greater in length, of which only one fish may be greater than 34 inches.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The annual limit for king salmon in the combined waters of Cook Inlet and Kenai River is five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, only two of those can be from the Kenai River. The annual limit does not apply to king salmon less than 20 inches in length. From January 1–June 30, king salmon less than 28 inches in length taken from the Kenai River does not count towards the annual limit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? In years the Kenai River king salmon optimal escapement goal (OEG) is projected to be achieved and king salmon harvest is allowed this proposal would likely reduce the harvest of king salmon greater than 34 inches by an unknown amount. This would add another layer of regulatory complexity to the Kenai River king salmon limits by adding another size category to the annual limits.

BACKGROUND: The annual limit for king salmon in the combined waters of Cook Inlet and Kenai River is five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, only two of those can be from the Kenai River. The annual limit does not apply to king salmon less than 20 inches in length. From January 1–June 30, king salmon less than 28 inches in length taken from the Kenai River do not count towards the annual limit. The current OEG is 15,000 – 30,000 large king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork or longer (approximately 34 inches total length or longer).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. If the OEG is projected to be achieved the regulatory complexity suggested by this proposal is not necessary.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 148 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Prohibit fishing for king salmon from a motorized vessel in the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit fishing from a motorized vessel for king salmon in the Kenai River on Wednesdays and Fridays.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Kenai River, downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge (Figure 148-1), no one may fish from any motorized vessel on Mondays (except Memorial Day) during May, June, and July. For purposes of this regulation, a motorized vessel is one that has a motor on board. From the Sterling Highway Bridge downstream to the mouth of the Kenai River, no one may fish on Mondays (except Memorial Day) during May, June, and July from a vessel that has on board no more than one motor that does not exceed 10 horsepower (HP), and it may only be used between the mouth of the Kenai River and ADF&G regulatory markers located at Cunningham Park, and only after fishing from the vessel has ceased for that day; a person may not deploy sport fishing gear from a vessel after a motor has been used to propel that vessel on the same day.

Under DNR regulations, no one may operate a boat on the Kenai River (except Skilak and Kenai Lakes) upstream of mile 4.2 with a motor or combination of motors with a propeller shaft rating greater than 50 HP. No one may operate a boat on the Kenai River upstream of river mile 4.2 unless the motor is a four-stroke motor or a direct fuel injection motor. This includes boats operating on both Kenai and Skilak Lakes. The maximum length of vessels for the Kenai River (except Skilak and Kenai Lakes) is 21 feet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the nonmotorized days in the Kenai River king salmon fishery from one day a week (Monday) to three (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday). The initial impact would be a reduction in effort since the fishery is largely accessed with powered vessels. Unguided anglers may purchase drift boats to participate in the fishery on these three days or choose to fish on another river, increasing effort at other locations, or choose not to fish. Guides and businesses would likely invest in drift boats that could be used on the Kenai or Kasilof Rivers to continue serving clients those days.

BACKGROUND: There are several Kenai River seasonal and reach-specific boat fishing restrictions that have been implemented over the past 20 years. Prior to the 2002 season, fishing on Mondays in May and June was prohibited from any vessel. In February 2002, the board allowed fishing on Mondays from unguided nonmotorized vessels.

Power boats, often in high numbers, are transiting the river each Monday even though fishing from a motorized vessel is restricted each Monday downstream of Skilak Lake. In July, for example, shore-based anglers (particularly those targeting sockeye salmon) travel to various shore locations and fish from shallow waters or riverbanks throughout the lower river. From July 10–31, personal use dip net anglers transit the lower river both to and from the lower river area downstream of the

Warren Ames Bridge open to dipnetting. Point of origin for river users transiting the river on Mondays in July include state-, city-, and privately-owned boat launches and campgrounds, commercial businesses (e.g., lodges), as well as privately-owned residences throughout the lower river.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to limit access to a fishery in the absence of a conservation concern and is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

