RC 2, Vol. 2

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON
COMMERCIAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE
REGULATORY PROPOSALS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 5–7
FOR

UPPER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

February 23–March 7, 2024

Regional Information Report No. 5J24-03

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

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON COMMERICAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE REGULATORY PROPOSALS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 5–7 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, eulachon.

This document should be cited as follows:

ADF&G (Alaska Department of Fish and Game). 2024. Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence regulatory proposals, Committee of the Whole–Groups 5–7 for Upper Cook Inlet finfish, Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, Anchorage, Alaska, February 23–March 7, 2024. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Information Report No. 5J24-03, Anchorage.

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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
111	O	Adopt a Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal
112	N	Increase the upper bound of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon inriver goal
113	O	Adopt an optimal escapement goal for Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon
114	O/N	Adopt an optimal escapement goal for Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon
115	N	Modify intent of the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
118	N	Reduce the Kasilof River sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal
119	O/N	Allow the Kasilof River SHA to remain open when the remainder of the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict is closed
120	N	Repeal portions of intent language within the *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan*
121	N	Modify intent language within the *Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan*
122	N	Repeal the ‘one percent rule’ in the Central District drift gillnet fishery
123	N	Repeal the “one percent rule” from Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery management plans
124	N	Repeal the “one percent rule” from Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery management plans
125	N	Repeal sections of the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* to provide additional commercial salmon fishing opportunity with drift gillnet gear
126	TNA	Increase drift gillnet fishing opportunity in Drift Gillnet Area 2
127	N	Modify weekly fishing periods in the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*
128	N	Provide additional fishing opportunity with set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict
129	N	Increase Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial salmon fishing opportunity
130	N	Lengthen Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial salmon fishing season
132	O/N	Provide additional commercial salmon fishing opportunity in Upper Cook Inlet based on salmon escapement
133	O/N	Modify weekly fishing periods in the Upper Subdistrict and adopt new ‘paired restrictive’ management measures
134	O/N	Modify weekly fishing periods
135	O	Close the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict to commercial fishing for salmon
136	N	Increase waters closed to commercial fishing for salmon
137	O/N	Increase waters closed to commercial fishing in Upper Cook Inlet

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; TNA = Take No Action; WS = Withdrawn Support.

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals (Page 2 of 4).

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
138	O/N	Allow use of a seine lead in the set gillnet fishery and define minimum distance between gear
139	N	Allow use of reef nets in the Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery
140	N	Restrict set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict
141	N	Increase the number of days the Susitna River dipnet fishery is open
142	O	Establish commercial fishery reporting requirements in Upper Cook Inlet
143	N	Allow Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet permit holders to fish in more than one registration area per year
43	O	Amend Basic Management Plans *Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan*
144	N	Amend the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*
145	O	Increase commercial fishing opportunity in the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*
150	O	Create a *Kasilof River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*
151	O/N	Add days and area to the nonmotorized restrictions on the Kenai River
152	O	Prohibit motorized vessels on the Kenai River
153	N	Allow guiding on the Kenai River on Sundays and Mondays
154	N	Allow guiding on the Kenai River without restrictions if king salmon fishery is closed
155	N	Allow guiding on the Kenai River Sundays and Mondays if king salmon fishery closed
156	N	Allow fishing from a guided nonmotorized vessel on Mondays during May–July
157	N	Allow anglers to fish on the Kenai River on Mondays in August and September from a guided vessel
158	N	Allow sport fishing from a guide vessel on Sundays and Mondays with no hour restrictions
159	N	Allow sport fishing from a guide vessel on the Kenai River on Mondays from August 1 through November 30
160	N	Limit guided activities on the Kenai River from May 1 through July 31
161	N	Restrict guided shoreline anglers on Kenai River to 6:00 AM–6:00 PM July 1 to August 15
162	N	Allow guiding on the Kenai River prior to 6:00 AM and after 6:00 PM
163	N	Reduce the time fishing from and anchoring a guided vessel in the Kasilof River
164	N	Limit sport fish guiding in the Kasilof River

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; TNA = Take No Action; WS = Withdrawn Support.

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals (Page 3 of 4).

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
165	O	Allow sport fishing in the Kenai River with only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from January to July
166	O	Expand time and area waters of the Kenai River that are limited to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure, and redefine "artificial fly"
167	O	Expand time and area waters of the Kenai River that are limited to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure
168	O	Allow anglers to use two artificial flies in tandem on the Kenai River
169	O	Change the definition of "bag limit" for sockeye salmon in Kenai and Kasilof Rivers
170	N	Allow backtrolling in a section of the Kenai River
171	N	Allow anglers to fish downstream of Soldotna Bridge after taking limit of coho salmon
172	N	Allow fishing from a vessel after retention of a limit of coho salmon on the Kenai River
173	O	Modify regulations for the Kenai River August coho salmon fishery
174	O	Regulate the use of bait in the Kenai River in August
175	N	Reduce the coho salmon limits in the Kenai River to two fish after August 30
176	N	Reduce the coho salmon limit on Kenai River after September 1
177	N	Modify Kenai River coho salmon season and bag limits
178	N	Reduce the season for the Kenai River coho salmon sport fishery
179	O	Close additional waters to sport fishing in the upper Kenai River
180	O	Close waters of the Kenai River to sportfishing from January 1 to April 1
181	O	Close waters of the Kenai River to sportfishing from January 1 to June 10
182	N	Prohibit nonresident sport fishing on the Kenai River
183	S	Allow the department to react to large Russian River sockeye salmon runs
184	S	Move 3-mile boundary marker to Old Kasilof Landing (RM4)
185	S	Allow only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures in the Kasilof River
186	S	Update the stocked lakes list for the Kenai Peninsula Area
187	S	Close Hidden Lake to fishing for lake trout from September 15 to November 30
188	O	Prohibit bait and multiple hooks in Hidden Lake

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; TNA = Take No Action; WS = Withdrawn Support.

-continued-

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

Proposal number	Department position	Issue
189	N	Require personal use guides in Cook Inlet to adhere to sport guiding requirements
190	N	Establish requirements to guide in Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries
191	O	Adjust limits in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries based on abundance
192	O/N	Close personal use fisheries based on commercial openings
193	S	Require king salmon caught and released in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries not be removed from the water
194	O	Allow retention of Dolly Varden in Kenai/Kasilof personal use dipnet fisheries
195	N	Restrict emergency order (EO) authority to only the shore-based fishery in the Kenai River personal use fishery
196	O	Prohibit personal use fishing on the Kenai River from an anchored vessel
197	N	Prohibit retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use fishery
198	O	Prohibit transport of Kenai personal use fish by motorized vessel
199	O	Prohibit transport of Kasilof personal use fish by motorized vessel
200	N	Close the Kasilof personal use gillnet fishery when Kenai or Kasilof sport fisheries are closed
201	O/N	Close the Kenai River personal use fishery when the drift fishery is restricted
202	S	Reduce the legal mesh size of a set gillnet in the UCI personal use fisheries
203	N	Move the regulatory markers for the Kasilof River personal use dip net fishery

Note: N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; TNA = Take No Action; WS = Withdrawn Support.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 5: SOCKEYE SALMON MANAGEMENT PLANS (8 PROPOSALS)

Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (5 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 111 – 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*.
Adopt a Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a new Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 450,000-750,000 fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* instructs the department to manage commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries in the Kenai River to: 1) meet the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 late-run sockeye salmon, 2) achieve inriver goals as established by the board and measured at the Kenai River sonar counter located at RM 19, and 3) distribute escapement of sockeye salmon evenly within the SEG range, in proportion to the size of the run.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Lowering the Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement objective could result in more fish being available for sport and personal use harvest if the inriver goals remained unchanged. If inriver goals were removed and the proposed OEG was the only management objective this could result in reduced harvest for inriver sport and personal use fisheries and increased harvest in commercial fisheries. Sockeye salmon escapement levels less than the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 fish will result in reduced yields in future years based on the current escapement goal analysis.

BACKGROUND: Escapement and inriver goals for Kenai River sockeye salmon have undergone numerous changes through time (Table 111-1). From 1999–2010, the SEG for Kenai River sockeye salmon was 500,000–800,000 fish measured in Bendix sonar units. After transitioning to DIDSON sonar in the Kenai River in 2011, a new sockeye salmon escapement goal analysis was conducted using the converted data. The analysis based on DIDSON-measured passage indicated the SEG be set at 700,000–1,200,000 spawners, a range that approximately represented the escapement that on average would produce 90-100% of MSY. The 2019 escapement goal review increased the Kenai River sockeye salmon SEG from 700,000–1,200,000 to 750,000–1,300,000 spawners beginning in 2020. The department did not change the SEG during the 2023 escapement goal review.

The inriver goal was established by the board in 1969 and beginning in 1999 as a tier-based goal that can change annually based on Kenai River sockeye salmon run size. The inriver goal, as measured at the Kenai River sonar counter located at RM 19, is used by managers inseason as the primary assessment of sockeye salmon inriver abundance. By adjusting the management

objective based on run size the escapement is distributed across the SEG range over time and each year a guaranteed amount of fish is allocated inriver to be available for sport fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** setting management objectives below the lower bound of established SEG ranges, as doing so would likely result in reduction of future yields and increased probability fishing the stock below sustainable levels. The Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal was reviewed in 2023 and no change was made to the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 fish. 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 sockeye salmon SEG and under the policy the board could make this change by adopting an OEG. The proposal is unclear in whether the proposers are seeking establishment of an OEG or BEG as both terms are used. The only exception to this may be to provide limited opportunity for subsistence use. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of 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 for the department.

Table 111-1.–History of changes to Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon BEG/SEGs, inriver goals, and OEGs.

Kenai River sockeye salmon goal changes			
Year	BEG/SEG	Inriver	OEG
1969		150,000	
1972		150,000-250,000	
1978	350,000-500,000	350,000-500,000	
1987	330,000-600,000	400,000-700,000	330,000-600,000
1995		450,000-700,000	
1996	330,000-600,000	550,000-800,000	330,000-600,000
1997	330,000-600,000	550,000-825,000	330,000-600,000
1998	330,000-600,000	550,000-850,000	330,000-600,000
1999	500,000-800,000	600,000-1,100,000[a]	500,000-1,000,000
2005	500,000-800,000	650,000- ,100,000[a]	500,000-1,000,000
2011	700,000-1,200,000	900,000-1,350,000[a]	700,000-1,400,000
2014	700,000-1,200,000	900,000-1,350,000[a]	700,000-1,400,000
2017	700,000-1,200,000	900,000-1,500,000[a]	eliminated
2020	750,000-1,300,000	1,000,000-1,600,000[a]	-

[a] Beginning in 1999, inriver goal is based upon three run size tiers

PROPOSAL 112 – 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*.

Increase the upper bound of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon inriver goal.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* to increase inriver goal ranges as follows:

Run strength	Current inriver goal	Proposed inriver goal
< 2.3 mil	1,000,000 – 1,200,000	1,000,000 – 1,600,000
2.3-4.6 mil	1,100,000 – 1,400,000	1,100,000 – 1,600,000
> 4.6 mil	1,200,000 – 1,600,000	No Change

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.360 (b)) states that Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries shall be managed to: 1) meet the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 750,000–1,300,000 late-run sockeye salmon, 2) achieve inriver goals as established by the board and measured at the Kenai River sonar counter located at RM 19, and 3) distribute escapement of sockeye salmon evenly within the SEG range, in proportion to the size of the run. Based on preseason forecasts and inseason projections of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon, the fishery will be managed as follows: at run strengths of less than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon, the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of 1,000,000–1,200,000 sockeye salmon past the sonar counter at RM 19; at run strengths of 2,300,000–4,600,000, the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of 1,100,000–1,400,000 sockeye salmon; at run strengths greater than 4,600,000, the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of 1,200,000–1,600,000 sockeye salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the number of sockeye salmon in the Kenai River (at RM 19) from 200,000 to 400,000 fish above the upper end of current lower and middle inriver goal ranges. In years when the commercial sockeye salmon fishery is not restricted for king salmon conservation, this may result in fewer openings for ESSN and drift gillnet fisheries potentially providing more fish for inriver use.

In recent years of low Kenai Late-run king salmon abundance the department's ability to manage to sockeye salmon is limited due to provisions in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* that restrict or close commercial fisheries for king salmon conservation. In years when the commercial fishery is restricted or closed, sockeye salmon run size is the greatest factor controlling the capacity to stay within the inriver goal as management strategy has little control because harvest power is ineffective in controlling average to large sized sockeye salmon runs.

BACKGROUND: The *Kenai River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.360) was first adopted in 1980. The purpose of this management plan was to ensure an adequate escapement of sockeye salmon into the Kenai River system and to provide management guidelines to reduce allocation conflicts between various user groups. In 1996, the name of the plan was changed to

the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* and the plan stated that its purpose is to achieve the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon BEG and to provide management guidelines to the department. In 1999, the purpose statement was modified to state that the department shall manage the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses to provide commercial fishermen with an economic yield from the harvest of these salmon resources based on abundance. Also in 1999, the three-tiered abundance-based inriver goals for Kenai River sockeye salmon were adopted. Tiers were originally set at less than two million; two million to four million; and greater than four million fish (Table 112-2). Since 1999, the management plan purpose statement has changed slightly as the board has deliberated to balance the allocation needs and desires of the various user groups. In addition, there have been numerous provisions added to the plan including no-fishing "windows" and weekly EO hour limitations to the ESSN fishery (Table 112-2). During that time period emergency order authority has been used to restrict inriver users in years of poor returns. Currently, the plan states the department shall also manage commercial fisheries to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, and late-run Kenai River king and coho salmon stocks, to provide personal use, sport, and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources.

Similar to management regulations, escapement and inriver goals for Kenai River sockeye salmon have also undergone numerous changes through time (Table 112-3). From 1978–1986, the escapement goal for Kenai River sockeye salmon was similar to the current inriver goal in that department escapement goal reports completed at the time referred to it as an escapement goal measured at the Kenai River sonar site. Since 1999, the inriver goal has been used to provide sockeye salmon to the inriver sport fishery and distribute escapements throughout the SEG/OEG range.

The 1999 goals were based on Bendix sonar counts. The upper end of the OEG range was set at 1,000,000 sockeye salmon in response to a risk analysis indicating spawning escapement in excess of 1,000,000 fish increased the risk of lower returns and yields. The upper end of the inriver goal for large runs was set at 100,000 fish above the OEG. This was done because the smallest harvest observed in the sport fishery above the sockeye salmon sonar counter was 100,000 fish. By setting the upper end of the inriver goal range at 1,100,000 fish, the upper end of the OEG of 1,000,000 fish would not be exceeded. In addition, the three tiers of inriver goals were established to spread escapements evenly throughout the range of both the BEG/SEG and OEG over time, based upon abundance of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon and in compliance with 5 AAC 39.222. *Policy for the management of sustainable salmon fisheries*. In 2005, the board added 50,000 sockeye salmon to the bottom tier of the inriver goal range (600,000– 650,000) to account for increased average sport fish harvest above the sockeye salmon sonar counter (Table 112-1).

In 2011, the abundance-based tiers were adjusted as the department transitioned from Bendix sonar to new DIDSON technology (Table 112-2). Sonar transition was completed after three years of comparison counts between the two types of sonar. Updated tiers were set at less than 2.3 million; 2.3 million to 4.6 million; and greater than 4.6 million fish. As a result of the change in sonar technology, the SEG for Kenai River sockeye salmon was modified from a range of 500,000–800,000 spawners to 700,000–1,200,000 spawners. The change in the SEG range resulted in no change in the actual number of spawners in the system; it just reflected that the new sonar technology enumerated more fish passing the sonar than the Bendix system did. The escapement goal range of 700,000–1,200,000 approximately represented the escapement that on average will produce 90–100% of MSY. Change in the SEG range also led to a change in the OEG range: it

was modified from 500,000–1,000,000 fish to 700,000–1,400,000 fish to reflect the change in the SEG range. In 2017, the OEG was eliminated, while the upper end of the inriver goal ranges were increased for middle and large sized runs to account for the increased ability of the sport fishery to harvest sockeye salmon when daily passage is high. The department's 2013 and 2016 escapement goal reviews found no changes to the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon SEG were warranted. In 2020, the SEG increased to 750,000–1,300,000 fish. The department did not change the SEG based on the 2023 escapement goal review.

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 112-1 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 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 112-1, Figure 112-2). 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. 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 112-1). 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.

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 for the department.

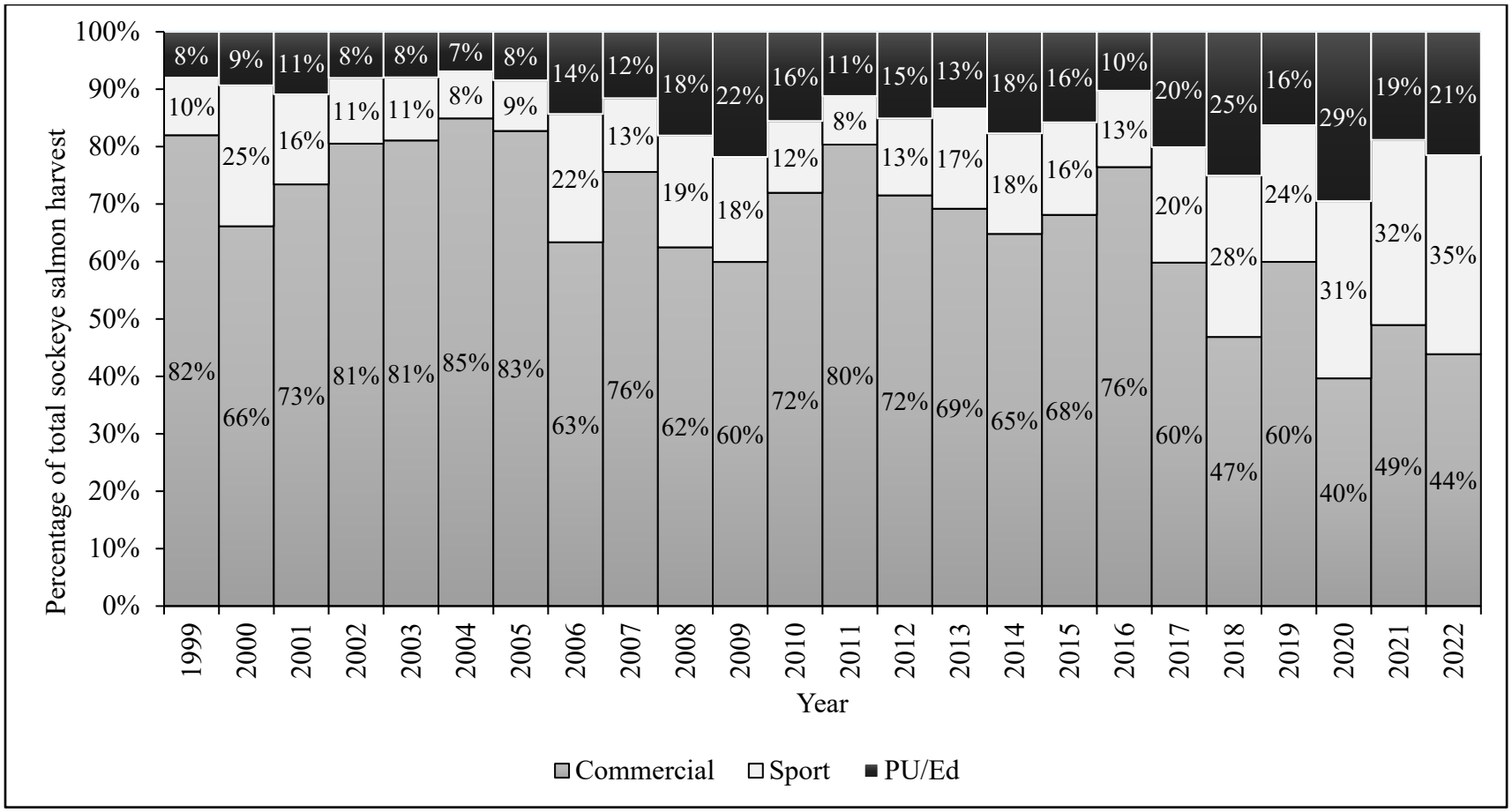

Figure 112-1.–Percentage of total Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon harvest in commercial, sport, personal use fisheries, 1999–2022.

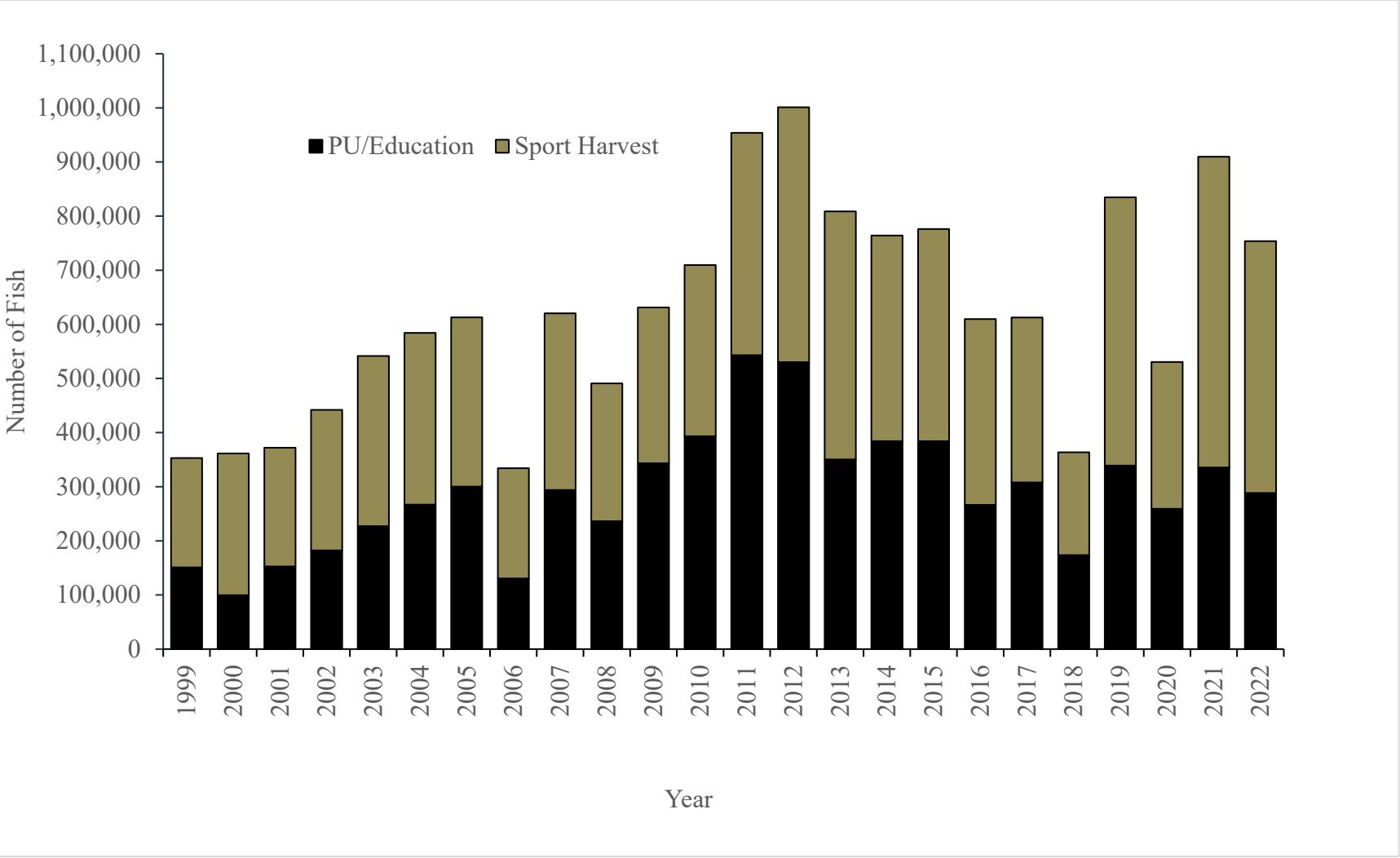

Figure 112-2.–Personal Use/Education (PU), sport and total inriver harvest of Kenai River sockeye salmon.

Table 112-1.–History of Kenai River sockeye salmon personal use/subsistence, educational, and sport harvest and esc 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 112-2.–History of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon tiers, windows, EO hour limitations, inriver goals, 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 beginning in 2011.

Table 112-3.–History of changes to Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon BEG/SEGs, inriver goals, and OEGs.

Kenai River sockeye salmon goal changes			
Year	BEG/SEG	Inriver	OEG
1969		150,000	
1972		150,000–250,000	
1978	350,000–500,000	350,000–500,000	
1987	330,000–600,000	400,000–700,000	330,000–600,000
1995		450,000–700,000	
1996	330,000–600,000	550,000–800,000	330,000–600,000
1997	330,000–600,000	550,000–825,000	330,000–600,000
1998	330,000–600,000	550,000–850,000	330,000–600,000
1999	500,000–800,000	600,000–1,100,000[a]	500,000–1,000,000
2005	500,000–800,000	650,000–1,100,000[a]	500,000–1,000,000
2011	700,000–1,200,000	900,000–1,350,000[a]	700,000–1,400,000
2014	700,000–1,200,000	900,000–1,350,000[a]	700,000–1,400,000
2017	700,000–1,200,000	900,000–1,500,000[a]	eliminated
2020	750,000–1,300,000	1,000,000–1,600,000[a]	

[a] Beginning in 1999, inriver goal is based upon three run size tiers.

Table 112-4.–Estimates of the harvest of Kenai River sockeye salmon in commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries, 1999–2022.

	Harvest				% of Total Harvest		
Year	Commercial	Sport	PU/Ed	Total	Commercial	Sport	PU/Ed
1999	1,551,907	189,885	150,993	1,892,785	82%	10%	8%
2000	705,699	261,779	99,571	1,067,049	66%	25%	9%
2001	1,028,205	219,478	152,580	1,400,263	73%	16%	11%
2002	1,827,466	259,759	182,229	2,269,454	81%	11%	8%
2003	2,321,047	314,456	227,207	2,862,710	81%	11%	8%
2004	3,289,237	317,233	266,937	3,873,407	85%	8%	7%
2005	2,936,487	312,835	300,105	3,549,427	83%	9%	8%
2006	577,512	203,602	130,486	911,600	63%	22%	14%
2007	1,921,009	326,341	293,941	2,541,291	76%	13%	12%
2008	817,164	254,579	236,355	1,308,098	62%	19%	18%
2009	943,784	287,867	343,302	1,574,953	60%	18%	22%
2010	1,821,553	316,275	393,317	2,531,145	72%	12%	16%
2011	3,901,433	410,767	543,043	4,855,243	80%	8%	11%
2012	2,513,544	471,096	530,128	3,514,768	72%	13%	15%
2013	1,816,297	458,522	350,302	2,625,121	69%	17%	13%
2014	1,406,865	380,055	384,018	2,170,938	65%	18%	18%
2015	1,658,415	392,116	384,095	2,434,626	68%	16%	16%
2016	1,973,123	343,169	264,900	2,581,192	76%	13%	10%
2017	906,523	304,667	304,632	1,515,822	60%	20%	20%
2018	317,200	190,122	169,553	676,875	47%	28%	25%
2019	1,248,570	495,723	338,952	2,083,245	60%	24%	16%
2020	348,634	271,290	259,282	879,206	40%	31%	29%
2021	871,824	574,275	335,396	1,781,495	49%	32%	19%
2022	588,802	465,194	288,453	1,342,449	44%	35%	21%
			Averages				
1999-2003	1,486,865	249,071	162,516	1,898,452	78%	13%	9%
2004-2008	1,908,282	282,918	245,565	2,436,765	78%	12%	10%
2009-2013	2,199,322	388,905	432,018	3,020,246	73%	13%	14%
2014-2018	1,252,425	322,026	301,440	1,875,891	67%	17%	16%
2019-2022	764,458	451,621	305,521	1,521,599	50%	30%	20%
All years	1,553,846	334,212	288,741	2,176,798	71%	15%	13%

Note: 1999–2004 commercial harvest estimates generated from age-comp allocation model (Tobias and Willette, 2013); 2005–2022 commercial harvest from genetic stock composition analyses (Barclay, 2019)

Table 112-5.–Commercial salmon harvest by drift gillnet and ESSN fisheries, 1989–2023.

Year	King[a]	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1989	10,914	4,543,497	83,189	37,984	12,398
1990	4,760	3,423,363	287,804	549,384	294,132
1991	5,139	1,962,741	206,681	8,461	217,863
1992	11,333	8,907,571	324,378	667,806	235,822
1993	14,844	4,500,530	164,927	88,153	91,803
1994	16,039	3,359,637	378,563	491,075	252,675
1995	12,662	2,735,100	286,224	118,052	471,935
1996	11,953	3,688,075	212,158	218,445	142,435
1997	11,952	4,030,817	98,334	61,975	93,385
1998	5,422	1,111,702	102,015	532,866	88,768
1999	10,038	2,506,941	76,737	12,909	166,985
2000	3,954	1,186,174	142,556	114,254	118,399
2001	6,628	1,716,294	43,664	64,217	75,847
2002	9,893	2,670,409	160,984	439,000	226,377
2003	16,050	3,340,479	62,603	46,850	108,401
2004	22,788	4,765,452	229,741	343,362	139,060
2005	23,555	5,054,672	164,296	44,849	66,381
2006	12,738	2,086,046	120,640	397,798	60,312
2007	13,204	3,176,888	132,313	137,316	75,357
2008	8,226	2,286,539	111,251	163,487	46,443
2009	6,447	1,873,928	93,531	195,521	77,392
2010	7,597	2,673,446	142,958	285,822	220,012
2011	8,290	5,078,974	56,418	30,860	112,694
2012	923	3,020,819	81,215	462,219	264,562
2013	3,481	2,584,094	187,037	45,276	132,274
2014	2,683	2,226,076	82,840	630,960	108,893
2015	8,337	2,494,020	148,668	44,636	254,579
2016	7,365	2,264,599	101,848	372,411	114,461
2017	5,043	1,712,499	221,406	149,958	233,102
2018	2,815	690,110	113,611	105,357	108,294
2019	2,423	1,533,644	95,129	60,353	113,046
2020	1,033	579,068	49,175	305,280	25,254
2021	1,514	1,258,908	81,865	73,367	65,441
2022	508	998,421	51,334	90,270	92,292
2023	107	1,363,839	49,625	57,817	112,838
1989-1998 avg	10,502	3,826,303	214,427	277,420	190,122
1999-2023 avg	7,426	2,365,694	112,058	186,966	124,748
% Change	-29%	-38%	-48%	-33%	-34%

[a] Consists of all stocks and sized harvest of king salmon

PROPOSAL 113 – 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*.
Adopt an optimal escapement goal for Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement objective from the current sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range from 750,000–1,300,000 to a new optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 600,000-800,000 sockeye salmon and prioritize achieving the proposed OEG over all other management objectives.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* instructs the department to manage commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries in the Kenai River to: 1) meet the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 late-run sockeye salmon, 2) achieve inriver goals as established by the board and measured at the Kenai River sonar counter located at RM 19, and 3) distribute escapement of sockeye salmon evenly within the SEG range, in proportion to the size of the run. The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* prescribes management actions that restrict commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries to achieve the large king salmon OEG.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Lowering the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement objective could result in more fish being available for sport and personal use harvest if the inriver goals remained unchanged. If inriver goals were removed and the proposed OEG was the only management objective this could result in reduced harvest for inriver sport and personal use fisheries and increased harvest in commercial fisheries. Sockeye salmon escapement levels less than the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 fish could result in reduced yields in future years.

BACKGROUND: See Backgrounds for Proposals 111 and 112.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** setting management objectives below the lower bound of established SEG ranges, as doing so would likely result in reduction of future yields and increased probability fishing the stock below sustainable levels. The Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal was reviewed in 2023 and no change was made to the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 fish. 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 sockeye salmon SEG and under the policy the board could make this change by adopting an OEG. The proposal is unclear in what management objectives are being superseded by the proposed OEG. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of 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 for the department.

PROPOSAL 114 – 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*.
Adopt an optimal escapement goal for Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement objective from the current sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range from 750,000–1,300,000 to a new optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 700,000-850,000 salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* instructs the department to manage commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries in the Kenai River to: 1) meet the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 late-run sockeye salmon, 2) achieve inriver goals as established by the board and measured at the Kenai River sonar counter located at RM 19, and 3) distribute escapement of sockeye salmon evenly within the SEG range, in proportion to the size of the run. The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* prescribes management actions that restrict commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries to achieve the large king salmon OEG.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Lowering the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement objective could result in more fish being available for sport and personal use harvest if the inriver goals remained unchanged. If inriver goals were removed and the proposed OEG was the only management objective this could result in reduced harvest for inriver sport and personal use fisheries and increased harvest in commercial fisheries. Sockeye salmon escapement levels less than the SEG of 750,000–1,300,000 fish will result in reduced yields in future years based on current escapement goal analyses.

BACKGROUND: See backgrounds for Proposals 111 and 112.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** setting management objectives below the lower bound of established SEG ranges, as doing so would likely result in reduction of future yields and increased probability fishing the stock below sustainable levels. The Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal was reviewed in 2023 and no change was made to the SEG range of 750,000–1,300,000 fish. 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 sockeye salmon SEG and under the policy the board could make this change by adopting an OEG. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of 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 for the department.

PROPOSAL 115 – 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.*
Modify intent of the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the preamble to the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* by removing board intent language specific to minimizing the harvest of Northern District coho, late-run Kenai River king, and Kenai River coho salmon stocks and replace it with language that states that the department shall also manage the common property fisheries with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The preamble to the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (a) 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 in order to provide personal use, sport, and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources."

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It is unlikely this proposal would provide additional tools to assist the department in managing for escapement objectives, as specific provisions for management of the various fisheries are already within the management plans and existing regulations (seasons, periods, gear, and duration). The department relies on these management plans and use of its emergency order authority to manage all fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet to achieve escapement goals regardless of management plan preamble language. It is unclear how this language would alter management of weak stocks.

BACKGROUND: The *Kenai River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.360) was first adopted in 1980. The purpose of this management plan was to ensure an adequate escapement, as determined by the department, of sockeye salmon into the Kenai River system and to provide management guidelines to the department to preclude allocation conflicts between various users of this resource. In 1996, the name of the plan was changed to the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* and the plan stated that its purpose is to achieve the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon BEG and to provide management guidelines to the department. In 1999, the purpose statement was modified and it now stated that the department shall manage the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses to provide commercial fishermen with an economic yield from the harvest of these salmon resources based on abundance. It also stated the department was to manage commercial fisheries to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, and late-run Kenai River king and coho salmon stocks, to provide personal use, sport, and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources. Since 1999, the purpose statement has changed slightly over the years as the board has deliberated to balance the allocation needs and desires of the various user groups. In addition, there have been numerous allocative provisions added in the plan including no-fishing windows and EO hour limitations (Table 112-2). Estimates of passage and sport harvest of coho salmon in Northern Cook Inlet drainages are reported in Tables 115-1 and 115-2. Commercial harvest of

king, sockeye, and coho salmon by the Central District drift gillnet and Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fisheries can be found in Table 115-3. Sport fish harvest of Kenai River coho salmon are reported in Table 115-4. Harvest data of Kenai River late-run large king salmon can be found in Table 115-5.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The allocation guidelines within the *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan*; 5 AAC 21.363 are used by the board in developing specific UCI fishery management plans and helps shape preamble language. When adopting or modifying specific management plans that apply in Cook Inlet, future board action could be guided by the proposed principle stated in the preamble. Preamble language in management plans provides direction to future boards, stake holders, and the department on the long-term management objectives of the board at the time the language was adopted, but does not override the priority of management for established escapement objectives. Specific provisions describing how to meet preamble directives and escapement objectives are often codified in the regulatory language of the management 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 for the department.

Table 115-1.–Estimated sport harvest and passage/escapement of coho salmon in the Little Susitna River, Fish Creek, Jim Creek, and Deshka River, 1999-2023.

	Little Susitna			Fish Creek			Jim Creek			Deshka River		
Year	Harvest	Passage	SEG	Harvest	Passage	SEG	Harvest[a]	Escapement[b]	SEG	Harvest	Passage	SEG
1999	8,864	3,017	9,600-19,200									
2000	20,357	15,436	9,600-19,200									
2001	17,071	30,587	9,600-19,200									
2003	19,278	47,938	10,100-17,700	1,233	14,651	1,200-4,400	14,707	2,473	400-700	3,616	24,612	
2004	13,672	10,877	10,100-17,700	112	1,231	1,200-4,400	6,415	1,421	400-700	4,946	17,305	
2005	15,307	40,199	10,100-17,700	774	1,415	1,200-4,400	11,766	4,652	400-700	4,440	62,940	
2006	10,203	16,839[c]	10,100-17,700	535	3,011	1,200-4,400	10,114	1,464	400-700	3,616	47,887	
2007	12,399	8,786[c,d]	10,100-17,700	281	4,967	1,200-4,400	19,259	2,389	400-700	6,042	59,419	
2008	11,089	17,573	10,100-17,700	120	6,868	1,200-4,400	11,848	725	400-700	2,550	10,575	
2009	13,498	18,485	10,100-17,700	993	4,868	1,200-4,400	17,545	1,890	400-700	3,426	12,724	
2010	8,346	9,523	10,100-17,700	1,178	8,214	1,200-4,400	11,573	1,331	400-700	4,060	27,348	
2011	10,662	9,214	10,100-17,700	805	6,977	1,200-4,400	8,442	242	400-700	5,690	10,393	
2012	2,452	4,826	10,100-17,700	414	1,428	1,200-4,400	3,132	261	400-700	2,282	7,326	
2013	1,681	6,779[c]	10,100-17,700	274	1,237	1,200-4,400	1,858	213	400-700	1,358	6,825	
2014	5,229	13,583[c]	10,100-17,700	356	7,593	1,200-4,400	3,258	663	400-700	2,658	22,141	
2015	6,922	24,211	10,100-17,700	622	10,283	1,200-4,400	3,045	122	400-700	2,598	11,578	
2016	8,880	12,756	10,100-17,700	2,041	7,912	1,200-4,400	2,910	571	450-1400	745	10,775	
2017	4,361	10,049	10,100-17,700	496	2,484	1,200-4,400	1,343	106	450-1400	1,528	6,820	
2018	3,068	17,781	10,100-17,700	358	8,966	1,200-4,400	750	607	450-1400	2,825	36,869	10,200-24,100
2019	6,663	7,583[c]	10,100-17,700	1,915	5,022	1,200-4,400	2,924	758	450-1400	3,169	12,962	10,200-24,100
2020	3,167	4,229[c]	10,100-17,700	892	3,025	1,200-4,400	2,856	162	450-1400	1,578	10,445	10,200-24,100
2021	2,557	9,779	9,200-17,700	1,916	4,555	1,200-6,000	2,404	735	250-700	1,953	5,368[e]	10,200-24,100
2022	3,560	10,229[c]	9,200-17,700	297	6,462	1,200-6,000	3,082	1,499	250-700	2,248	3,431[e]	10,200-24,100
2023	2,114	2,792[c]	9,200-17,700	533	NC[a]	1,200-6,000	3,717	1,899	250-700	1,936	3,137[e]	10,200-24,100
	NA	2,949[c]	9,200-17,700	NA	1,534	1,200-6,000	NA	378	250-700	NA	1,817[e]	10,200-24,100

[a] Includes other Knik River tributaries

[b] Escapement is a foot index survey of a section of McRoberts Creek, a tributary of the Jim Creek drainage.

[c] Weir washed out, incomplete count

[d] Escapement goal undoubtedly achieved, perhaps exceeded

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

Table 115-2.–Estimated sport harvest of coho salmon in the Northern Cook Inlet Management Area, 2003–2022.

	Northern Cook Inlet Management Area				
Year	Knik Arm	Eastside Susitna	Westside Susitna	West Cook Inlet	Total harvest
1999	14,429	23,292	17,995	9,339	65,055
2000	32,530	37,748	23,262	11,712	105,252
2001	30,106	26,617	19,221	13,949	89,893
2002	44,448	27,183	14,144	13,380	99,155
2003	24,583	18,585	16,072	14,239	73,479
2004	34,298	20,484	17,785	16,179	88,746
2005	27,000	17,471	18,266	12,572	75,309
2006	39,953	22,719	20,474	11,940	95,086
2007	27,733	13,464	14,065	12,580	67,842
2008	35,996	24,211	15,126	14,673	90,006
2009	37,271	15,335	14,464	9,801	76,871
2010	26,369	14,291	16,245	9,030	65,935
2011	8,484	9,040	12,483	6,292	36,299
2012	5,014	7,629	9,434	7,813	29,890
2013	12,335	12,989	13,042	7,698	46,064
2014	16,180	12,462	12,972	7,320	48,934
2015	17,800	15,043	14,191	12,849	59,883
2016	7,989	5,939	4,022	6,029	23,979
2017	6,232	12,838	10,759	4,828	34,657
2018	14,429	9,728	15,093	8,554	47,804
2019	9,369	8,308	11,373	10,001	39,051
2020	8,682	8,830	5,283	6,937	29,732
2021	7,870	14,069	10,879	7,444	40,262
2022	6,946	6,722	8,573	3,995	26,236
Averages					
All Years	20,669	16,042	13,968	9,965	60,643
2003-2012	26,670	16,323	15,441	11,512	69,946
2013-2022	10,783	10,693	10,619	7,566	39,660

Table 115-3.–Commercial harvest of king, sockeye, and coho salmon in the drift and ESSN fisheries, 1999–2023.