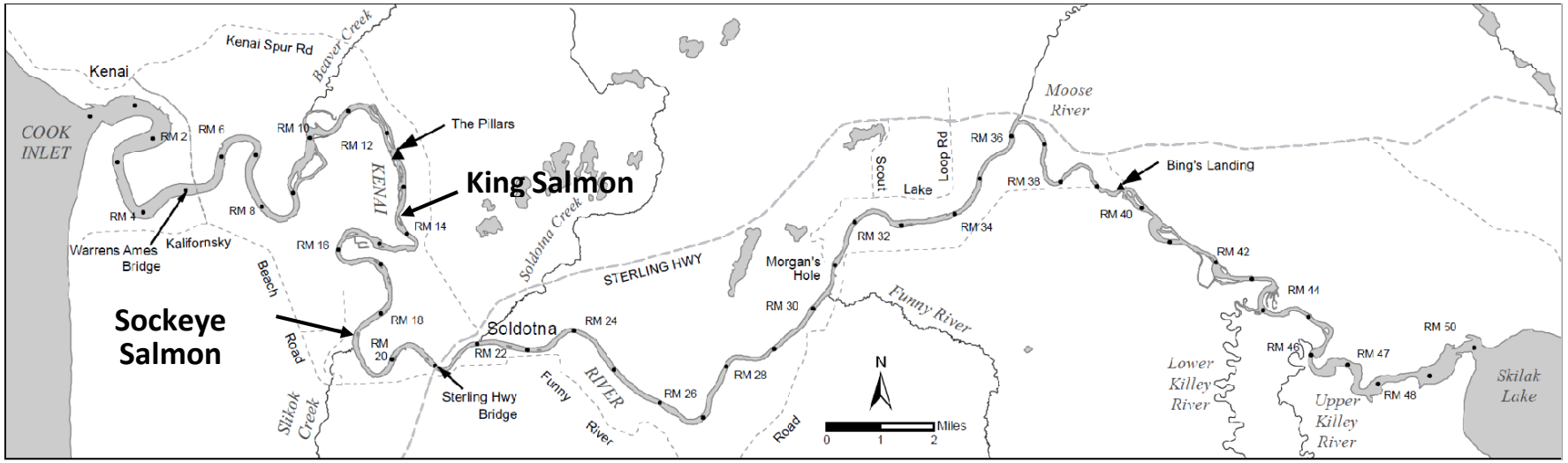

Figure 148-1.–Map of the lower Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 149 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Require mandatory retention of Kenai River king salmon.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit releasing Kenai River king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under statewide regulations, the commissioner may, by emergency order (EO), modify bag and possession limits and annual limits and alter methods and means in sport fisheries. If the sport harvest must be curtailed in any fishery for conservation reasons; the department may issue a "catch-and-release only" EO when the estimated hooking mortality is not projected to reduce the population of fish below the escapement goal.

Under the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359), the department manages the late run of Kenai River king salmon to achieve an optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 15,000–30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork length and longer. In order to achieve the OEG the department may restrict the sport fishery by prohibiting the use of bait or prohibiting retention and the use of bait.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could reduce fishing opportunity because it would require anglers who would otherwise intend to release a king salmon to harvest the fish. It would conflict with existing size limit regulations during the early run that require the release of fish greater than 34 inches in length, putting anglers in a regulatory paradox where it is illegal to keep a king salmon (fish is too large) but illegal to release it. It would eliminate release mortality, estimated to be around 8% of released king salmon. Removing catch-and-release as a step-down management option would increase the frequency of closures to the inriver sport fishery and could reduce fishing opportunity for sport, PU, and commercial fisheries (Table 149-1).

BACKGROUND: Information from Kenai River catch-and-release mortality studies indicate that the overall delayed hooking mortality for king salmon is approximately 8% using all gear types. The mortality of released fish is dependent mostly on hook placement. Hooking mortality is often higher for fish that have been hooked in vital areas, such as the esophagus or gills. Other factors, such as fish size, gear type, bleeding, and elapsed time to unhook the fish, can influence survival to a lesser degree than hook location.

The board has adopted regulations to promote best practices for releasing fish and reducing release-related mortality by prohibiting removing a fish from the water if it is to be released; prohibiting bait, which can affect hook placement and increase catch rates; prohibiting multiple hooks; and prohibiting fishing after a limit of a specific species is harvested. The department promotes best practices for releasing fish through education and outreach. The department uses emergency order authority to reduce mortality when necessary to achieve escapement goals or provide

sustainability. It does so primarily through harvest limit reductions, but also by prohibiting use of bait and multiple hooks.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal**.** Anglers release fish for a number of reasons. Catch-and-release fishing also allows fishing opportunity for all users and provides managers with the ability to allow fisheries to continue through the season to achieve escapement goals. The department encourages anglers to use best practices through outreach efforts.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 149-1.–Kenai River late-run large ≥75 cm king salmon harvest, catch-and-release mortality, inriver run, escapement, total run and harvest rate, 1986–2023.