	King		Sockeye		Coho	
Year	Drift	Set	Drift	Set	Drift	Set
1999	575	9,463	1,413,995	1,092,946	64,814	11,923
2000	270	3,684	656,427	529,747	131,478	11,078
2001	619	6,009	846,275	870,019	39,418	4,246
2002	415	9,478	1,367,251	1,303,158	125,831	35,153
2003	1,240	14,810	1,593,638	1,746,841	52,432	10,171
2004	1,104	21,684	2,529,642	2,235,810	199,587	30,154
2005	1,958	21,597	2,520,327	2,534,345	144,753	19,543
2006	2,782	9,956	784,771	1,301,275	98,473	22,167
2007	912	12,292	1,823,481	1,353,407	108,703	23,610
2008	653	7,573	983,303	1,303,236	89,428	21,823
2009	859	5,588	968,075	905,853	82,096	11,435
2010	538	7,059	1,587,657	1,085,789	110,275	32,683
2011	593	7,697	3,201,035	1,877,939	40,858	15,560
2012	218	705	2,924,144	96,675	74,678	6,537
2013	493	2,988	1,662,561	921,533	184,771	2,266
2014	382	2,301	1,501,678	724,398	76,932	5,908
2015	556	7,781	1,012,684	1,481,336	130,720	17,948
2016	606	6,759	1,266,696	997,768	90,242	11,606
2017	264	4,779	880,279	832,220	191,490	29,916
2018	503	2,312	400,285	289,841	108,906	4,705
2019	178	2,246	749,101	784,543	88,618	6,511
2020	181	852	283,727	295,341	48,803	372
2021	217	1,297	851,901	407,007	80,982	883
2022	167	341	893,743	104,678	51,306	28
2023[a]	107	0	1,363,839	0	49,625	0
Averages						
All years	656	6,770	1,362,661	1,003,028	98,609	13,449
2004-2013	1,011	9,714	1,898,500	1,361,586	113,362	18,578
2014-2023	316	2,867	920,393	591,713	91,762	7,788

[a] Preliminary data.

Table 115-4.–Estimated sport harvest of Kenai River coho salmon by river section, 1999–2022.

Year	Cook Inlet to Soldotna Bridge	Soldotna Bridge to Moose River	Moose River to Skilak Lake	Skilak Lake to Kenai Lake	Kenai River reach not specified	All sections
1999	20,442	5,386	3,080	2,729	ND	31,637
2000	30,836	10,065	5,053	2,565	ND	48,519
2001	32,478	9,328	5,551	2,425	ND	49,782
2002	36,703	10,850	5,069	4,851	2177	59,650
2003	26,056	10,990	4,677	3,180	1754	46,657
2004	41,616	13,200	5,726	3,601	1809	65,952
2005	25,141	14,356	4,436	4,413	2065	50,411
2006	20,949	7,131	4,829	3,528	1202	37,639
2007	20,334	7,455	5,591	3,790	847	38,017
2008	31,164	9,283	5,274	4,536	1367	51,624
2009	28,066	8,416	7,895	4,357	1226	49,960
2010	28,135	11,029	8,884	2,733	2131	52,912
2011	27,346	8,939	5,531	2,213	103	44,132
2012	22,965	7,487	4,064	1,262	629	36,407
2013	23,831	14,950	6,901	2,978	294	48,954
2014	30,759	12,878	9,584	7,216	129	60,566
2015	34,002	12,140	8,091	2,760	74	57,067
2016	24,778	9,460	3,872	1,613	208	39,931
2017	29,625	10,521	6,151	1,985	145	48,427
2018	29,699	11,032	7,125	2,607	112	50,575
2019	20,555	11,520	5,915	2,894	287	41,171
2020	16,084	6,502	3,307	1,486	67	27,446
2021	32,774	14,986	6,071	5,140	0	58,971
2022	34,886	12,989	5,705	3,575	47	57,202
Averages						
All years	27,884	10,454	5,766	3,268	794	48,067
2003–2012	27,177	9,829	5,691	3,361	1,313	47,371
2013–2022	27,699	11,698	6,272	3,225	136	49,031

Table 115-5.–Kenai River late-run large > 75 cm king salmon data, 1986–2023.

Year	Cook Inlet marine harvest [a]	Eastside setnet harvest [b]	Drift gillnet harvest [c]	Subsis./Educ. [d]	Personal use dipnet [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 115-5.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Cook Inlet marine harvest [a]	Eastside setnet harvest [b]	Drift gillnet harvest [c]	Subsis./Educ. [d]	Personal use dipnet [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 dervived 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 which occurred 2005–2008.

[i] These estimates are preliminary until biometrically reviewed and published.

Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (3 proposals)

PROPOSAL 118 – 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan*. Reduce the Kasilof River sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal.

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the Kasilof River sockeye salmon optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 140,000–370,000 fish to 150,000–250,000 fish and establish priority of achieving this goal over all other management objectives.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* (KRSMP) states, in part, that achieving the lower end of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal range takes priority over not exceeding the upper end of the Kasilof River OEG range of 140,000–370,000 sockeye salmon. In years when the lower end of the Kenai River sockeye salmon goal is achieved, Kasilof River sockeye salmon are to be managed to the biological escapement goal (BEG) of 140,000–320,000 fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the harvest of Kasilof River sockeye salmon by an unknown amount. Run entry of sockeye salmon into the Kenai River, and achievement of the Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement goal, would not have higher priority than exceeding the Kasilof River OEG. This may result in greater use of regulations that focus the harvest of Kasilof River sockeye salmon, such as Kasilof Section ½ mile or 600-foot fishery, or the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area. This would also likely increase the harvest of Kenai River king and sockeye salmon stocks by an unknown amount regardless of stock status.

BACKGROUND: In 2002, the board made numerous changes to the KRSMP. One major change to the plan was the creation of an OEG range of 150,000–300,000 fish. The OEG was adopted primarily in response to poor sockeye salmon runs to the Kenai River in 2000 and 2001, when the department struggled to achieve the minimum Kenai River inriver goal, while the Kasilof River experienced strong sockeye salmon runs both years. In this case, the department was challenged with how to reduce Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement through additional set gillnet harvest, while minimizing harvest of Kenai River sockeye salmon. At this time, the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area had never been used, although it had been in existence since 1986, and the 600-foot fishery in the Kasilof Section was not part of the management plan. The board responded by making the upper end of the Kasilof River OEG 50,000 fish above the upper end of the BEG range of 150,000–250,000 fish. The rationale for the 50,000 additional fish above the Kasilof River BEG was to allow for a reduction of harvest of Kasilof River sockeye salmon during years when the Kenai River sockeye salmon run was weak. Exact wording of the plan (5 AAC 21.365(b)) from 2002–2005 regulations stated: "Achieving the lower end of the Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement goal shall take priority over not exceeding the upper end of the Kasilof River OEG of 150,000–300,000 sockeye salmon." In 2008, the board also clarified that achieving established escapement goals was the primary management objective.

In 2011, the department transitioned the Kasilof River sockeye sonar program from Bendix sonar to DIDSON. Although the difference in the number of fish detected by the two sonars was small in the Kasilof River, the department's escapement goal analysis supported an increase of the Kasilof River BEG range from 150,000–250,000 fish to 160,000–340,000 fish. Based on this change, the board also modified the Kasilof River OEG range to 160,000–390,000 fish. This represented a 90,000 fish increase in both the BEG and OEG. Because there was very little difference in enumeration estimates between the two sonar technologies in the Kasilof River, the change in escapement goals represented an increase in actual number of spawners in the system. A reassessment of the Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement goal in 2013 and 2016 did not result in any changes to the BEG for this stock, but based on an escapement goal review in 2019, the Kasilof River BEG was lowered to 140,000–320,000 sockeye salmon. The department did not change the BEG based on the 2023 escapement goal review.

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 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.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. Without specific direction from the board, the department places a higher priority on achieving the lower end of an escapement goal for one stock over exceeding the upper end of another stock. If adopted, this proposal would likely increase the harvest of Kenai River origin sockeye and king salmon during years these stocks have 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 cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 119 – 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

Allow the Kasilof River SHA to remain open when the remainder of the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Hollier.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow commercial fishing in the Kasilof River Special harvest Area (KRSHA) of the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery after July 8 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 sockeye salmon escapement will exceed 365,000 fish.

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 salmon, including 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 fishery would have restricted openings in the KRSHA. 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. This could additionally increase harvest specifically of the unmonitored stock of Kasilof River late-run king salmon which is assumed to be in the same weak status as other wild stocks of king salmon in Upper Cook Inlet.

BACKGROUND: See Background for Proposals 81 and 120.

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 120 – 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan*. Repeal portions of intent language within the *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan.*

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal provisions described in (f) from the *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* (KRSMP), which describes the boards intent for when the department is to utilize the Kasilof Special harvest Area (KRSHA).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The KRSMP allows the commissioner to open the KRSHA after July 8 if the Kasilof section set gillnet fishery had previously been restricted to fishing within one-half mile from shore. Use of the KRSHA is not to exceed 48 hours without a 24 consecutive hour closure, unless the department projects that Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement will exceed 365,000 fish. If escapement is projected to exceed 365,000 fish, the KRSHA may be open with no mandatory time limits. The management plan states the board's intent that the KRSHA should rarely, if ever, be opened under this subsection and only for conservation reasons. Before the commissioner opens the KRSHA, it is also the board's intent that additional fishing time be allowed in the remainder of the Kasilof Section first, and secondly that the mandatory closures specified in regulation be reduced in duration, if necessary, to meet the escapement goals contained within this and other management plans.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could result in more liberal use of the KRSHA when the fishery is being regulated under the KRSMP. It is likely to increase harvest of all salmon by an unknown amount in the commercial set gillnet fishery and increase the likely hood of meeting the Kasilof River sockeye salmon biological escapement goal (BEG). This would likely increase the harvest of all salmon and decrease availability of salmon to inriver fisheries by an unknown amount and is most likely to directly impact Kasilof River sport and personal use fisheries. It is unknown what impacts to the unmonitored stock of Kasilof River late-run king salmon this proposal would have but it is likely to increase harvest of this stock in the commercial set gillnet fishery.

BACKGROUND: The KRSHA was developed by the board in 1986 to be used for the purpose of concentrating commercial harvest on Kasilof River sockeye salmon run, while significantly decreasing the harvest of Kenai River sockeye salmon. The board has expressed their intent in the management plan that the KRSHA should rarely, if ever, be opened, and before doing so, the department should add additional fishing time in the remainder of the Kasilof Section and then reduce the mandatory closures specified in regulation. The KRSHA was first opened in 2004 and since then has been used over 10 different years, from as few as 1 day per year in 2021 to as many as 21 days in 2006 (Table 120-1). During that time, harvest of king salmon ranged from 5–2,996 fish, harvest of sockeye salmon ranged from 1,502–687,572 fish, and harvest of coho salmon ranged from 0–6,273 fish (Table 120-1).

In 2011, the board modified the *KRSMP* to include provisions beginning after July 8. Beginning July 8, the set gillnet fishery in the Kasilof Section will be managed as specified in 5 AAC 21.360(c) *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*. In addition to provisions of 5 AAC 21.360(c), the department may limit fishing in the Kasilof Section during the regular weekly periods and any extra fishing periods to those waters within one-half mile of shore, if the set gillnet fishery in the Kenai and East Foreland sections is not open for the fishing period. If the department determines that further restrictions are necessary to aid in achieving the lower end of the Kenai River escapement goal range, the department may further restrict fishing to within 600 ft of the high-tide mark in the Kasilof Section. After July 8, if the Kasilof Section set gillnet fishery is restricted to fishing within the first one-half mile of shore, the department may open the KRSHA described in (f) of this section to both set and drift gillnet fishing using only one gillnet, for fishing periods not to exceed 48 hours in duration without one period of 24 consecutive hours of closure. The provisions in (f)(1–8) of this section apply during these openings.

Under provisions in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan* (KRLRKSMP) that close the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery (ESSN) when the projected escapement of large late-run king salmon is less than 15,000 large fish, the KRSHA is also closed. If the ESSN is restricted under the KRLRKSMP then hours used in the KRSHA apply towards weekly hour restrictions.

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 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.

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 for the department.

Table 120-1.–Commercial salmon harvest in the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area, 2004–2021.

	King salmon			Sockeye salmon			Coho salmon			Days
Year	Drift	Set	Total	Drift	Set	Total	Drift	Set	Total	open
2004	9	68	77	572	4,904	5,476	1	20	21	8
2005	119	629	748	19,292	77,907	97,199	11	58	69	11
2006	1,731	1,265	2,996	349,417	338,155	687,572	1,826	675	2,501	21
2007	16	164	180	4,659	15,631	20,290	54	452	506	8
2008	358	1,164	1,522	17,370	60,499	77,869	1,071	5,202	6,273	12
2013	11	358	369	2,701	64,150	66,851	31	633	664	14
2014	36	625	661	11,676	198,131	209,807	61	345	406	17
2015	89	426	515	28,387	101,660	130,047	311	126	437	20
2018	4	28	32	743	11,410	12,153	424	1,322	1,746	5
2021	0	5	5	0	1,502	1,502	0	0	0	1

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 6: CENTRAL DISTRICT DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN, FISHING DISTRICTS AND GILLNET PSECIFICATIONS AND OPERATIONS, PINK SALMON MANAGEMENT PALN, HATCHERY PRODUCTION, UPPER COOK INLET MANAGEMENT PLAN, WEST COOK INLET SALMON (25 PROPOSALS)

Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan (7 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 121 – 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*.
Modify intent language within the *Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan.*

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* to remove the provision to minimize the commercial harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon and add a provision for reasonable opportunity for common property fishery harvest.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The purpose of the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* (drift plan) is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department manages the commercial drift gillnet fishery primarily to harvest sockeye salmon returning to Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, while minimizing harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The board has established specific time and area restrictions in the drift gillnet management plan to reduce (minimize) the harvest of these stocks.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would remove specific intent language on management of the drift gillnet fishery. Specific provisions for management of the various fisheries (time, area, and gear) are unmodified by this proposal and would not provide additional management flexibility to the department.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending adoption of a federal fishery management plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*, states, "The department shall manage the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon stocks primarily

for commercial uses based on abundance." Kenai River sockeye salmon are the most abundant sockeye salmon stock in UCI, many management decisions, and even management plan provisions, are driven by the abundance of Kenai River sockeye salmon. However, this plan also states, "The department shall also manage the 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." These management plan objectives are primarily accomplished with specific provisions that restrict commercial fishing during two time periods, July 9–15 and July 16–31, where the drift fleet is restricted to specific areas of the Central District to reduce the drift gillnet harvest of NCI sockeye and coho salmon.

In 1996, the *Northern District Coho Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.358) was first adopted to minimize the harvest of Susitna River coho salmon and to limit the commercial harvest of coho salmon bound for freshwater streams and rivers of the Northern District. It included a restriction to the Central District drift gillnet fishery where the first regularly scheduled drift gillnet fishing period after July 25 was restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections, and the fishery closed on August 9 (Table 121-1).

In 1999, the plan was renamed the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* and included new restrictions on the drift gillnet fishery. One regular fishing period (designated by the department), from July 9–15, was restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections. In addition, for the first regular fishing period immediately before or on July 25 and the first regular period after July 25, fishing was restricted to either or both the Kenai and Kasilof sections and/or that portion of the Central District south of Kalgin Island (now referred to as Drift Area 1). If Kenai River sockeye salmon run was projected to be more than four million fish, there were no mandatory restrictions during regular fishing periods. The August 9 season closure remained unchanged.

In 2002, additional changes were made to the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*. The one regular period restriction to the Kenai and Kasilof sections, from July 9–15, designated by the department, remained unchanged (Table 121-1). From July 16–31, however, fishing with drift gillnet gear was now restricted for two consecutive regular fishing periods to either or both of the Kenai and Kasilof sections of the Upper Subdistrict, or that portion of the Central District south of Kalgin Island (Drift Area 1). However, if Kenai River sockeye salmon run was greater than three million fish, the plan provided options to liberalize restrictions to include Drift Area 2 during the July 16–31 timeframe. If Kenai River sockeye salmon run was greater than four million fish, the plan provided for an option for districtwide openings for the periods on or before July 25 and the first period after July 25. Drift gillnet fishing was only authorized in this additional area if the department determined that 1) sockeye salmon escapement goals were being met in the Kenai, Kasilof, and Yentna Rivers; 2) abundance of pink salmon and chum salmon stocks were sufficient to withstand commercial harvest; and 3) coho salmon stocks were sufficient enough to withstand commercial harvest and that additional harvest would not lead to restrictions in the coho salmon sport fisheries. The August 9 season closure remained unchanged.

In 2005, the board eliminated all specific references to the drift gillnet fishery in the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* and established a new management plan for the drift gillnet fishery, the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.353). In this plan, the board provided for an earlier opening date (the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later); this was done largely in response to strong Kasilof River sockeye salmon runs during the previous nine years (Table 121-1). Restrictions to the drift gillnet fishery now required both fishing

periods between July 9–15 to be limited to the Kenai and Kasilof sections and Drift Area 1. Restrictions during this time period were put in place because of difficulty achieving the minimum sockeye salmon escapement goal in the Yentna River. From July 16–31, restrictions were based upon run strength of Kenai River sockeye salmon. At run strengths of less than two million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during any two regular 12-hour fishing periods was restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Area 1; at run strengths of two million to four million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during two regular 12-hour fishing periods was restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections and Drift areas 1 and 2 (Figures 121-1 and 121-2); at run strengths greater than four million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, there were no mandatory restrictions during regular fishing periods.

The fishery remained open until closed by EO, except that beginning August 11 fishing with drift gillnet gear was limited to the newly described Drift Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 121-3). Finally, in 2005, the board established an OEG range for Yentna River sockeye salmon of 75,000–180,000 fish when Kenai River sockeye salmon runs exceeded 4 million fish. The OEG was 15,000 fish below the Yentna River SEG range of 90,000–160,000 fish on the bottom end and 20,000 fish above the SEG range on the upper end. Specifically, the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* stated, "Achievement of the lower end of the Yentna River optimal escapement goal shall take priority over not exceeding the upper end of the Kenai River escapement goal."

In 2008, no significant changes were made to the drift gillnet fishery management plan, but the *Pink Salmon Management Plan* was repealed and the drift gillnet fishery was extended for regularly scheduled fishing periods only between August 11–15 in Drift Areas 1 and 2. Previously, drift gillnet fishermen were restricted to Drift areas 3 and 4 after August 10.

In 2011, the drift gillnet plan was changed as follows: 1) fishing during the second regular fishing period from July 9–15 was restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections (not the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections) of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift area 1; 2) at run strengths greater than 2.3 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, the department may, by EO, open one additional 12-hour fishing period in the Kenai and Kasilof sections (not the Expanded Kenai and Kasilof sections) of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Area 1; 3) at run strengths of 2.3 million to 4.6 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during one regular 12-hour fishing period per week was to be restricted to either the Expanded Kenai or Expanded Kasilof sections (or both together) of the Upper Subdistrict or to Drift Area 1, but not to both areas concurrently; and (4) at run strengths greater than 4.6 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, there were no mandatory restrictions during regular fishing periods (Table 121-1).

In 2014, modifications to the drift gillnet plan included: 1) Both regular fishing periods from July 9–15 were restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections and Drift Gillnet Area 1; 2) At Kenai River run strengths greater than 2.3 million fish, a third 12 hour fishing period during this time may be allowed in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections and Drift Gillnet Area 1; 3) from July 16 to 31, at run strengths less than 2.3 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during all regular 12 hour fishing periods were to be restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections; 4) at run strengths of 2.3 million to 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during one 12 hour regular fishing period per week will be restricted to any or all of the following areas: Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, Anchor Point Section, and Drift Area 1. The remaining weekly 12 hour regular fishing period will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, or Anchor Point sections; 5) at run strengths greater than 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during

one 12 hour fishing period per week will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections. There are no mandatory restrictions on the remaining 12-hour regular fishing period; 6) all additional fishing time, other than regular fishing periods, is allowed in any or all of the following: Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof and Anchor Point sections; 7) added the "Anchor Point Section" to the list of corridors. Finally, in 2014, a new one-percent rule for drift gillnetting was passed. The drift rule states that after August 1 drift gillnet regular periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4, if the drift fleet harvests less than one-percent of their total sockeye salmon harvest for two consecutive fishing periods.

In 2017, one of the drift gillnet Area 1 openings from July 16–31 in Kenai River sockeye salmon runs of 2.3–4.6 million fish could be expanded to districtwide instead of just in Drift Area 1.

In 2020, the drift gillnet plan was modified by removing the option to expand one Area 1 opening to districtwide from July 16–31 in Kenai River sockeye runs of 2.3–4.6 million fish. Additionally, drift gillnet periods after July 31 were no longer allowed to be districtwide and are restricted to Area 1, Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, and Anchor Point Section. Additional periods are restricted to the Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, and Anchor Point section during this time period.

The drift gillnet average annual harvest of both sockeye and coho salmon has declined through time (Table 121-2). The average annual sockeye salmon harvest of approximately 950,000 fish from the most recent 10 years (2013–2022) is approximately one million fish less than the 2003–2022 average annual harvest of 1.9 million fish. Coho salmon harvest has been stable with the most recent 10-year average annual harvest of 105,000 fish, 5,000 fish more than the average annual harvest of 100,000 fish from 2003–2012.

From 2013–2016, genetic mixed stock analyses were conducted on coho salmon harvested in UCI commercial fisheries (Figures 121-5 through 121-9; Tables 121-3 through 121-8). The drift gillnet average annual harvest of NCI coho salmon during these four years averaged 24,000 fish from the Northwest CI; 23,000 from Susitna; 5,400 from Deshka River; 28,000 from Yentna River; 21,000 from Knik Arm; 1,700 from Jim Creek; and 7,800 originating from Turnagain/Northeast CI streams (Figures 121-4, 121-6, and 121-7; Table 121-8). Coho salmon abundance estimates were completed for the entire Susitna River drainage in 2014 and 2015; in 2014 the estimate was 159,000 fish, in 2015 the coho salmon abundance estimate was 263,000 fish (Table 121-9).

From 2003–2022, the average annual total coho salmon harvest in the NCI management area sport fisheries was approximately 55,000 fish per year (Table 115-2). In the most recent 10 years (2013–2022), the average annual harvest has been 40,000 fish. The average annual sport fishery harvest in the Little Susitna River from 2003–2012 was approximately 9,900 fish and from 2013-2022 the average harvest decreased to 4,652 fish (Table 115-1). The average annual coho salmon sport fishery harvest from 2003–2012 at Fish Creek was approximately 549 fish and from 2013-2022 the average harvest increased to 943 fish. The average annual coho salmon sport fishery harvest from 2003–2012 at Jim Creek was approximately 10,195 fish and from 2013-2022 the average harvest decreased to 2,629 fish. The average annual coho salmon sport fishery harvest from 2003–2012 at the Deshka River was approximately 3,841 fish and from 2013-2022 the average harvest decreased to 2,124 fish.

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.

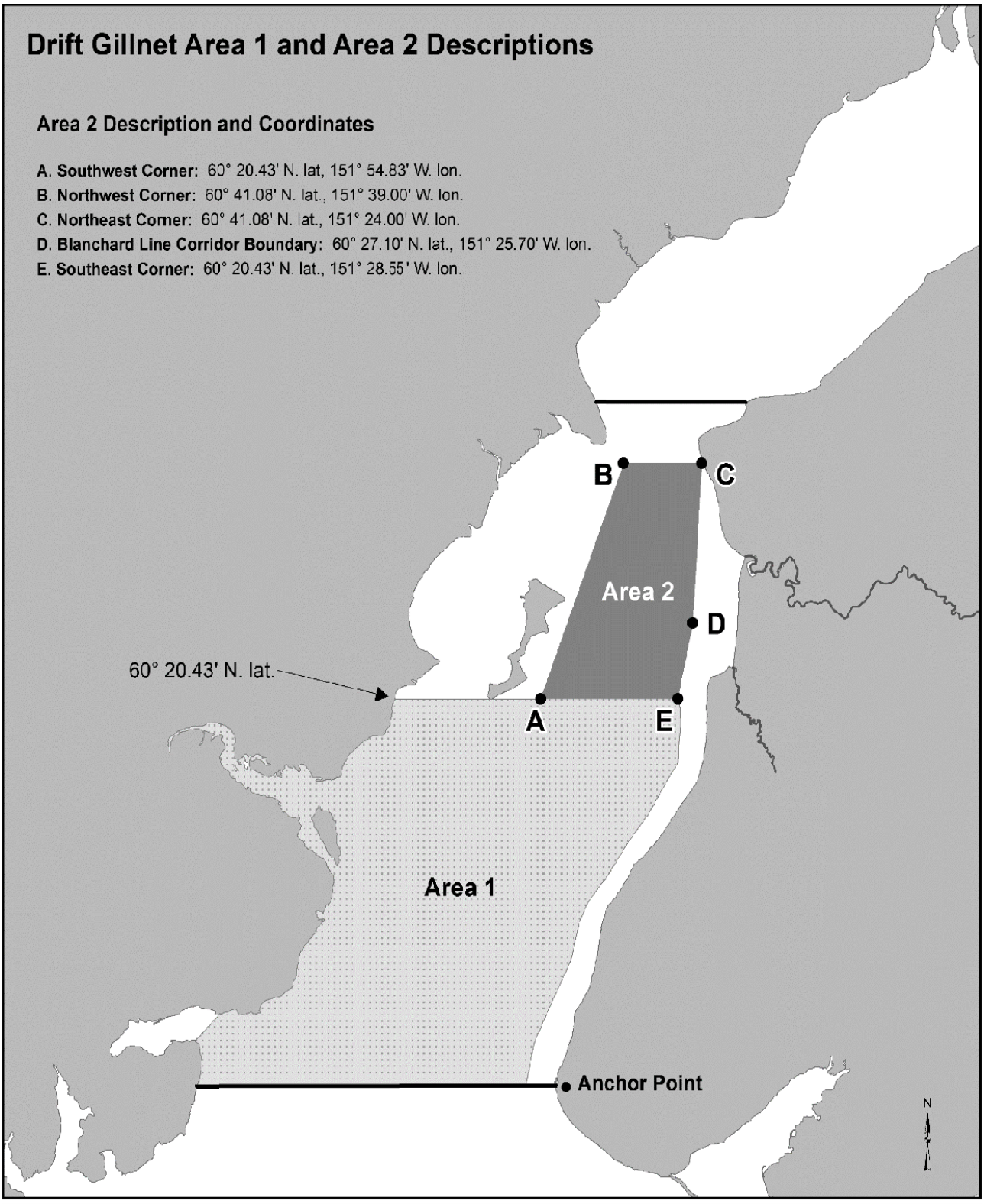

Figure 121-1.–Map of Drift Gillnet Areas 1 & 2.

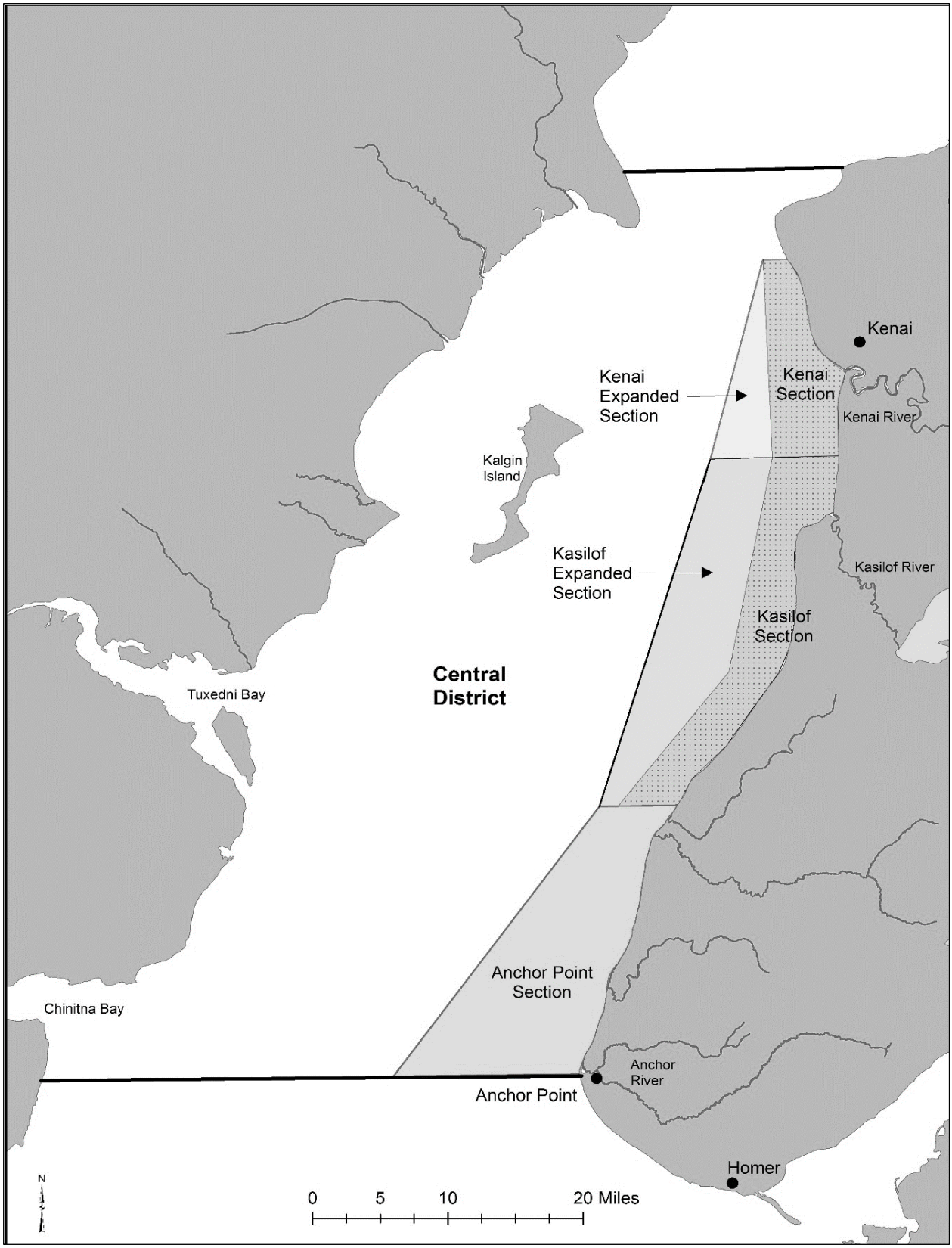

Figure 121-2.–Map of the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections.

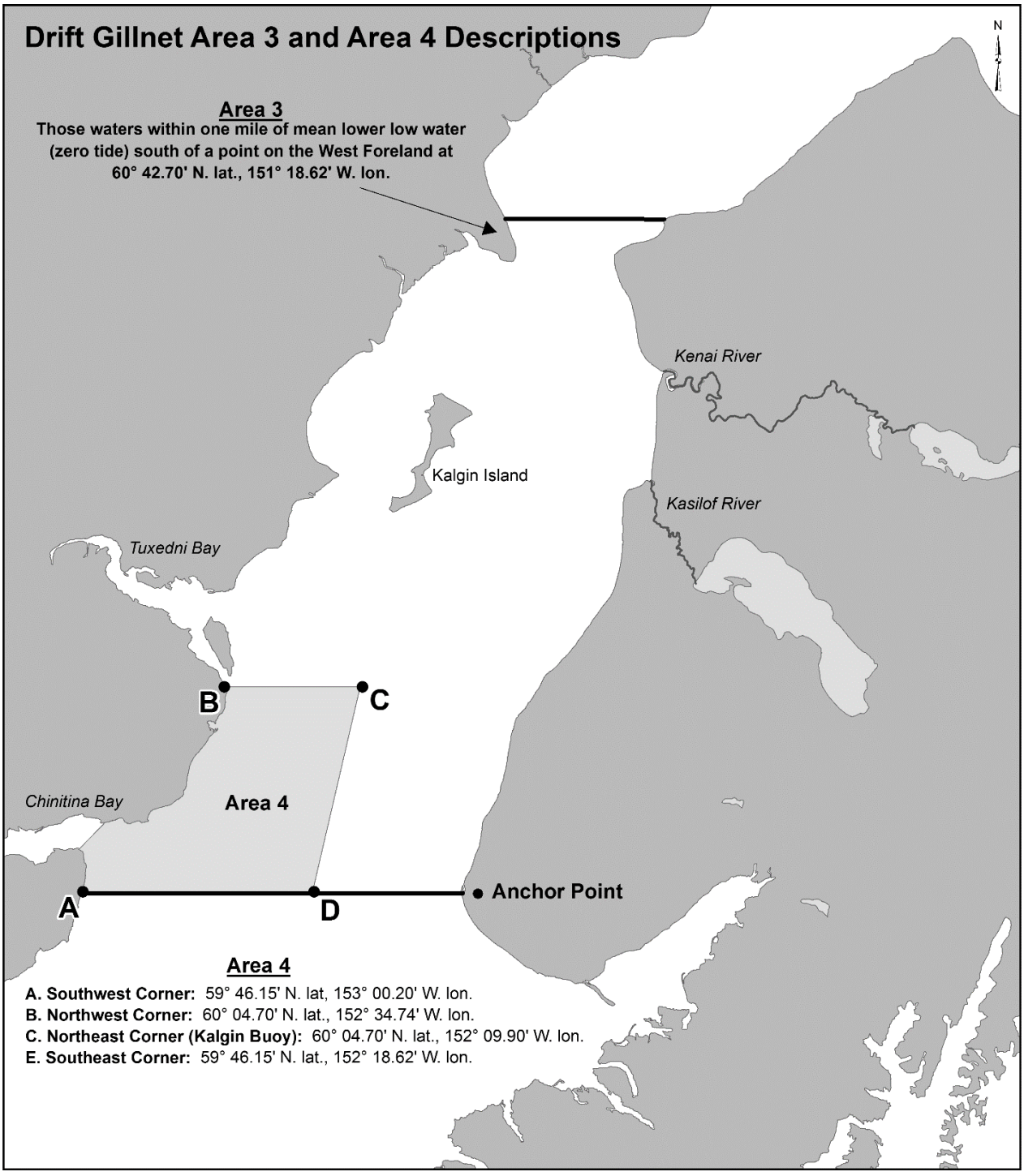

Figure 121-3.–Map of drift gillnet Areas 3 & 4.

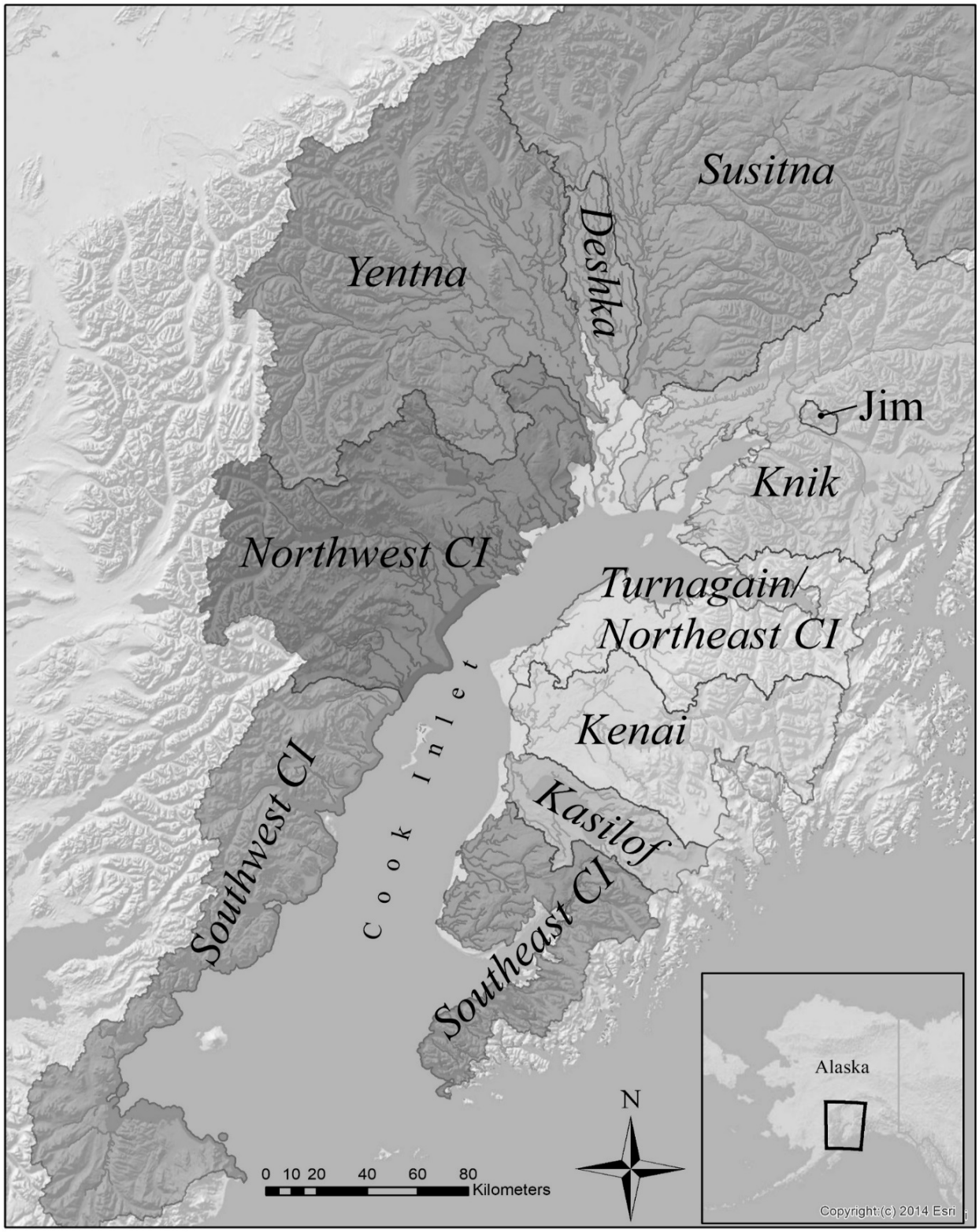

Figure 121-4.–Map of Cook Inlet showing reporting group areas for genetic mixed stock analysis of coho salmon harvest samples.