Year	Cook Inlet marine harvest[a]	Eastside setnet harvest[b,h]	Drift gillnet harvest[c]	Subsis. or Educ. harvest[d]	Personal use dipnet harvest[e]	Inriver sport harvest[f]	Inriver sport catch-and-release mortality[f]	Inriver run[g]	Spawning escapement[g]	Total run[g]	Harvest rate
1986	45	9,750	902	0	0	8,940	286	58,428	49,197	69,188	0.29
1987	93	11,760	2,530	0	187	12,801	121	61,051	48,096	75,846	0.37
1988	114	7,526	1,309	0	0	19,417	174	61,638	42,003	70,691	0.41
1989	105	6,034	0	17	0	9,505	87	36,430	26,852	42,598	0.37
1990	107	1,688	253	8	0	5,886	59	30,471	24,496	32,514	0.25
1991	123	2,409	121	203	0	7,334	14	36,442	29,076	39,342	0.26
1992	158	5,604	322	300	0	7,255	225	45,289	37,788	51,689	0.27
1993	214	8,022	436	22	0	17,207	463	56,042	38,346	64,711	0.41
1994	139	9,005	268	325	0	17,051	547	49,005	31,400	58,798	0.47
1995	144	6,002	295	2	506	11,218	420	42,697	31,022	49,767	0.38
1996	147	5,993	202	1	218	7,525	313	38,309	30,453	44,874	0.32
1997	218	5,913	327	15	271	12,151	543	37,445	24,734	44,260	0.44
1998	116	2,173	143	1	155	6,289	498	40,218	33,381	42,828	0.22
1999	67	4,446	270	3	328	11,556	580	40,912	28,769	46,006	0.37
2000	73	1,856	136	4	295	13,611	446	40,441	26,331	42,826	0.39
2001	61	1,952	201	4	296	13,974	700	42,675	27,895	45,147	0.38
2002	30	3,522	154	3	322	11,278	595	54,878	42,940	58,965	0.27
2003	13	4,546	381	5	446	13,713	1,459	66,994	51,862	72,422	0.28
2004	109	10,021	510	7	523	14,622	858	86,094	70,617	97,329	0.27
2005	76	9,909	884	7	643	17,153	1,193	74,315	55,764	85,879	0.35
2006	63	3,173	887	5	471	13,602	714	55,247	40,911	59,872	0.32
2007	53	4,196	310	3	733	9,759	572	41,629	31,276	46,981	0.33
2008	36	3,535	301	10	896	10,015	333	40,468	30,001	45,202	0.34
2009	16	1,336	205	1	405	7,460	517	28,807	20,807	30,785	0.32
2010	35	2,384	193	11	444	5,774	212	19,403	13,425	22,502	0.40
2011	56	2,499	243	3	728	5,964	388	22,880	16,541	26,411	0.37
2012	0	334	103	0	27	86	79	23,571	23,427	24,038	0.03
2013	25	679	104	2	3	821	41	13,727	12,719	14,542	0.13
2014	41	706	112	0	0	287	38	11,903	11,584	12,776	0.09
2015	92	2,808	184	5	31	2,997	154	20,010	16,857	23,139	0.27

-continued-

Table 149-1.–Page 2 of 2.

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2016	80	2,906	242	3	364	5,576	228	21,422	15,652	25,023	0.37
2017	61	2,998	144	7	928	5,857	196	26,595	20,583	30,734	0.33
2018	11	555[h]	106	0	2	97	198	17,691	17,405	18,364	0.05
2019	34	613	58	0	14	857	92	12,637	11,709	13,360	0.12
2020	0	166	35	1	6	0	163	12,014	11,854	12,226	0.03
2021	28	217	40	0	13	141	117	12,489	12,238	12,794	0.04
2022	0	41	53	0	2	0	92	13,981	13,911	14,078	0.01
2023 [i]	0	0	35	0	0	0	0	14,502	14,502	14,537	0.00
Average											
1986–2023	73	3,876	342	-	244	8,099	361	37,072	28,590	41,659	0.27
2016–2023	27	937	89	2	166	1,566	136	16,416	14,732	17,640	0.12

[a] Estimates derived from SWHS, mean values of Kenai mainstem proportion (0.078; Schuster et al. 2021) and percent large in lower Kenai River late run creel survey by year.

[b] 1986–2009 estimates derived from mean 2010–2021 Kenai River mainstem proportion in ESSN (0.70; Eskelin and Barclay 2022) and fraction large in ESSN samples by year; 2010–2022 are point estimates from Eskelin and Barclay (2016–2023).

[c] Estimates derived from mean Kenai River mainstem proportion in ESSN (0.70; Eskelin and Barclay 2022), fraction large in ESSN samples by year and reported commercial drift gillnet harvest by year.

[d] Kenaitze education and federal subsistence fisheries; estimates derived from total reported harvest and fraction large in ESSN samples by year.

[e] Estimates derived from fraction large in ESSN samples by year and reported Kenai River personal use harvest.