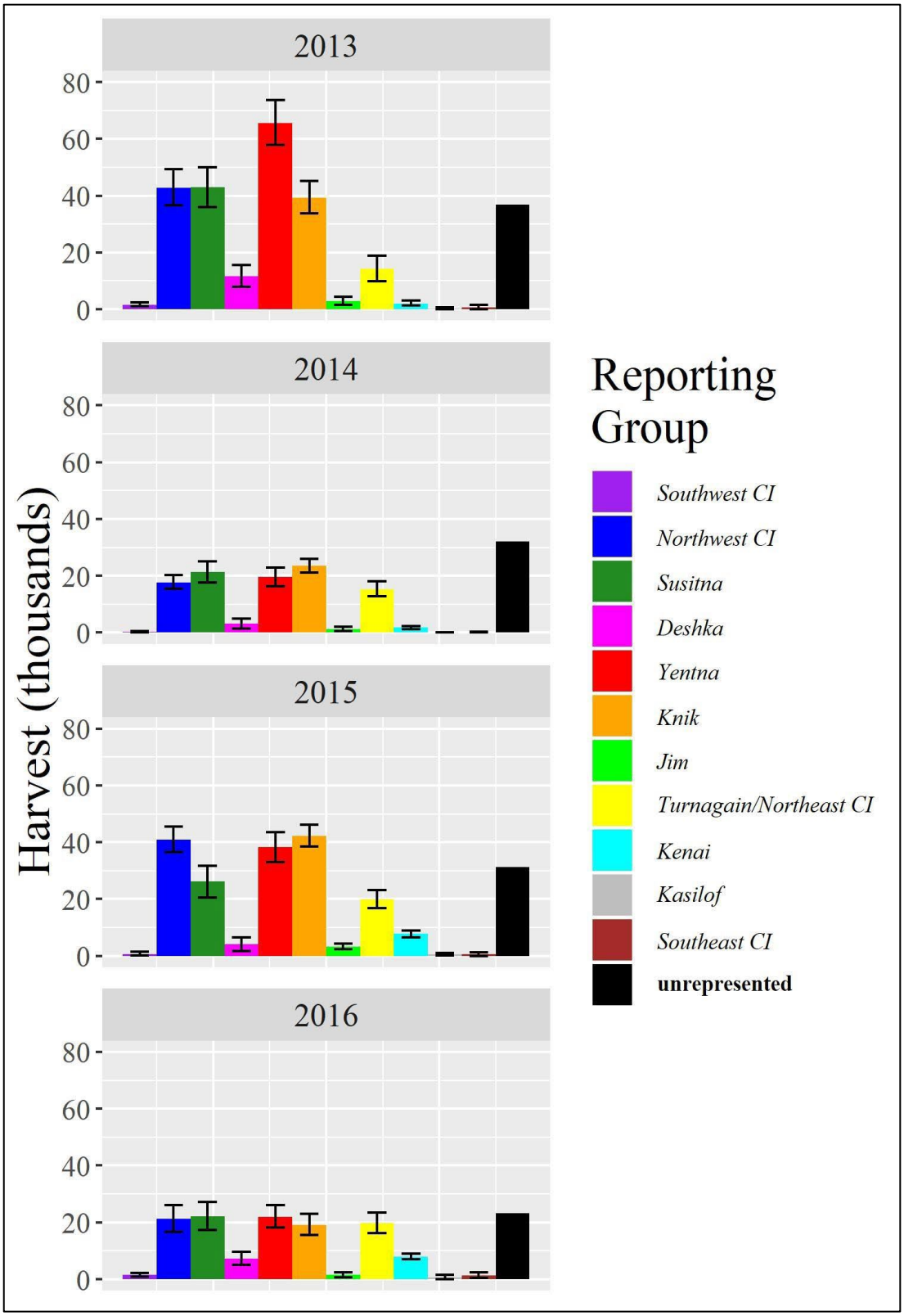

Figure 121-5.–Overall Cook Inlet commercial fishery stratified harvest estimates for coho salmon by stock for 2013–2016. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

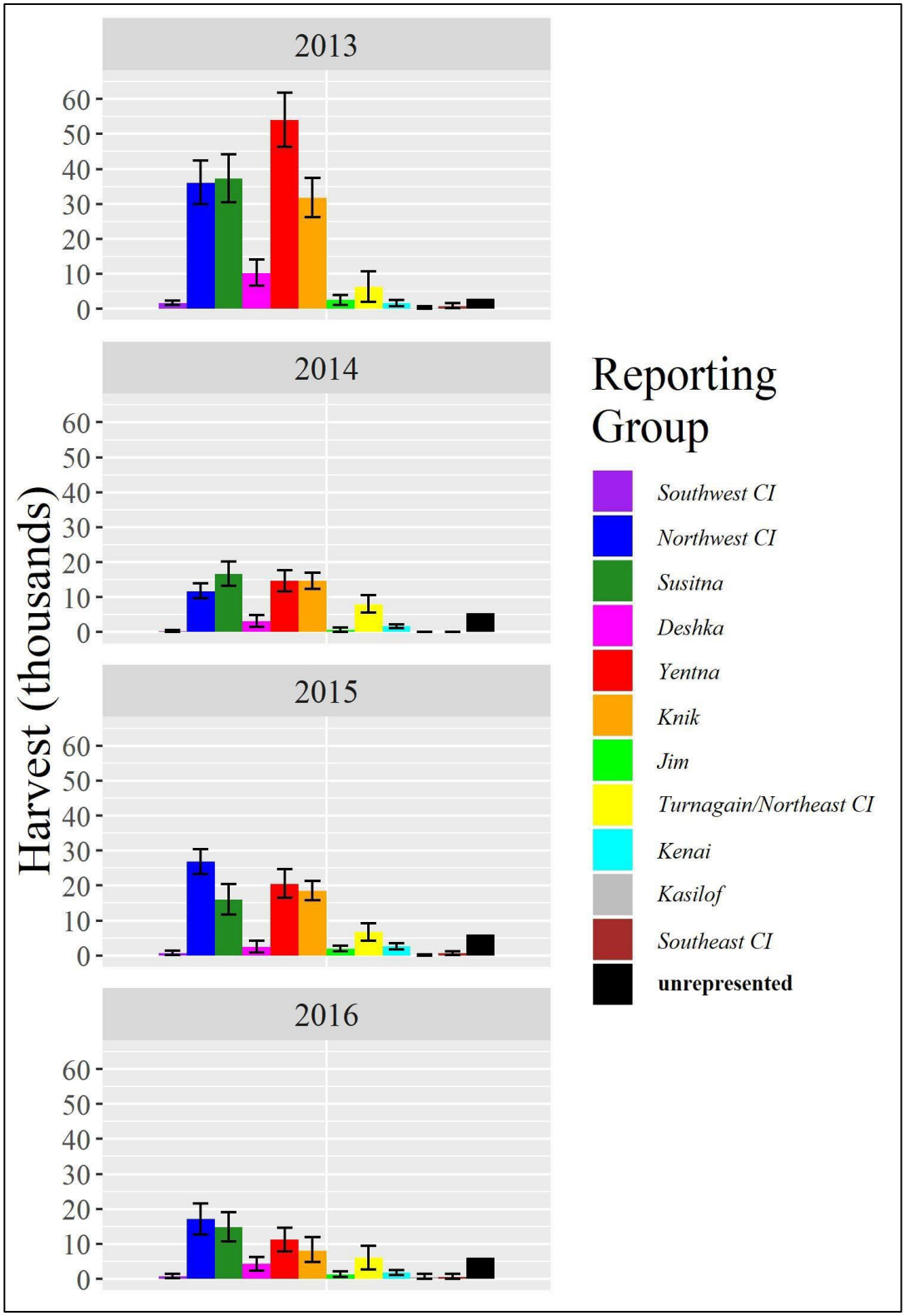

Figure 121-6.–Central District drift gillnet fishery (excluding corridor-only periods); stratified harvest estimates and credibility intervals for coho salmon by stock 2013–2016. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

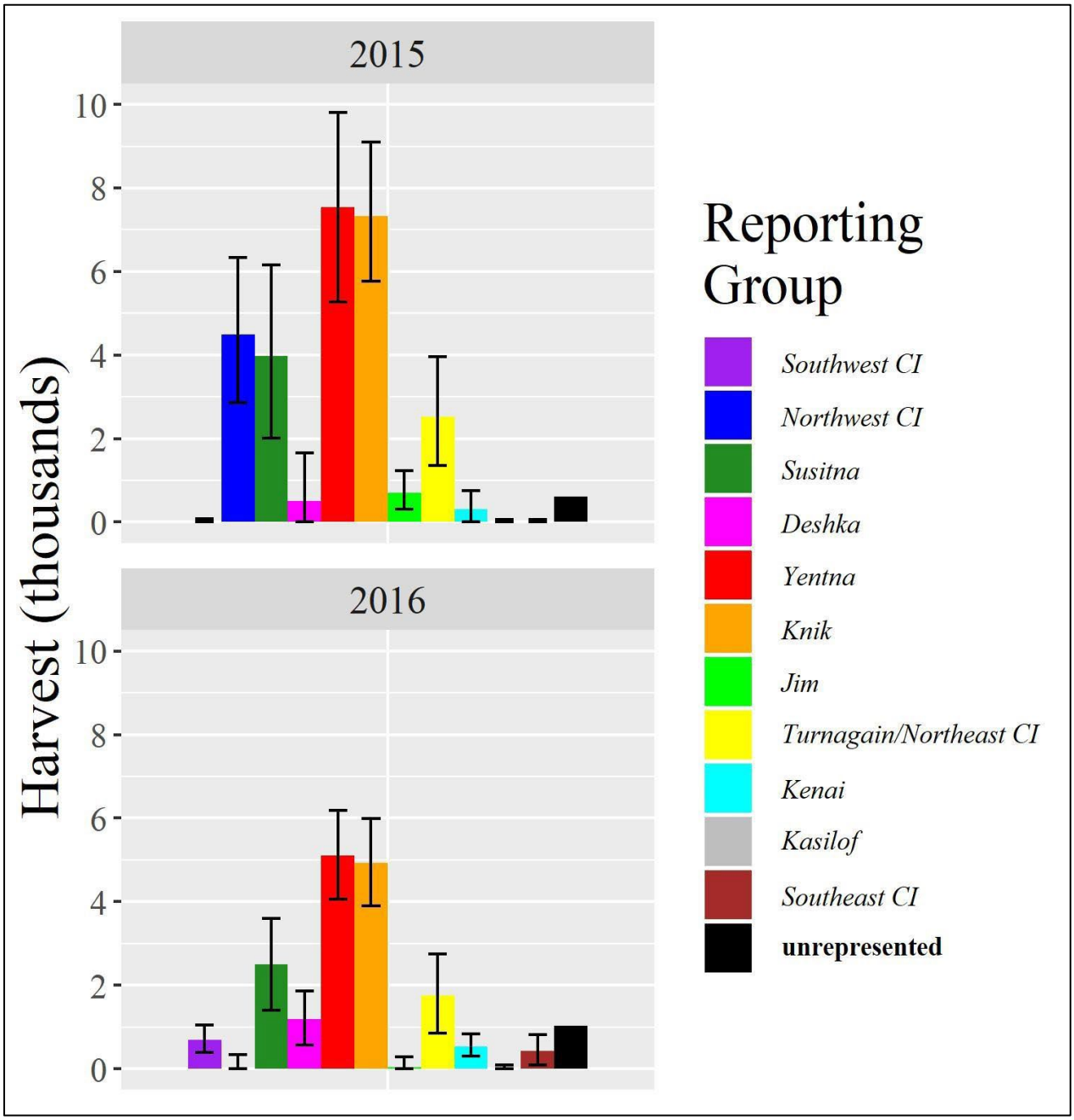

Figure 121-7.–Central District drift gillnet fishery (corridor-only periods); stratified harvest estimates and credibility intervals for coho salmon by stock 2015–2016. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

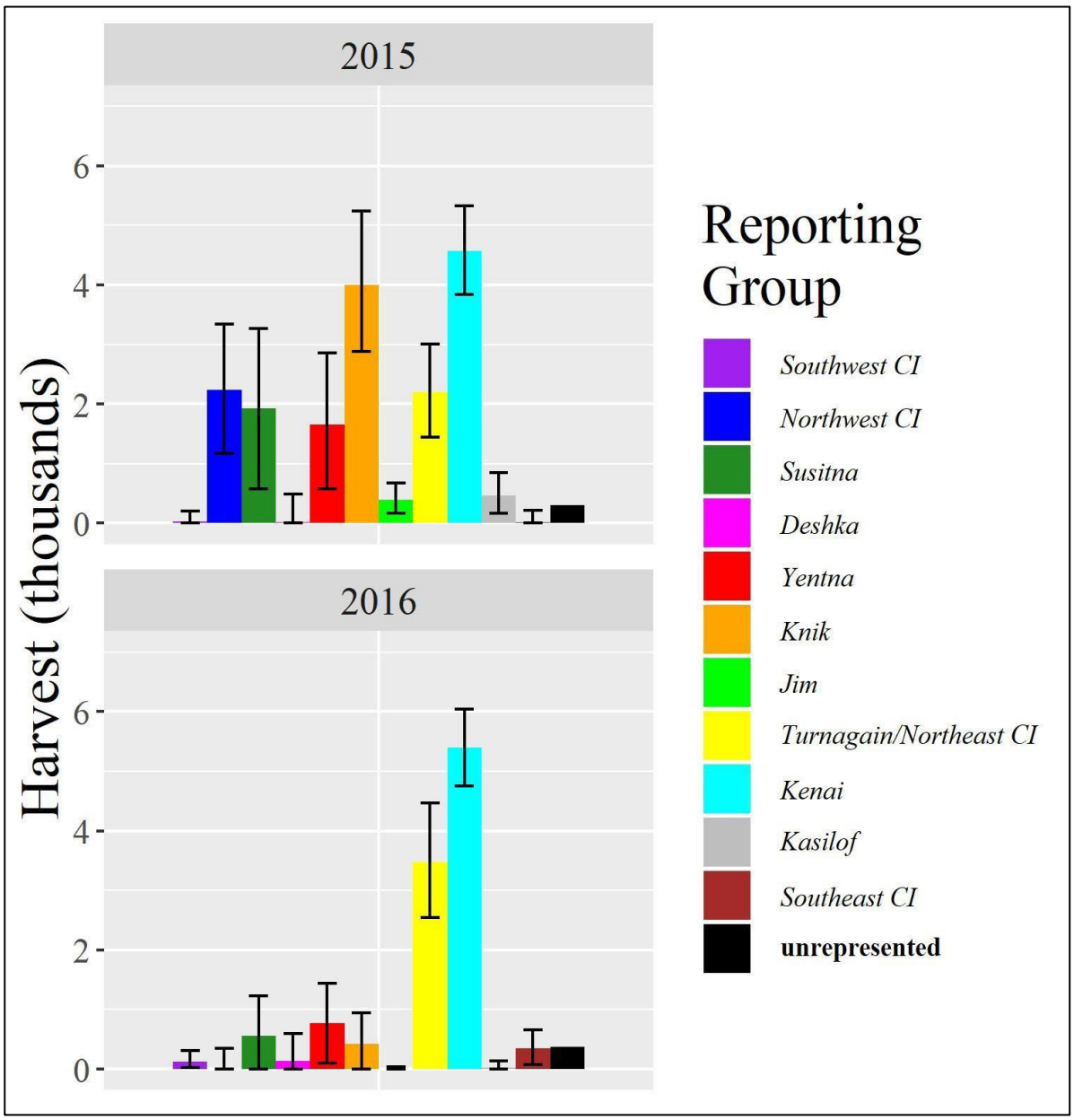

Figure 121-8.–Upper Subdistrict (Central District) set gillnet fishery 2015–2016; harvest estimates and 90% credibility intervals for coho salmon by stock. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

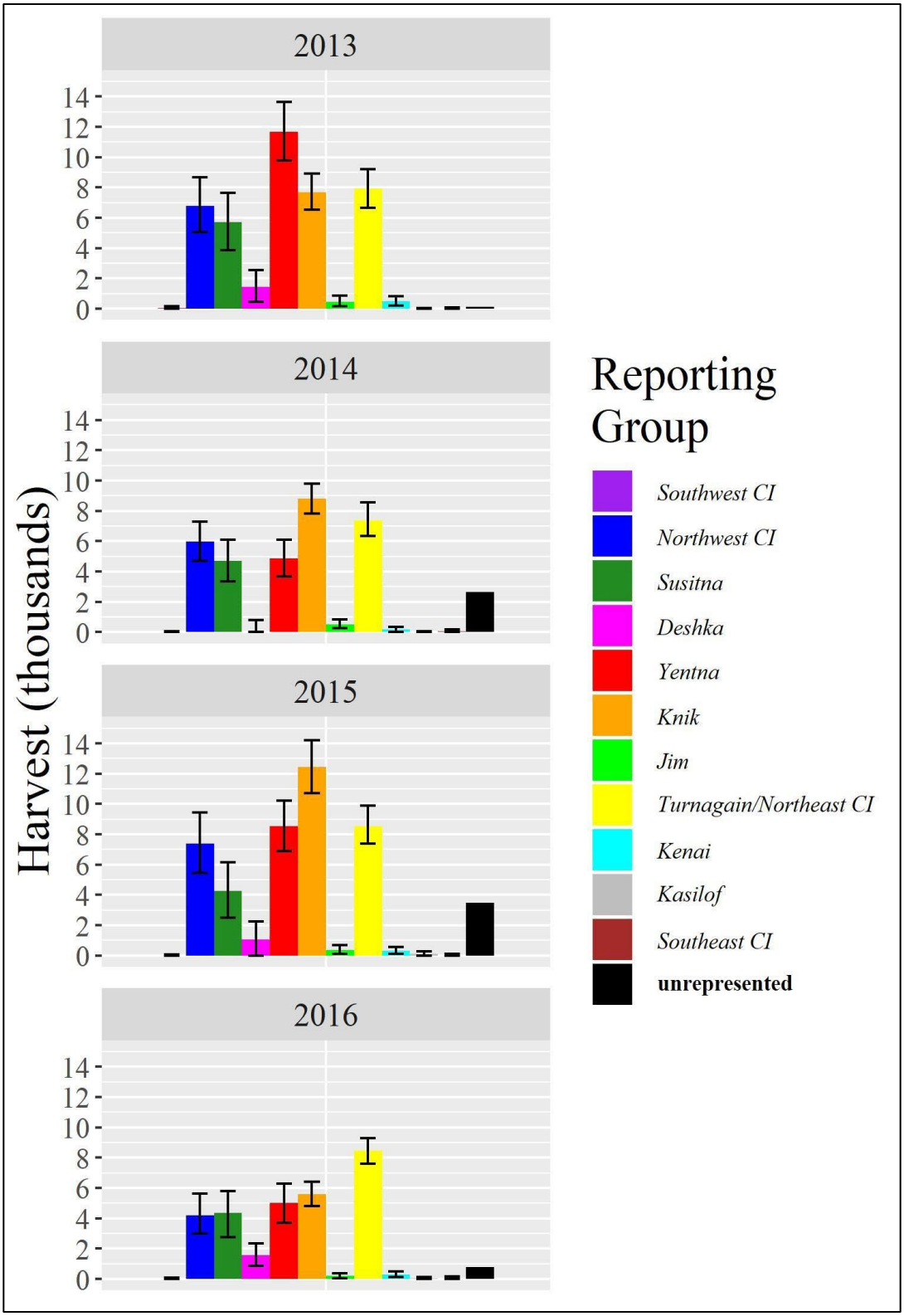

Figure 121-9.–Northern District set gillnet fishery by area, 2013–2016; harvest estimates and 90% credibility intervals for coho salmon by stock. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

Table 121-1.–History of season dates, weekly fishing periods, and restrictions in the Central District drift gillnet fishery.

Year	Description
Season Opening/Closing Dates	
1970	June 17 until closed by Emergency Order (EO).
1979	June 25 until closed by EO.
1986	June 25 until closed by EO. However, the fishing season can now open prior to June 25 if certain sockeye salmon passage triggers are met in the Kenai and Kasilof rivers (1986–2004).
1996	June 25 through August 9.
2005	3rd Monday in June or June 19 (whichever is later). From August 11 until closed by EO, fishery is open in Drift Areas 3 & 4 only.
2008	3rd Monday in June or June 19 (whichever is later). From August 15 until closed by EO, fishery is open in Drift Areas 3 & 4 only.
Weekly Fishing Periods	
1970	Prior to July 15: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. After July 15: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m.
1971	Mondays and Fridays from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m.
1985	Mondays and Fridays from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
1999	Mondays and Thursdays from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
July Restrictions/Tier Restrictions	
1996	The first regular fishing period after July 25 is restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections (1996– 1998).
1999	One regular fishing period from July 9–15 is restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections (1999– 2004).
	First regular period before and after July 25 is restricted to either the Kenai and Kasilof sections or the area south of Kalgin Island (1999–2001).
	Regular period restrictions removed if Kenai River sockeye salmon run strength is great than 4 million fish (1999–2004).
2002	From July 16–31 (2002–2004): two consecutive regular periods are restricted to either or both the Kenai and Kasilof sections or Drift Area 1. However, if Kenai sockeye salmon run strength is greater than 3 million fish, fishing is allowed the first regular period on or before July 25 and the first regular period after July 25 in the Kenai/Kasilof sections, Drift Area 1, and in the area south and east of the north tip of Kalgin Island. If two consecutive fishing restrictions are used during two regular periods from July 16–31, no further restrictions are necessary on the periods before or after July 25. After July 20, if the Kenai sockeye salmon run strength is greater than 4 million fish,
	the first regular period after July 25 may be fished district wide.
2005	Both regular periods from July 9–15 are restricted to Drift Area 1 and the Kenai/Kasilof sections (2005–2010). 'From July 16–31, if Kenai River sockeye salmon run strength is: less than 2 million fish, two regular periods restricted to Drift Area 1 and the Kenai/Kasilof sections (2005– 2010); between 2 million and 4 million fish, two regular periods restricted to Drift Areas 1 and 2 and the Kenai/Kasilof sections (2005 through 2010); and greater than 4 million fish, there are no mandatory restrictions (2005–2010).
2011	From July 9–15: 1st regular fishing period restricted to the expanded corridor (Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections; 2011–2013); 2nd regular fishing period restricted to Drift Area 1 and the narrow corridor (2011–2013); and additional fishing time is allowed only in the expanded corridor (2011–present). From July 16–31: if the Kenai River sockeye salmon run strength is: less than 2.3 million fish, one period is restricted to the expanded corridor (2011–2013); between 2.3 million and 4.6 million fish, one period per week is restricted to Drift Area 1 and/or the expanded corridor (2011–2013); and greater than 4.6 million fish, there are no mandatory restrictions (2011–2013).

-continued-

Table 121-2.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Description
July Restrictions/Tier Restrictions	
2014	From July 9–15: 1st and 2nd regular fishing periods restricted to the expanded corridor and Drift Area 1.
	From July 16–31: if the Kenai River sockeye salmon run strength is: less than 2.3 million fish, all 12-hour fishing periods restricted to the expanded corridor; between 2.3 and 4.6 million fish, one 12-hour period per week is restricted to one or more of the following areas: Drift Area 1, expanded corridor, Anchor Point section; the remaining weekly 12-hour period is restricted to one or more of the following areas: expanded corridor, Anchor Point Section; greater than 4.6 million, one regular 12-hour fishing period per week is restricted to the expanded corridor and the Anchor Point Section; and additional fishing time in this time period is allowed only in the expanded corridor and Anchor Point Section.
2017	From July 16–31: same as 2014, except that for Kenai River sockeye salmon runs of 2.3 to 4.6 million fish, during this time period one Drift Area 1 fishing period may be fished districtwide instead of in Drift Area 1.
2020	From July 16–31: Reverted to same regulations as in 2014 for this time period.
	From August 1–15: all regular 12-hour fishing periods are restricted to one or more of the following areas: Drift Area 1, expanded corridor, Anchor Point section and additional fishing time in this time period is allowed only in the expanded corridor and Anchor Point Section.

Table 121-2.–Drift gillnet commercial harvest of sockeye and coho salmon, 2003–2023.

Year	Sockeye	Coho
2003	1,593,638	52,432
2004	2,529,642	199,587
2005	2,520,327	144,753
2006	784,771	98,473
2007	1,823,481	108,703
2008	983,303	89,428
2009	968,075	82,096
2010	1,587,657	110,275
2011	3,201,035	40,858
2012	2,924,144	74,678
2013	1,662,561	184,771
2014	1,501,678	76,932
2015	1,012,684	130,720
2016	1,266,746	90,242
2017	880,279	191,490
2018	400,269	108,906
2019	749,101	88,618
2020	283,727	48,803
2021	851,901	80,982
2022	893,743	51,306
2023	1,363,839	49,625
Averages		
2003-2012	1,891,607	100,128
2013-2023	950,269	105,277

Table 121-3.–Stock-specific harvest, standard deviation (SD), and 90% credibility intervals calculated using a stratified estimator for combined strata in the Central District drift gillnet (5 temporal strata) and Northern District set gillnet (3 spatial strata) fisheries and based on genetic analysis of mixtures of coho salmon harvested in the Upper Cook Inlet in 2013. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

			90% CI		
Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	5%	95%	SD
Central District drift gillnet					
	Southwest	1,621	1,066	2,295	389
	Northwest	35,981	29,874	42,448	3,731
	Susitna	37,207	30,437	44,197	4,108
	Deshka	10,094	6,640	14,125	2,267
	Yentna	53,940	46,388	61,868	4,745
	Knik	31,681	26,175	37,435	3,380
	Jim	2,444	1,142	3,985	876
	Turnagain/Northeast	6,240	2,045	10,771	2,619
	Kenai	1,590	823	2,472	513
	Kasilof	237	0	723	255
	Southeast	782	144	1,607	453
	Harvest represented	181,818			
	Harvest unanalyzed	2,953			
	Total Harvest	184,771			
Northern District, Eastern and General subdistricts set gillnet					
	Southwest	30	0	152	59
	Northwest	6,783	5,042	8,694	1,100
	Susitna	5,712	3,875	7,634	1,141
	Deshka	1,449	471	2,539	626
	Yentna	11,667	9,791	13,658	1,149
	Knik	7,685	6,527	8,934	726
	Jim	475	175	855	207
	Turnagain/Northeast	7,932	6,670	9,225	777
	Kenai	513	224	829	187
	Kasilof	0	0	64	34
	Southeast	0	0	77	39
	Harvest represented	42,246			
	Harvest unanalyzed	147			
	Total harvest	42,393			

Note: Stock-specific harvest numbers may not sum to the total harvest due to rounding error.

Table 121-4.–Stock-specific harvest, standard deviation (SD), and 90% credibility intervals calculated using a stratified estimator for combined strata in the Central District drift gillnet (5 temporal strata) and Northern District set gillnet (3 spatial strata) fisheries and based on genetic analysis of mixtures of coho salmon harvested in the Upper Cook Inlet in 2014. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

			90% CI		
Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	5%	95%	SD
Central District drift gillnet					
	Southwest	334	144	601	141
	Northwest	11,717	9,742	14,022	1,316
	Susitna	16,593	13,201	20,262	2,168
	Deshka	3,163	1,467	4,920	1,053
	Yentna	14,752	11,651	17,781	1,884
	Knik	14,654	12,425	17,061	1,397
	Jim	696	54	1,387	400
	Turnagain/Northeast	7,937	5,544	10,596	1,541
	Kenai	1,589	1,078	2,178	335
	Kasilof	3	0	118	63
	Southeast	3	0	141	67
	Harvest represented	71,441			
	Harvest unanalyzed	5,491			
	Total Harvest	76,932			
Northern District, Eastern and General subdistricts set gillnet					
	Southwest	0	0	60	28
	Northwest	6,095	4,799	7,456	820
	Susitna	4,847	3,462	6,290	863
	Deshka	0	0	807	386
	Yentna	4,877	3,687	6,085	747
	Knik	9,000	7,980	10,041	629
	Jim	523	262	827	175
	Turnagain/Northeast	8,169	7,135	9,380	704
	Kenai	189	36	393	115
	Kasilof	3	0	78	36
	Southeast	46	1	191	66
	Harvest represented	33,750			
	Harvest unanalyzed	1,375			
	Total harvest	35,125			

Note: Stock-specific harvest numbers may not sum to the total harvest due to rounding error.

Table 121-5.–Stock-specific harvest, standard deviation (SD), and 90% credibility intervals calculated using a stratified estimator for combined strata in the Central District drift gillnet excluding corridor-only periods (5 temporal strata), drift gillnet corridor-only periods (1 temporal stratum) and Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (1 temporal stratum) and Northern District set gillnet (3 spatial strata) fisheries and based on genetic analysis of mixtures of coho salmon harvested in the Upper Cook Inlet in 2015. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	90% CI		SD
			0	1	
Central District drift gillnet (excluding corridor-only periods)					
	Southwest	649	151	1,414	386
	Northwest	26,843	23,316	30,473	2,210
	Susitna	16,044	11,650	20,426	2,676
	Deshka	2,448	886	4,153	1,005
	Yentna	20,478	16,481	24,625	2,498
	Knik	18,522	15,768	21,311	1,701
	Jim	1,844	1,110	2,709	485
	Turnagain/Northeast	6,675	4,217	9,231	1,531
	Kenai	2,590	1,760	3,496	525
	Kasilof	28	0	345	147
	Southeast	572	52	1,188	366
	Harvest represented	96,694			
	Harvest unanalyzed	6,007			
	Total Harvest	102,701			
Central District drift gillnet (corridor-only periods)					
	Southwest	0	0	74	50
	Northwest	4,498	2,864	6,338	1,062
	Susitna	3,972	2,013	6,154	1,255
	Deshka	507	0	1,660	696
	Yentna	7,545	5,279	9,808	1,365
	Knik	7,334	5,762	9,106	1,022
	Jim	706	303	1,235	284
	Turnagain/Northeast	2,531	1,358	3,967	797
	Kenai	313	0	754	245
	Kasilof	0	0	69	45
	Southeast	0	0	58	35
	Harvest represented	27,405			
	Harvest unanalyzed	614			
	Total harvest	28,019			

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Table 121-5.–Page 2 of 2.

Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	90% CI 0	90% CI 1	SD
Central District, Upper Subdistrict set gillnet					
	Southwest	29	0	201	76
	Northwest	2,233	1,167	3,337	649
	Susitna	1,923	576	3,267	808
	Deshka	20	0	495	206
	Yentna	1,659	577	2,859	690
	Knik	3,998	2,879	5,246	728
	Jim	395	167	671	156
	Turnagain/Northeast	2,205	1,449	3,007	480
	Kenai	4,576	3,833	5,331	450
	Kasilof	467	161	843	209
	Southeast	12	0	212	91
	Harvest represented	17,517			
	Harvest unanalyzed	431			
	Total Harvest	17,948			

Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	90% CI 0	90% CI 1	SD
Northern District, Eastern and General subdistricts set gillnet					
	Southwest	6	0	74	40
	Northwest	7,390	5,434	9,456	1,201
	Susitna	4,271	2,492	6,163	1,123
	Deshka	1,074	0	2,230	687
	Yentna	8,542	6,875	10,234	1,021
	Knik	12,438	10,712	14,215	1,081
	Jim	372	117	705	182
	Turnagain/Northeast	8,519	7,371	9,873	768
	Kenai	303	120	550	132
	Kasilof	100	0	288	99
	Southeast	0	0	131	68
	Harvest represented	43,015			
	Harvest unanalyzed	3,488			
	Total harvest	46,503			

Note: Stock-specific harvest numbers may not sum to the total harvest due to rounding error.

Table 121-6.– Stock-specific harvest, standard deviation (SD), and 90% credibility intervals calculated using a stratified estimator (see text) for combined strata in the Central District drift gillnet excluding corridor-only periods (2 temporal strata), drift gillnet corridor-only periods (1 temporal stratum) and Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (1 temporal stratum) and Northern District set gillnet (3 spatial strata) fisheries and based on genetic analysis of mixtures of coho salmon harvested in the Upper Cook Inlet in 2016. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

			90% CI		
Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	5%	95%	SD
Central District drift gillnet (excluding corridor-only periods)					
	Southwest	667	194	1,346	367
	Northwest	17,072	12,729	21,569	2,701
	Susitna	14,762	10,739	19,072	2,545
	Deshka	4,291	2,385	6,294	1,191
	Yentna	11,136	7,803	14,669	2,081
	Knik	8,101	4,888	11,883	2,185
	Jim	1,230	531	2,050	471
	Turnagain/Northeast	6,053	2,742	9,471	2,036
	Kenai	1,721	1,016	2,578	466
	Kasilof	549	82	1,470	473
	Southeast	501	52	1,508	480
	Harvest represented	66,083			
	Harvest unanalyzed	5,984			
	Total harvest	72,067			
Central District drift gillnet (corridor-only periods)					
	Southwest	696	393	1,041	199
	Northwest	0	0	337	159
	Susitna	2,503	1,408	3,601	670
	Deshka	1,196	567	1,864	387
	Yentna	5,101	4,051	6,185	637
	Knik	4,918	3,903	5,991	634
	Jim	28	0	285	117
	Turnagain/Northeast	1,757	852	2,747	578
	Kenai	533	299	837	166
	Kasilof	0	0	80	42
	Southeast	418	95	824	223
	Harvest represented	17,151			
	Harvest unanalyzed	1,024			
	Total harvest	18,175			

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Table 121-6.–Page 2 of 2.

Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	90% CI 5%	90% CI 95%	SD
Central District, Upper Subdistrict set gillnet					
	Southwest	120	29	314	101
	Northwest	0	0	350	157
	Susitna	553	0	1,230	413
	Deshka	140	0	602	230
	Yentna	771	100	1,444	395
	Knik	417	0	942	308
	Jim	0	0	34	22
	Turnagain/Northeast	3,469	2,542	4,467	583
	Kenai	5,395	4,746	6,039	393
	Kasilof	21	0	143	57
	Southeast	343	74	654	174
	Harvest represented	11,228			
	Harvest unanalyzed	378			
	Total Harvest	11,606			

Area strata	Reporting group	Harvest	90% CI 5%	90% CI 95%	SD
Northern District, Eastern and General subdistricts set gillnet					
	Southwest	4	0	82	39
	Northwest	4,175	2,985	5,622	784
	Susitna	4,338	2,755	5,801	932
	Deshka	1,578	859	2,361	452
	Yentna	5,014	3,701	6,281	785
	Knik	5,587	4,816	6,405	497
	Jim	188	58	367	100
	Turnagain/Northeast	8,448	7,619	9,280	511
	Kenai	298	140	507	112
	Kasilof	22	0	111	41
	Southeast	17	0	159	71
	Harvest represented	29,669			
	Harvest unanalyzed	780			
	Total Harvest	30,449			

Note: Stock-specific harvest numbers may not sum to the total harvest due to rounding error.

Table 121-7.–Stock-specific harvest, standard deviation (SD), coefficient of variation (CV), and 90% credibility intervals calculated using a stratified estimator for combined temporal strata in all fishing area strata and based on genetic analysis of mixtures of coho salmon harvested in the Upper Cook Inlet, 2013–2016. (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

			90% CI			
Year	Reporting Group	Harvest	5%	95%	SD	CV
2013	*Southwest*	1,651	1,089	2,349	393	24%
	Northwest	42,764	36,614	49,336	3,879	9%
	Susitna	42,919	35,940	49,962	4,237	10%
	Deshka	11,543	8,001	15,632	2,352	20%
	Yentna	65,607	57,889	73,603	4,842	7%
	Knik	39,366	33,776	45,264	3,456	9%
	Jim	2,919	1,555	4,475	902	31%
	Turnagain/Northeast	14,172	9,808	18,917	2,725	19%
	Kenai	2,103	1,275	3,068	551	26%
	Kasilof	237	0	725	257	108%
	Southeast	782	134	1,612	453	58%
	Harvest represented	224,064				
	Harvest unanalyzed	36,879				
	Total harvest	260,943				
2014	*Southwest*	334	136	600	144	43%
	Northwest	17,812	15,452	20,400	1,525	9%
	Susitna	21,440	17,784	25,283	2,299	11%
	Deshka	3,163	1,373	4,947	1,108	35%
	Yentna	19,629	16,240	22,897	2,025	10%
	Knik	23,654	21,224	26,184	1,500	6%
	Jim	1,219	523	1,999	437	36%
	Turnagain/Northeast	16,106	13,508	18,863	1,681	10%
	Kenai	1,778	1,228	2,410	359	20%
	Kasilof	6	0	142	73	1259%
	Southeast	49	0	241	94	191%
	Harvest represented	105,191				
	Harvest unanalyzed	32,153				
	Total harvest	137,344				

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Table 121-7.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Reporting Group	Harvest	90% CI 5%	90% CI 95%	SD	CV
2015	*Southwest*	683	163	1,445	396	58%
	Northwest	40,964	36,526	45,622	2,792	7%
	Susitna	26,210	20,644	31,649	3,332	13%
	Deshka	4,049	1,742	6,490	1,435	35%
	Yentna	38,224	33,074	43,544	3,167	8%
	Knik	42,292	38,458	46,109	2,328	6%
	Jim	3,318	2,379	4,369	605	18%
	Turnagain/Northeast	19,929	16,818	23,118	1,908	10%
	Kenai	7,782	6,611	9,004	725	9%
	Kasilof	595	204	1,124	281	47%
	Southeast	584	24	1,272	383	66%
	Harvest represented	184,631				
	Harvest unanalyzed	31,288				
	Total harvest	215,919				
2016	*Southwest*	1,488	875	2,261	432	29%
	Northwest	21,246	16,632	26,134	2,951	14%
	Susitna	22,156	17,353	27,070	2,959	13%
	Deshka	7,205	5,004	9,559	1,364	19%
	Yentna	22,022	18,151	26,024	2,420	11%
	Knik	19,023	15,571	22,990	2,317	12%
	Jim	1,446	709	2,348	502	35%
	Turnagain/Northeast	19,727	16,175	23,507	2,255	11%
	Kenai	7,947	6,934	9,059	640	8%
	Kasilof	592	69	1,519	478	81%
	Southeast	1,278	541	2,362	565	44%
	Harvest represented	124,131				
	Harvest unanalyzed	23,337				
	Total harvest	147,468				

Note: Stock-specific harvest numbers may not sum to the total harvest represented due to rounding error.

Table 121-8.–Commercial drift gillnet harvest of coho salmon by major stock reporting group based on genetic analysis of mixtures of fish harvested in Upper Cook Inlet, 2013-2016 (Source: Barclay et al. 2019, RIR 5J19-06).

	Harvest				
Reporting group	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average
Southwest CI	1,621	334	649	1,364	992
Northwest CI	35,981	11,717	31,341	17,072	24,027
Susitna	37,207	16,593	20,016	17,265	22,770
Deshka	10,094	3,163	2,955	5,487	5,425
Yentna	53,940	14,752	28,023	16,237	28,238
Knik	31,681	14,654	25,856	13,019	21,302
Jim	2,444	696	2,551	1,258	1,737
Turnagain/Northeast CI	6,240	7,937	9,205	7,809	7,798
Kenai	1,590	1,589	2,903	2,255	2,084
Kasilof	237	3	28	549	204
Southeast CI	782	3	572	919	569
Harvest represented	181,818	71,441	124,099	83,234	115,148
Harvest unanalyzed	2,953	5,491	6,621	7,008	5,518
Total harvest	184,771	76,932	130,720	90,242	120,666

Table 121-9.–Abundance and Northern District set gillnet commercial harvest and sport harvest of Susitna River drainage coho salmon, 2013–2015.

	Commercial harvest[a]	Mainstem abundance	Mainstem inriver	Sport harvest[b]	Commercial harvest rate	Sport harvest rate	Total harvest rate
Mainstem Susitna							
2013	7,186	130,026	184,488	15,647	4%	8%	12%
2014	5,045	84,879	109,483	15,120	5%	14%	18%
2015	5,779	152,500	182,759	17,900	3%	10%	13%
Yentna River							
2013	11,707						
2014	5,075	73,819	93,448	9,899	5%	11%	16%
2015	9,235	110,321	148,545	10,928	6%	7%	14%

[a] Commercial harvest includes applying analyzed stock composition to unanalyzed harvest.

PROPOSAL 122 – 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*.
Repeal the 'one percent rule' in the Central District drift gillnet fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Brian Harrison.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the one-percent rule in the Central District drift gillnet fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the drift gillnet fishery, from August 1 through August 15, both regular 12-hour commercial fishing periods are restricted to one or more of the following areas: Drift Area 1, expanded Kasilof section, expanded Kenai section, and Anchor Point section. Additional fishing periods in this time period is allowed only in the expanded Kenai, expanded Kasilof and Anchor Point Sections, except that if the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed under its own one-percent rule, or the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the drift gillnet fishery, regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figures 121-1–3) .

The term "fishing period" is defined as a time period open to commercial fishing as measured by a 24-hour calendar day from 12:01 a.m. until 11:59 p.m.

The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* states, in part, that the department is to manage the 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.

The purpose statement of 5 AAC 21.353 currently reads, "The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the ND drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions."

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? **This** may increase commercial drift gillnet harvest of salmon in August by an unknown amount, depending on abundance, run timing and migratory patterns of salmon returning to UCI.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending adoption of a federal fishery management plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4 and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposals 121, 123, & 124.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

The department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District coho salmon stocks, and given the likelihood that elimination of the 1% rule would increase the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, the department may need to restrict or close Northern District fisheries that harvest coho salmon to ensure escapement goals are attained.

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 123 and 124 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons. and 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*.
Repeal the "one percent rule" from Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery management plans.
Repeal the "one percent rule" from Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery management plans.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee & John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the one-percent rule in both the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) and Central District drift gillnet fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the combined Kenai and East Foreland sections, and separately in the Kasilof Section, the set gillnet fishing season closes no later than August 15. However, the season may close earlier, by emergency order (EO), after July 31, if the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total sockeye harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the combined Kenai and East Foreland sections, or separately in the Kasilof Section.

In the drift gillnet fishery, from August 1 through August 15, both regular 12-hour commercial fishing periods are restricted to one or more of the following areas: Drift Area 1, expanded Kasilof section, expanded Kenai section, and Anchor Point section. Additional fishing periods in this time period is allowed only in the expanded Kenai, expanded Kasilof and Anchor Point Sections, except that if the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed under its own one-percent rule, or the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the drift gillnet fishery, regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4.

For set gillnets, the term "fishing period" is defined as a time period open to commercial fishing as measured by a 24-hour calendar day from 12:01 a.m. until 11:59 p.m. There is no regulatory definition of "fishing period" applied to the drift gillnet fishery.

The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* states, in part, that the department is to manage the 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.

The purpose statement of 5 AAC 21.353 currently reads, "The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the ND drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions."

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow the ESSN and drift gillnet fisheries to remain open until August 15, unless the department closed either fishery earlier to achieve escapement goals. This would likely increase commercial harvest in August of all salmon by an unknown amount. The amount of additional harvest would be dependent upon run timing and run size of the respective salmon stocks. Elimination of the one-

percent rule would provide the department additional tools in managing the ESSN and the Central District drift gillnet fishery to achieve sockeye salmon goals in the Kenai River and Kasilof River, but would likely increase the harvest of UCI coho salmon stocks, including Northern District coho salmon stocks for which the department has conservation concerns.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending adoption of a Federal Fishery Management Plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: In 2005, 5 AAC 21.320(b)(2)(C)(iii) was amended to include, for the first time, what is commonly referred to as the "one-percent" rule. This provision stated that any time after July 31, if less than one percent of the season's total sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the Kenai, Kasilof, and East Foreland sections set gillnet fishery, the season will close. In 2008, the board modified the drift gillnet plan to state that if the ESSN fishery was closed based on the one-percent rule, drift gillnet regular fishing periods from August 11–15 would be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4. In 2014, the setnet one-percent rule was modified so it would apply to the combined Kenai and East Foreland sections and the Kasilof Section separately. Also in 2014, the board adopted a new drift gillnet one-percent rule (5 AAC 21.353 (e)). The drift rule states that after August 1 drift gillnet regular periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4, if the drift fleet harvests less than one- percent of their total sockeye salmon harvest for two consecutive fishing periods or if the entire ESSN fishery was closed based on their one-percent rule. In 2017, the one-percent rule for the ESSN fishery was modified to begin after August 7. In 2020, the one-percent rule for the ESSN fishery was modified to begin after July 31.

Since the one-percent rule was adopted, part or all of the ESSN fishery has been closed based on the one-percent rule three times (Tables 123-1 & 123-2). In two of those years, 2009 and 2011, the drift gillnet fishery was also restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 based on the ESSN closure. This affected one fishing period in 2009 and two fishing periods in 2011. Since the drift gillnet specific one-percent rule was implemented in 2014, the drift fishery has been impacted in three of 10 years (Table 123-3), affecting a total of five fishing periods over these three years.

Based on recent genetic mixed stock analysis of coho salmon harvested in the ESSN fishery, approximately 4,600 coho salmon of the 17,500 fish harvested in 2015 (26%) were Kenai River stock, while 5,400 of the 11,230 fish taken in 2016 (48%) were Kenai River coho salmon (Tables 121-5 and 121-6). Based on these two years of data, 37% of the coho salmon harvested in the ESSN fishery were Kenai River stock.

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 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.

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.

Information gathered from research programs on the Kenai River indicate that coho salmon runs averaged about 140,000 fish from 1999 to 2004, with total harvests averaging just over 62,000 fish (Table 123-5). Overall harvest rates for Kenai River coho salmon runs prior to 2000 were high, in some cases (84% in 1999) under the previous Kenai River coho salmon management plan, which allowed a 3-fish bag limit and more liberal commercial fishing in August; under a plan that allowed a 2-fish bag limit and more restrictive commercial fishing, the harvest rate ranged from 35% to 47% from 2000 to 2004. Regulations created since 2004 to coho salmon bag limit and the 1% rule increased harvest rates of Kenai River coho salmon relative to the rates observed from 1999–2004. Research findings from studies conducted in Southeast Alaska with transboundary coho salmon stocks have indicated that a harvest rate of about 61% is sustainable. Based on the relatively low

coho salmon harvest rate by the commercial fishery, the season ending date for the ESSN and drift gillnet fisheries was extended by the board from August 10 to August 15 in 2008, but only regular Monday/Thursday fishing periods were open during this time period. The drift fishery is restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 after August 15 to reduce harvest of northern bound coho salmon.

The department does not manage the Kenai River coho salmon sport fishery inseason based upon abundance because coho salmon escapement is not monitored and no escapement goal has been established for the Kenai River.

Since 1999, the average annual ESSN and drift gillnet coho salmon harvest (all stocks) has decreased by 48% from the 1989–1999 average of 214,427 fish to the 1999–2023 average of 112,058 fish (Table 123-6). The Kenai River coho salmon sport fish harvest during that time decreased 4% from 52,000 fish per year (1989–1998) to 48,000 fish per year (1999–2022) (Table 123-7).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs. The department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District coho salmon stocks, and given the likelihood that elimination of the 1% rule would increase the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, the department may need to restrict or close Northern District fisheries that harvest coho salmon to ensure escapement goals are attained.

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 123-1.–Years where the one-percent closed the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery prior to the regulatory season ending date.

ESSN Fishery					
2009		Sockeye salmon		Coho salmon	
Date	Daily	Total	Sockeye %	Daily	Total
1-Aug	11,913	882,702	1.30%	1,299	2,712
3-Aug	9,906	892,608	1.10%	1,375	4,087
6-Aug	8,363	900,971	0.90%	3,181	7,268
10-Aug	4,882	905,853	0.50%	4,167	11,435
Kenai Section					
2011		Sockeye salmon		Coho salmon	
Date	Daily	Total	Sockeye %	Daily	Total
1-Aug	28,385	1,811,664	1.60%	974	10,715
2-Aug	11,410	1,823,074	0.60%	528	11,243
4-Aug	29,461	1,852,535	1.60%	948	12,191
6-Aug	13,567	1,866,102	0.70%	1,426	13,617
7-Aug	11,837	1,877,939	0.60%	1,943	15,560
Kasilof Section					
2015		Sockeye salmon		Coho salmon	
Date	Daily	Total	Sockeye %	Daily	Total
1-Aug	13,973	728,085	1.90%	189	2,830
3-Aug	11,304	739,389	1.50%	478	3,308
5-Aug	14,752	754,141	2.00%	643	3,951
6-Aug	16,890	771,031	2.20%	539	4,490
8-Aug	10,743	781,774	1.40%	673	5,163
9-Aug	7,086	788,860	0.90%	683	5,846
10-Aug	6,091	794,951	0.80%	615	6,461

Table 123-2.–Season closing date and reason for closure by year in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery, 2005–2023.

Year	Last day of fishing	Closing date in regulation	1% rule (yes/no)	Reason for closing
2005	10-Aug	10-Aug	No	End of season
2006	9-Aug	10-Aug	No	End of season
2007	9-Aug	10-Aug	No	End of season
2008	7-Aug	15-Aug	No	Poor sockeye salmon run to Kenai River
2009	10-Aug	15-Aug	Yes	1% Rule
2010	12-Aug	15-Aug	No	End of season
2011	7-Aug	15-Aug	Yes	1% Rule
2012	13-Aug	15-Aug	No	End of season
2013	23-Jul	15-Aug	No	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River

Year	Last Day of Fishing		Closing Date in Regulation	Reason for closing
	Kasilof	Kenai/EF		
2014	4-Aug	6-Aug	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2015	10-Aug	12-Aug	15-Aug	1% Rule in Kasilof Section; End of Season in Kenai/EF
2016	9-Aug	9-Aug	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2017	15-Aug	14-Aug	15-Aug	End of season
2018	28-Jul	23-Jul	15-Aug	Late sockeye run to Kenai River
2019	3-Aug	3-Aug	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2020	22-Jul	22-Jul	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2021	20-Jul	20-Jul	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2022	14-Jul	14-Jul	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2023	Did not open		15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River

Table 123-3.–Drift gillnet fishing periods affected by the drift gillnet one-percent rule, 2014–2023.

Year	Restricted by 1%		EO #	Dates affected
	Yes	No		
2014	X		51	8/11; 8/14
2015		X		
2016	X		33	8/11; 8/15
2017		X		
2018		X		
2019	X		32	8/15
2020		X		
2021		X		
2022		X		
2023		X		

Table 123-4.–Kenai River sockeye salmon sonar passage, 1990-2023.

Year	Total passage	August passage	August %	Last day of counts
1990	950,358	125,523	13%	7-Aug
1991	954,843	146,377	15%	12-Aug
1992	1,429,864	217,960	15%	13-Aug
1993	1,134,922	205,617	18%	13-Aug
1994	1,412,047	662,379	47%	23-Aug
1995	884,922	167,066	19%	14-Aug
1996	1,129,274	212,699	19%	12-Aug
1997	1,512,733	462,151	31%	25-Aug
1998	1,084,996	328,190	30%	13-Aug
1999	1,137,001	300,574	26%	18-Aug
2000	900,700	92,997	10%	10-Aug
2001	906,333	150,082	17%	13-Aug
2002	1,339,682	264,779	20%	14-Aug
2003	1,656,026	203,300	12%	10-Aug
2004	1,945,383	638,089	33%	18-Aug
2005	1,908,821	735,097	39%	21-Aug
2006	2,064,728	1,166,748	57%	31-Aug
2007	1,229,945	437,981	36%	23-Aug
2008	917,139	242,358	26%	17-Aug
2009	1,090,055	184,799	17%	13-Aug
2010	1,294,884	308,010	24%	19-Aug
2011	1,599,217	181,908	11%	13-Aug
2012	1,581,555	229,388	15%	16-Aug
2013	1,359,893	84,031	6%	7-Aug
2014	1,520,340	628,716	41%	14-Aug
2015	1,709,051	818,423	48%	26-Aug
2016	1,383,692	596,624	43%	26-Aug
2017	1,308,498	561,149	43%	24-Aug
2018	1,035,761	583,014	56%	28-Aug
2019	1,849,054	724,287	39%	19-Aug
2020	1,814,252	1,126,045	62%	24-Aug
2021	2,441,825	1,517,880	62%	24-Aug
2022	1,570,395	362,764	23%	16-Aug
2023	2,343,976	1,057,794	45%	29-Aug
Averages				
1990-1999	1,163,096	282,854	23%	15-Aug
2000-2009	1,395,881	411,623	27%	17-Aug
2010-2019	1,464,195	471,555	33%	19-Aug
2020-2023	2,042,612	1,016,121	48%	23-Aug

Table 123-5.–Estimated harvest, total run, and harvest rate of Kenai River coho salmon from 1999–2004.

Year	Escapement[a,b]	Sport[c]	Personal Use	Commercial[d]	Research Mortality	Total Run	Total Harvest[e]	Harvest Rate[f]
1999	7,889	35,361	1,009	3,894	193	48,346	40,457	0.837
2000	72,742	52,489	1,449	2,965	555	130,200	56,903	0.437
2001	75,122	55,004	1,555	1,934	540	134,155	58,493	0.436
2002	133,612	66,104	1,721	6,115	968	208,520	73,940	0.355
2003	79,915	51,944	1,332	2,578	209	135,978	55,854	0.411
2004	95,394	72,565	2,661	11,149	2,106	183,875	86,375	0.47
Average								
1999–2004	77,446	55,578	1,621	4,773	762	140,179	62,004	0.491
2000–2004	91,357	59,621	1,744	4,948	876	158,546	66,313	0.422

Note: 1991–1993 and 1998 Kenai River coho salmon creel data was used to calculate the effect of increasing the bag limit from 2 to 3 fish, only boat angler interviews/data were selected for use for 1991–1993 due to the lack of data from shore anglers.

[a] Kenai River coho salmon total runs were estimated only during 1999–2004.

[b] Sources: Carlon and Evans 2007, Massengill and Evans 2007.

[c] Source: Statewide Harvest Survey.

[d] Sources: Massengill and Carlon 2004 a,b; Massengill and Carlon 2007 a,b; Massengill 2007.

[e] Aggregate of all harvest estimates (sport, commercial, and personal use).

[f] Total Harvest divided by Total Run. ND = No Data

Table 123-6.–Drift and ESSN commercial salmon harvest, 1989–2023.

Year	King	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum
1989	10,914	4,543,497	83,189	37,984	12,398
1990	4,760	3,423,363	287,804	549,384	294,132
1991	5,139	1,962,741	206,681	8,461	217,863
1992	11,333	8,907,571	324,378	667,806	235,822
1993	14,844	4,500,530	164,927	88,153	91,803
1994	16,039	3,359,637	378,563	491,075	252,675
1995	12,662	2,735,100	286,224	118,052	471,935
1996	11,953	3,688,075	212,158	218,445	142,435
1997	11,952	4,030,817	98,334	61,975	93,385
1998	5,422	1,111,702	102,015	532,866	88,768
1999	10,038	2,506,941	76,737	12,909	166,985
2000	3,954	1,186,174	142,556	114,254	118,399
2001	6,628	1,716,294	43,664	64,217	75,847
2002	9,893	2,670,409	160,984	439,000	226,377
2003	16,050	3,340,479	62,603	46,850	108,401
2004	22,788	4,765,452	229,741	343,362	139,060
2005	23,555	5,054,672	164,296	44,849	66,381
2006	12,738	2,086,046	120,640	397,798	60,312
2007	13,204	3,176,888	132,313	137,316	75,357
2008	8,226	2,286,539	111,251	163,487	46,443
2009	6,447	1,873,928	93,531	195,521	77,392
2010	7,597	2,673,446	142,958	285,822	220,012
2011	8,290	5,078,974	56,418	30,860	112,694
2012	923	3,020,819	81,215	462,219	264,562
2013	3,481	2,584,094	187,037	45,276	132,274
2014	2,683	2,226,076	82,840	630,960	108,893
2015	8,337	2,494,020	148,668	44,636	254,579
2016	7,365	2,264,599	101,848	372,411	114,461
2017	5,043	1,712,499	221,406	149,958	233,102
2018	2,815	690,110	113,611	105,357	108,294
2019	2,423	1,533,644	95,129	60,353	113,046
2020	1,033	579,068	49,175	305,280	25,254
2021	1,514	1,258,908	81,865	73,367	65,441
2022	508	998,421	51,334	90,270	92,292
2023	107	1,363,839	49,625	57,817	112,838
1989–1998 Avg	10,502	3,826,303	214,427	277,420	190,122
1999–2023 Avg	7,426	2,365,694	112,058	186,966	124,748
% Change	-29%	-38%	-48%	-33%	-34%

Table 123-7.– Estimated sport harvest of Kenai River coho salmon by river section, 1989─2022.

Year	Cook Inlet to Soldotna bridge	Soldotna bridge to Moose River	Moose River to Skilak Lake	Skilak Lake to Kenai Lake	Kenai River reach not specified	All sections
1989	36,668	7,921	8,236	2,434	4,316	59,575
1990	40,567	8,446	7,281	4,031	ND	60,325
1991	49,499	13,438	9,520	3,699	7	76,163
1992	33,175	7,579	7,547	4,009	ND	52,310
1993	29,135	9,677	6,771	4,955	ND	50,538
1994	46,345	15,249	12,286	12,831	ND	86,711
1995	31,839	5,973	5,579	2,792	ND	46,183
1996	22,561	10,423	6,053	3,256	ND	42,293
1997	6,863	4,177	3,082	2,042	ND	16,164
1998	15,461	5,097	4,206	2,203	ND	26,967
1999	20,442	5,386	3,080	2,729	ND	31,637
2000	30,836	10,065	5,053	2,565	ND	48,519
2001	32,478	9,328	5,551	2,425	ND	49,782
2002	36,703	10,850	5,069	4,851	2,177	59,650
2003	26,056	10,990	4,677	3,180	,1754	46,657
2004	41,616	13,200	5,726	3,601	1,809	65,952
2005	25,141	14,356	4,436	4,413	2,065	50,411
2006	20,949	7,131	4,829	3,528	1,202	37,639
2007	20,334	7,455	5,591	3,790	847	38,017
2008	31,164	9,283	5,274	4,536	1,367	51,624
2009	28,066	8,416	7,895	4,357	1,226	49,960
2010	28,135	11,029	8,884	2,733	2,131	52,912
2011	27,346	8,939	5,531	2,213	103	44,132
2012	22,965	7,487	4,064	1,262	629	36,407
2013	23,831	14,950	6,901	2,978	294	48,954
2014	30,759	12,878	9,584	7,216	129	60,566
2015	34,002	12,140	8,091	2,760	74	57,067
2016	24,778	9,460	3,872	1,613	208	39,931
2017	29,625	10,521	6,151	1,985	145	48,427
2018	29,699	11,032	7,125	2,607	112	50,575
2019	20,555	11,520	5,915	2,894	287	41,171
2020	16,084	6,502	3,307	1,486	67	27,446
2021	32,774	14,986	6,071	5,140	0	58,971
2022	34,886	12,989	5,705	3,575	47	57,202
Averages						
All years	28,863	9,967	6,145	3,550	913	49,142
1989–1998	31,211	8,798	7,056	4,225	2,162	51,723
1999–2022	27,884	10,454	5,766	3,268	794	48,067

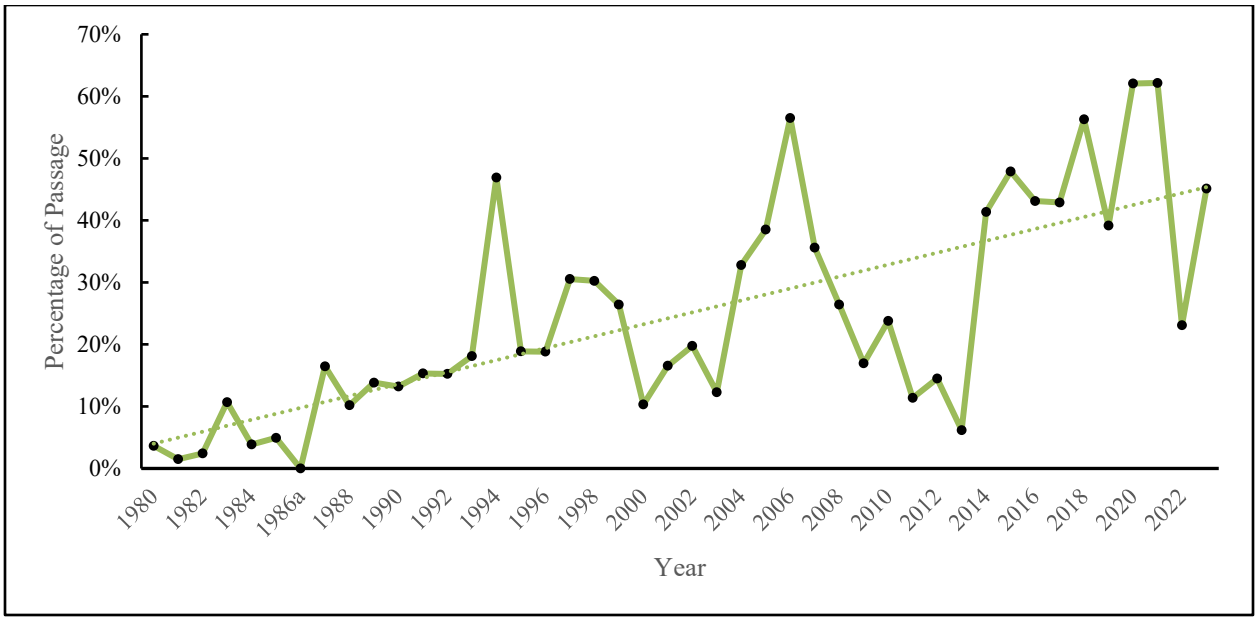

Figure 123-1.–Percentage of Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon passage occurring in August, 1980–2023.

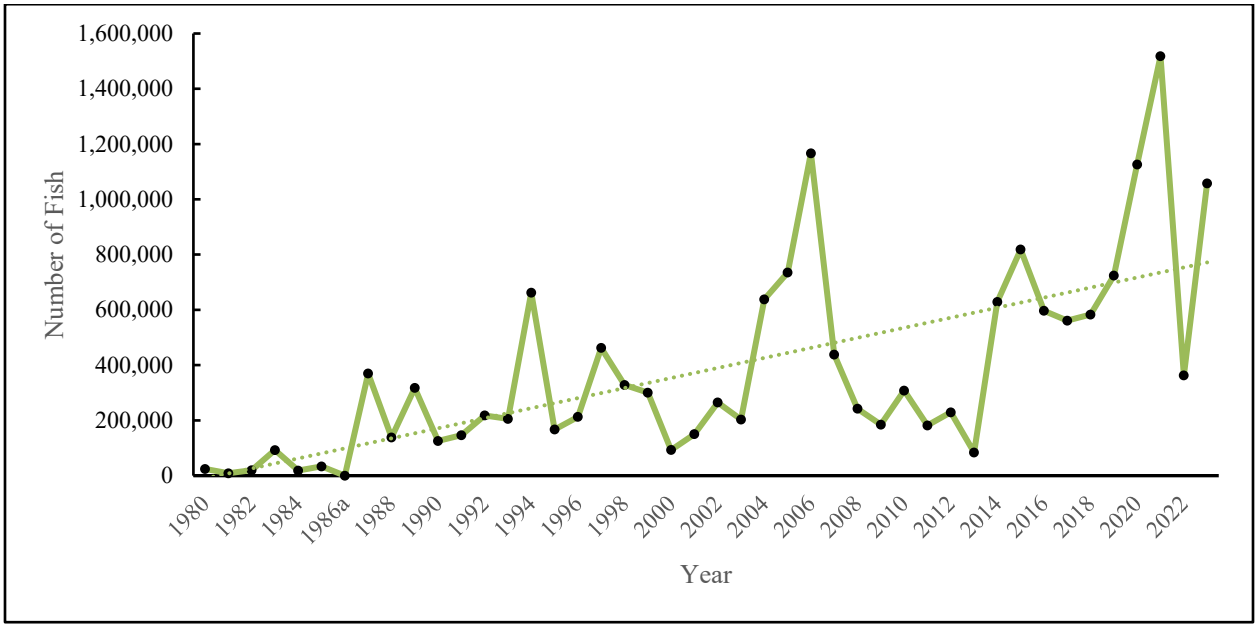

Figure 123-2.–Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon passage occurring in August, 1980–2023.

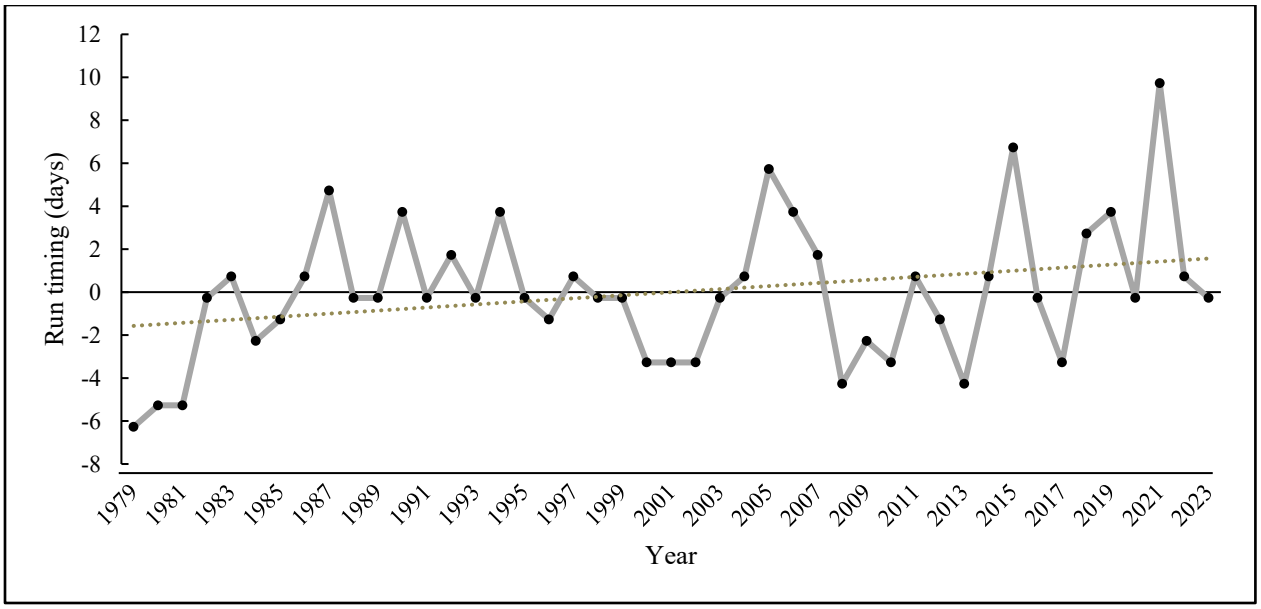

Figure 123-3.–Upper Cook Inlet Offshore Test Fish Sockeye Salmon Timing Relative to Historical Mean Midpoint, 1979–2023.

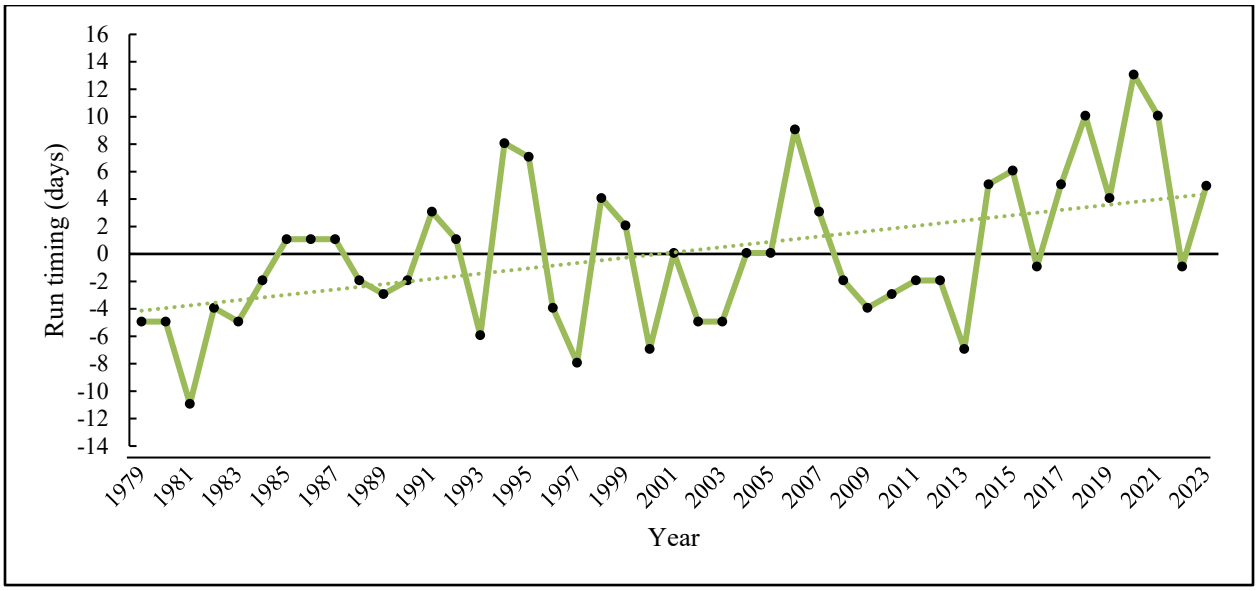

Figure 123-4.–Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Run Timing Relative to Historical Mean Midpoint at RM19 sonar site, 1979–2023.

PROPOSAL 125 – 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*.
Repeal sections of the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* to provide additional commercial salmon fishing opportunity with drift gillnet gear.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal provisions in the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* that restrict area open to drift gillnet fishing during regular and additional fishing periods.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the drift gillnet fishery, from August 1 through August 15, fishing during both regular 12-hour periods per week will be restricted to one or more of the following areas; Area 1, Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections, and any additional time will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections. However, if the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery is closed under its own one-percent rule, or the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the drift gillnet fishery, regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4. One-percent rules were adopted to reduce coho salmon harvest during years when sockeye salmon harvests have declined to less than one-percent of yearly totals. From August 16 until closed by emergency order (EO) drift fishing is open for regular fishing periods in Drift Gillnet Areas 3 & 4 only (Figure 121-1–3).

The purpose statement of 5 AAC 21.353 currently reads, "The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the ND drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions."

The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* states, in part, that the department is to manage the 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.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase commercial drift harvest of salmon in August by an unknown amount, depending on abundance, run timing and migratory patterns of salmon returning to UCI. This could impact the reasonable opportunity of sport and guided sport fishermen to harvest coho salmon in the Kenai River and northern Cook Inlet drainages.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending adoption of a federal fishery management plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposals 121, 123, & 124.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs. The department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District coho salmon stocks, and given the likelihood that elimination of the 1% rule would increase the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, the department may need to restrict or close Northern District fisheries that harvest coho salmon to ensure escapement goals are attained.

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 126 – 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*.
Increase drift gillnet fishing opportunity in Drift Gillnet Area 2.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would not change existing regulation as during districtwide commercial periods, drift gillnet Area 2 is open to commercial drift gillnet fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Fishing with drift gillnet gear, in the Central District, begins on the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later. Regular fishing periods are Mondays and Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Area is not restricted, and includes Area 2, during this time frame for regular or additional commercial fishing periods.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would have no effect if adopted. Drift gillnet area 2 is already open for two 12-hours periods per week during all districtwide commercial fishing periods.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposals 121, 123, & 124.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends the board **TAKE NO ACTION** on this proposal because it does not change existing 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 127 – 5 AAC 21.353. *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan*.
Modify weekly fishing periods in the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.*

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open drift gillnet fishing, in the Central District, districtwide for two 12-hour fishing periods per week and in the Expanded Kenai, Kasilof sections for one 12-hour fishing period per week.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Fishing with drift gillnet gear begins on the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later. Regular fishing periods are Mondays and Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Area is not restricted during this time frame for regular or additional commercial fishing periods.

From July 9–15, for all Kenai River sockeye salmon run sizes, fishing during the two regular fishing periods is restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Area 1 (Figures 121-1 and 121-2). At run strengths greater than 2.3 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, the commissioner may open one additional 12-hour fishing period in the Kenai and Kasilof sections and Drift Area 1. Any additional fishing time provided during the July 9–15 time frame is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections of the Upper Subdistrict. Restrictions to the drift fleet from July 9–15 are to reduce the harvest of Susitna River sockeye salmon.

From July 16–31, at run strengths less than 2.3 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during all regular 12-hour fishing periods will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof sections. At run strengths of 2.3 million to 4.6 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during one regular 12-hour fishing period per week is restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kasilof Section, Expanded Kenai Section, Anchor Point Section, or Drift Area 1. The remaining 12-hour weekly fishing period and all additional fishing time during this time period will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kasilof Section, Expanded Kenai Section, or Anchor Point Section. At run strengths greater than 4.6 million sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, one regular 12-hour fishing period per week will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections. Restrictions to the drift fleet from July 16–31 are to reduce the harvest of Susitna River sockeye and Northern Cook Inlet coho salmon.

From August 1–15, fishing during both regular 12-hour periods per week will be restricted to one or more of the following areas; Expanded Kasilof Section, Expanded Kenai Section, Anchor Point Section, or Drift Area 1, and any additional time will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections. However, if the entire Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed because of the one-percent rule, or if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the drift gillnet fishery, regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift areas 3 and 4 (Figure 121-1).

From August 16 until closed by EO, Drift areas 3 and 4 are open for fishing during regular fishing periods (Figure 121-3).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require repealing of the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon abundance based tiered restrictions in the *Central Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* 5AAC 21.353 (c)–(f). This would increase commercial drift gillnet harvest of salmon by an unknown amount. This could impact the opportunity for sport and guided sport fishermen to harvest coho salmon in the Kenai River and northern Cook Inlet drainages.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending implementation of a federal fishery management plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposals 121, 123, & 126.

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.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. In addition, while reduced yields in this watershed can in part be attributed to invasive northern pike, average harvest for Susitna River sockeye salmon has remained stable.
The department believes current coho salmon management under the existing management strategy is sustainable. The Kenai River coho salmon stock is not monitored for escapement and with the discontinuation of the guide logbook program in the spring of 2019, the department no longer has one of the few metrics by which to gauge relative coho salmon run strength inseason. The department largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

The department does have conservation concerns for several Northern District coho salmon stocks, and given the likelihood that alteration of the existing management strategy would increase the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, the department may need to restrict or close Northern District fisheries that harvest coho salmon to ensure escapement goals are attained.

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.

Fishing Seasons, Weekly Periods, Set Gillnet Gear, and Registration (15 proposals)

PROPOSAL 128 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.
Provide additional fishing opportunity with set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Hollier.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would mandate opening the North Kalifonsky Beach (NKB) statistical area within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark to set gillnets when any portion of the Kasilof Section is open to commercial set gillnet fishing from July 1 until the Kenai and East Foreland sections open on or after July 8.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) commercial fishery is primarily managed under the guidance of two management plans: 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* and 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*. The Kasilof Section fishery opens on or after June 25, with provisions for an opening as early as June 20 based on a 30,000-sockeye salmon inriver trigger. The Kenai and East Foreland sections do not open until on or after July 8. Both fisheries close on or before August 15.

On or after July 1, when the Kasilof Section is open to commercial fishing with set gillnets, and the Kenai and East Foreland Sections are closed to commercial fishing with set gillnets, commercial fishing with set gillnets may be allowed within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark in that portion of the Kenai Section north of the latitude of the Blanchard Line (NKB-stat area 244-32), and is not subject to the time limitations in 5 AAC 21.359(e)(3) and 5 AAC 21.360. From July 1 until the Kenai and East Foreland Sections commercial salmon set gillnet fishery open on or after July 8, set gillnet gear may not exceed 29 meshes in depth and may not have a mesh size greater than four and three quarter inches during all fishing periods that are restricted to within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark.

In Cook Inlet, one person may own two set gillnet permits (S04H) and operate two full complements of gear. However, in the ESSN fishery only, if one person owns and operates two permits, 105 fathoms of the 210 fathoms of total gear must be fished with nets that are not more than 29 meshes in depth and marked with a blue buoy on either end of the net. The buoy must be at least 9.5 inches in diameter. There also is an option for gear reduction (number of nets and depth of nets) in the ESSN fishery found in 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River King Salmon Management Plan*.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the harvest of king and sockeye salmon by an unknown amount in the NKB statistical area (Figure 128-1). Harvest would be dependent on run timing and abundance of Kenai and Kasilof Rivers king and sockeye salmon as well as the amount and type of gear fished.

BACKGROUND: In 2017, the board passed Proposal 136 which allowed set gillnetting within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark in the NKB area, beginning on or after July 8, when the Kasilof

Section is open to set gillnetting, but the Kenai and East Foreland sections are not open. Since adoption of this proposal, the NKB 600-foot fishing area has been open at least once in each year except 2023; two days in 2018, three days in 2019, six days in 2020, seven days in 2021, and one day in 2022 (Table 128-1). The average harvest per fishing period across those years in the 600-foot fishery was two king salmon and 2,851 sockeye salmon per period. The average harvest from the full area (out to 1.5 miles from shore) across the same years was 29 fish king salmon and 5,744 sockeye salmon per period.

Genetic stock composition estimates were conducted on the 2018 sockeye salmon harvest in the NKB 600-foot fishery (Table 128-2). Samples were pooled (n=187) from two days of fishing representing a harvest of 9,057 fish. From this, it was estimated that 4,652 fish (51.4%) were of Kasilof River origin; 4,244 fish (46.9%) were of Kenai River origin; and 161 fish (1.8%) were from Other Cook Inlet areas. Stock composition estimates specific to NKB have not been conducted since 2018. It is unknow if the proportions found in this one year of sampling are consistent across years.

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 achieve 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.

Kenai River late-run king salmon returns have steadily declined since 2012, to the point where they were identified as a stock of management concern in 2023. From 1998–2016 Kenai River late-run king salmon were managed to meet an SEG/BEG based upon all sizes of fish (Table 128-3). During that time the goal was not met two years, was met nine years, and was exceeded eight years. From 2017–2019, Kenai River late-run king salmon have been managed to meet a sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 13,500–27,000 large (>75cm mid-eye to tail fork) fish. From 2017–2019, the SEG was met twice and missed once. From 2020–2023, Kenai River late-run king salmon

have been managed to meet a optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 13,500–27,000 large fish that was established by the board in 2020. From 2020–2023, the OEG has not been met in each year. The stock of concern listing was evaluated using the OEG except for 2019 which was evaluated on the SEG.

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.

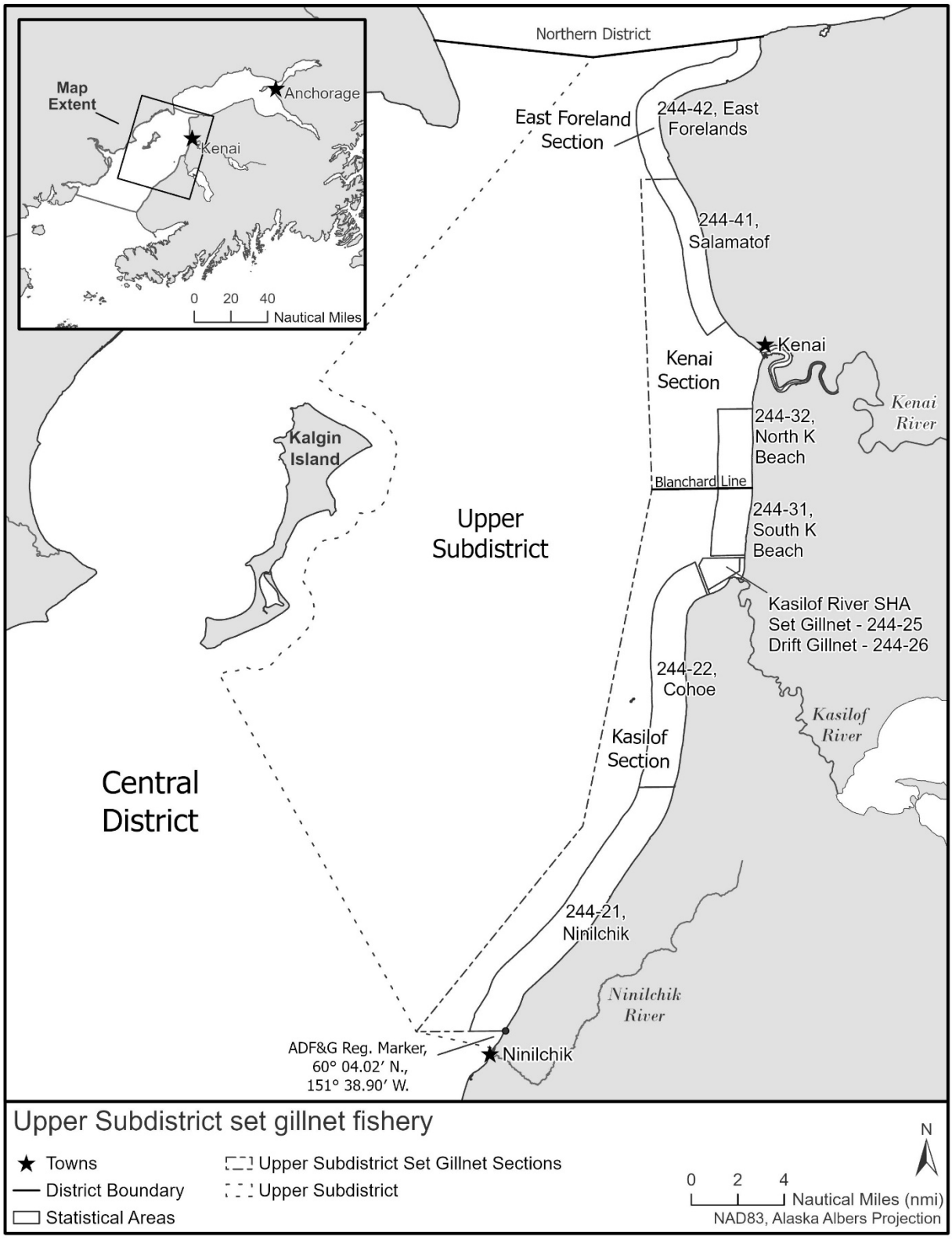

Figure 128-1.–Map of the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery (ESSN), with statistical areas.

Table 128-1.–King (all sizes) and sockeye salmon harvest in the North Kalifonsky Beach statistical area (244-32), 2018–2023.

Date	King	Sockeye	Area fished
7/9/2018	51	1,184	Full Area
7/12/2018	177	6,277	Full Area
7/19/2018	5	6,885	600 ft
7/21/2018	6	2,172	600 ft
7/23/2018	59	2,595	Full Area
7/8/2019	26	4,128	Full Area
7/11/2019	39	6,539	Full Area
7/13/2019	4	3,227	600 ft
7/15/2019	39	7,329	Full Area
7/18/2019	77	8,938	Full Area
7/21/2019	13	8,076	600 ft
7/22/2019	37	7,266	Full Area
7/25/2019	26	13,125	Full Area
7/28/2019	12	14,133	Full Area
7/29/2019	16	12,666	Full Area
7/31/2019	15	8,746	Full Area
8/1/2019	11	5,551	Full Area
8/2/2019	0	1,331	600 ft
8/3/2019	2	2,163	Full Area
7/2/2020	1	1,897	600 ft
7/4/2020	0	684	600 ft
7/6/2020	1	2,260	600 ft
7/7/2020	1	1,796	600 ft
7/8/2020	0	629	600 ft
7/9/2020	1	1,479	Full Area
7/13/2020	5	3,032	Full Area
7/15/2020	6	3,420	Full Area
7/16/2020	0	2,275	600 ft
7/20/2020	13	2,947	Full Area
7/22/2020	15	2,207	Full Area
7/1/2021	0	2,162	600 ft
7/3/2021	0	3,072	600 ft
7/5/2021	2	3,110	600 ft
7/6/2021	0	2,243	600 ft
7/7/2021	1	2,728	600 ft
7/8/2021	6	4,221	Full Area
7/12/2021	51	4,415	Full Area
7/13/2021	3	2,289	Full Area
7/14/2021	0	3,216	600 ft
7/15/2021	38	3,381	Full Area
7/19/2021	29	16,886	Full Area
7/20/2021	4	3,460	600 ft
7/7/2022	0	2,942	600 ft
7/11/2022	1	3,036	Full Area
7/14/2022	9	1,386	Full Area
Average Harvest per Period (2018-2022)			
Full Area	29	5,744	
600 ft	2	2,851	

Table 128-2.–Genetic stock composition estimates of sockeye salmon harvested in the North Kalifonsky Beach statistical area (244-32), 2018.