[f] Creel survey estimates used for RM 5-21, SWHS and or guide logbook estimates used for RM 21-50 and fraction large from RM 5-21 creel survey by year. Assumes 0.076 catch and release mortality rate (Bendock and Alexandersdottir 1992).

[g] 1986–2021 posterior medians of state space model; 2022 and 2023 are point estimates.

[h] Harvest estimate does not include Kasilof River terminal fishery.

[i] These estimates are preliminary until biometrically reviewed and published.

Upper Cook Inlet Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Plan (4 proposals)

PROPOSAL 1 – 5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan.
Amend the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create preseason and inseason management actions for the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery based on Anchor and Kenai Rivers' preseason forecasts and inseason projections.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* encompasses all salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59°40.00′N) (Figure 1-1). This management plan is effective April 1 through August 31, requires anglers to stop fishing for king (Chinook) salmon for the day after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or longer, and prohibits guides and crewmembers from sport fishing when clients are present or within guide's control or responsibility. This plan also closes all sport fishing within one mile of shore around the mouths of the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams from April 1 through July 15 except from shore for three 3-day weekends in June in the Ninilchik area.

Management plans that impact Cook Inlet salt water king salmon fisheries are:

- *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.055)
  - North of Bluff Point
  - April – August
  - GHL 8,000 king salmon
- *Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.060)
  - Cook Inlet wide
  - September – March
  - GHL 4,500 king salmon
- *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC57.160)
  - prescribes management actions in fresh waters of Kenai and Kasilof rivers to achieve established escapement goals
  - January – June
- *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359)
  - directs salt water sport fishery and the Kenai River sport fishery closures based on projections to achieve established escapement goal
  - June 20 – August 15

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide the board the opportunity to create regulatory structure for preseason and inseason management actions for the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery for early-run Cook Inlet king salmon stocks. It would also align management of this fishery with freshwater fisheries outlined in the *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon*

Management Plan and would specify an effective date for late-run restrictions. This proposal would reduce king salmon harvest in the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Fishery in years with preseason forecasts and inseason projection estimates below the lower end of the escapement goals.

BACKGROUND: In 1996, the board adopted the *Upper Cook Inlet Salt Water Early-run King Salmon Management Plan* to stabilize a growing king salmon fishery on a mixture of Cook Inlet stocks in nearshore salt waters. The board extended the plan to include late-run stocks in 2016 and all salt waters north of Bluff Point in 2019. These early-run stocks include the Lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams (Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River), Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, and Northern Cook Inlet stocks, and the late-run stocks include Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. The *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* has a guideline harvest level of 8,000 king salmon, but there are no management actions outlined in the plan. The *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* which begins June 20, specifies that this saltwater sport fishery and the Kenai River sport fishery will be closed if the projected late-run Kenai River king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid-eye to tail fork and longer.

The harvest in the summer saltwater fishery in its peak years (1986-2001) averaged approximately 7,000 king salmon annually, but in the last three years has declined to an average of less than 2,000 fish (Table 1-1). Lower harvests are due to restrictions and closures in salt waters to protect Kenai Peninsula king salmon stocks and lower abundance of local king salmon stocks in Cook Inlet in recent years. From 2014 through 2018, the department conducted a Cook Inlet marine sport harvest assessment program to identify the harvest contribution by genetic reporting groups for this fishery. On average, Cook Inlet stocks made up 17% of the annual fishery harvest, which resulted in annual harvests of approximately 300 to 700 Cook Inlet king salmon.

In combination with restrictions to freshwater king salmon sport fisheries within Cook Inlet, the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery has been restricted or closed by emergency order in 12 of the last 15 years since 2009. For early-run stocks, these restrictions have been based on the king salmon escapement monitoring in the Anchor and Kenai Rivers. Based on king salmon run timing to the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, these actions have been effective through July 15. Preseason restrictions generally reduced the annual limit of king salmon 20" or longer from five fish to two fish. Inseason restrictions closed king salmon sport fishing within one mile of shore where Cook Inlet stocks are most likely to be harvested. The late-run portion of this fishery has been managed with the stipulations in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* which has closed the fishery annually from 2020 through 2022. In 2023, this fishery was closed preseason from May 15 through July 31 to reduce the harvest of early-run and late-run stocks.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. In years of low abundance of Cook Inlet king salmon stocks, the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery should be restricted to reduce the harvest of Cook Inlet stocks. By specifying management actions in the plan, the public and the board have the opportunity to provide input on the fishery structure. This fishery will also be reviewed with the development of a Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern action plan.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