Kenai Section, North K Beach 600 ft[a]								
Dates: 7/19 & 7/21, 2018	Stock composition (n = 187)				Harvest = 9,057			
		90% CI				90% CI		
Reporting Group	Mean	5%	95%	SD	Mean	5%	95%	SD
Other Cook Inlet [b]	1.8	0.1	5.1	1.7	161	6	464	150
Kenai	46.9	38.3	56.5	5.5	4,244	3,471	5,118	500
Kasilof	51.4	41.9	59.9	5.5	4,652	3,793	5,425	498

Note: Data from Appendix F4; Barclay 2019.

Note: The 90% credibility intervals of harvest estimates may not include the point estimate for the very low harvest estimates.

Note: Stock composition and harvest estimates may not sum to 100% due to rounding errors.

[a] These mixtures represent fishing periods restricted to within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark. The stock composition estimates may differ from what was reported in season due to postseason reanalysis using a different mixed stock analysis program.

[b] This reporting group includes populations from the *Crescent*, *West*, *JCL*, *SusYen*, *Fish*, and *KTNE* reporting groups.

Table 128-3.–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		60,246	**17,800–35,700**	-
2006		48,950	**17,800–35,700**	-
2007	**All Sizes of Fish**	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**	**≥ 22,500**
2016		22,535	**15,000–30,000**	**≥ 22,500**
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**

Note: Large fish are king salmon that are 75 cm from mid eye to tail fork in length or longer. **BOLD FONT** indicates the goal that was managed to and shading indicates if goal was achieved

[a] 2023 project operations extended past August 20 until three days of <1% passage occurred

PROPOSAL 129 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.
Increase Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial salmon fishing opportunity.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would mandate opening the North Kalifonsky Beach (NKB) statistical area within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark to set gillnets when the Kasilof Section is open to commercial set gillnet fishing and enact an early start date for the provision from the current date of July 1 to June 20, until the Kenai and East Foreland sections open on or after July 8.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) commercial fishery is primarily managed under the guidance of two management plans: 5 AAC 21.365. *Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan* and 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*. The Kasilof Section fishery opens on or after June 25, with provisions for an opening as early as June 20 based on a 30,000-sockeye salmon inriver trigger. The Kenai and East Foreland sections do not open until on or after July 8. Both fisheries close on or before August 15.

On or after July 1, when the Kasilof Section is open to commercial fishing with set gillnets, and the Kenai and East Foreland Sections are closed to commercial fishing with set gillnets, commercial fishing with set gillnets may be allowed within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark in that portion of the Kenai Section north of the latitude of the Blanchard Line (NKB-stat area 244-32), and is not subject to the time limitations in 5 AAC 21.359(e)(3) and 5 AAC 21.360. From July 1 until the Kenai and East Foreland Sections commercial salmon set gillnet fishery open on or after July 8, set gillnet gear may not exceed 29 meshes in depth and may not have a mesh size greater than four and three quarter inches during all fishing periods that are restricted to within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark.

In Cook Inlet, one person may own two set gillnet permits (S04H) and operate two full complements of gear. However, in the ESSN fishery only, if one person owns and operates two permits, 105 fathoms of the 210 fathoms of total gear must be fished with nets that are not more than 29 meshes in depth and marked with a blue buoy on either end of the net. The buoy must be at least 9.5 inches in diameter. There also is an option for gear reduction (number of nets and depth of nets) in the ESSN fishery found in 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River King Salmon Management Plan*.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the harvest of king and sockeye salmon by an unknown amount in the NKB statistical area (Figure 128-1), which is that area of beach from the Kenai River south to the Blanchard Line (approximately 3.9 miles). Harvest would be dependent on run timing and abundance of Kenai and Kasilof river king and sockeye salmon.

BACKGROUND: See background for proposal 128.

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 130 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.
Lengthen Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial salmon fishing season.

PROPOSED BY: Karen McGahan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the commercial fishing season closing date in the Kenai and East Foreland sections set gillnet fishery from August 15 to August 31 and restrict commercial periods from August 6–August 31 to regular periods only.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Kenai, Kasilof, and East Foreland sections set gillnet fisheries (Figures 128-1) currently close on or before August 15. Fishing from August 11–15 is allowed only from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Monday or Thursday (only one or two possible fishing periods during this time). Any time after July 31, however, the Kasilof Section and the Kenai/East Foreland section may be closed independent of each other if less than 1% of the season total sockeye salmon harvest is taken during two consecutive fishing periods in either area.

The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* directs the department to minimize the harvest of Kenai River coho salmon to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase the Kenai and East Foreland set gillnet commercial harvest of all salmon, especially Kenai River sockeye and coho salmon, by an unknown amount based upon the run timing and abundance of these stocks. It could increase the likelihood of maintaining Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement within SEG range, especially in years when runs return later than average, but it could also increase coho salmon exploitation rates to unsustainable levels during years of below or average returns.

BACKGROUND: From 1979 until 1999 the commercial fishery in the Kasilof Section was managed from June 25 until August 15 to achieve sockeye salmon escapement goals in the Kasilof River and secondarily to achieve Kenai and Kasilof River king salmon escapements as well as Kenai River sockeye salmon escapements. From July 1 through August 15, the Kenai and East Foreland Sections were managed to achieve Kenai River sockeye and king salmon escapement goals. As a result of a petition filed prior to the 2000 field season over poor coho salmon runs, management was altered. Changes included a shortened commercial season, reallocation of fish to inriver users, restricted additional commercial fishing time and areas, and instituted mandatory closed windows. In 2008, based on study results that showed low commercial exploitation of Kenai and Kasilof river coho salmon (Table 130-1), the board extended the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) and drift gillnet fishing season from August 11 to August 15, but only for regularly scheduled periods. A one-percent rule was also established for the ESSN fishery that would close the fishery after July 31 based on two consecutive fishing period harvest at less than one-percent of the season total sockeye salmon harvest. At the 2017 UCI board meeting, the one-percent rule was modified to begin after August 7. Subsequently at the 2020 UCI board meeting, the one-percent rule was modified back to beginning after July 31.

Since 1979, the ESSN fishery has not been open after August 15. From 1966–1978, the average annual ESSN commercial harvest after August 15 was 163 sockeye and 10,861 coho salmon (Table 130-2).

From 2005–2013 the one-percent rule was applied to harvest data from the entire ESSN fishery as one unit; beginning in 2014, the rule was now applied separately to the Kasilof Section and the Kenai/East Foreland sections. Since 2005, part or all the ESSN fishery has been closed due to the 1% rule three times (Table 130-3).

Since 1980, the number of sockeye salmon enumerated in the Kenai River in August has steadily increased (Figure 123-1, Figure 123-2, and Table 123-4). For example, the average sockeye salmon passage estimate in August was 283,000 fish per year in the 1990s, then increased 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 percentage of each year's total passage estimate that occurs in August has risen from 23% in the 1990s to 48% since 2020. 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 can also be impacted by restrictions to commercial fisheries in late July and August, thereby increasing passage of sockeye salmon in August.

Since 1999, the average annual ESSN and drift gillnet coho salmon harvest has decreased from the 1989–1999 average of 214,427 fish to the 1999–2023 average of 112,058 fish (Table 123-6). The Kenai River coho salmon sport fish harvest during that time decreased moderately from 52,000 fish per year (1989–1998) to 48,000 fish per year (1999–2022) (Table 123-7).

The *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 57.170) was first adopted in 1996 in response to a decline in coho salmon smolt abundance and increased harvest of returning adults in the Kenai River. A special board meeting was convened in 1997 and restrictions affecting all users were put into regulation to conserve Kenai River coho salmon. Additional restrictive regulations were added to the plan from 1997–1999.

In 2000, a special board meeting was convened, through a petition submitted by the governor, based on low abundance of coho salmon throughout Cook Inlet. As an outcome of this meeting, the bag and possession limit was reduced from three to two fish Cook Inlet-wide (excepting West Cook Inlet and terminal fisheries targeting hatchery fish). Coho salmon fishing regulations for the Kenai River were considered by the board in 2005 and 2008. Changes resulted in a net gain in fishing time and area, a seasonal increase in the bag limit, and liberalized fishing methods.

Information gathered from research programs on Kenai River indicate the coho salmon runs averaged about 140,000 fish from 1999–2004, with harvests averaging over 62,000 fish (Table 130-1). Overall harvest rates for Kenai River coho salmon runs prior to 2000 were high, in some cases (84% in 1999) under the previous Kenai River coho salmon management plan, which allowed a three-fish bag limit and more liberal commercial fishing in August; under a plan that allowed a two-fish bag limit and more restrictive commercial fishing, the harvest rate ranged from 35%–47% from 2000–2004. Regulations in 2005 and 2008, which liberalized sport and commercial fisheries, increased harvest rates of Kenai River coho salmon to a range from 36%–47%. Research findings from studies conducted in Southeast Alaska with transboundary coho salmon stocks have indicated that a harvest rate of about 61% is sustainable.

The Kenai River coho salmon sport fish harvest during that time decreased moderately from 52,000 fish per year (1989–1998) to 48,000 fish per year (1999–2022) (Table 123-7).

The department does not manage the Kenai River coho salmon sport fishery inseason based upon abundance because coho salmon escapement is not monitored and no escapement goal has been established for the Kenai River. When management actions were required, they were based upon angler reports and guide logbook information that signified a conservation concern relative to angler success in prior years.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department believes current coho salmon management under current management is sustainable. The Kenai River coho salmon stock is not monitored for escapement and with the discontinuation of the guide logbook program in the spring of 2019, the department no longer has one of the few metrics by which to gauge relative coho salmon run strength inseason The department largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

If adopted this proposal would increase, to an unknown degree, the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon as data show that king salmon continue to enter into the Kenai River in early and mid-August. 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 may result in an additional cost to the department if fishing seasons are extended and monitoring projects continue longer than currently budgeted.

Table 130-1.–Estimated harvest, total run, and harvest rate of Kenai River coho salmon from 1999–2004.

Year	Escapement[a,b]	Sport[c]	Personal Use	Commercial[d]	Research Mortality	Total Run	Total Harvest[e]	Harvest Rate[f]
1999	7,889	35,361	1,009	3,894	193	48,346	40,457	0.837
2000	72,742	52,489	1,449	2,965	555	130,200	56,903	0.437
2001	75,122	55,004	1,555	1,934	540	134,155	58,493	0.436
2002	133,612	66,104	1,721	6,115	968	208,520	73,940	0.355
2003	79,915	51,944	1,332	2,578	209	135,978	55,854	0.411
2004	95,394	72,565	2,661	11,149	2,106	183,875	86,375	0.470
Average								
1999–2004	77,446	55,578	1,621	4,773	762	140,179	62,004	0.491
2000–2004	91,357	59,621	1,744	4,948	876	158,546	66,313	0.422

Note: 1991–1993 and 1998 Kenai River coho salmon creel data was used to calculate the effect of increasing the bag limit from 2 to 3 fish, only boat angler interviews/data were selected for use for 1991–1993 due to the lack of data from shore anglers. ND = No Data

[a] Kenai River coho salmon total runs were estimated only during 1999–2004.

[b] Sources: Carlon and Evans 2007, Massengill and Evans 2007.

[c] Source: Statewide Harvest Survey.

[d] Sources: Massengill and Carlon 2004 a,b; Massengill and Carlon 2007 a,b; Massengill 2007.

[e] Aggregate of all harvest estimates (sport, commercial, and personal use).

[f] Total Harvest divided by Total Run.

Table 130-2.–Commercial salmon harvest in the ESSN fishery, 1966–1978.

ALL YEAR

Year	King	Sockeye	Coho	Even year pink	Odd year pink	Chum	Total
1966	7,329	485,330	68,877	969,624		7,461	1,538,621
1967	6,646	303,858	40,738		12,900	399	364,541
1968	3,304	317,535	80,828	785,887		1,563	1,189,117
1969	5,834	210,834	18,988		10,968	399	247,023
1970	5,368	142,701	30,114	281,067		1,228	460,478
1971	7,055	111,505	16,589		18,097	128	153,374
1972	8,599	204,599	24,673	403,706		1,727	643,304
1973	4,411	188,816	23,901		80,596	1,965	299,689
1974	5,571	136,889	36,837	291,408		506	471,211
1975	3,675	177,336	46,209		112,423	980	340,623
1976	8,249	476,376	47,873	479,024		1,484	1,013,006
1977	9,730	751,178	23,693		125,817	1,413	911,831
1978	12,468	660,797	34,134	372,601		4,563	1,084,563
Avg	6,788	320,596	37,958	511,902	60,134	1,832	670,568

> AUG 15

Year	King	Sockeye	Coho	Even year pink	Odd year pink	Chum	Total
1966	79	105	13,477	3,378		5	17,044
1967	44	63	14,082		48	8	14,245
1968	39	120	15,200	25,752		432	41,543
1969	59	118	6,546		41	17	6,781
1970	80	239	6,226	8,601		23	15,169
1971	124	125	7,583		3	81	7,916
1972	51	106	7,320	3,557		338	11,372
1973	64	100	6,860		8	53	7,085
1974	73	187	15,419	3,731		179	19,589
1975	108	195	23,130		24	101	23,558
1976	44	313	12,452	23,783		49	36,641
1977	42	129	6,238		22	211	6,642
1978	79	314	6,659	31,583		100	38,735
Avg	68	163	10,861	14,341	24	123	18,948

Note: there has been no commercial harvest in the ESSN fishery after August 15 since 1979.

Table 130-3.–Season closing date and reason for closure by year in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery, 2005–2023.

Year	Last day of fishing	Closing date in regulation	1% rule (yes/no)	Reason for closing
2005	10-Aug	10-Aug	No	End of season
2006	9-Aug	10-Aug	No	End of season
2007	9-Aug	10-Aug	No	End of season
2008	7-Aug	15-Aug	No	Poor sockeye salmon run to Kenai River
2009	10-Aug	15-Aug	Yes	1% Rule
2010	12-Aug	15-Aug	No	End of season
2011	7-Aug	15-Aug	Yes	1% Rule
2012	13-Aug	15-Aug	No	End of season
2013	23-Jul	15-Aug	No	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River

Year	Last Day of Fishing		Closing Date in regulation	Reason for closing
	Kasilof	Kenai/EF		
2014	4-Aug	6-Aug	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2015	10-Aug	12-Aug	15-Aug	1% Rule in Kasilof Section; End of Season in Kenai/EF
2016	9-Aug	9-Aug	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2017	15-Aug	14-Aug	15-Aug	End of season
2018	28-Jul	23-Jul	15-Aug	Late sockeye run to Kenai River
2019	3-Aug	3-Aug	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2020	22-Jul	22-Jul	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2021	20-Jul	20-Jul	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2022	14-Jul	14-Jul	15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River
2023	Did not open		15-Aug	Poor late-run king salmon run to Kenai River

PROPOSAL 132 – 5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.
Provide additional commercial salmon fishing opportunity in Upper Cook Inlet based on salmon escapement.

PROPOSED BY: Teague Vanek.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would mandate regular weekly fishing periods from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for drift gillnet, set gillnet, and seine commercial fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Upper Cook Inlet commercial fisheries management is primarily guided by regulations found in 5 AAC 21.001 – 5 AAC 21.370 for salmon harvest. Season dates and weekly periods are specified by district, subdistrict, and section by gear type. The primary management plans for finfish in Upper cook Inlet are as follows:

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan
5 AAC 21.354. Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.365. Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.368. Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.370. Packers Creek Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan
5 AAC 27.409. Central District Herring Management Plan

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require elimination of all the current fishery or stock specific management plans that regulate commercial fisheries in UCI. This would subsequently eliminate fishery and species specific management priorities, allocative determinations, mixed stock harvest guidance, and weak stock management guidance prescribed in current management plans. Management would be based upon achieving sockeye salmon escapement goals on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. This would increase the harvest of salmon in the commercial fisheries of UCI by an unknown but likely significant amount. Specifically, this would increase exploitation on weak stocks and stocks of concern such as Kenai River king salmon, Susitna River king salmon, and Susitna River sockeye salmon. This would decrease the department's ability to manage for discrete stocks other than the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers sockeye salmon stocks. This would additionally increase harvest of coho salmon across UCI including which the department has limited inseason information. Further effects are difficult to determine as the proposer does not specify season dates.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to State of Alaska waters pending adoption of a federal fisheries management plan that would regulate the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: See the Background on Proposals 121, 112, 205, 120, 97, and 135.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** increasing exploitation on weak stocks and stocks of concern that could result in increased probability of not meeting escapement goals or delay recovery of those stocks. The department manages fisheries to meet established escapement goals and utilizes inseason management authority to protect weak stocks or provide additional opportunity on 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 may result in an additional cost to the department if fishing seasons are extended and catch sampling monitoring projects continue longer than currently budgeted.

PROPOSAL 133 – 5 AAC 21.320. Weekly fishing periods, 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, 5 AAC 21.360. *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*, and 5 AAC 21.353 *Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan*.
Modify weekly fishing periods in the Upper Subdistrict and adopt new 'paired restrictive' management measures.

PROPOSED BY: Chris Every.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify several regulations and management plans that guide management of UCI fisheries, specifically it would:

- Open the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery earlier on June 25
- Possibly remove the 1% rule in the ESSN (unclear from the proposal)
- Establish paired restrictions that remove equivocal opportunity in the metric of time from the Central District drift gillnet fishery, personal use, and inriver sport fisheries based on any restriction or closure of the ESSN fishery.

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 OEG, the ESSN fishery, is then managed per provisions found in the *KRLRKSMP*.

Commonly referred to as paired restrictions, 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:

(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.

Under *Fishing Season* and *Weekly Periods* the ESSN fishery is open on the Kasilof Section: from June 25 through August 15, unless closed earlier by emergency order under (iii) of this subparagraph; however, if the department estimates that 30,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River before June 25, but on or after June 20, the commissioner shall , by emergency order, open the fishery; from August 1 through August 15, the fishery is open for regular periods only;

In the Kenai and East Foreland Sections: from July 8 through August 15, unless closed earlier by emergency order under (iii) of this subparagraph; from August 11 through August 15, the fishery is open for regular periods only; from July 1 through August 15, when the Kasilof Section is open to commercial fishing with set gillnets and the Kenai and East Foreland Sections are closed to commercial fishing with set gillnets, commercial fishing with set gillnets may be allowed within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark in that portion of the Kenai Section north of the latitude of the Blanchard Line at 60° 27.10' N. lat., and south of the latitude of the ADF&G regulatory marker located south of the Kenai River mouth at 60° 30.49' N. lat., and is not subject to the time limitations in 5 AAC 21.359(e)(3) and 5 AAC 21.360; from July 1 until the Kenai and East Foreland Sections commercial salmon set gillnet fishery open for the regular season, set gillnet gear may not exceed 29 meshes in depth and may not have a mesh size greater than four and three quarter inches during all fishing periods that are restricted to within 600 feet of the mean high tide mark;

(iii) Kenai, Kasilof, and East Foreland Sections: in the combined Kenai and East Foreland Sections, and separately in the Kasilof Section, the season will close August 15, unless closed earlier by emergency order after July 31, if the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total sockeye harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the combined Kenai and East Foreland Sections, or separately in the Kasilof Section; from August 11 through August 15, the fishery is open for regular fishing periods only; for

purposes of this sub-subparagraph, "fishing period" means a time period open to commercial fishing as measured by a 24-hour calendar day from 12:01 a.m. until 11:59 p.m.;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The effects of this proposal are difficult to determine as the proposed management strategy is not defined in scope of the paired restrictions. There could be a difference in effect of this proposal depending on whether restrictions to personal use and sport fisheries is confined to the Kenai River or expanded to a greater area within UCI or outside of UCI as well. As a general causation and effect, if drift gillnet, personal use, and sport fisheries are restricted as proposed then there would be a reduction in harvest of salmon in those fisheries to include removing opportunity in sport fisheries to fish for nonsalmon species in freshwater. This would additionally add complexity to regulation and implementation of emergency orders for personal use and sport fisheries. Open and closed days and times would need to be amended inseason for these fisheries. This may lead to an increase in regulatory violations.

If the ESSN fishery season dates on June 25 then this would likely increase commercial harvest of salmon in the ESSN, specifically the harvest would increase on Kasilof River sockeye salmon, Kenai River early- and late- run king salmon, and Kenai River sockeye salmon.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending adoption of a federal fishery management plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: See the Background on Proposals 121, 112, 120, 97, and 123.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** closure of fisheries that would generate little or no conservation effect, such as the resident species sport fisheries that this proposal would affect. The department utilizes live release gear types in these fisheries to continue to provide opportunity and harvest yield of more abundant species to meet escapement goals. The proposal could 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 134 – 5 AAC 21.320. Weekly fishing periods, 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan, 5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan, and 5 AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan.
Modify weekly fishing periods.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would mandate two regular weekly fishing periods for Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) commercial fisheries. Additional periods would be districtwide if abundance warranted.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Upper Cook Inlet commercial fisheries management is guided by regulations found in 5 AAC 21.001 – 5 AAC 21.370 for salmon harvest. Season dates and weekly periods are specified by district, subdistrict, and section by gear type. The primary management plans for finfish in Upper cook Inlet are as follows:

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan
5 AAC 21.354. Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.365. Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.368. Big River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.370. Packers Creek Sockeye Salmon Management Plan
5 AAC 21.505. Cook Inlet Smelt Fishery Management Plan
5 AAC 27.409. Central District Herring Management Plan

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require modification of all the current fishery or stock specific management plans that regulate commercial fisheries in UCI. This would subsequently eliminate fishery and species-specific management priorities, and allocative determinations prescribed in current management plans. This would increase the harvest of salmon in the commercial fisheries of UCI by an unknown amount. Specifically, this would increase exploitation on weak stocks and stocks of concern such as Kenai River king salmon, Susitna River king salmon, and Susitna River sockeye salmon. This would decrease the department's ability to manage for discrete stocks other than the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers sockeye salmon. This would additionally increase harvest of coho salmon across UCI including which the department has limited inseason information on. This would likely result in fewer fish being available for inriver use by personal use and sport fisheries throughout Upper Cook Inlet. Further effects are difficult to determine as the proposer does not specify season dates or what species or stock abundance management would be based upon.

The effects of this proposal would be limited to waters of Alaska pending adoption of a federal fishery management plan that would regulate salmon fishing in the exclusive United States

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within Upper Cook Inlet. Districtwide, Area 1, Area 4, and Expanded Kasilof section drift gillnet areas contain some amount of EEZ waters.

BACKGROUND: See the Background on Proposals 121, 112, 205, 120, 97, and 135.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** increasing exploitation on weak stocks and stocks of concern that could result in increased probability of not meeting escapement goals or delay recovery of those stocks. The department manages fisheries to meet established escapement goals and utilizes inseason management authority to protect weak stocks or provide additional opportunity on harvestable surplus. The proposal could 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 may result in an additional cost to the department if fishing seasons are extended and catch sampling monitoring projects continue longer than currently budgeted.

PROPOSAL 135 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.
Close the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict to commercial fishing for salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close the commercial salmon fishery in Chinitna Bay Subdistrict (CBS) for coho and chum salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Regulations allowed the CBS to open to both drift gillnets and purse seines only by emergency order (EO). Commercial fishing with set gillnet gear is open only on the north side of the CBS for Monday and Thursday 12-hour regular fishing periods from June 25 until closed by EO.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would eliminate all commercial harvest of salmon in the CBS. This would result in an increase of salmon escaping into tributaries in the CBS and the number of fish available for sport fisheries.

BACKGROUND: The department opens the CBS to drift gillnet gear either after aerial survey counts show the chum salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 3,500–8,000 fish has been achieved or the chum salmon run is complete, which occurs in the latter part of August. Opening the CBS to drift and seine fishing after the chum salmon run is complete meets with board intent as reported in the 1983 Upper Cook Inlet Annual Management Report. This report highlighted regulatory changes adopted by the board affecting commercial fishing in the CBS, stating, "Adopted in the fall meeting in 1982, the board clarified its intent for this regulatory change in the spring of 1983. Drift and seine gear was to be permitted (by EO) during the portions of the season when chum salmon were not a concern (i.e., both prior to and after the chum salmon return) as well as immediately after chum salmon escapements were observed.

Commercial harvests in the CBS are relatively small compared to other areas of Cook Inlet. There are no biological concerns for the local stocks that are targeted in this fishery. It is assumed that the coho salmon harvested in this area are Westside Cook Inlet stocks and not Northern Cook Inlet or Kenai River stocks. Since 1983, the CBS has been open to drift gillnetting 31 years, producing an average harvest of 279 sockeye, 5,244 coho, and 1,659 chum salmon with an average opening date of August 22 (Table 135-1). In the last 10 years, the average harvest has been 498 sockeye, 6,348 coho, and 2,573 chum salmon, with an average season opening date of August 18. In the past 10 years, an average of 14 vessels have fished in the CBS drift fishery.

In 2002, the peak aerial survey chum salmon SEG was changed from a point goal to a range of 3,800–8,400 fish and in 2017, the SEG was lowered to 3,500–8,000 fish. Since then, the goal has been achieved or exceeded 21 times and not met one time (Figure 135-1).

There is also a set gillnet fishery in the CBS that sporadically occurs with only one or two permit holders and limited harvest and effort. The set gillnet fishery is open for regular Monday/Thursday fishing periods on June 25 in conjunction with other set gillnet fisheries on the west side of UCI and closes by emergency order at the end of the season.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal as it would reduce the ability to manage for the CBS chum salmon SEG range. This is the only chum salmon escapement goal in western Cook Inlet and has been achieved or exceeded in all but one year since 2002. The department approaches this fishery conservatively and assesses chum salmon abundance prior to opening the fishery. Impacts to coho salmon stocks would be unknown as this is an unmonitored stock.

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 135-1.–Drift gillnet harvest of sockeye, coho, and chum salmon in Chinitna Bay, 1984–2023.

Year	Sockeye	Coho	Chum	Date Opened
1984	949	16,809	4,788	13-Aug
1985	962	20,322	2,023	23-Aug
1986	364	5,346	2,437	22-Aug
1987	55	6,369	3,559	17-Aug
1988	192	14,226	5,324	15-Aug
1989	3	743	72	28-Aug
1990	35	1,622	219	24-Aug
1991	4	453	0	30-Aug
1992	20	1,880	250	21-Aug
1993	98	43	73	27-Aug
1994	25	2,282	313	26-Aug
1995	592	7,347	1,161	18-Aug
1996	Drift Gillnet Fishery not Opened from 1996-2005			
2005				
2006	57	1,509	34	31-Aug
2007	4	414	0	3-Sep
2008	4	2,857	113	25-Aug
2009	18	3,085	372	26-Aug
2010	52	868	180	27-Aug
2011	0	479	2	1-Sep
2012	4	792	124	29-Aug
2013	12	2,895	169	19-Aug
2014	4	2,292	65	29-Aug
2015	628	3,467	1,203	18-Aug
2016	103	4,219	1,326	26-Aug
2017	1,027	24,177	5,067	18-Aug
2018	60	2,277	257	31-Aug
2019	654	4,585	2,382	16-Aug
2020	462	8,821	523	3-Aug
2021	299	5,439	1,362	20-Aug
2022	596	4,475	6,150	9-Aug
2023	1,148	3,725	7,399	11-Aug
Average	279	5,244	1,659	22-Aug
Low	0	43	0	3-Aug
High	1,148	24,177	7,399	3-Sep

Note: For years with no values, the fishery was not open.

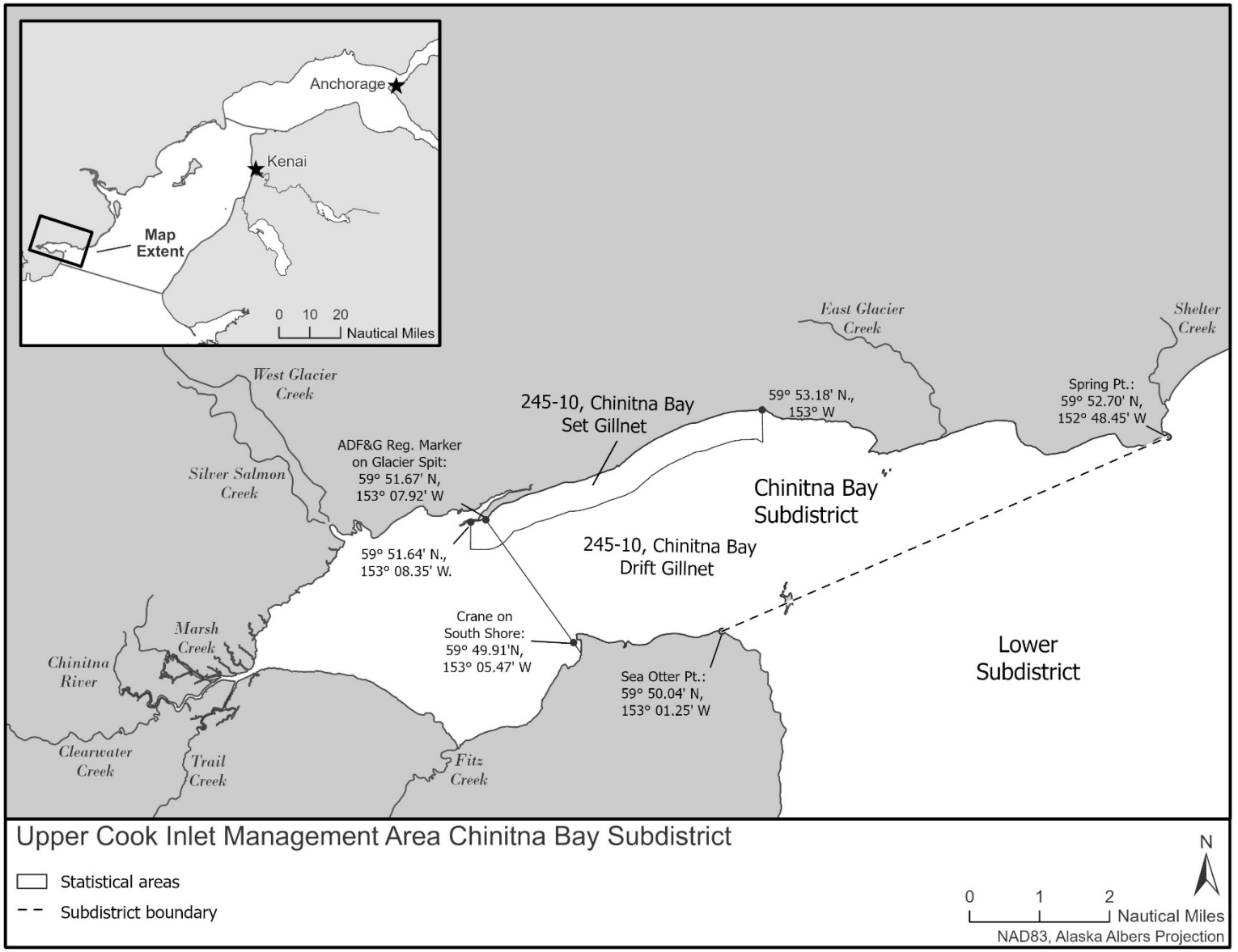

Figure 135-1.–The Chinitna Bay Subdistrict drift and set gillnet areas.

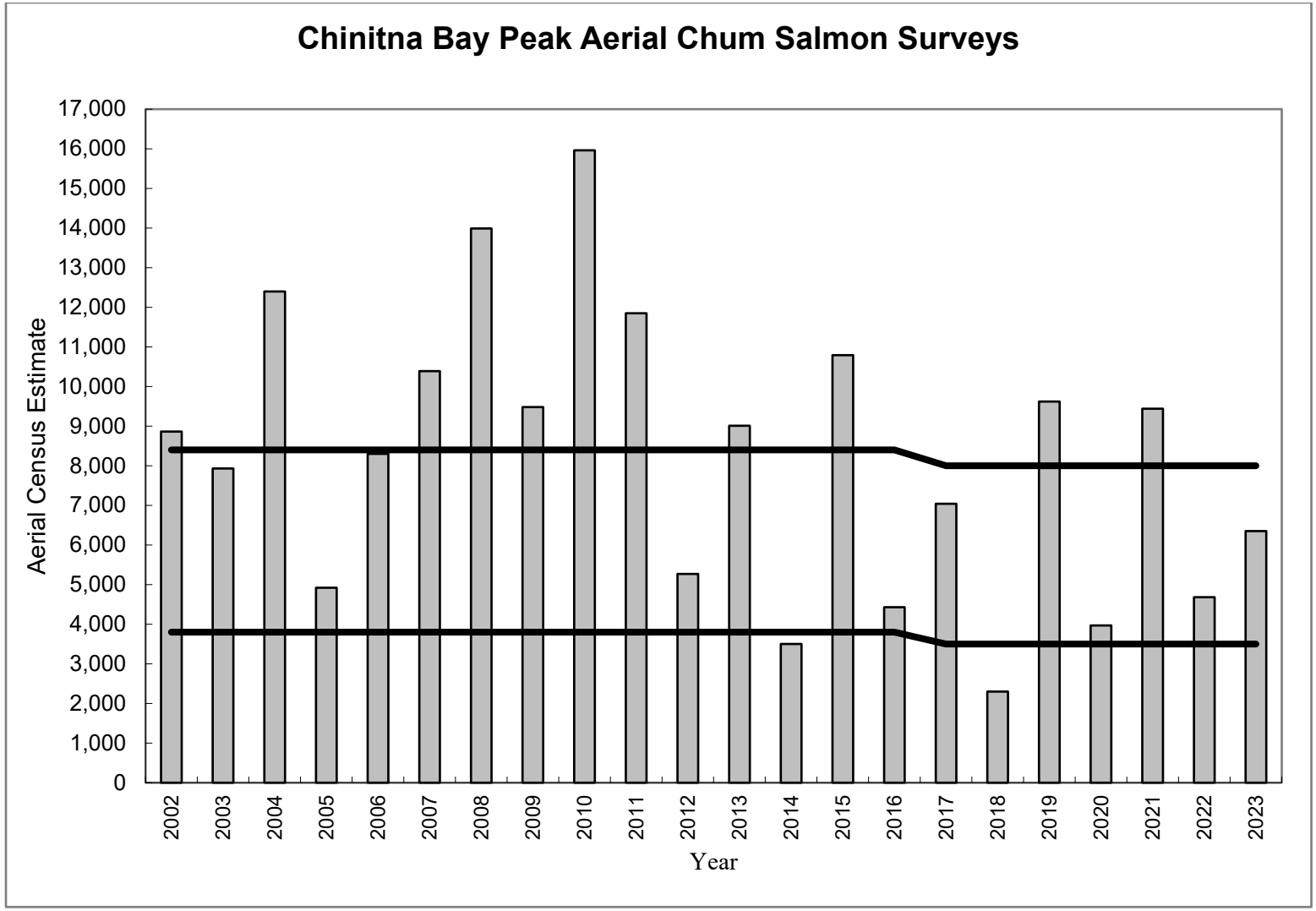

Figure 135-2.–Peak Aerial Census count in Chinitna Bay, 2002–2023.

PROPOSAL 136 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.
Increase waters closed to commercial fishing for salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close waters to drift gillnet gear on the west side of Cook Inlet within one mile of the terminus of Shelter Creek and Silver Salmon Creek with Cook Inlet (Figure 136-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 5 AAC 21.350(b)(6) lists specific waters closed to commercial salmon fishing along the west side of Cook Inlet, including waters within one statute mile of the terminus, at mean high tide, of the Kustatan, Drift, and Big Rivers, and waters within one statute mile of the terminus, at mean lower low water, of Cannery Creek. In addition, commercial fishing is closed within 500 yards of the terminus, at mean high tide, of any anadromous fish stream, and within 900 feet of the stream bed or channel of any anadromous fish stream throughout the intertidal portion of that stream out to the lower low water mark. Commercial salmon fishing is also prohibited within the fresh waters of streams and rivers of the state, and over the beds of channels of fresh waters of streams and rivers of the state during all stages of the tide.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce areas currently open to drift gillnet gear on the west side of Cook Inlet and could reduce the commercial harvest of salmon by an unknown amount. Drift gillnet harvest information specific to these waters is not available.

BACKGROUND: The board adopted a new definition of closed waters (5 AAC 39.290) and salmon stream (5 AAC 39.975) at the 2013 Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues meeting. The board changed the definition due to confusion on how closed waters were defined and enforced by the Department of Public Safety. The new definition prohibits commercial fishing in waters within 500 yards of a salmon stream. In addition, commercial salmon fishing is prohibited within the fresh waters of streams and rivers of the state, and over the beds or channels of fresh waters of streams and rivers of the state during all stages of the tide. The department and board have also regularly updated 5 AAC 21.350, which lists waters closed to commercial fishing in UCI. Shelter and Silver Salmon Creeks are unmonitored systems that have documented returns of sockeye, coho, chum, and pink salmon.

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.

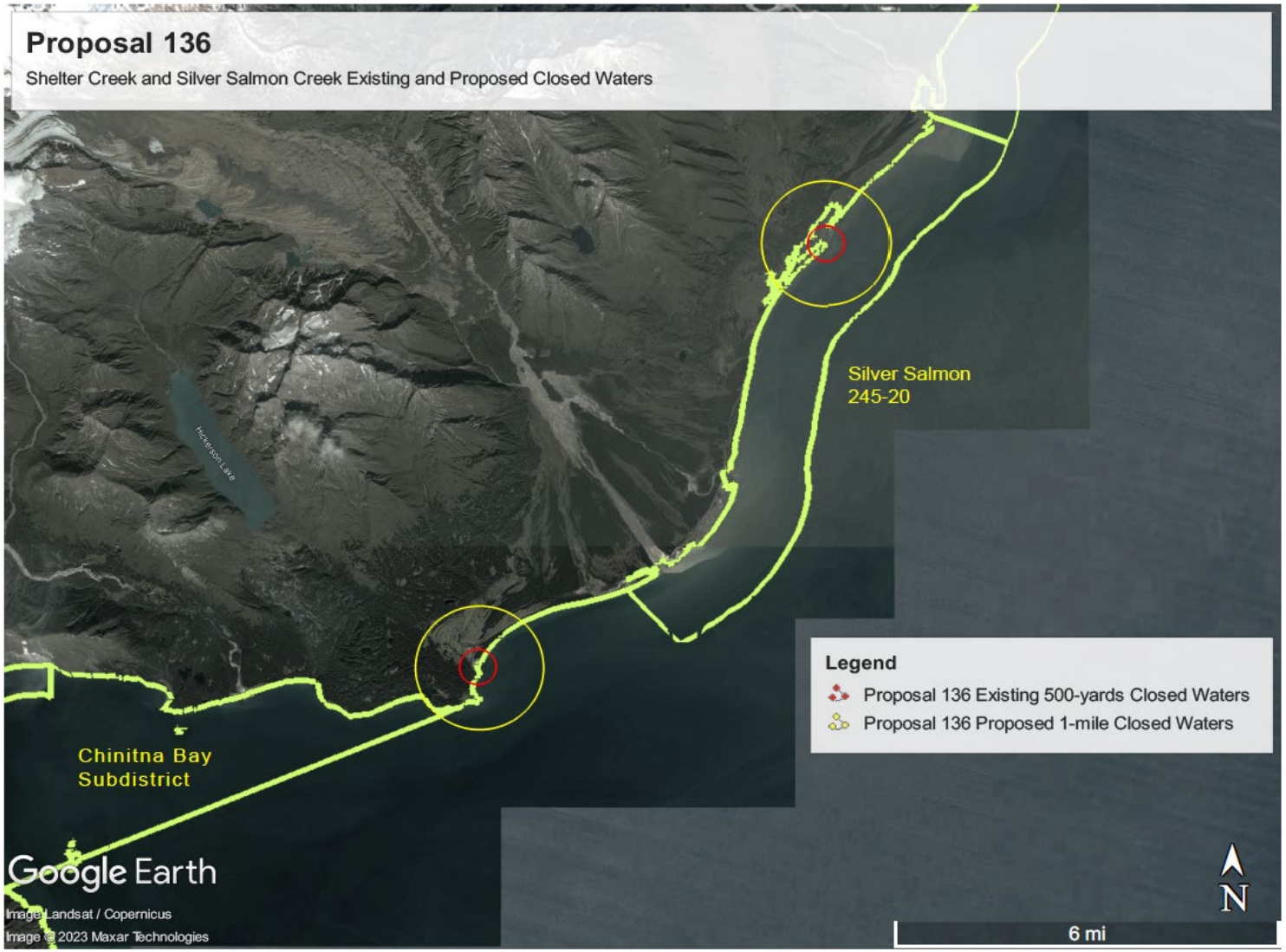

Figure 136-1.–Map of proposed commercial fishing closures within 1-mile of Shelter and Silver Salmon Creeks.