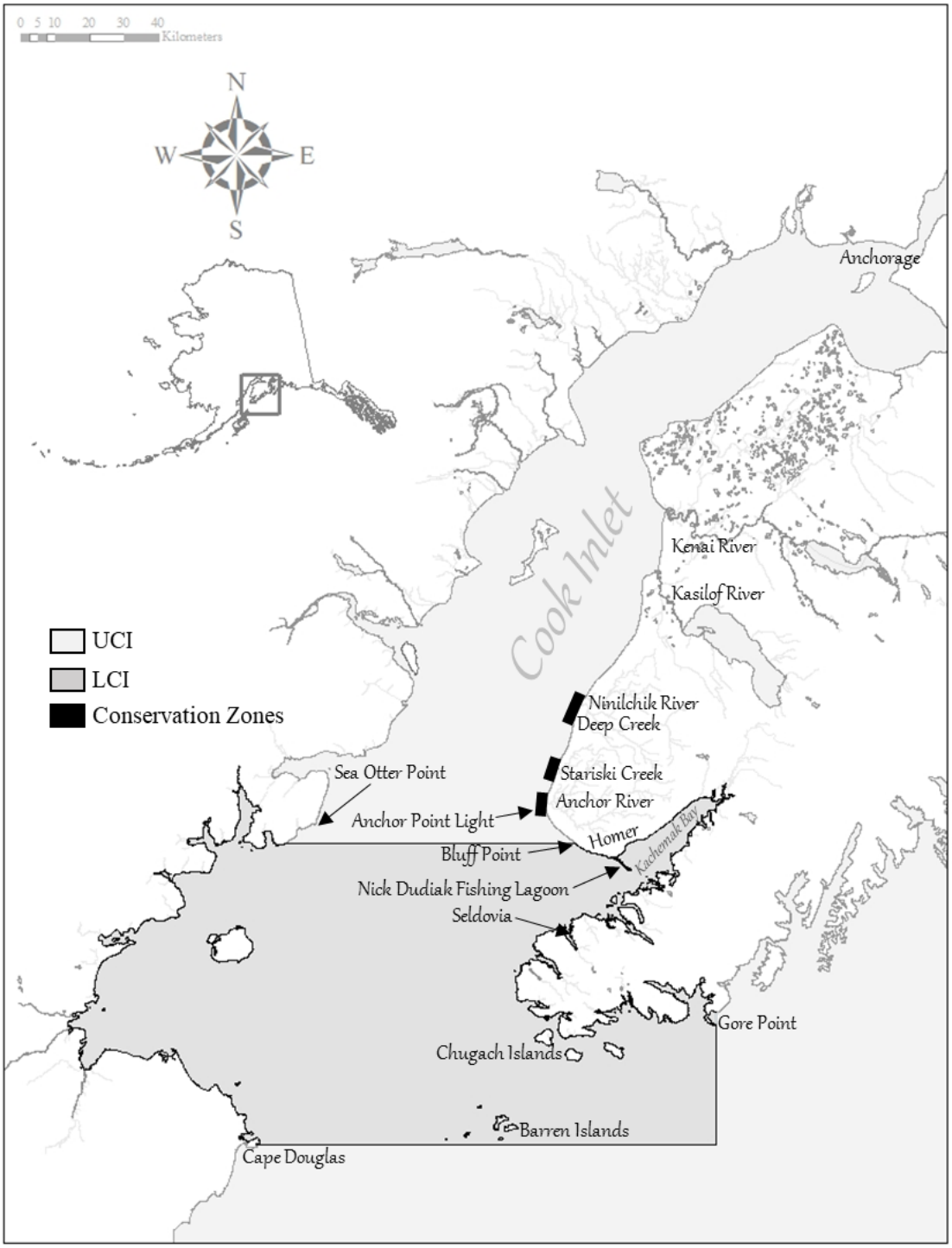

Figure 1-1.–Map of Lower and Upper Cook Inlet salt waters associated with king salmon sport fishing regulations including the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan*.

Table 1-1.–King salmon sport harvest by fishery and user group in Upper and Lower Cook Inlet salt waters, 2002–2022.