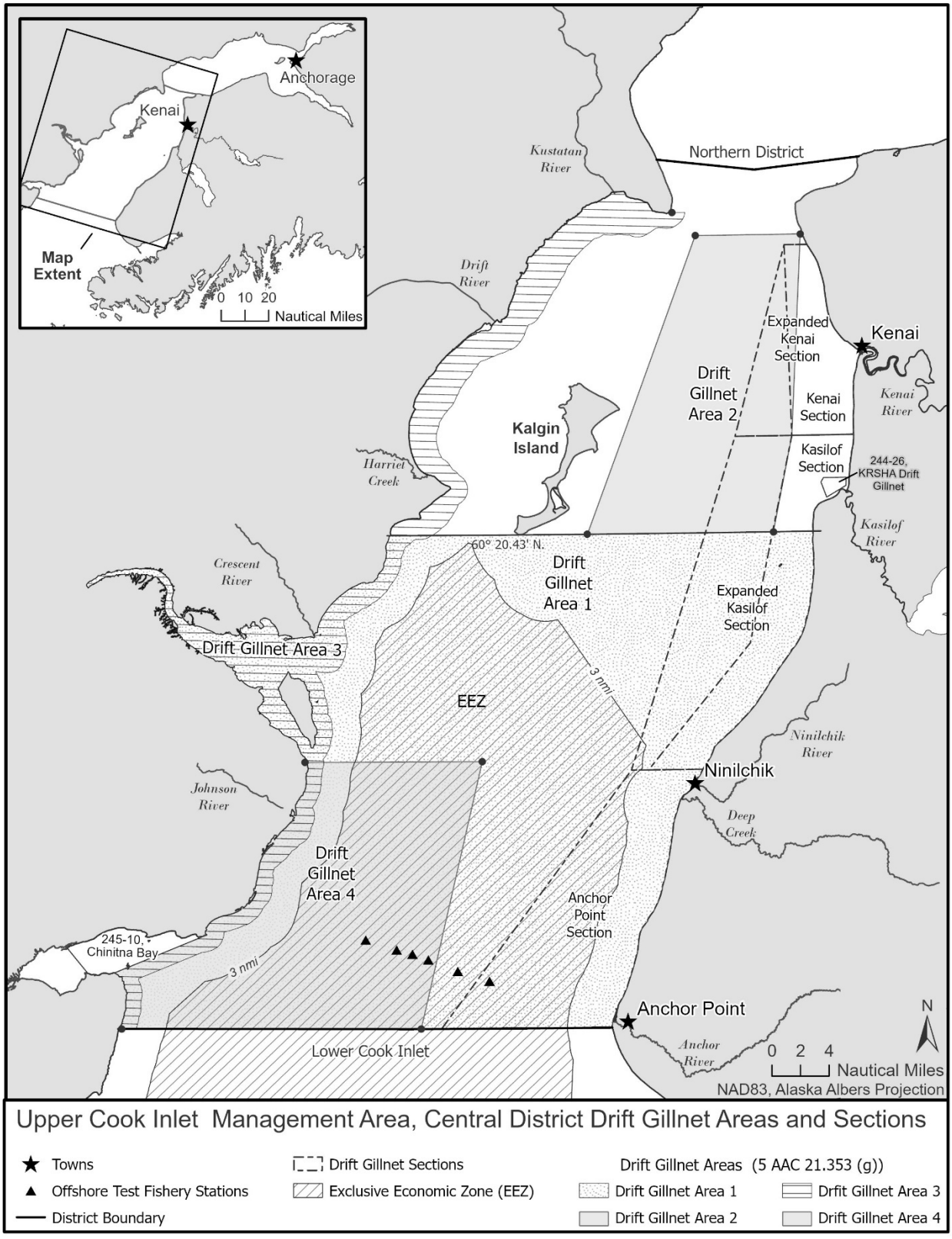

Figure 136-2.–Map of drift gillnet areas and sections.

PROPOSAL 137 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.
Increase waters closed to commercial fishing in Upper Cook Inlet.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close waters in the Northern District of Upper Cook Inlet within one mile of the terminus of the Susitna and Little Susitna Rivers to commercial fishing (Figure 137-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Commercial fishing around the mouth of the Susitna and Little Susitna rivers 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? Closure of the area at the mouth of the Susitna and Little Susitna Rivers 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: 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 fishery lease (Figure 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. The 500-yard closed waters regulation that applies to the Little Susitna River has been in effect since at least 1977. In the most recent 20 year time period (1997–2016), an average of 10 permit holders per year have caught an average of approximately 200 king and 3,700 coho salmon per year in statistical area 247-31 (Figure 210-2; Table 210-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal but **OPPOSES** this proposal as a means of conserving Susitna and Little Susitna rivers salmon. This would unnecessarily close waters currently open to commercial fishing. Susitna and Little Susitna Rivers king, sockeye, and coho salmon sport and commercial fishing regulations and the department's EO authority provide opportunity to harvest salmon excess to escapement needs

and meet established escapement goals. The department will continue to restrict, as necessary, set net opportunity based on inseason run strength assessment to ensure coho salmon escapement goals are attained.

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 137-1.–Sport harvest and escapement of coho salmon 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
Average 2013-2022	4,651	16,199[d]	316	1,155

Note: 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 2,300–3,900 king salmon.

[b] BEG from 1994–1998 was 7,500 coho salmon; BEG from 1999–2001 was 9,600–19,200 coho salmon; SEG from 2002–2019 was 10,100–17,700 coho salmon; SEG from 2020–Current is 9,200–17,700 fish.

Table 137-2.–Commercial salmon harvest and number of permits fished in the Northern District statistical area 247-41, 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
Average 2013–2022	8	67	2,368	3,047	261	809

Note: Averages include the confidential harvest information.

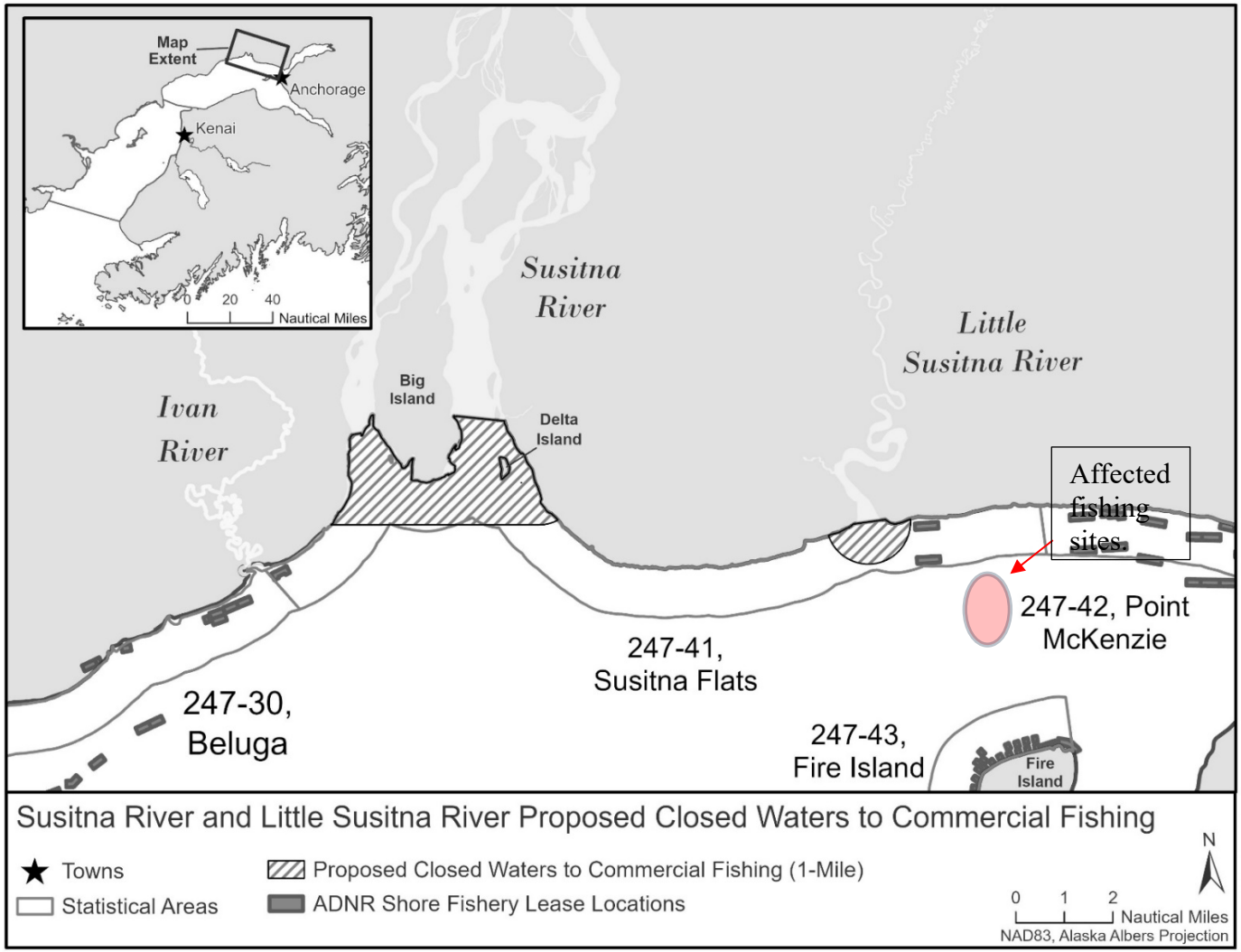

Figure 137-1.–Map of shore fisheries leases from the Susitna River east to Knik Arm and proposed closed waters.

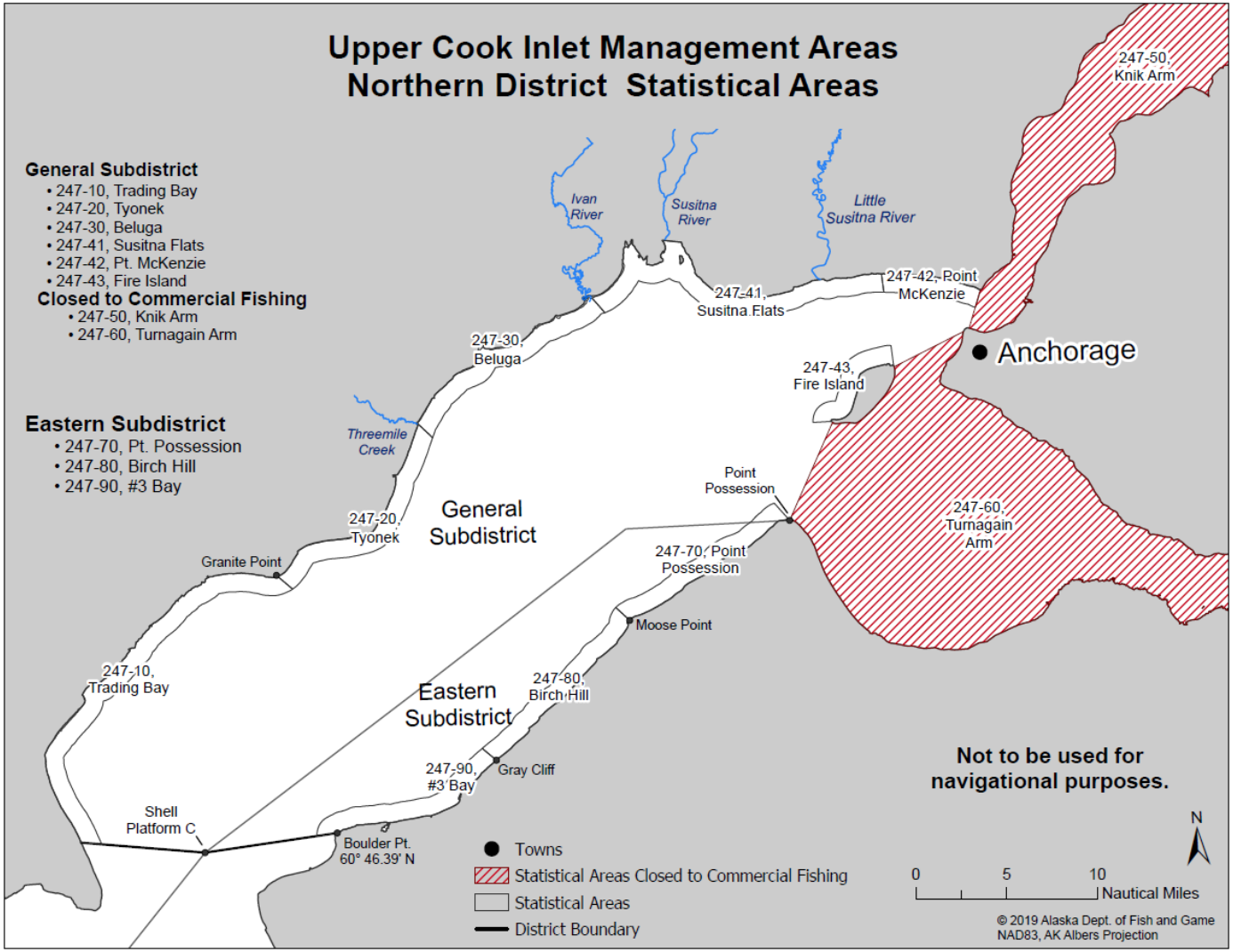

Figure 137-2.–Map of Northern District statistical areas

PROPOSAL 138 – 5 AAC 21.335. Minimum distance between units of gear; 5 AAC 21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.
Allow use of a seine lead in the set gillnet fishery and define minimum distance between gear.

PROPOSED BY: Nathan Hoff.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the use of 105 fathom seine lead in Area H (Cook Inlet) set gillnet fisheries, and define minimum distance between commercial gear.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Cook Inlet, a set gillnet may not be more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. South of the latitude of Anchor Point, 30 fathoms of seine webbing may be used on the shore between high and low water levels. 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. Set gillnets shall be operated in substantially a straight line. No more than 20 yards of each set gillnet may be used as a single hook. Purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines may not be less than 90 fathoms in length and 100 meshes in depth, nor more than 250 fathoms in length and 335 meshes in depth. Detachable or loose leads are not permitted.

No part of a commercial drift gillnet or set gillnet may be set or operated within 600 feet of any part of another commercial set gillnet. Except in Chinitna Bay Subdistrict, no part of a seine may be operated within 300 feet of a set gillnet except in the zone outside of the offshore end of a set gillnet. In the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict, no part of a purse seine may be placed or operated within 600 feet of a drift or set gillnet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase harvest of all salmon in set gillnet fisheries with Area H. The proposer is unclear on how the seine leads would be utilized in relation to set gillnets and in what areas the proposal was intended to be implemented. As proposed, this would add seine leads as legal gear to Upper and Lower Cook Inlet set gillnet fisheries. It is also unclear how "approval" from commercial permit holders with set gillnets within 1,200 ft of a seine lead would be documented or ratified which could lead to enforcement issues.

BACKGROUND: Current regulation regarding the use of seine leads or webbing in the set gillnet fishery have been in place since at least 1977. Purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines are not legal gear types in the Central or Northern Districts except for in Chinitna Bay Subdistrict by emergency order only. The last commercial harvest of salmon using seine ger in Chinitna Bay Subdistrict was in 1988.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** addition of this new gear type without further information on configuration and use within the set gillnet fishery. One option would be to apply for an

experimental fishery permit to determine the feasibility of this new gear type. This proposal would affect multiple management areas. The portion of this proposal dealing with ‘fishermen approval of ‘ would be difficult to enforce.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal could result in an additional direct cost to a private person to participate in this fishery. This cost would be optional as it would not be a requirement to use the proposed seine lead but electing to not do so may give a competitive advantage to permit holders that do. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSALS 139 and 140 – 5 AAC 21.330. Gear.
Allow use of reef nets in the Upper Cook Inlet commercial salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Shadura II.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add reef nets as a legal gear type to be used in Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet areas and seeks for the board to describe specific areas for reef net use and reef net specifications and operations. Proposal 140 is similar in that it seeks to add reef nets as a legal gear type but further clarifies reef nets are to be used when set gillnets are restricted and that permit holders must be on site while a reef net is operating.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Reef nets are not a gear type currently in use in the State of Alaska or defined in Alaska Administrative Code. Adoption of this proposal would require definition of this gear type.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would be a new gear type that would need gear specifications, operation, identification, permitting, registration requirements, COOP registration, fishing periods, and fishing seasons to be implemented by the board. Use of reef nets in a commercial fishing capacity would be experimental and may be better applied through the commissioners permit process for testing new gear types. This could provide a selective harvest opportunity for SO4H permit holders. The effectiveness of reef nets in environments such as Upper Cook Inlet for catching salmon is unknown. Subsequently, survival rates of non-target species of salmon such as king salmon are also unknown.

BACKGROUND: A reef net is composed of a portion of net, anchored to the bottom, that funnels fish up in the water column and into a holding pen. Fish capture gear of this configuration is also known as an inclined plane trap. Fish traps are prohibited under Alaska Statute.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department encourages the public and board to identify new gear types and methods that would allow commercial fishing opportunity while allowing live release of weak stocks in mixed stock fisheries. One option would be to apply for an experimental fishery permit to determine the feasibility of this new gear type.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal could result in an additional direct cost to 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 141 – 5 AAC 21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations. Increase the number of days the Susitna River dipnet fishery is open.

PROPOSED BY: Kenia River Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the amount of set gillnet gear allowed to be use in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery (ESSN). A commercial permit holder shall be restricted to 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.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? *Gillnet specifications and operations* states that a set gillnet in Cook Inlet may not be longer 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 on Fire Island, where a person may operate more than four set gillnets, but the aggregate length may not exceed 105 fathoms. The maximum mesh size for set gillnets is six inches.

There are 29-mesh depth restriction options in 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River King Salmon Management Plan*. Specifically from June 20 to August 15, if the inriver run of late-run king salmon is projected to be less than 15,000 large fish (> 75 cm METF), to achieve the OEG, the sport fishery may be restricted to fishing with no bait, no bait and no retention of king salmon 34 inches in length or greater, or to no bait and no retention of king salmon of any size. If the sport fishery is restricted, the ESSN fishery must be managed as follows: no regular Monday/Thursday fishing periods, no mandatory 24-hour closed period (36-hour "Friday" closed period remains), and total weekly hours are restricted based on which sport fishery restriction is in place. Additionally, the department must restrict the number and depth of nets to either 1) 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; or 2) 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.

There are also 29-mesh depth restrictions as it relates to permit stacking (5 AAC 21.331(i)). In Cook Inlet, a person may own two set gillnet permits and operate two full complements of gear. However, in the Upper Subdistrict only, if one person owns and operates two permits, 105 fathoms of the 210 fathoms of total gear must be fished with nets that are not more than 29 meshes in depth and marked with a blue buoy on either end of the net. The buoy must be at least 9.5 inches in diameter.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Available data is not sufficient to quantitatively estimate the effect of changing set gillnet depths on the relative harvests of king versus sockeye salmon. A net depth of 29 meshes represents a decrease of 36% from a 45-mesh net. The decrease in the depth of nets or reduction of the number

of deeper nets would decrease 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, thus the proposal may simply reallocate fish to other set gillnets. A general reduction in harvest in set gillnet fishery would likely result in more fish in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers that are available for sport and personal use. This may also increase the likelihood that sockeye salmon inriver and escapement goals would be exceeded in these rivers.

If sockeye salmon harvests were reduced, it may result in an increase in fishing time and harvest of sockeye salmon for the drift gillnet fishery. This, in turn, would likely increase the harvest of other salmon stocks by the drift fleet.

BACKGROUND: The regulation for the length and depth of a set gillnet has been the same since statehood. The regulation restricting mesh size to six inches was adopted in 1964 to decrease the harvest of king salmon and directly target sockeye salmon.

While individual fishermen have always had the option of fishing set gillnets with fewer than 45 meshes, specific regulations restricting set gillnets to 29-meshes under certain circumstances were not adopted until 2014. At the 2014 UCI board meeting, regulations were passed that restricted 105 fathoms of set gillnet gear to no more than 29-meshes in depths for individuals who own and operate two Cook Inlet CFEC set gillnet permits in the Upper Subdistrict. Additionally, the department was given the authority to restrict the number of set gillnets or the depth of set gillnets during times of low Kenai River late-run king salmon abundance. The efficacy of restricting set gillnets depth to no more than 29-meshes to conserve king salmon is inconclusive.

In 2014, the board adopted paired restrictions in the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery, personal use fishery, and Upper Subdistrict commercial set gillnet fishery. The paired restrictions included an option of commercial fishing with 29-mesh depth set gillnets. The department used this option once in 2014 and opened the commercial set gillnet fishery in Upper Subdistrict with the option of fishing with either 1) three set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and up to 29 meshes in depth, or 2) two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and up to 45 meshes in depth. Further modifications to the amount and configuration of set gillnets were made at the 2017 and 2020 board meetings with the additional language being added that requires the department to utilize one of the two restrictive options whenever paired restrictions are in effect.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. There are inadequate data to predict the effects of a net depth restriction to 29 meshes. Further information and a more sophisticated analysis are needed to realistically model changes in king and sockeye salmon harvests in relation to gillnet depths. 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.

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 may result in additional direct costs for Upper Subdistrict set gillnet permit holders to participate in this fishery because they would have to reconfigure their nets to meet the 29-mesh depth restriction. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 142 –5 AAC 21.355. Reporting requirements.
Establish commercial fishery reporting requirements in Upper Cook Inlet.

PROPOSED BY: Tyonek Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require the number of commercially harvested king salmon to be recorded by length (under 20" and over 20") on fish tickets.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All salmon harvested commercially, whether sold or kept for personal use, must be reported on a fish ticket (5 AAC 39.130 and 5 AAC 21.355). From 1989–1998, 5 AAC 21.355 required each commercial fisherman to report on an ADF&G fish ticket, at the time of landing, the number of king salmon taken but not sold. In 1999, 5 AAC 21.355 was amended to state that a commercial salmon fisherman shall, at the time of landing, report on an ADF&G fish ticket the number of salmon, by species, taken but not sold; therefore, since 1999, all salmon kept for personal use must be recorded on a fish ticket.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Adoption of this proposal would require commercial fishermen or processors to measure each king salmon for length and record it on fish tickets.

BACKGROUND: Age, sex, and length (ASL) composition data is collected by the department from a sample of all king salmon harvested that are sold in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery. Northern District set gillnet, Central District drift gillnet, and west Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet fisheries king salmon harvest are not sampled for ASL composition.

In the Central District and Northern District commercial fisheries, specific management plans provide the department guidance on management of king salmon stocks in UCI including specific conservation based actions to achieve escapement goals.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department already has the ability to differentiate king salmon by size on fish tickets under species code 411. The department would prefer to have this as an option that could be used in certain areas, and not make it a requirement in all areas of UCI. This proposal would create an unnecessary burden on commercial users and processing industry. Fisheries management would not change based on harvest of king salmon less than 20 inches length vs king salmon greater than 20 inches in length.

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. This proposal would result in additional cost for the department to implement.

PROPOSAL 143 – 5 AAC 21.345. Registration.
Allow Upper Cook Inlet set gillnet permit holders to fish in more than one registration area per year.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow CFEC set gillnet permit holders to fish in more than one Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) registration area during a registration year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Set gillnet permit holders must register in one of three areas – Upper Subdistrict, Northern District, or Greater Cook inlet areas prior to fishing for the season. Permit holders may not transfer between or fish more than one area during a registration year.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Set gillnet permit holders would be able to fish more than one UCI registration area during a registration year. This would potentially allow permit holders to move to an area when their original area is closed or if fishing were better in another area or to extend their season in an area with a later closing date. Anticipating harvest rates and participation used to manage fisheries would be more difficult to predict for managers. This proposal may increase commercial harvest of salmon by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: Area registration for set gillnets went into effect in 1992 to prevent permit holders from moving into "hot" fishing areas at the peak of the season and then returning to their original area for the remainder of the season. At the time it was implemented, it was aimed at primarily reducing the influx of set gillnets into the Upper Subdistrict or Upper Subdistrict set gillnet registered permits into the Northern District king salmon and Big River sockeye salmon fisheries.

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. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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.

Hatchery Production (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 43 – 5 AAC 40.820. Basic Management Plans.
Amend Basic Management Plans: *Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would cap Lower Cook Inlet management area hatchery permitted pink salmon egg take level at 58.75 million eggs.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Private nonprofit (PNP) hatchery egg take levels are not set in regulation, rather they are specified on permits issued by the department. The board may, after the issuance of a permit by the commissioner, amend by regulation, the terms of the permit relating to the source and number of salmon eggs, the harvest of fish by hatchery operators, and the specific locations designated by the department for harvest. The board may not adopt any regulations or take any action regarding the issuance or denial of any permits required in AS 16.10.400 — 16.10.470 (AS 16.10.440).

Primary authority over issuance of hatchery permits and regulations of hatchery operations is vested in the commissioner and department. There are several interrelated statutory authorities relating to hatchery production levels (AS 16.10.400-16.10.430).

Each salmon enhancement region has a Comprehensive Salmon Enhancement Plan that outlines production goals by species and time (AS 16.10.375; 5 AAC 40.340-370).

PNP hatcheries operate under 4 permitting documents issued by the department: *PNP hatchery permit*, *basic management plan* (BMP), *fish transport permits* (FTP), and *annual management plans* (AMP). Each of these documents are approved by the commissioner.

The *PNP hatchery permit* (AS 16.10.400–16.10.470) authorizes operation of the hatchery and specifies the species, egg source (stock), egg numbers, release location(s), release numbers, and other conditions. Hatchery permits remain in effect unless relinquished by the permit holder or revoked by the commissioner.

The *basic management plan* (BMP; 5 AAC 40.820) is an addendum to the PNP hatchery permit to include a facility development schedule and specifies the stocks for broodstock development, maximum number of eggs of each species that a facility can incubate, and the authorized release locations, among other conditions.

PNP hatchery permits and BMPs are available for public input through a public hearing that includes an oral and written comment period prior to a determination by the commissioner. The permit and BMP may be amended by the permit holder through a *permit alteration request* (PAR; 5 AAC 40.850). Requested changes are reviewed by the Regional Planning Team (RPT) that allows for public participation and are reviewed by department staff. PARs are sent to the commissioner for consideration of approval.

A *fish transport permit* (FTP; 5 AAC 41.001–41.060) is required for egg collection, transport, and release of live fish. An FTP authorizes specific activities described in the hatchery permit and management plans including broodstock source, gamete collection, and release site, and are consistent with the previously approved guiding documents for the program, such as the PNP hatchery permit. FTP applications are reviewed by the department fish pathologist, fish geneticist, regional resource development biologist, and other department staff as delegated by the commissioner. Reviewers ensure activities described in the FTP are consistent with department policies and may suggest conditions for the FTP. Reviewers recommend approval or provide concerns, and final consideration of approval is made by the commissioner. FTPs are issued for a fixed period. When an FTP is renewed or amended, the FTP application goes through the same review process as the original FTP. Continual review of hatchery activities provides an ongoing assessment of all hatchery projects over time.

An *annual management plan* (AMP; 5 AAC 40.840) outlines operation for the current year and is written cooperatively between department regional and PNP hatchery staff in a process that is coordinated by the PNP Hatchery Program Coordinator. Typically, AMPs include the current year's egg-take goals, juvenile releases, remaining fish inventory, expected adult returns, harvest management plans, FTPs required or in place, production strategies, and evaluation plans. AMPs must be consistent with the PNP Hatchery Permit. Final consideration of the plan is made by the commissioner.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? At current (2022) egg take levels this would not impact the number of pink salmon eggs taken in Cook Inlet. In 2000, pink salmon hatcheries in Cook Inlet were permitted to take up to 235 million pink salmon eggs (Table 43-1). An egg take cap of 25% of this level results in a cap of 58.75 million pink salmon eggs. Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) took 30.38 million pink salmon eggs in 2022. Since 2013, the average annual pink salmon egg take in Cook Inlet is 77.2 million eggs. This would reduce CIAA's, or any future hatchery operator in Cook Inlet's, ability to expand pink salmon egg take number up to the level permitted by the department. This is not likely to result in improved productivity of western Alaska or Cook Inlet salmon stocks.

BACKGROUND: Pink salmon are produced at two facilities in Cook Inlet: Port Graham (PGH) and Tutka Bay Lagoon (TBLH) hatcheries.

TBLH, located in Tutka Bay near Homer, was constructed by the department in 1976. TBLH was initially permitted to release pink and chum salmon, but sockeye salmon have also been produced there. In 1991, the department contracted with CIAA to operate TBLH, and in 1994 CIAA took over operations and was issued PNP permit #32 with the state retaining ownership of the facility. TBLH has been permitted to take 125 million pink salmon eggs annually since 1996. Since 2013, TBLH has taken an average of 63.2 million pink salmon eggs annually (Table 43-1).

PGH is located in the village of Port Graham about 30 miles southwest of Homer. In 1992, Port Graham Hatchery Corporation (PGHC) was issued PNP Permit #33 to operate PGH. PGHC was permitted to take 110 million pink salmon eggs annually. In 2014, PGHC relinquished their PNP Permit and a new PNP permit (#46) was issued to CIAA to operate PGH. Since 2014, CIAA has

been permitted to take 125 million pink salmon eggs. Since 2014 (9 years of operation under PNP Permit #46), PGH has taken an average of 15.5 million pink salmon eggs annually.

The board's authority over hatchery production has previously been outlined by the Alaska Department of Law in an informal Attorney General Opinion (Nov. 6, 1997; 661-98-0127). The informal attorney general opinion notes the board "may exercise indirect authority over hatchery production by regulating the harvest of hatchery release fish in the common use fishery," by regulating "hatchery broodstock and cost recovery harvests," and by regulatory action "amending those portions of hatchery permits relating to the source and number of salmon eggs, hatchery harvests, and designation of special harvest areas." The opinion also noted that "Board action that effectively revokes or prevents the issuance of a hatchery permit is probably not authorized."

Excerpt from the Dept. of Law Memo on Authority of the Board of Fisheries Over Private Nonprofit Hatchery Production (1997) (page 12):

> Given (1) the detailed statutory scheme granting specific authority to the department over nearly every aspect of the permitting and operation of nonprofit hatcheries, (2) the more general statutory authority of the Board over the harvest of fishery resources, and (3) by contrast, the limitations imposed upon the specific statutory authority of the Board over hatchery permits by the amendment to AS 16.10.440(b) in 1979, we conclude the following. Though the Board may effectively amend hatchery permits by regulation in a manner that affects hatchery fish production, we do not believe the Board may either (1) adopt regulations that effectively veto or override a fundamental department policy decision regarding whether to authorize the operation of a particular hatchery or (2) adopt regulations preventing the department from exercising its authority to permit a hatchery operation. We believe that Board actions falling into either of these two categories would risk being viewed by a court as constructing an impermissible impediment to the department's role as the primary government agency responsible for the regulation of hatcheries. In particular, such actions would risk being deemed incompatible with the limitations imposed by the 1979 amendment to AS 16.05.440(b).
>
> A recent decision by the Alaska Supreme Court supports this view. In Peninsula Marketing Ass'n v. Rosier, 890 P.2d 567, 573 (Alaska 1995), the court held that in absence of specific statutory authority for the commissioner to issue emergency orders concerning a question previously considered by the Board, the commissioner could not effectively veto a decision by the Board for which there was specific statutory authority. The court ruled that "[i]nferring a broad veto power would make superfluous the detailed provisions dividing power and authority within the Department" and effectively eviscerate the powers explicitly granted to the Board. *Id*. Similarly, to read the limited grant of authority to the Board over hatcheries set out in AS 16.10.440(b) to permit the Board to effectively veto fundamental policy decisions by the department for which there is specific statutory authority would upset the balance of the statutory scheme chosen by the legislature.
>
> Additional reasons support that conclusion. As previously noted, the Board "may not adopt any regulations or take any action regarding the *issuance* or *denial* of any permits required under AS 16.10.400-16.10.470." AS 16.10.440(b) (emphasis added). We believe

> that a Board regulation that so drastically amends a hatchery permit to render the hatchery's operation impracticable might be viewed by a court to be an impermissible action by the Board "regarding the issuance or denial . . . of a permit." *See* AS 16.10.440(b). In other words, a Board amendment that puts a hatchery out of operation might be construed as an effective revocation or denial of a hatchery permit, an action that is expressly prohibited by AS 16.10.440(b). Similarly, Board regulations prohibiting the establishment of a hatchery in a particular area deemed by a court as an action by the Board regarding the issuance of a permit and, therefore, unlawful under AS 16.10.440(b). [1]

The Commissioner directed that he would not allow for any increase in the permitted number of pink and chum salmon eggs that could be taken by hatchery operators. This directive has been in place since 2019 and there has not been an increase in permitted numbers of pink or chum salmon eggs allowed to be taken.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Hatchery egg take levels are established through an iterative process involving department staff and stakeholders. Hatchery operations are permitted in a way that minimizes impact on wild salmon stocks and the commissioner can amend a permit if conservation concerns arise related to hatchery production. If there is a compelling reason to amend terms of a hatchery permit, the amendment should be based on analysis of data and there should be clear evidence the amendment will have a positive impact on wild salmon stocks. No evidence has been presented in this proposal to support the proposed reduction in permitted pink salmon egg take level.

If the board were to adopt this proposal there would need to be discussion of how to apportion the egg take cap between Cook Inlet hatcheries since egg take capacity is set on permits for specific hatchery facilities, not the PNP corporation.

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 will not result in an additional cost for the department.

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[1] We realize that without additional clarification from the legislature the parameters of permissible Board regulations remain somewhat murky. However, we believe that the more significantly a particular Board regulation restricts the effective functioning of a hatchery in a way that is incompatible with a departmental decision to permit the hatchery's operation, the greater is the risk that the Board regulation may be invalidated by a reviewing court.

Source: https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2019-2020/hc/law.pdf

Table 43-1. Pink salmon egg take and fry release information for Cook Inlet hatcheries, 1975–2022.

	Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery Pink Salmon				Port Graham Hatchery Pink Salmon				Total Pink Salmon		
Year	PNP egg capactiy	PNP operator	Egg take	Fry released (brood year)	PNP egg capactiy	PNP operator	Egg take	Fry released (brood year)	PNP egg capactiy	Egg take	Fry released (brood year)
1975	N/A	N/A	3,000,000	250,000	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	3,000,000	250,000
1976	N/A	N/A	10,400,000	318,280	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	10,400,000	318,280
1977	N/A	N/A	7,100,000	4,820,937	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	7,100,000	4,820,937
1978	N/A	N/A	12,658,000	9,243,717	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	12,658,000	9,243,717
1979	N/A	N/A	10,643,000	6,795,244	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	10,643,000	6,795,244
1980	N/A	N/A	15,856,000	10,268,753	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	15,856,000	10,268,753
1981	N/A	N/A	19,916,000	15,475,435	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	19,916,000	15,475,435
1982	N/A	N/A	18,997,000	15,232,750	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	18,997,000	15,232,750
1983	N/A	N/A	26,800,000	18,142,463	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	26,800,000	18,142,463
1984	N/A	N/A	29,500,000	23,537,000	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	29,500,000	23,537,000
1985	N/A	N/A	32,300,000	26,234,600	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	32,300,000	26,234,600
1986	N/A	N/A	31,500,000	8,240,700	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	31,500,000	8,240,700
1987	N/A	N/A	19,500,000	15,589,360	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	19,500,000	15,589,360
1988	N/A	N/A	46,000,000	36,977,190	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	46,000,000	36,977,190
1989	N/A	N/A	43,335,000	36,684,662	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	43,335,000	36,684,662
1990	N/A	N/A	50,000,000	30,000,000	N/A	N/A	300,000	255,000	N/A	50,300,000	30,255,000
1991	N/A	N/A	37,350,000	31,950,000	N/A	N/A	3200000[a]	1,810,487	N/A	40,550,000	33,760,487
1992	N/A	N/A	60,000,000	48,700,000	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	110,000,000	60,000,000	48,700,000
1993	N/A	N/A	77,000,000	61,100,000	110,000,000	PGHC	2,039,000	1,295,000	110,000,000	79,039,000	62,395,000
1994	125,000,000	CIAA	89,200,000	63,000,000	110,000,000	PGHC	526,000	358,000	235,000,000	89,726,000	63,358,000
1995	125,000,000	CIAA	125,600,000	105,000,000	110,000,000	PGHC	7,807,808	6,469,975	235,000,000	133,407,808	111,469,975
1996	125,000,000	CIAA	116,000,000	89,000,000	110,000,000	PGHC	1,501,672	918,000	235,000,000	117,501,672	89,918,000
1997	125,000,000	CIAA	117,400,000	90,000,000	110,000,000	PGHC	15,489,306	0[b]	235,000,000	132,889,306	90,000,000
1998	125,000,000	CIAA	129,000,000	60,132,000	110,000,000	PGHC	16,161,000	4,617,362	235,000,000	145,161,000	64,749,362
1999	125,000,000	CIAA	114,091,000	65,120,870	110,000,000	PGHC	1,462,185	1,142,726	235,000,000	115,553,185	66,263,596
2000	125,000,000	CIAA	130,291,000[c]	99,336,410	110,000,000	PGHC	33,652,000	27,298,797	235,000,000	163,943,000	126,635,207
2001	125,000,000	CIAA	136,632,615[c]	99,371,000	110,000,000	PGHC	11,040,034	6,600,985	235,000,000	147,672,649	105,971,985

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Table 43-1. Page 2 of 2.

Year	Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery Pink Salmon				Port Graham Hatchery Pink Salmon				Total Pink Salmon		
	PNP egg capactiy	PNP operator	Egg take	Fry released (brood year)	PNP egg capactiy	PNP operator	Egg take	Fry released (brood year)	PNP egg capactiy	Egg take	Fry released (brood year)
2002	125,000,000	CIAA	124,847,819	67,967,000	110,000,000	PGHC	77,361,665	57,200,000	235,000,000	202,209,484	125,167,000
2003	125,000,000	CIAA	73,196,000	47,964,360	110,000,000	PGHC	57,326,017	36,282,671	235,000,000	130,522,017	84,247,031
2004	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	56,451,661	26,567,983	235,000,000	56,451,661	26,567,983
2005	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	25,183,199	13,863,682	235,000,000	25,183,199	13,863,682
2006	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	20,500,000	13,282,049	235,000,000	20,500,000	13,282,049
2007	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	0	0
2008	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	0	0
2009	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	0	0
2010	125,000,000	CIAA	0	0	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	0	0
2011	125,000,000	CIAA	14,596,062	11,246,399	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	14,596,062	11,246,399
2012	125,000,000	CIAA	21,770,000	18,603,000	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	21,770,000	18,603,000
2013	125,000,000	CIAA	80,417,000	51,298,000	110,000,000	PGHC	0	0	235,000,000	80,417,000	51,298,000
2014	125,000,000	CIAA	14,862,656	12,274,240	125,000,000	CIAA	3,195,600	2,200,060	250,000,000	18,058,256	14,474,300
2015	125,000,000	CIAA	29,125,813	11,433,515	125,000,000	CIAA	2,247,953	1,310,762	250,000,000	31,373,766	12,744,277
2016	125,000,000	CIAA	64,813,289	54,245,411	125,000,000	CIAA	9,076,353	6,059,757	250,000,000	73,889,642	60,305,168
2017	125,000,000	CIAA	123,548,148	50,040,000	125,000,000	CIAA	36,661,527	21,155,000	250,000,000	160,209,675	71,195,000
2018	125,000,000	CIAA	122,144,501	85,580,538	125,000,000	CIAA	18,385,026	10,144,850	250,000,000	140,529,527	95,725,388
2019	125,000,000	CIAA	39,187,425	27,684,949	125,000,000	CIAA	7,814,197	5,948,143	250,000,000	47,001,622	33,633,092
2020	125,000,000	CIAA	87,140,083	71,907,183	125,000,000	CIAA	34,853,545	22,382,661	250,000,000	121,993,628	94,289,844
2021	125,000,000	CIAA	61,987,400	55,092,122	125,000,000	CIAA	6,081,714	1,973,319	250,000,000	68,069,114	57,065,441
2022	125,000,000	CIAA	9,202,835	8,031,496[d]	125,000,000	CIAA	21,179,087	Not available[e]	250,000,000	30,381,922	Not available[e]

Note: CIAA = Cook Inet Aquaculture Association and PGHC = Port Graham Hatchery Corporation.

[a] Eggs collected under an ADF&G scientific permit (F-91-053).

[b] All eggs destroyed in a fire.

[c] Excess eggs discarded (7,977,000 eggs in 2000; 2,248,615 in 2001).

[d] Number released is preliminary.

[e] Number released will be available in December 2023.

Pink Salmon Management Plan (2 proposals)

PROPOSAL 144 – 5 AAC 21.354. *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*. Amend the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Chris Every.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow for one additional 12-hr commercial period per week between August 1–August 15 on even calendar years to target pink salmon. This would additionally remove pink salmon harvest level criteria for commercial periods under the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The purpose of the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan* is to allow for harvest of surplus pink salmon in the Upper Subdistrict for set gillnet and drift gillnet gear. The plan allows for up to two 12-hour fishing periods in the Upper Subdistrict for drift and set gillnetting in even-numbered years between August 11 and August 15. The area open to drift gillnetting is the regular Kenai Section only (Figure 145-1). The pink salmon fishery is first dependent upon the commissioner determining that the sockeye salmon escapement goals in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers are being achieved and that coho salmon run strength is sufficient to withstand additional harvest.