	Lower Cook Inlet Management Area											
	UCI Summer			LCI Summer			Winter			Total MA[a]		
Year	Charter	Unguided	Total	Charter	Unguided	Total	Charter	Unguided	Total	Charter	Unguided	Overall total
2002	1,970	1,825	3,795	1,520	1,990	3,510	204	1,219	1,423	3,694	8,116	11,810
2003	2,326	1,916	4,242	1,732	2,498	4,230	289	1,515	1,804	4,347	10,409	14,756
2004	3,024	2,395	5,419	3,515	2,420	5,935	419	1,650	2,069	6,958	10,766	17,724
2005	2,371	2,415	4,786	3,861	3,331	7,192	412	2,546	2,958	6,644	12,160	18,804
2006	3,323	2,610	5,933	3,055	2,943	5,998	169	1,346	1,515	6,547	9,821	16,368
2007	2,786	2,026	4,812	1,736	1,923	3,659	404	1,607	2,011	4,926	7,630	12,556
2008	1,742	912	2,654	1,285	1,749	3,034	336	1,356	1,692	3,363	5,199	8,562
2009	645	1,026	1,671	808	1,481	2,289	310	1,386	1,696	1,763	4,783	6,546
2010	731	1,580	2,311	2,580	1,673	4,253	789	1,770	2,559	4,100	6,034	10,134
2011	1,308	1,746	3,054	1,718	1,806	3,524	441	1,559	2,000	3,467	5,817	9,284
2012	581	827	1,408	1,817	1,514	3,331	330	1,749	2,079	2,728	4,162	6,890
2013	1,438	1,099	2,537	3,180	2,630	5,810	638	1,773	2,411	5,256	5,766	11,022
2014	1,160	1,379	2,539	2,964	2,095	5,059	438	2,735	3,173	4,562	7,427	11,989
2015	2,282	1,904	4,186	3,594	4,472	8,066	902	4,277	5,179	6,778	12,737	19,515
2016	1,962	1,801	3,763	5,335	4,533	9,868	344	4,762	5,106	7,641	12,364	20,005
2017	1,862	1,294	3,156	5,059	3,628	8,687	903	3,615	4,518	7,824	9,614	17,438
2018	1,436	1,541	2,977	3,318	3,500	6,818	1,341	6,503	7,844	6,095	12,062	18,157
2019	1,586	645	2,231	4,246	2,589	6,835	1,667	3,656	5,323	7,499	8,151	15,650
2020	592	1,188	1,780	4,756	2,319	7,075	1,795	3,540	5,335	7,143	8,002	15,145
2021	1,315	464	1,779	7,471	3,544	11,015	1,455	3,128	4,583	10,241	8,100	18,341
2022	1,490	897	2,387	4,534	3,853	8,387	1,520	3,422	4,942	7,544	9,224	16,768
Averages												
1986–2001	4,507	2,569	7,076	–	–	–	–	–	–	4,222	9,581	13,804
2002–2013	1,854	1,664	3,485	2,234	2,163	4,397	510	2,433	2,943	5,100	8,522	12,038
2014–2018	1,740	1,584	3,324	4,054	3,646	7,700	786	4,378	5,164	6,580	10,841	17,421
2019–2022	1,246	799	2,044	5,252	3,076	8,328	1,609	3,437	5,046	8,107	8,369	16,476

[a] The total management area harvest contains harvest from other locations including the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon on the Homer Spit and shoreline fishing in Upper Cook Inlet, and is not just the sum of the summer and winter fisheries.

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan.
Amend the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? For the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery, this would prevent preseason management actions, create a management action based on inseason projections for the Kenai and Anchor Rivers, and would establish a seasonal limit of two king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* encompasses all salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59°40.00'N) (Figure 1-1). This management plan is effective April 1 through August 31, requires anglers to stop fishing for king salmon for the day after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or longer, and prohibits guides and crewmembers from sport fishing when clients are present or within guide's control or responsibility. This plan also closes all sport fishing within one mile of shore around the mouths of the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams from April 1 through July 15 except from shore for three 3-day weekends in June in the Ninilchik area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit the department from taking any management actions for the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery until sonar counts are available for the Kenai and Anchor Rivers, which may increase harvest of Cook Inlet king salmon by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: In 1996, the board adopted the *Upper Cook Inlet Salt Water Early-run King Salmon Management Plan* with the intention of stabilizing a growing king salmon fishery on a mixture of fully utilized Cook Inlet stocks in the nearshore salt waters. The board extended the plan to include late-run stocks in 2016 and all salt waters north of Bluff Point in 2019. The early-run stocks include the Lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams (Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River), Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, and Northern Cook Inlet stocks and late-run stocks include Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. The *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* has a guideline harvest level of 8,000 king salmon, but there are no management actions outlined in the plan. The *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* which begins June 20, specifies that this salt water sport fishery and the Kenai River sport fishery will be closed if the projected late-run Kenai River king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid-eye to tail fork and longer.

The harvest in the summer saltwater fishery in its peak years (1986-2001) averaged approximately 7,000 king salmon annually, but in the last three years has declined to an average of less than 2,000 fish (Table 1-1). Lower harvests are due to restrictions and closures in salt waters to protect Kenai Peninsula king salmon stocks and lower abundance of local king salmon stocks in Cook Inlet in recent years. From 2014 through 2018, the department conducted a Cook Inlet marine sport harvest assessment program to identify the harvest contribution by genetic reporting groups for this

fishery. On average, Cook Inlet stocks comprised 17% of the annual fishery harvest, which resulted in annual harvests of approximately 300 to 700 Cook Inlet king salmon.

King salmon escapement monitoring on the Anchor and Kenai Rivers begins in mid-May. On both rivers, the first king salmon are typically counted in mid- to late-May, with inseason management actions typically taken the first or second week of June.

In combination with restrictions to freshwater king salmon sport fisheries within Cook Inlet, the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery has been restricted or closed by emergency order in 12 of the last 15 years since 2009. For early-run stocks, these restrictions have been based on the king salmon escapement monitoring in the Anchor and Kenai Rivers. Based on king salmon run timing to the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, these actions have been effective through July 15. Preseason restrictions generally reduced the annual limit of king salmon 20" or longer from five fish to two fish. Inseason restrictions closed king salmon sport fishing within one mile of shore where Cook Inlet stocks are most likely to be harvested. The late-run portion of this fishery has been managed with the stipulations in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* which has closed the fishery annually from 2020 through 2022. In 2023, this fishery was closed preseason from May 15 through July 31 to reduce the harvest of early-run and late-run stocks.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. In years of low abundance of Cook Inlet king salmon, using both preseason and inseason management actions for this fishery provides more protection for these stocks as they migrate through Cook Inlet salt waters. A large portion of these early-run stocks would likely have migrated through these waters by the time inriver counts allowed for inseason management actions to be made. The department has submitted Proposal 1 to provide regulatory structure for preseason and inseason restrictions for this fishery. This fishery will also be reviewed with the development of a Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern action plan.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 3 – 5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan and 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Amend the management plans for the Upper Cook Inlet Summer and Kenai River late-run king salmon fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a paired management action for the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery with the commercial Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery that stipulates if the commercial fishery is open, the sport fishery will be open from Anchor Point to Deep Creek in July.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* encompasses all salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59°40.00'N) (Figure 1-1). This management plan is effective April 1 through August 31, requires anglers to stop fishing for king salmon for the day after harvesting a king salmon 20 inches or longer, and prohibits guides and crewmembers from sport fishing when clients are present or within guide's control or responsibility. This plan also closes all sport fishing within one mile of shore around the mouths of the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams from April 1 through July 15, except from shore for three 3-day weekends in June in the Ninilchik area.

The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* is effective June 20 through August 15 and stipulates that if the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid-eye to tail fork or longer, the department shall

1) close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon;
2) close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and
3) close the commercial set gillnet in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? In some years when the Upper subdistrict set gillnet fishery is open, this would provide more sport fishing opportunity for early- and late-run king salmon stocks in years of low abundance of early-run stocks. It is likely to increase the harvest by an unknown but assumed small amount.

BACKGROUND: In 1996, the board adopted the *Upper Cook Inlet Salt Water Early-run King Salmon Management Plan* with the intention of stabilizing a growing king salmon fishery on a mixture of fully utilized Cook Inlet stocks in the nearshore salt waters. The board extended the plan to include late-run stocks in 2016 and all salt waters north of Bluff Point in 2019. These early-run stocks include the Lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams (Anchor River, Deep Creek and Ninilchik River), Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, and Northern Cook Inlet stocks and late-run stocks include Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. The *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* has a guideline harvest level of 8,000 king salmon, but there are no management

actions outlined in the plan. The *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan*, which begins June 20, specifies that this saltwater sport fishery and the Kenai River sport fishery will be closed if the projected late-run Kenai River king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid-eye to tail fork and longer.

The harvest in the summer saltwater fishery in its peak years (1986-2001) averaged approximately 7,000 king salmon annually, but in the last three years has declined to an average of less than 2,000 fish (Table 1-1). Lower harvests are due to restrictions and closures in salt waters to protect Kenai Peninsula king salmon stocks and lower abundance of local king salmon stocks in Cook Inlet in recent years. From 2014 through 2018, the department conducted a Cook Inlet marine sport harvest assessment program to identify the harvest contribution by genetic reporting groups for this fishery. On average, Cook Inlet stocks comprised 17% of the annual fishery harvest, which resulted in annual harvests of approximately 300 to 700 Cook Inlet king salmon.