The first pink salmon commercial fishing period may occur only if the harvest of pink salmon in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery during the first regular fishing period from August 6 through August 10 exceeds 25,000 fish, or the cumulative harvest from both regular fishing periods is 50,000 or more pink salmon. The second pink salmon commercial fishing period will occur only if 25,000 or more pink salmon and no more than 2,500 coho salmon were harvested in ESSN fishery during the first pink salmon commercial fishing period.

Legal gear during the pink salmon fishing periods are gillnets (drift and set) with a mesh size not greater than four and three-quarters inches.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase commercial harvest of salmon in the ESSN and drift gillnet fisheries in August of even numbered years. Pink salmon runs in Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) are not assessed for abundance. While pink salmon exploitation rates are currently unknown, it is unclear how to increase the commercial harvest of pink salmon without also increasing the harvest of other salmon species. This would create conflict with other management plan directives that inform managers to minimize the harvest of specific salmon stocks for inriver users.

BACKGROUND: Pink salmon runs in UCI are even-year dominant and receive little commercial exploitation. A 2002 department marine tagging study estimated the commercial harvest rate of UCI pink salmon to be very low, but aside from this study, the department does not assess pink salmon run strength in UCI. The primary harvesters of pink salmon in UCI are the Central District drift fishery and ESSN fishery. The relatively small pink salmon harvests in UCI are in part, due to restrictions on fishing time and seasons of these two fisheries to conserve or allocate other

salmon species and accommodate other management plans. The average odd-year pink salmon harvest from 1999–2023 in the drift gillnet fishery was 47,219 fish and in the ESSN fishery was 26,929 fish. Even-year harvests since 2000 have averaged 207,298 fish in the drift gillnet fishery and 101,887 fish in the ESSN fishery (Table 145-1).

The original *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan* was adopted in 2002. At the time, it was considered an experimental fishery by the board. Its purpose was to allow harvest of abundant pink salmon stocks by the drift gillnet fleet.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department believes current coho salmon management under existing management is sustainable. The Kenai River coho salmon stock is not monitored for escapement and with the discontinuation of the guide logbook program in the spring of 2019, the department no longer has one of the few metrics by which to gauge relative coho salmon run strength inseason. Inriver harvest data indicate harvest of Kenai River coho salmon is relatively stable under existing regulations and the department does not recommend any increase in exploitation. The proposal could also increase, to an unknown degree, the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon as late-run Kenai River king salmon continue to enter the river during early and mid-August. 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. This proposal would result in additional costs to the department if the department attempted to assess the annual abundance of pink salmon to determine commercial fishery harvest rates.

PROPOSAL 145 – 5 AAC 21.354. *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*. Increase commercial fishing opportunity in the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal and readopt the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan* with requirements to manage the harvest of pink salmon stocks primarily for commercial uses to achieve a 60% to 70% exploitation rate to provide an economic yield from the harvest.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The purpose of the *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan* is to allow for harvest of surplus pink salmon in the Upper Subdistrict for set gillnet and drift gillnet gear. The plan allows for up to two 12-hour fishing periods in the Upper Subdistrict for drift and set gillnetting in even-numbered years between August 11 and August 15. The area open to drift gillnetting is the regular Kenai Section only (Figure 145-1). The pink salmon fishery is first dependent upon the commissioner determining that the sockeye salmon escapement goals in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers are being achieved and that coho salmon run strength is sufficient to withstand additional harvest.

The first pink salmon commercial fishing period may occur only if the harvest of pink salmon in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet (ESSN) fishery during the first regular fishing period from August 6 through August 10 exceeds 25,000 fish, or the cumulative harvest from both regular fishing periods is 50,000 or more pink salmon. The second pink salmon commercial fishing period will occur only if 25,000 or more pink salmon and no more than 2,500 coho salmon were harvested in ESSN fishery during the first pink salmon commercial fishing period.

Legal gear during the pink salmon fishing periods are gillnets (drift and set) with a mesh size not greater than four and three-quarters inches.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It is difficult to determine the effect of this proposal as it does not specify how a fishery would be implemented to achieve the new management plan goals. Pink salmon runs in Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) are not assessed for abundance, so to meet an exploitation rate directive, pink salmon run abundance to UCI would have to be estimated, requiring new assessment projects in a restrictive budgetary environment. Furthermore, while pink salmon exploitation rates are currently unknown, it is unclear how to increase the commercial harvest of pink salmon without also increasing the harvest of sockeye and coho salmon. This would create conflict with other management plan directives that guide managers to minimize the harvest of specific salmon stocks intended for inriver users.

BACKGROUND: Pink salmon runs in UCI are even-year dominant and receive little commercial exploitation. A 2002 department marine tagging study estimated the commercial harvest rate of UCI pink salmon to be very low, but aside from this study, the department does not assess pink salmon run strength in UCI. The primary harvesters of pink salmon in UCI are the Central District drift fishery and ESSN fishery. The relatively small pink salmon harvests in UCI are in part, due to restrictions on fishing time and seasons of these two fisheries to conserve or allocate other salmon species and accommodate other management plans. The average odd-year pink salmon

harvest from 1999–2023 in the drift gillnet fishery was 47,219 fish and in the ESSN fishery was 26,929 fish. Even-year harvests since 2000 have averaged 207,298 fish in the drift gillnet fishery and 101,887 fish in the ESSN fishery (Table 145-1).

The original *Cook Inlet Pink Salmon Management Plan* was adopted in 2002. At the time, it was considered an experimental fishery by the board. Its purpose was to allow harvest of abundant pink salmon stocks by the drift gillnet fleet.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal because the department does not currently estimate pink salmon abundance or harvest rates in UCI and does not intend to implement a UCI pink salmon stock assessment program. Without this sort of assessment, it would not be possible to determine whether the proposed increase in pink salmon harvest rates was being achieved. In addition, the increased fishing time required to achieve the proposed pink salmon harvest rates would likely result in unsustainable harvests of Susitna River sockeye, coho, and Kenai River coho salmon. The proposal could also increase to an unknown degree the harvest of late-run Kenai River king salmon as late-run Kenai River king salmon continue to enter the river during early and mid-August. 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. This proposal would result in additional costs to the department if the department attempted to assess the annual abundance of pink salmon to determine commercial fishery harvest rates.

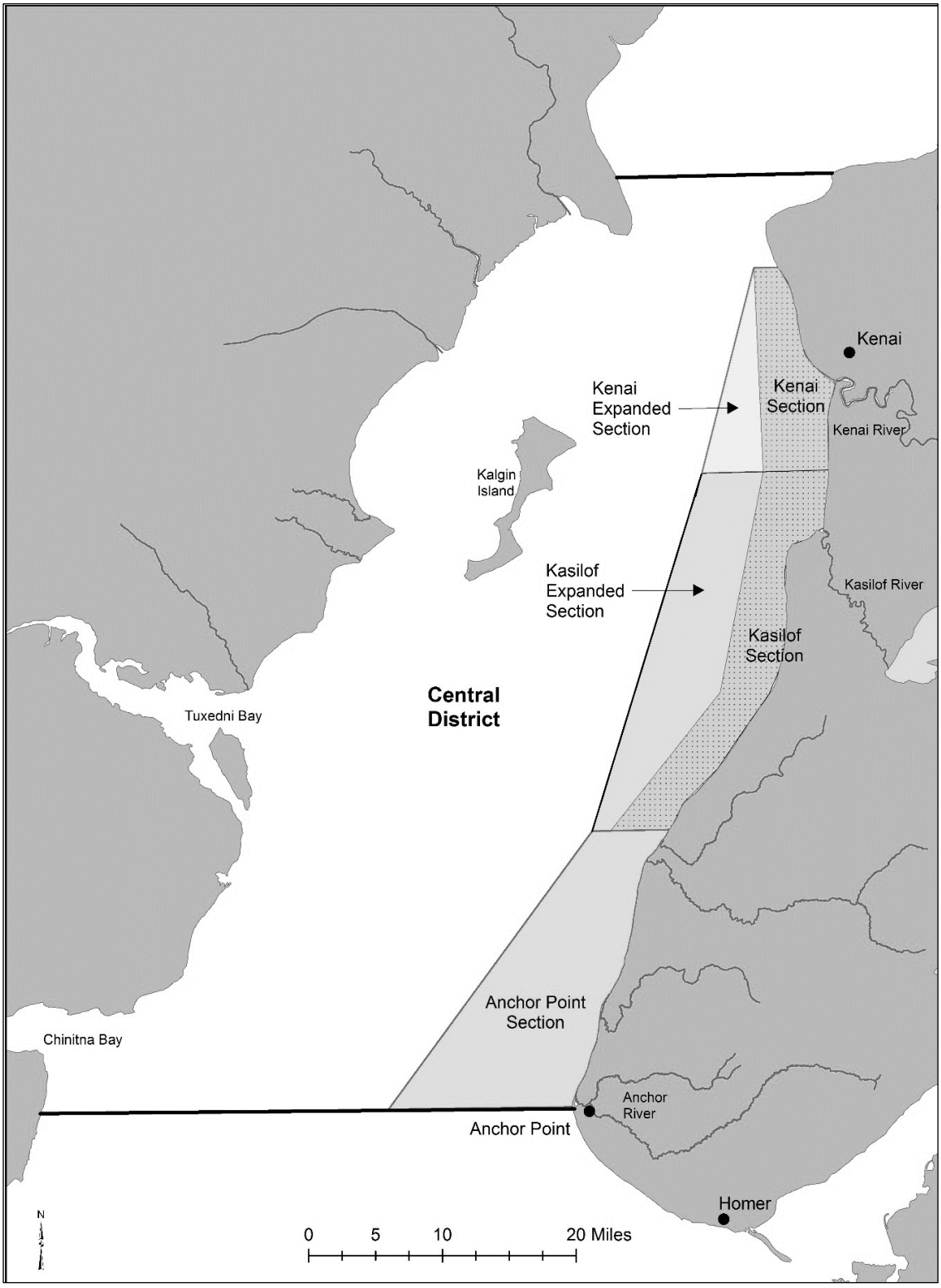

Figure 145-1.–Map of the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point sections.

Table 145-1.–Upper Cook Inlet commercial pink salmon harvest by gear type and area, 1999–2022.

	Central District						Northern District		
	Drift gillnet		Upper Subdistrict set		Kalgin/West Side set		set gillnet		
Year	Pink[a]	%	Pink[a]	%	Pink[a]	%	Pink[a]	%	Total
1999	3,552	22.0	9,357	57.8	2,674	16.5	593	3.7	16,176
2000	90,508	61.8	23,746	16.2	11,983	8.2	20,245	13.8	146,482
2001	31,219	43.0	32,998	45.5	3,988	5.5	4,355	6.0	72,560
2002	224,229	50.2	214,771	48.1	1,736	0.4	6,224	1.4	446,960
2003	30,376	62.3	16,474	33.8	375	0.8	1,564	3.2	48,789
2004	235,524	65.8	107,838	30.1	12,560	3.5	2,017	0.6	357,939
2005	31,230	64.5	13,619	28.1	2,747	5.7	823	1.7	48,419
2006	212,808	52.7	184,990	45.8	4,684	1.2	1,629	0.4	404,111
2007	67,398	45.8	69,918	47.6	6,177	4.2	3,527	2.4	147,020
2008	103,867	61.3	59,620	35.2	2,357	1.4	3,524	2.1	169,368
2009	139,676	65.2	55,845	26.1	12,246	5.7	6,554	3.1	214,321
2010	164,005	56.0	121,817	41.6	3,106	1.1	3,778	1.3	292,706
2011	15,333	44.9	15,527	45.5	2,424	7.1	839	2.5	34,123
2012	303,216	64.6	159,003	33.9	3,376	0.7	4,003	0.9	469,598
2013	30,605	63.4	14,671	30.4	1,014	2.1	1,985	4.1	48,275
2014	417,344	64.9	213,616	33.2	4,331	0.7	7,695	1.2	642,986
2015	21,653	45.1	22,983	47.9	1,175	2.4	2,193	4.6	48,004
2016	268,908	70.3	103,503	27.1	2,089	0.5	7,968	2.1	382,468
2017	89,963	53.6	59,995	35.7	7,775	4.6	10,109	6.0	167,842
2018	83,535	65.8	21,822	17.2	8,294	6.5	13,272	10.5	126,923
2019	27,607	39.0	32,746	46.3	3,795	5.4	6,679	9.4	70,741
2020	293,676	85.1	11,604	3.4	12,325	3.6	27,467	8.0	345,072
2021	67,423	82.9	5,944	7.3	3,281	4.0	4,712	5.8	81,360
2022	89,953	89.1	317	0.3	2,650	2.6	8,044	8.0	100,964
2023	57,817	87.4	0	0.0	1,128	1.7	7,207	10.9	66,152
Averages									
Odd Year	47,219	55.3	26,929	34.8	3,754	5.1	3,934	4.9	81,829
Even Year	207,298	65.6	101,887	27.7	5,791	2.5	8,822	4.2	323,798

[a] Harvest data prior to 2021 reflect minor adjustments to historical catch database.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 7: KASILOF RIVER KING SALMON SPORT FISHERIES, VESSEL AND HABITAT RESTRICTIONS, AND GUIDES (15 PROPOSALS)

Kasilof River King Salmon Sport Fisheries (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 150 – 5 AAC 21.XXX. New Section.
Create a *Kasilof River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a Kasilof River late-run king salmon management plan.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Kasilof River late-run king salmon are managed under general provisions for the Kenai Peninsula (5 AAC 56.120) and special provisions for the Kasilof River drainage (5 AAC 56.122 (8)). The special provisions include regulations establishing seasons upriver and downriver of the Sterling Highway Bridge; king salmon bag and possession limits for hatchery and naturally-produced king salmon; requirements to retain king salmon removed from the water; regulations prohibiting mutilating, filleting or disfiguring a king salmon until it has been offloaded from the vessel or fishing site; seasonal single-hook, artificial lure restrictions; nonguided boat Sundays in July; seasonal fishing from any vessel prohibitions; fishing from an anchored vessel prohibitions; horse power restrictions; and seasonal power vessel prohibitions.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal proposes management of Kasilof River king salmon by aligning with emergency orders issued for Kenai River late-run king salmon. Effectively any action taken for Kenai River late-run king salmon conservation would be mirrored for the Kasilof River fishery. This would create one-size management for two very different systems. Additionally, closing the Kasilof Special Harvest Area when the Kenai/Kasilof Rivers were closed to sport fishing for king salmon would increase sockeye salmon escapement to that system with little ability to increase inriver harvest potential.

BACKGROUND: The department manages Kasilof River early-run king salmon to achieve a run of approximately 3,000 hatchery-produced, early-run adult king salmon to provide sport fishing opportunity; while ensuring that sustainable escapement goal of 700–1,400 naturally-produced adult king salmon continue to spawn upstream from the Crooked Creek Facility. There is no established escapement goal for late-run Kasilof River king salmon (Figures 150-1, 150-2).

The department has committed to assessing Kasilof River late-run king salmon by expanding its sonar assessment program to the Kasilof River. The program has been running for six years at the department's sockeye salmon sonar site just upriver of the Sterling Highway Bridge. As Kasilof River fisheries become more popular and our knowledge of the late-run king salmon stock

becomes more informed the department plans to establish an escapement goal for Kasilof late-run king salmon and present the board with a management plan that recognizes the uniqueness of the Kasilof River. Until then the department has emergency order authority to conservatively manage this stock.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and has the tools to manage the Kasilof River king salmon fishery. Actions taken to manage Kenai River king salmon may not be appropriate for the Kasilof River.

Kenai River Vessels and Habitat Restrictions (2 proposal)

PROPOSAL 151 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Add days and area to the nonmotorized restrictions on the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Nyce.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This seeks to add days and area to the nonmotorized vessel restrictions on the Kenai River.

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 eliminate more time and area of fishing opportunity for anglers fishing from power boats. It would increase the opportunity to fish for anglers with access to a drift boat or shore access but would overall reduce the level of participation in Kenai River salmon and 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.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to limit access to fisheries 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.

PROPOSAL 152 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Prohibit motorized vessels on the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit motorized vessels on the Kenai River.

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 operated 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 change the vessels used on the Kenai River to be primarily drift boats, would eliminate fishing opportunity from power boats completely, and increase the opportunity to fish without power boat anglers present on the river. This would most likely reduce the level of participation in most Kenai River sport fisheries, especially the king and coho salmon fisheries, and the resident species fisheries by a significant amount. Conflict related to issues such as congestion on the river, bank erosion, and poor quality of the angling experience could be reduced.

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.

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 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.

Guides- Kenai and Kasilof Rivers (12 proposals)

PROPOSAL 153 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow guiding on the Kenai River on Sundays and Mondays.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Professional Guides Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow guided sport fishing from a vessel on the Kenai River on Sundays and Mondays.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 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 (Figure 148-1) and Mondays, May 1 through July 31, except for Memorial Day, in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge sport fishing from a vessel is only allowed for unguided anglers fishing from a nonmotorized vessel. May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow fishing from a guided vessel in the Kenai River seven days a week during king salmon season and peak sockeye salmon abundance. This would likely increase catch and harvest of king salmon when open, and sockeye, pink, and silver salmon. User conflicts would likely increase between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 154 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow guiding on the Kenai River without restrictions if king salmon fishery is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Johnston Hanes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow guided sport fishing on the Kenai River without day and time restrictions if the king salmon sport fishery is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 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 (Figure 148-1). Mondays, May 1 through July 31, except for Memorial Day, in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge sport fishing from a vessel is only allowed for unguided anglers fishing from a nonmotorized vessel. May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow fishing from a guided vessel in the Kenai River seven days a week during king salmon season and peak sockeye salmon abundance. This would likely increase incidental catch and harvest of king salmon when the king salmon fishery is closed due to conservation concerns and increase catch of sockeye, pink, and silver salmon, and rainbow trout and Dolly Varden. User conflicts would likely increase between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 155 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow guiding on the Kenai River Sundays and Mondays if king salmon fishery closed.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Loomis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow guided sport fishing on the Kenai River Sundays and Mondays if the king salmon sport fishery is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 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 (Figure 148-1). Mondays, May 1 through July 31, except for Memorial Day, in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge sport fishing from a vessel is only allowed for unguided anglers fishing from a nonmotorized vessel. May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow fishing from a guided vessel in the Kenai River seven days a week during king salmon season and peak sockeye salmon abundance. This would likely increase catch and harvest of king salmon when the king salmon fishery is closed due to conservation concerns and increase catch of sockeye, pink, and silver salmon, and rainbow trout and Dolly Varden. User conflicts would likely increase between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 156 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Allow fishing from a guided nonmotorized vessel on Mondays during May–July.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick P McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow sport fishing from a guided nonmotorized vessel on Mondays during May through July.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 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 (Figure 148-1). Mondays, May 1 through July 31, except for Memorial Day, in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge sport fishing from a vessel is only allowed for unguided anglers fishing from a nonmotorized vessel. May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow guides to operate on the Kenai River on Mondays with a nonmotorized vessel. That would allow anglers who want to utilize guide services another day of opportunity on the river but would also increase the number of vessels on the river and the potential for conflicts between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided

anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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 157 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow anglers to fish on the Kenai River on Mondays in August and September from a guided vessel.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow guided sport fishing on the Kenai River Mondays in August and September.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From July 31 through November 30, sport fishing from a guide vessel is prohibited on Mondays, except Labor Day. Upstream from the confluence of the Moose River and Kenai River, sport fishing for coho salmon from a guide vessel is prohibited on Mondays, except Labor Day (Figure 148-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow guides to operate on the Kenai River on Mondays. That would allow anglers who want to utilize guide services another day of opportunity on the river but would also increase the number of vessels on the river and the potential for conflicts between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels. Increasing the number of guided anglers may increase coho salmon harvest.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 158 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Allow sport fishing from a guide vessel on Sundays and Mondays with no hour restrictions.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow sport fishing from a guided vessel on Sundays and Mondays with no hour restrictions above the Moose River May through July.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 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 (Figure 148-1). Mondays, May 1 through July 31, except for Memorial Day, in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge sport fishing from a vessel is only allowed for unguided anglers fishing from a non-motorized vessel. May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow guides to operate on the Kenai River seven days a week from May through July. That would allow anglers who want to utilize guide services more opportunity on the river but would also increase the number of vessels on the river and the potential for conflicts between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years have allocated between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River, have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided

anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative , not a biological issue.

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 159 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow sport fishing from a guide vessel on the Kenai River on Mondays from August 1 through November 30.

PROPOSED BY: Eric L Loomis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow guided sport fishing along the entirety of the Kenai River Mondays from August through November.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From July 31 through November 30, sport fishing from a guide vessel is prohibited on Mondays, except Labor Day. Upstream from the confluence of the Moose River and Kenai River, sport fishing for coho salmon from a guide vessel is prohibited on Mondays (Figure 159-1, 159-2)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow guides to operate on the Kenai River on Mondays from August through November. That would allow anglers who want to utilize guide services another day of opportunity on the river but would also increase the number of vessels on the river and the potential for conflicts between unguided and guided anglers on days reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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.

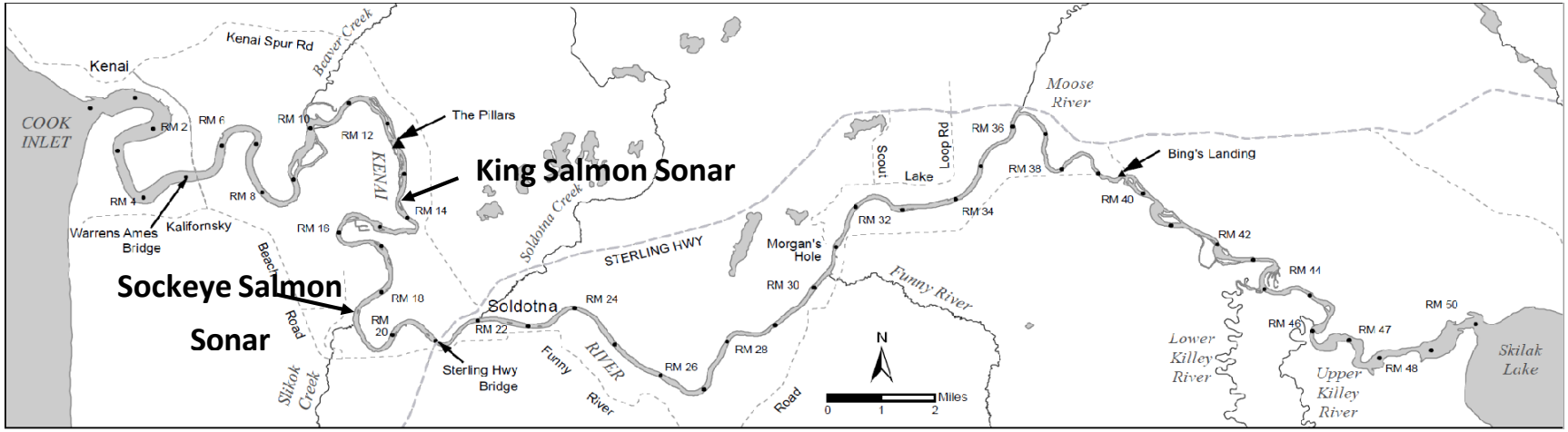

Figure 159-1.–Map of the lower Kenai River.

Figure 159-2.–Map of the middle Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 160 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Limit guided activities on the Kenai River from May 1 through July 31.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit guided sport fishing on Sunday and Monday from May through July downstream of Skilak Lake.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 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 (Figure 148-1). Mondays, May 1 through July 31, except for Memorial Day, in the portion of the Kenai River from the outlet of Skilak Lake to the Sterling Highway Bridge sport fishing from a vessel is only allowed for unguided anglers fishing from a nonmotorized vessel. May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit sport fishing with a guide on the Kenai River on Sundays and Mondays, not just sport fishing from a guided vessel. That would restrict anglers who want to utilize guide services on the river but would also decrease the number of vessels on the river and the potential for conflicts between unguided and guided anglers fishing from shore.

BACKGROUND: Regulations adopted by the board through the years allocating between guided and unguided anglers on the Kenai River have closed specific areas of the river to all fishing, restricted certain areas of the river to shore fishing only, and imposed time and date closures for all guided and unguided boat anglers. In addition, the board has addressed the allocation between guided and unguided anglers within the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery by reducing the number of hours and days guided anglers may fish, limiting the number of clients allowed to fish from a guided vessel, and prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are present/fishing.

Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided

anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 161 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Restrict guided shoreline anglers on Kenai River to 6:00 AM–6:00 PM July 1 to August 15.

PROPOSED BY: Pete Imhof.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would restrict guided sport fishing from shore on the Kenai River to 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. from July through August 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit guided anglers from fishing from shore before 6:00 a.m. and after 6:00 pm. That may have the intended consequence of allowing unguided anglers a better chance to secure a productive fishing spot, but it may potentially increase conflicts between unguided and guided shore anglers if guides try to hold spots for their clients prior to 6:00 a.m.

BACKGROUND: Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 162 – 5 AAC 57.140. Kenai River guiding and guided fishing requirements in the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow guiding on the Kenai River prior to 6:00 AM and after 6:00 PM.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Professional Guides Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. from July through August 15 guided sport fishing restriction on the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? May 1 through July 31, sport fishing from a registered guide vessel downstream of Skilak Lake is permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, guided anglers may fish from shore for any species during that time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow guided anglers to fish before 6:00 a.m. and after 6:00 p.m. during the peak of the sockeye salmon fishery. That would allow anglers who want to utilize guide services more opportunity on the river but would also increase the number of vessels on the river and the potential for conflicts between unguided and guided anglers on hours reallocated from fishing from unguided vessels.

BACKGROUND: Since 1985, during June and July, sport fishing from registered guide vessels has been permitted only from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except for the years 1986–1988 when, during July, the time was 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.). In 2000, the daily time restrictions were extended to include the month of May. Guided anglers are also restricted from fishing on the Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake from a registered guide vessel on Sundays or Mondays in May through July (except Memorial Day). These regulations are intended to restrict harvest of king salmon by reducing guided angling effort, provide unguided anglers with hours free of competition with guided anglers, and reduce angler congestion on the Kenai River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

PROPOSAL 163 – 5 AAC 56.140. Kasilof River guiding and guided fishing requirements.
Reduce the time fishing from and anchoring a guided vessel in the Kasilof River.

PROPOSED BY: Pete Imhof.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would restrict guided sport fishing for king salmon on the Kasilof River from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. from May 15 through June 30. Additionally, guides could not anchor their vessel until 6 a.m.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? A guided vessel may anchor and fish clients from a vessel in the Kasilof River any time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would restrict guided activity on the Kasilof River during the king salmon season. Restricting the guided hours may reduce angling effort unless those times are filled with unguided anglers. Prohibiting anchoring in sections of the river may provide opportunity for more anglers to fish the more productive spots.

BACKGROUND: Beginning in 2002, guides operating on the Kasilof River were restricted to one group of clients per day. Sport fish guide logbook regulations became effective in 2006; therefore, the number of guides servicing two separate clients or groups of clients in one day prior to implementation of the logbook program is not known. The number of guided sport fishing trips taken on the Kasilof River has averaged 2,000 annually from 2006 through 2010 (Table 163-1).

Beginning in 2011, guides operating on the Kasilof River were allowed to conduct multiple trips per day. The number of guided sport fishing trips taken on the Kasilof River has averaged 1,897 trips annually from 2011 through 2016 (Table 163-1). The freshwater logbook program was discontinued after 2018.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

Table 163-1.–Guide logbook fishing effort, number of trips, business and guides, Kasilof River, 2006–2016.

	Days fished	Trips	Businesses	Guides
2006				
Below Highway	6,563	1,936	113	151
Above Highway	158	47	14	15
Unspecified	189	59	21	24
Total	6,910	2,042	148	190
2007				
Below Highway	6,761	2,022	106	152
Above Highway	89	30	13	14
Unspecified	220	69	20	25
Total	7,070	2,121	139	191
2008				
Below Highway	6,660	1,980	88	139
Above Highway	89	28	10	11
Unspecified	322	99	21	23
Total	7,071	2,107	119	173
2009				
Below Highway	5,757	1,746	84	117
Above Highway	102	32	8	8
Unspecified	301	97	30	35
Total	6,160	1,875	122	160
2010				
Below Highway	5,735	1,784	85	134
Above Highway	154	54	11	14
Unspecified	63	19	10	11
Total	5,952	1,857	106	159
Average				
Below Highway	6,295	1,894	95	139
Above Highway	118	38	11	12
Unspecified	219	69	20	24
Total	6,633	2,000	127	175

-continued-

Table 163-1.–Page 2 of 2.

	Days fished	Trips	Businesses	Guides
2011				
Below Highway	7,734	2,307	89	133
Above Highway	104	32	10	12
Unspecified	7	2	2	2
Total	7,845	2,341	101	147
2012				
Below Highway	5,668	1,747	84	126
Above Highway	282	100	17	27
Unspecified	0	0	0	0
Total	5,950	1,847	101	153
2013				
Below Highway	6,367	1,937	74	126
Above Highway	510	155	22	35
Unspecified	19	7	4	5
Total	6,896	2,099	100	166
2014				
Below Highway	4,222	1,310	67	119
Above Highway	1,017	296	35	56
Unspecified	36	12	5	5
Total	5,275	1,618	107	180
2015				
Below Highway	4,283	1,317	63	117
Above Highway	1,332	387	36	65
Unspecified	4	1	1	1
Total	5,619	1,705	100	183
2016				
Below Highway	5,066	1,548	68	121
Above Highway	664	207	29	45
Unspecified	42	14	2	2
Total	5,772	1,769	99	168
Average				
Below Highway	5,557	1,694	74	124
Above Highway	652	196	25	40
Unspecified	18	6	2	3
Total	6,226	1,897	101	166

Source: Participation, effort and Harvest in the Sport Fish Business/Guide Licensing and Logbook Programs, 2011–2016.

PROPOSAL 164 – 5 AAC 56.140. Kasilof River guiding and guided fishing requirements.
Limit sport fish guiding in the Kasilof River.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would restrict guided sport fishing from shore to 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. from May 1 through August 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no restricted hours for guided anglers on the Kasilof River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would restrict guided activity on the Kasilof River downstream of Tustamena Lake during the peak fishing season. Restricting the guided hours may reduce angling effort unless those times are filled with unguided anglers.

BACKGROUND: Beginning in 2002, guides operating on the Kasilof River were restricted to one group of clients per day. Sport fish guide logbook regulations became effective in 2006; therefore, the number of guides servicing two separate clients or groups of clients in one day prior to implementation of the logbook program is not known. The number of guided sport fishing trips taken on the Kasilof River has averaged 2,000 annually from 2006 through 2010 (Table 163-1).

Beginning in 2011, guides operating on the Kasilof River were allowed to conduct multiple trips per day. The number of guided sport fishing trips taken on the Kasilof River has averaged 1,897 trips annually from 2011 through 2016 (Table 163-1). The freshwater logbook program was discontinued after 2018.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, but would like to point out that guided anglers typically experience higher catch rates than nonguided anglers. Allocating between guided and unguided anglers is largely an allocative, not a biological issue.

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.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUP 8: KENAI, KASILOF, AND RUSSIAN RIVER SPORTAND PERSONAL USE (39 PROPOSALS)

Kenai, Kasilof, and Russian Rivers (24 proposals)

PROPOSAL 165 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.

Allow sport fishing in the Kenai River with only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from January to July.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick P McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would only allow sport fishing in the lower Kenai River with one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from January 1 through July 31. From Bings Landing upriver to Skilak Lake, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure could be used year round, except two artificial flies could be used provided the gap of the hooks combined is less than ½ inch(Figure 165-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The following sections of the Kenai River are restricted to fishing with one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure during portions of January through July:

- January – June in the entire Kenai River, and July from Slikok Creek to Skilak Lake
- May – July in the confluence of the Moose and Funny Rivers and Slikok Creek. These confluence areas are also closed to fishing from boats.

In the Middle Section of the Kenai River, from the inlet of Skilak Lake upstream to the outlet of Kenai Lake, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure or fly, with a gap between hook and shank must be 3/8 inch or less may be used year-round.

The Lower Section of the Kenai River requires use of one unbaited single-hook, artificial lure or fly in specific subsections throughout the year. Additionally, only artificial flies may be used in specific waters. There are also times and specific areas from August 1 – November 30 when bait and multiple hooks may be used during the coho salmon fishing season.

The use of dropper hooks, two hooks fished in tandem, is not permitted in waters restricted to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure or in fly-fishing-only waters.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The multiple requests in this proposal make the potential effects difficult to quantify. Making the entire Kenai River unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may simplify regulations, but allowing the use of two artificial flies with a total combined hook gap of less than ½ inch and modifying regulations that no longer align with the statewide definition of fly-fishing-only waters would add complexity.

This would restrict fishing the waters of the Kenai River from Slikok Creek downstream to the mouth of the Kenai River to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure in July by regulation, an action that has been taken by emergency order in accordance with the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan.* The effect on king salmon would likely be negligible as one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure, along with other restrictions, are already in regulation for waters identified as staging areas for king salmon and implemented as appropriate by emergency order.

BACKGROUND: Bait and gear restrictions on the Kenai River have been created in regulation or enacted through emergency order to reduce catch rates and mortality of salmon and resident species. Restrictions are typically season and site specific. Restricting gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure is typically implemented when fisheries are restricted to nonretention.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to add further restrictions to methods and means and additional complexity to 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.

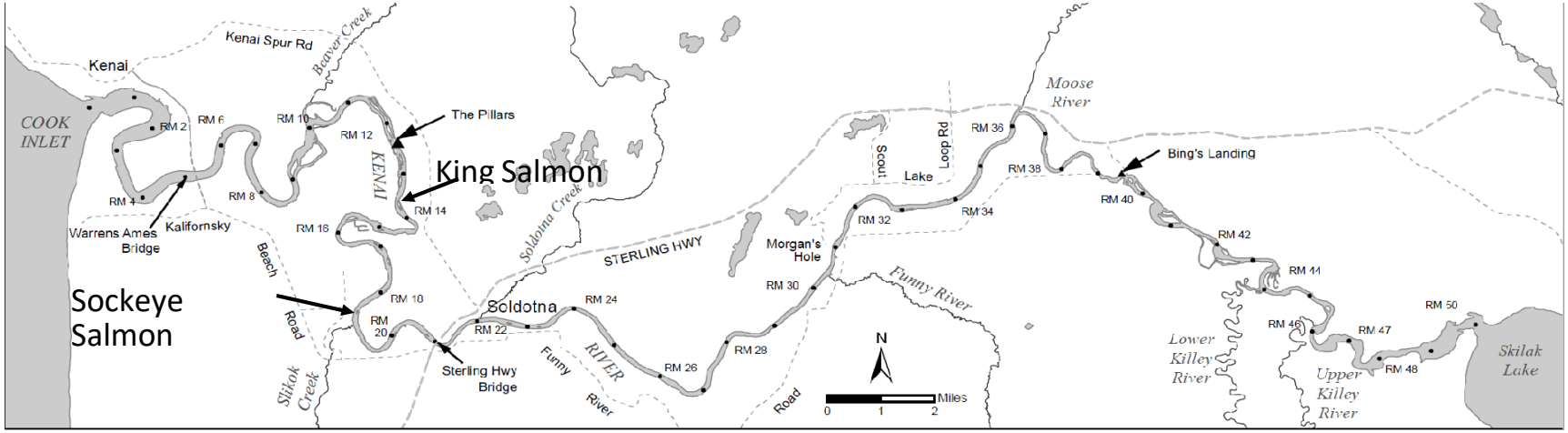

Figure 165-1.–Map of the lower Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 166 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Expand time and area waters of the Kenai River that are limited to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure, and redefine "artificial fly."

PROPOSED BY: Josh Hayes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would expand the waters that are limited to only allow sport fishing with one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure. Additionally, it seeks to change the definition of artificial fly for these waters.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The waters of the Kenai River around the confluence of the Lower and Upper Killey Rivers are restricted to fishing with one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from May through July. The Kenai River about one mile upstream of the mouth of the Lower Killey River to Skilak Lake is closed to sport fishing May 1 through June 10 (Figure 166-1).

The statewide definition of an "artificial fly" is a fly which is constructed by common methods known as fly tying, including a dry fly, wet fly, and nymph, or a bare single hook that is free of bait: materials and chemicals designed and produced primarily to cause flies to float or sink may be used on artificial flies (5 AAC 75.995(1)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the waters of the Kenai River restricted to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure around its confluence with the Killey Rivers from approximately three miles to approximately nine miles. Prohibiting bait decreases the catch rates in most fisheries and disproportionately affects inexperienced anglers.

Additionally, this seeks to modify the statewide definition of artificial fly to not include a single bare hook. A modified definition of bare hook specific to these nine miles of the Kenai River would be inconsistent with statewide regulations, the rest of the Kenai River and other peninsula streams, and create regulatory complexity and inconsistency.

BACKGROUND: Bait and gear restrictions on the Kenai River have been created in regulation or enacted through emergency order to reduce catch rates and mortality of salmon and resident species. Restrictions are typically season and site specific. Restricting gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure is typically implemented when fisheries are restricted to nonretention.

The department assessed Kenai River rainbow trout abundance in the upper river in 2018 and found it was considerably higher than in any other study year, but the number of fish greater than 450 mm FL was only 743 (SE = 71), which was less than half of what was observed in 1995, 2001, and 2009. Although the rainbow trout fisheries are popular fisheries on the Kenai River anglers release 96-99% of them (Table 166-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to add further restrictions to methods and additional complexity to regulations by creating a new definition of artificial fly.

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.

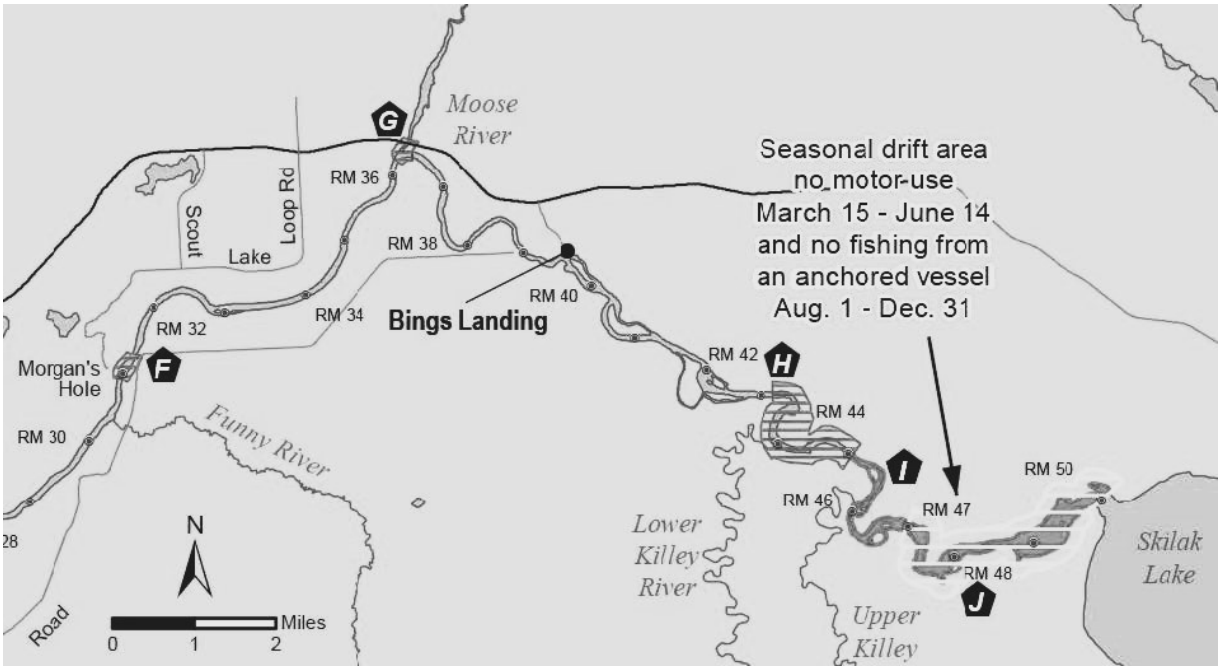

Figure 166-1.–Map of the Lower Section of the Kenai River from Funny River upstream to Skilak Lake.

Table 166-1.─Estimated Kenai River rainbow trout catch (C), harvest (H) and retention rate (% R) by river section, 2003–2022.