In combination with restrictions to freshwater king salmon sport fisheries within Cook Inlet, the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery has been restricted or closed by emergency order in 12 of the last 15 years since 2009. For early-run stocks, these restrictions have been based on the king salmon escapement monitoring in the Anchor and Kenai Rivers. Based on king salmon run timing to the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, these actions have been effective through July 15. Preseason restrictions generally reduced the annual limit of king salmon 20" or longer from five fish to two fish. Inseason restrictions closed king salmon sport fishing within one mile of shore where Cook Inlet stocks are most likely to be harvested. The late-run portion of this fishery has been managed with the stipulations in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* which has closed the fishery annually from 2020 through 2022. In 2023, this fishery was closed preseason from May 15 through July 31 to reduce the harvest of early-run and late-run stocks. The reduced annual king salmon harvest in this saltwater fishery in recent years is likely due to a combination of these restrictions and poor runs of Cook Inlet king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and is **NEUTRAL** on any allocative aspects. Allowing fishing in July from Anchor Point to Deep Creek salt waters may increase the harvest of late-run king salmon and other lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams stocks. It is unclear if the intention of this proposal was to allow fishing in the first two weeks of July in the conservation zones that are closed to all sport fishing. Currently, the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* only has management actions that would close king salmon sport fishing in Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery and commercial Eastside Setnet Fishery simultaneously. Given the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern designation, this fishery will also be reviewed with the development of an action plan.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 4 – 5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan.
Redefine the boundaries of the Upper Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would move the regulatory boundary in Cook Inlet salt waters for king salmon sport fisheries from the latitude of Bluff Point to a line from Anchor Point to Sea Otter Point.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From April 1 through August 31, all salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59°40.00'N) (Figure 1-1) are included in the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* and the king salmon bag and possession limit is one fish any size. From April 1 through August 31, in Cook Inlet salt waters south of the latitude of Bluff Point (59°40.00'N), the king salmon bag and possession limits are two fish any size. During this time, king salmon 20" or greater in length harvested in Cook Inlet salt waters are included in the Cook Inlet annual limit of five.

The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* is effective June 20 through August 15 and stipulates that if the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid-eye to tail fork or longer, the department shall

1) close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon;
2) close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and
3) close the commercial set gillnet in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would remove an approximately seven statute mile area between Bluff Point and Anchor Point from the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* and would increase the king salmon bag and possession limits in that area from one to two king salmon from April 1 through August 31. This would likely increase king salmon harvest of both Cook Inlet and nonlocal stocks by an unknown small amount. It would also provide a more identifiable landmark for this boundary.

BACKGROUND: In Cook Inlet salt waters along the Kenai Peninsula, the Bluff Point to Anchor Point area is a popular location for anglers to troll for king salmon year-round. In a typical fishing trip, anglers will routinely fish both north and south of the latitude of Bluff Point. Based on sport harvest assessment projects in Cook Inlet salt waters, Cook Inlet stocks are most likely to be harvested north of Anchor Point and within one mile of shore in May through July. In the area from Anchor Point south to Bluff Point and greater than one mile from shore, nonlocal feeder king salmon comprise most of the harvest, but based on maturity a small percentage (10% or less) are Cook Inlet stocks. Based on genetic mixed stock analyses from 2014 through 2018, on average 97% of the king salmon harvested south of Bluff Point are nonlocal stocks.

In 1990, the board first established Bluff Point as a boundary to divide Cook Inlet salt waters, reducing bag and possession limits to one king salmon north of the boundary and leaving the king salmon bag and possession limits south of the boundary. Additionally in 1990, the board used Bluff Point as a southern boundary in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.* Cook Inlet saltwater king salmon sport fisheries area and season have been refined over time by the board, but in 2013 and 2016 the board failed to adopt public proposals to modify the Bluff Point boundary to Anchor Point.

In combination with restrictions to freshwater king salmon sport fisheries within Cook Inlet, the Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery has been restricted or closed by emergency order in 12 of the last 15 years since 2009. For early-run stocks, these restrictions have been based on the king salmon escapement monitoring in the Anchor and Kenai Rivers. Based on king salmon run timing to the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, these actions have been effective through July 15. Preseason restrictions generally reduced the annual limit of king salmon 20" or longer from five fish to two fish. Inseason restrictions closed king salmon sport fishing within one mile of shore where Cook Inlet stocks are most likely to be harvested. The late-run portion of this fishery has been managed with the stipulations in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* which has closed the fishery annually from 2020 through 2022. In 2023, this fishery was closed preseason from May 15 through July 31 to reduce the harvest of early-run and late-run stocks. Also in 2023, the king salmon bag limit south of Bluff Point was reduced preseason from two to one fish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and is **NEUTRAL** on any allocative aspects. The department supports using a more recognizable landmark for boundaries where possible, but potential increased king salmon harvest in this area is not advisable during years of low productivity of Cook Inlet stocks. This fishery will also be reviewed with the development of a Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern action plan.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.