	Cook Inlet to Soldotna Bridge			Soldotna Bridge to Moose River			Moose River to Skilak Outlet			Skilak Inlet to Kenai Lake			Kenai River Reach not specified [a]			Kenai River total		
Year	C	H	% R	C	H	% R	C	H	% R	C	H	% R	C	H	% R	C	H	% R
2003	12,844	1,026	8.0	10,913	700	6.4	41,204	372	0.9	54,552	0	0.0	3,536	180	5.1	123,049	2,278	1.9
2004	15,080	1,452	9.6	13,310	978	7.3	34,026	831	2.4	91,443	0	0.0	5,651	50	0.9	159,510	3,311	2.1
2005	14,119	953	6.7	11,585	647	5.6	34,675	607	1.8	57,936	267	0.5	7,949	43	0.5	126,264	2,517	2.0
2006	13,168	588	4.5	13,683	1,109	8.1	33,222	472	1.4	67,741	289	0.4	4,005	41	1.0	131,819	2,499	1.9
2007	11,829	542	4.6	18,832	769	4.1	52,701	684	1.3	90,757	661	0.7	4,851	10	0.2	178,970	2,666	1.5
2008	26,385	696	2.6	20,943	794	3.8	47,956	772	1.6	103,095	941	0.9	4,496	11	0.2	202,875	3,214	1.6
2009	11,502	625	5.4	16,165	543	3.4	67,940	828	1.2	102,745	399	0.4	3,280	59	1.8	201,632	2,454	1.2
2010	9,397	553	5.9	16,944	786	4.6	63,655	696	1.1	79,663	237	0.3	3,642	131	3.6	173,301	2,403	1.4
2011	19,849	571	2.9	27,305	464	1.7	80,908	318	0.4	71,088	374	0.5	615	0	0.0	199,765	1,727	0.9
2012	16,119	843	5.2	23,866	878	3.7	47,253	396	0.8	81,349	386	0.5	856	37	4.3	169,443	2,540	1.5
2013	11,140	464	4.2	13,174	461	3.5	52,992	400	0.8	90,301	446	0.5	435	0	0.0	168,042	1,771	1.1
2014	12,123	616	5.1	14,216	502	3.5	43,059	273	0.6	69,629	135	0.2	166	93	56.0	139,193	1,619	1.2
2015	29,097	797	2.7	22,093	534	2.4	67,020	648	1.0	123,441	286	0.2	0	0	0.0	241,651	2,265	0.9
2016	23,241	834	3.6	25,492	860	3.4	43,042	599	1.4	78,149	169	0.2	1,011	0	0.0	170,935	2,462	1.4
2017	18,206	1,526	8.4	17,967	918	5.1	53,884	303	0.6	103,437	830	0.8	0	0	0.0	193,494	3,577	1.8
2018	10,132	323	3.2	15,302	259	1.7	27,538	219	0.8	48,373	351	0.7	79	0	0.0	101,424	1,152	1.1
2019	12,731	392	3.1	17,550	684	3.9	33,459	196	0.6	52,166	257	0.5	176	0	0.0	116,082	1,529	1.3
2020	9,230	311	3.4	11,380	229	2.0	38,189	99	0.3	64,951	174	0.3	175	48	27.4	123,925	861	0.7
2021	21,010	456	2.2	22,729	260	1.1	37,059	55	0.1	62,509	727	1.2	199	0	0.0	143,506	1,498	1.0
2022	14,332	501	3.5	14,147	614	4.3	22,095	264	1.2	68,189	180	0.3	527	0	0.0	119,290	1,559	1.3
Average																		
2012–2021	16,303	656	4	18,377	559	3	44,350	319	1	77,431	376	1	310	18	9	156,770	1,927	1
2017–2021	14,262	602	4	16,986	470	3	38,026	174	0	66,287	468	1	126	10	5	135,686	1,723	1

Source: Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 1999–present. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited October 2023). Available from: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/.

Note: ND means no data collected.

[a] SWHS began consistently reporting in 2002.

PROPOSAL 167 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Expand time and area waters of the Kenai River that are limited to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure.

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would expand the time and area that are limited to only allow sport fishing with one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The waters of the Kenai River around the confluence of the Lower and Upper Killey Rivers are restricted to fishing with one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure from May through July. The Kenai River about one mile upstream of the mouth of the Lower Killey River to Skilak Lake is closed to sport fishing May 1 through June 10 (Figure 166-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the waters of the Kenai River restricted to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure around its confluence with the Killey Rivers from approximately three miles to approximately nine miles. Additionally, it would increase the date of the restriction from two months to year-round. Prohibiting bait decreases the catch rates in most fisheries and disproportionately affects inexperienced anglers.

BACKGROUND: Bait and gear restrictions on the Kenai River have been created in regulation or enacted through emergency order to reduce catch rates and mortality of salmon and resident species. Restrictions are typically season and site specific. Restricting gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure is typically implemented when fisheries are restricted to nonretention.

The department assessed Kenai River rainbow trout abundance in the upper river in 2018 and found it was considerably higher than in any other study year, but the number of fish greater than 450 mm FL was only 743 (SE 71), which was less than half of what was observed in 1995, 2001, and 2009. Although the rainbow trout fisheries are popular fisheries on the Kenai River anglers release 96-99% of them (Table 166-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal seeking to add further restrictions to methods and means without biological justification.

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 168 – 5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Allow anglers to use two artificial flies in tandem on the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick P McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? In the Middle section of the Kenai River drainage (Figure 168-1) in those waters where one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure with a gap between point and shank of 3/8 inch may be used, this would also allow the use of two hooks used in tandem providing the combined gap between point and shank does not exceed 3/8 inch.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Middle Section of the Kenai River, from the inlet of Skilak Lake upstream to the outlet of Kenai Lake, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure or fly, with a gap between hook and shank must be 3/8 inch or less may be used year-round.

The waters of the Kenai River at the confluence with the Russian River are designated fly-fishing-only waters.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would liberalize the allowable gear in fly-fishing-only and one unbaited, single- hook, artificial lure areas. Additionally, it may increase harvest and catch of target fish species. Fly-fishing only regulations are a statewide regulation (5 AAC 75.024) so area regulations would be modified to no longer align with the fly-fishing-only regulations.

BACKGROUND: Fly-fishing-only regulations for specific waters of the state have been in effect since at least 1966 in the Kenai River. Fly-fishing-only regulations have been adopted in most areas to reduce the incidence of both intentional and unintentional snagging. There are other waters in the state that require one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure to be used during specific times of the year that are not designated fly-fishing-only waters.

The Kenai River supports one of the state's largest sockeye salmon fisheries as well as high effort resident rainbow trout fisheries in the lower and middle river. The single hook regulations in place are designed to be conservative and reduce angler efficiency in high use or predominate staging areas near tributary stream confluences with the Kenai River. Additionally, the unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure regulation is utilized to allow angling opportunity for target species while reducing incidental catch of non-target species. For instance, in the lower Kenai River tributary sanctuary areas for king salmon have been established but to provide opportunity for sockeye salmon the allowable gear is restricted to unbaited, single-hook, artificial flies. Unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure regulations are stipulated within management plans and in general regulation dependent upon the fishery and intent of the regulation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This would increase regulatory complexity unless all fly-fishing-only waters were repealed, and regulations replaced with the proposed language.

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.

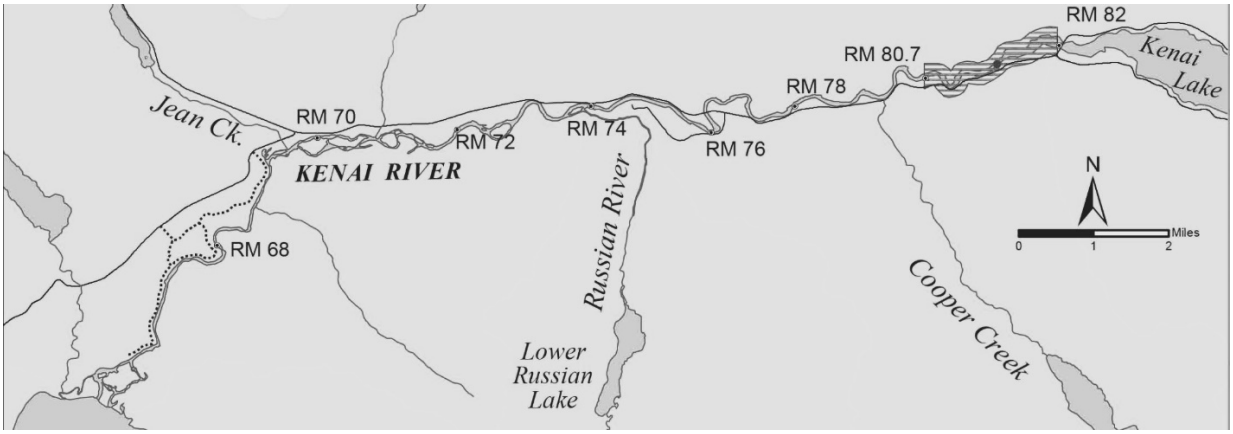

Figure 168-1.–Map of the Middle Section of the Kenai River from Skilak Lake to Kenai Lake.

PROPOSAL 169 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. 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.
Change the definition of "bag limit" for sockeye salmon in Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the definition of bag limit to include fish landed but not originally hooked by an angler for the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Bag limit is defined as the maximum legal take of fish per person per day. A fish when landed and not immediately released becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would encourage the practice of party fishing and would create an areawide exception to the statewide definition of individual-based bag limits. This would likely increase the harvest in Kenai and Kasilof River fisheries by an unknown amount. This would also create inconsistent regulations for Kenai and Kasilof Rivers and the rest of the state. It would add regulatory complexity to the definition of bag limit.

BACKGROUND: The definition of bag limit has consistently been maintained by the board and party fishing has not been implemented at any time in Alaska. The current definition is enforceable and still allows guides or experienced anglers to assist less experienced anglers land their catch.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal since it may increase harvest in some fisheries and result in challenges of enforceability. This proposal would be better addressed at a statewide 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 cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 170 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Allow backtrolling in a section of the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Loomis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the prohibition of backtrolling in a section of the Lower Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the month of July, between ADF&G regulatory markers located at RM 11 to RM 12, a person may not sport fish from a vessel that is making upstream progress relative to the water with the aid of a motor.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow backtrolling in a section of the Kenai River where it is currently prohibited. Under current king salmon management due to poor runs, the effects may be negligible as backtrolling in the lower river in July was a method used primarily by anglers fishing for king salmon. Repealing this regulation would simplify regulations by eliminating this one mile no-backtrolling zone but may increase conflict between anglers who are backtrolling and those who choose to fish by drifting methods.

BACKGROUND: The regulation prohibiting backtrolling in this section of the Kenai River was created to address conflicts between anglers backtrolling in an area that was productive for fishing king salmon and those anglers who drifted.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal addressing issues that have no significant biological consequences.

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 171 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Allow anglers to fish downstream of Soldotna Bridge after taking limit of coho salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Loomis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the regulation prohibiting anglers who harvest a limit of coho salmon from continuing to fish downstream of the Soldotna Bridge.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon may only be taken in the Lower Section of the Kenai River from July 1–November 30 and the Middle Section only from July 1–October 31. An angler who retains a bag limit of coho salmon 16 inches or greater from the Kenai River may only continue to sport fish in the waters between the Soldotna Bridge (Sterling Highway Bridge) and Skilak Lake (Figure 171-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would potentially increase crowding in the portion of the Kenai River downstream of the Soldotna Bridge as anglers who retained a bag limit of coho salmon remained to fish for other species or continue fishing and releasing coho salmon. It would simplify regulations by making them consistent throughout the river.

BACKGROUND: The regulation to move anglers out of this section of the Kenai River was created to address crowding issues.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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.

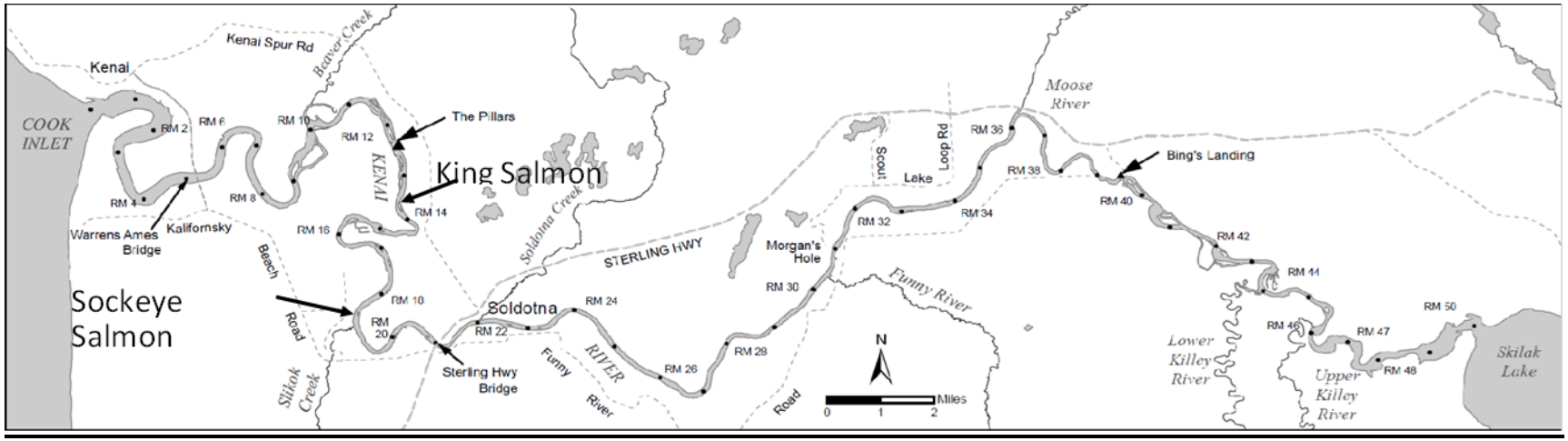

Figure 171-1.–Map of the lower Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 172 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Allow fishing from a vessel after retention of a limit of coho salmon on the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the regulation prohibiting anglers who harvest a limit of coho salmon from continuing to fish downstream of the Soldotna Bridge.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon may only be taken in the Lower Section of the Kenai River from July 1–November 30 and the Middle Section only from July 1–October 31. An angler who retains a bag limit of coho salmon 16 inches or greater from the Kenai River may only continue to sport fish in the waters between the Soldotna Bridge and Skilak Lake (Figure 171-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would potentially increase crowding in the portion of the Kenai River downstream of the Soldotna Bridge as anglers who retained a bag limit of coho salmon remain to fish for other species or continue fishing and releasing coho salmon. It would simplify regulations by making them consistent throughout the river.

BACKGROUND: The regulation to move anglers out of this section of the Kenai River was created to address crowding issues.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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 173 – 5 AAC 57.170. *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan*. Modify regulations for the Kenai River August coho salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would set in regulation how use of bait is allowed in the coho salmon fishery in August. Various dates and areas are suggested based on performance of Kenai River late-run king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no criteria in the plan to restrict the use of bait in the Kenai River coho salmon fishery based on king salmon run strength. Provisions of the plan direct the commissioner to take restrictive action for coho salmon management but not specifically for conservation of king salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would codify the potential actions that could be taken to manage the coho salmon fishery in August. Codified regulations provide a level of predictability for anglers and businesses who participate in the coho salmon fishery.

The proposed actions are prescriptive and don't allow managers to assess conditions in season and potentially take stronger measures. They would also add to regulatory complexity with different dates and restrictions for different parts of the river.

BACKGROUND: Beginning in 2019, because of low returns of Kenai River late-run king salmon, the department issued emergency orders to delay the use of bait in the Kenai River coho salmon fishery. The midpoint of the Kenai River king salmon late-run is typically around July 27 meaning nearly half of the late run return to the river in August. In years when achieving the escapement goal was in question it was prudent to remove bait from the river as king salmon returned. King salmon are more likely to hit a baited lure than an unbaited lure and when they do the release mortality is greater for fish taken with bait.

From 2019–2022 action was taken to remove bait from the coho salmon fishery until August 15. In 2023, consistent with the restrictions and closures taken throughout Cook Inlet to maximize returns of Kenai River late-run king salmon to the river, bait was pulled from the coho salmon fishery through August. The single-hook, artificial lure restriction for the coho salmon fishery was in effect from the mouth of the Kenai River to Skilak Lake. A department study published in 2017 (*Eskelin, A., and A. M. Reimer. 2017. Migratory timing and distribution of Kenai River Chinook salmon using radio telemetry, 2014–2015. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 17-03, Anchorage*.) identified late-run king salmon utilize the length of the Kenai River for spawning and/or traveling to spawning areas (Figure 173-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The proposed measures may not be restrictive enough in some years and don't allow managers to take action based on run strength in season. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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.

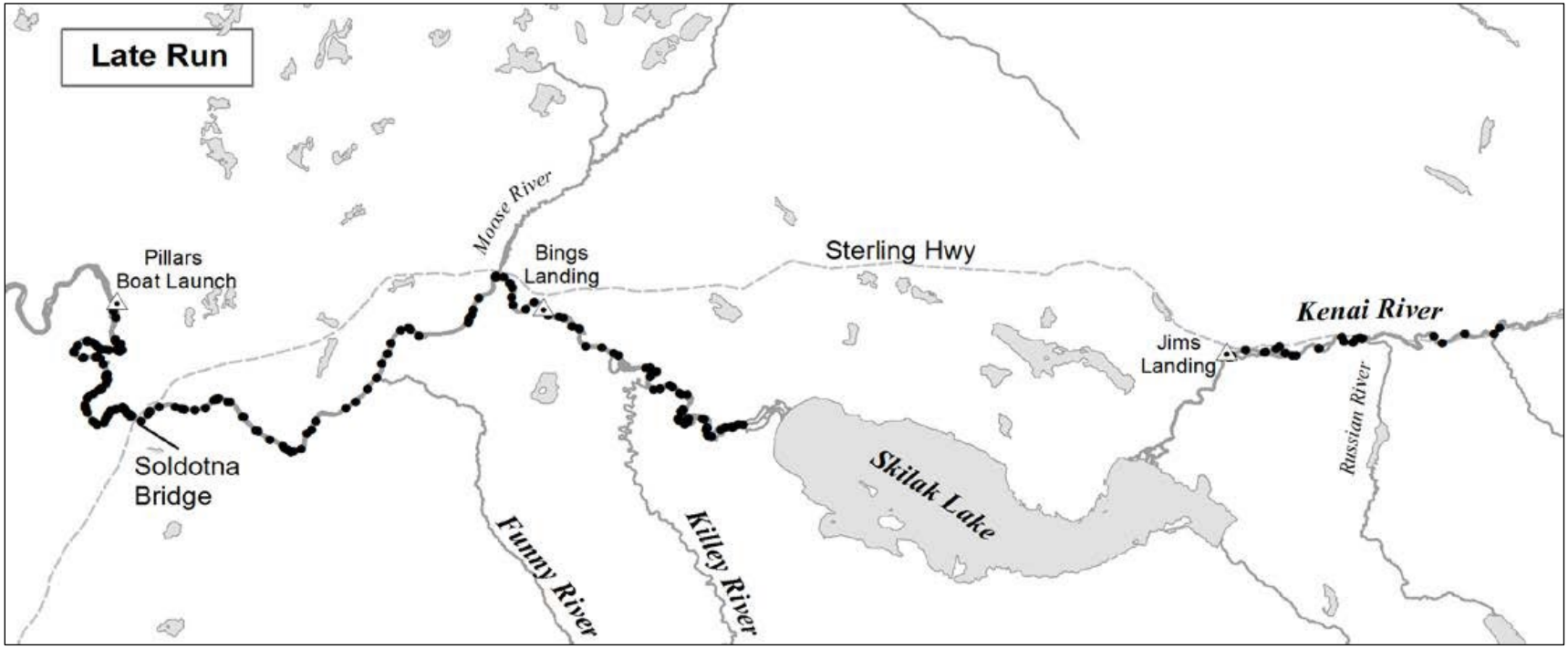

Figure 173.1–Spawning destinations determined by run for radiotagged Kenai River mainstem spawning king salmon captured at RM 8.6, 2012–2014.

PROPOSAL 174 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Regulate the use of bait in the Kenai River in August.

PROPOSED BY: Mel Erickson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would set in regulation how the use of bait is allowed in the coho salmon fishery in August.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no criteria in the plan to restrict the use of bait in the Kenai River coho salmon fishery based on king salmon run strength. Provisions of the plan direct the commissioner to take restrictive action for coho salmon management but not specifically for conservation of king salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would codify the potential actions that could be taken to manage the coho salmon fishery in August. Codified regulations provide a level of predictability for anglers and businesses who participate in the coho salmon fishery.

The proposed actions are prescriptive and don't allow managers to assess conditions in season and potentially take stronger measures.

BACKGROUND: Beginning in 2019, because of low returns of Kenai River late-run king salmon, the department issued emergency orders to delay the use of bait in the Kenai River coho salmon fishery. The midpoint of the Kenai River king salmon late-run is typically around July 27 meaning nearly half of the late run return to the river in August. In years when achieving the escapement goal was in question it was prudent to remove bait from the river as king salmon returned. King salmon are more likely to hit a baited lure than an unbaited lure and when they do the release mortality is greater for fish taken with bait.

From 2019–2022 action was taken to remove bait from the coho salmon fishery until August 15. In 2023, consistent with the restrictions and closures taken throughout Cook Inlet to maximize returns of Kenai River late-run king salmon to the river, bait was pulled from the coho salmon fishery through August. The single-hook, artificial lure restriction for the coho salmon fishery was in effect from the mouth of the Kenai River to Skilak Lake. A department study published in 2017 (*Eskelin, A., and A. M. Reimer. 2017. Migratory timing and distribution of Kenai River Chinook salmon using radio telemetry, 2014–2015. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 17-03, Anchorage*.) identified late-run king salmon utilize the length of the Kenai River for spawning and/or traveling to spawning areas (Figure 173-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The proposed measures may not be restrictive enough in some years and do not allow managers to take action based on run strength in season. It would also compromise the Department's ability to protect king salmon entering and spawning in the lower river when management targets are not projected

to be attained. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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 175 – 5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan. Reduce the coho salmon limits in the Kenai River to two fish after August 30.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Loomis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the bag limit for coho salmon to two fish after August 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon may be taken in the Middle and Upper sections of the Kenai River from July 1 through October 31 and in the Lower Section from July 1 through November 30. From July 1 through August 31 the bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish. The limit increases to three fish from September 1 through November 30.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would simplify regulations and maintain a bag and possession limit of two coho salmon for the duration of the coho salmon season. It would not allow the more liberal bag limit in September and October when effort is reduced. It may add an unknown number of coho salmon to the spawning escapement that otherwise would have been harvested.

BACKGROUND: The *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 57.170) was first adopted in 1996 in response to a decline in coho salmon smolt abundance and increased harvest of returning adults in the Kenai River. A special board meeting was convened in 1997 and restrictions affecting all users were put into regulation to conserve Kenai River coho salmon. Additional restrictive regulations were added to the plan from 1997–1999. In 2000, a special board meeting was convened, through a petition submitted by the governor, based on low abundance of coho salmon throughout Cook Inlet. As an outcome of this meeting, the bag and possession limit was reduced from 3 to 2 fish Cook Inlet-wide (excepting West Cook Inlet and terminal fisheries targeting hatchery fish). Since then, changes to coho salmon fishing regulations resulted in a net gain in commercial fishing time and area, a seasonal increase in the bag limit, and liberalized fishing methods.

The previous Kenai River coho salmon management plan allowed a 3-fish bag limit and more liberal commercial fishing in August. With a 2-fish bag limit and more restrictive commercial fishing, the harvest rate ranged from 35%–47% from 2000–2004. Regulations created since 2004 to the coho salmon bag limit and the 1% rule increased harvest rates of Kenai River coho salmon relative to the rates observed from 1999–2004. Research findings from studies conducted in Southeast Alaska with transboundary coho salmon stocks have indicated that a harvest rate of about 61% is sustainable. Since 2003 (2 coho salmon per day), harvests have averaged 47,727 fish (Table 175-1).

The department does not manage the Kenai River coho salmon sport fishery inseason based upon abundance because coho salmon escapement is not monitored and no escapement goal has been established for the Kenai River. When management actions were required, they were based upon fishing reports and guide logbook information that signified a conservation concern relative to angler success in prior years. There are no coho salmon escapement goals for the other streams in

the Northern Kenai Peninsula Management Area where the bag and possession limit for coho salmon was reduced from 3 to 2 fish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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 175-1.—Estimated Kenai River coho salmon harvest by river section and timing, 2003–2022.

	Cook Inlet to Soldotna Bridge			Soldotna Bridge to Moose River			Moose River to Skilak Lake			Skilak Lake to Kenai Lake			Kenai River reach not specified [a]			All sections [b]		
0	Prior to 1 Sep	After 1 Sep	Total	Prior to 1 Sep	After 1 Sep	Total	Prior to 1 Sep	After 1 Sep	Total	Prior to 1 Sep	After 1 Sep	Total	Prior to 1 Sep	After 1 Sep	Total	Prior to 1 Sep	After 1 Sep	Total
2003	20,093	5,963	26,056	8,961	2,029	10,990	3,160	1,517	4,677	2,690	490	3,180	1,367	352	1,754	36,271	10,351	46,657
2004	29,606	12,010	41,616	9,145	4,055	13,200	3,492	2,234	5,726	2,733	868	3,601	1,135	637	1,809	46,111	19,804	65,952
2005	17,331	7,810	25,141	10,793	3,563	14,356	1,697	2,739	4,436	2,310	2,103	4,413	1,671	339	2,065	33,802	16,554	50,411
2006	13,817	7,132	20,949	4,800	2,331	7,131	1,890	2,939	4,829	2,638	890	3,528	797	405	1,202	23,942	13,697	37,639
2007	12,891	7,443	20,334	6,322	1,133	7,455	3,230	2,361	5,591	2,390	1,400	3,790	621	226	847	25,454	12,563	38,017
2008	20,602	10,562	31,164	6,122	3,161	9,283	2,262	3,012	5,274	3,110	1,426	4,536	796	571	1,367	32,892	18,732	51,624
2009	19,022	9,044	28,066	5,509	2,907	8,416	4,016	3,879	7,895	2,391	1,966	4,357	1,146	80	1,226	32,084	17,876	49,960
2010	20,001	8,134	28,135	7,140	3,889	11,029	5,671	3,213	8,884	2,115	618	2,733	2,005	126	2,131	36,932	15,980	52,912
2011	16,784	10,562	27,346	6,509	2,430	8,939	2,185	3,346	5,531	1,038	1,175	2,213	61	42	103	26,577	17,555	44,132
2012	14,842	8,123	22,965	4,819	2,668	7,487	2,202	1,862	4,064	768	494	1,262	375	254	629	23,006	13,401	36,407
2013	17,414	6,417	23,831	12,090	2,860	14,950	3,669	3,232	6,901	1,649	1,329	2,978	212	82	294	35,034	13,920	48,954
2014	18,930	11,829	30,759	9,224	3,654	12,878	3,940	5,644	9,584	4,928	2,288	7,216	89	40	129	37,111	23,455	60,566
2015	20,317	13,685	34,002	7,673	4,467	12,140	2,881	5,210	8,091	2,356	404	2,760	45	29	74	33,272	23,795	57,067
2016	15,759	9,019	24,778	6,593	2,867	9,460	2,597	1,275	3,872	883	730	1,613	131	77	208	25,963	13,968	39,931
2017	17,810	11,815	29,625	6,859	3,662	10,521	2,926	3,225	6,151	826	1,159	1,985	83	62	145	28,504	19,923	48,427
2018	20,168	9,531	29,699	7,735	3,297	11,032	3,585	3,540	7,125	1,499	1,108	2,607	29	17	112	33,016	17,493	50,575
2019	13,517	7,038	20,555	9,262	2,258	11,520	1,975	3,940	5,915	2,028	866	2,894	93	60	287	26,875	14,162	41,171
2020	10,223	5,861	16,084	4,251	2,251	6,502	1,668	1,639	3,307	1,186	300	1,486	28	17	67	17,356	10,068	27,446
2021	21,930	10,844	32,774	11,496	3,472	14,986	3,320	2,751	6,071	1,950	3,190	5,140	0	0	0	38,696	20,257	58,971
2022	22,161	12,725	34,886	9,571	3,418	12,989	2,905	2,800	5,705	2,899	676	3,575	31	16	47	37,567	19,635	57,202
Average 2003–2021	17,950	9,096	27,046	7,648	2,998	10,646	2,967	3,029	5,996	2,078	1,200	3,279	562	180	760	31,205	16,503	47,727
2012–2021	17,091	9,416	26,507	8,000	3,146	11,148	2,876	3,232	6,108	1,807	1,187	2,994	109	64	195	29,883	17,044	46,952

Source: Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 1999–present. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited October 2023). Available from: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/.

Note: ND means no data collected

[a] SWHS began reporting consistently in 2002. Total includes harvest with no early/late run breakdown.

[b] Total does not sum due to early- or late-run not specified.

PROPOSAL 176 – 5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho 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.
Reduce the coho salmon limit on Kenai River after September 1.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Soldotna Fish and Game Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the bag limit for coho salmon to two fish after September 1.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon may be taken in the Middle and Upper sections of the Kenai River from July 1 through October 31 and in the Lower Section from July 1 through November 30. From July 1 through August 31 the bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish. The limit increases to three fish from September 1 through November 30.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would simplify regulations and maintain a bag and possession limit of two coho salmon for the duration of the coho salmon season. It would not allow the more liberal bag limit in September and October when effort is reduced. It may add an unknown number of coho salmon to the spawning escapement that otherwise would have been harvested.

BACKGROUND: The *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 57.170) was first adopted in 1996 in response to a decline in coho salmon smolt abundance and increased harvest of returning adults in the Kenai River. In 2000, a special board meeting was convened, through a petition submitted by the governor, based on low abundance of coho salmon throughout Cook Inlet. As an outcome of this meeting, the bag and possession limit was reduced from 3 to 2 fish Cook Inlet-wide (excepting West Cook Inlet and terminal fisheries targeting hatchery fish). Since then, changes to coho salmon fishing regulations resulted in a net gain in commercial fishing time and area, a seasonal increase in the bag limit, and liberalized fishing methods.

The previous Kenai River coho salmon management plan allowed a 3-fish bag limit and more liberal commercial fishing in August. With a 2-fish bag limit and more restrictive commercial fishing, the harvest rate ranged from 35%–47% from 2000–2004. Regulations created since 2004 to the coho salmon bag limit and the 1% rule increased harvest rates of Kenai River coho salmon relative to the rates observed from 1999–2004. Research findings from studies conducted in Southeast Alaska with transboundary coho salmon stocks have indicated that a harvest rate of about 61% is sustainable. Since 2003 (2 coho salmon per day), harvests have averaged 47,727 fish (Table 175-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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 177 – 5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho 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 Kenai River coho salmon season and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Dwight Kramer.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the bag limit for coho salmon to two fish from July 1 through November 30

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon may be taken in the Middle and Upper sections of the Kenai River from July 1 through October 31 and in the Lower Section from July 1 through November 30. From July 1 through August 31 the bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish. The limit increases to three fish from September 1 through November 30.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would simplify regulations and maintain a bag and possession limit of two coho salmon for the duration of the coho salmon season. It would not allow the more liberal bag limit in September and October when effort is reduced. It may add an unknown number of coho salmon to the spawning escapement that otherwise would have been harvested.

BACKGROUND: The *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 57.170) was first adopted in 1996 in response to a decline in coho salmon smolt abundance and increased harvest of returning adults in the Kenai River. In 2000, a special board meeting was convened, through a petition submitted by the governor, based on low abundance of coho salmon throughout Cook Inlet. As an outcome of this meeting, the bag and possession limit was reduced from 3 to 2 fish Cook Inlet-wide (excepting West Cook Inlet and terminal fisheries targeting hatchery fish). Since then, changes to coho salmon fishing regulations resulted in a net gain in commercial fishing time and area, a seasonal increase in the bag limit, and liberalized fishing methods.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs.

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 178 – 5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan. Reduce the season for the Kenai River coho salmon sport fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Eric Nyce.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the sport fishing season for coho salmon on the Kenai River by a month and require the prohibition of bait if emergency order authority is used for conservation of coho salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon may be taken in the Middle and Upper sections of the Kenai River from July 1 through October 31 and in the Lower Section from July 1 through November 30. From July 1 through August 31 the bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish. The limit increases to three fish from September 1 through November 30. Bait is allowed by regulation August 1.

The *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan* list four options the commissioner may take, individually or in combination, to restrict the coho salmon fishery inseason when necessary.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would shorten the coho salmon season on the Kenai River by a month which would open it August 1. That would reduce harvest of coho salmon and possibly increase harvest of sockeye salmon and other species available in July. Prohibiting the use of bait in the fishery would reduce catch rates disproportionately affecting inexperienced anglers and reducing release mortality by some amount.

BACKGROUND: The *Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 57.170) was first adopted in 1996 in response to a decline in coho salmon smolt abundance and increased harvest of returning adults in the Kenai River. In 2000, a special board meeting was convened, through a petition submitted by the governor, based on low abundance of coho salmon throughout Cook Inlet. As an outcome of this meeting, the bag and possession limit was reduced from 3 to 2 fish Cook Inlet-wide (excepting West Cook Inlet and terminal fisheries targeting hatchery fish). Since then, changes to coho salmon fishing regulations resulted in a net gain in commercial fishing time and area, a seasonal increase in the bag limit, and liberalized fishing methods.

The previous Kenai River coho salmon management plan allowed a 3-fish bag limit and more liberal commercial fishing in August. With a 2-fish bag limit and more restrictive commercial fishing, the harvest rate ranged from 35%–47% from 2000–2004. Regulations created since 2004 to the coho salmon bag limit and the 1% rule increased harvest rates of Kenai River coho salmon relative to the rates observed from 1999–2004. Research findings from studies conducted in Southeast Alaska with transboundary coho salmon stocks have indicated that a harvest rate of about 61% is sustainable. Since 2003 (2 coho salmon per day), harvests have averaged 47,727 fish (Table 175-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department does not assess Kenai River coho salmon runs and largely relies on conservative regulations to provide fishing opportunity and sustainable runs. The options to restrict the coho salmon fishery already list removing bait as an option.

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 179 – 5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Close additional waters to sport fishing in the upper Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: John Pearson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close additional waters to sport fishing on the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From May 1–June 10 all flowing waters of the Upper Section of the Kenai River are closed to sport fishing. Additionally, from September 15–October 31 the Quartz Creek drainage upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge including Devils Creek, Johns Creek, Jerome Creek, Summit Creek, Slate Creek, and the South Fork of the Snow River are closed (Figure 179-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the rainbow trout spawning closure from May 1–June 10 to January 1–June 10. Some of the waters for the extended closure specified in the proposal are in the Middle Section of the Kenai River and may include the Russian River. These waters in the Middle Section of the Kenai River (between Skilak Lake and Kenai Lake, figure 179-2 and Figure 179-3) also have the rainbow trout spawning closure from May 1–June 10.

Regardless of the waters, the extended closure of all sport fishing would reduce opportunity for anglers to enjoy the resource on stocks that can sustain the effort with an unknown impact on illegal coho salmon fishing.

BACKGROUND: Closures are in place for species that need additional protection (rainbow trout spawning closures) and the season for coho salmon closes October 31 in the Upper and Middle Sections. Fishing for coho salmon from November 1 through June 30 is already prohibited in these sections.

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.

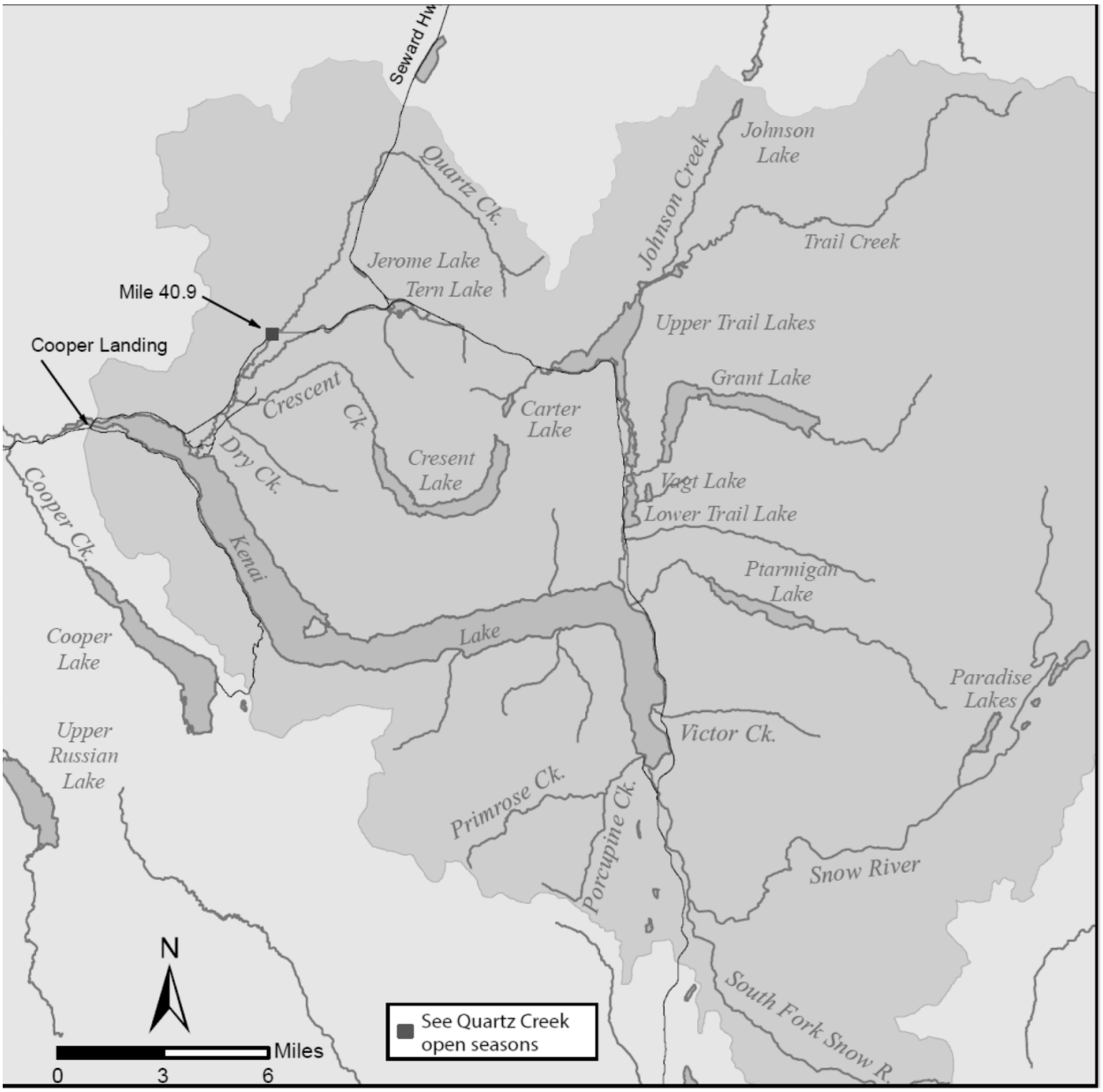

Figure 179-1.–Map of the Upper Section of the Kenai River.

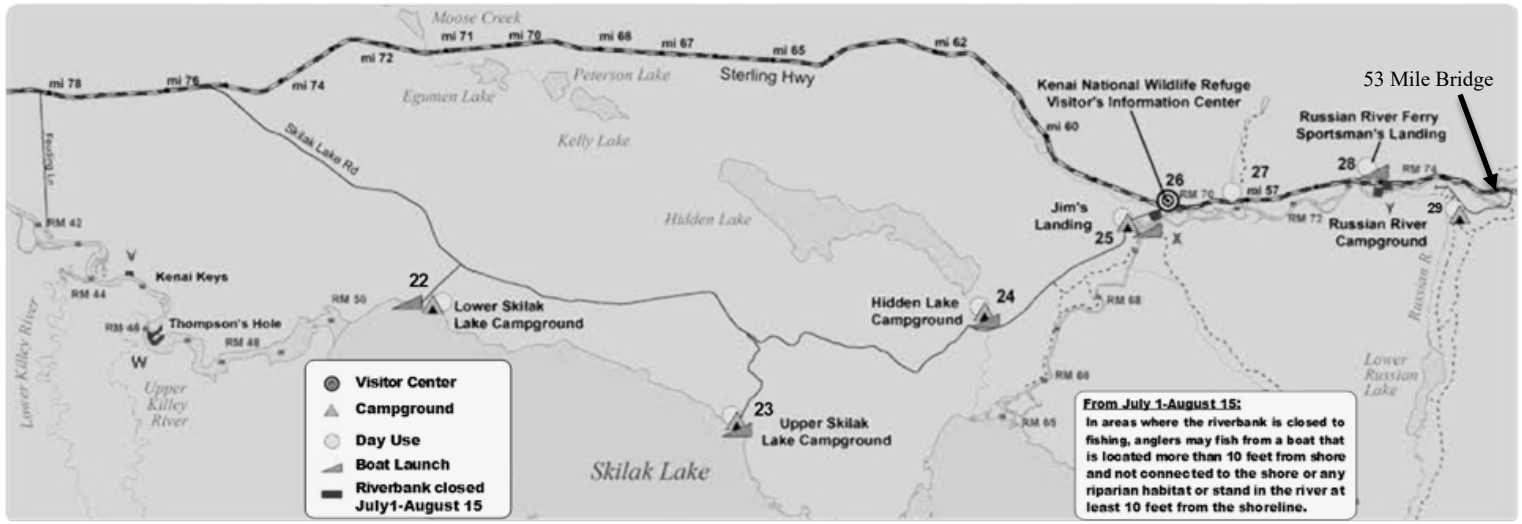

Figure 179-2.–Map of the Middle Section of the Kenai River with Sterling Highway as reference.

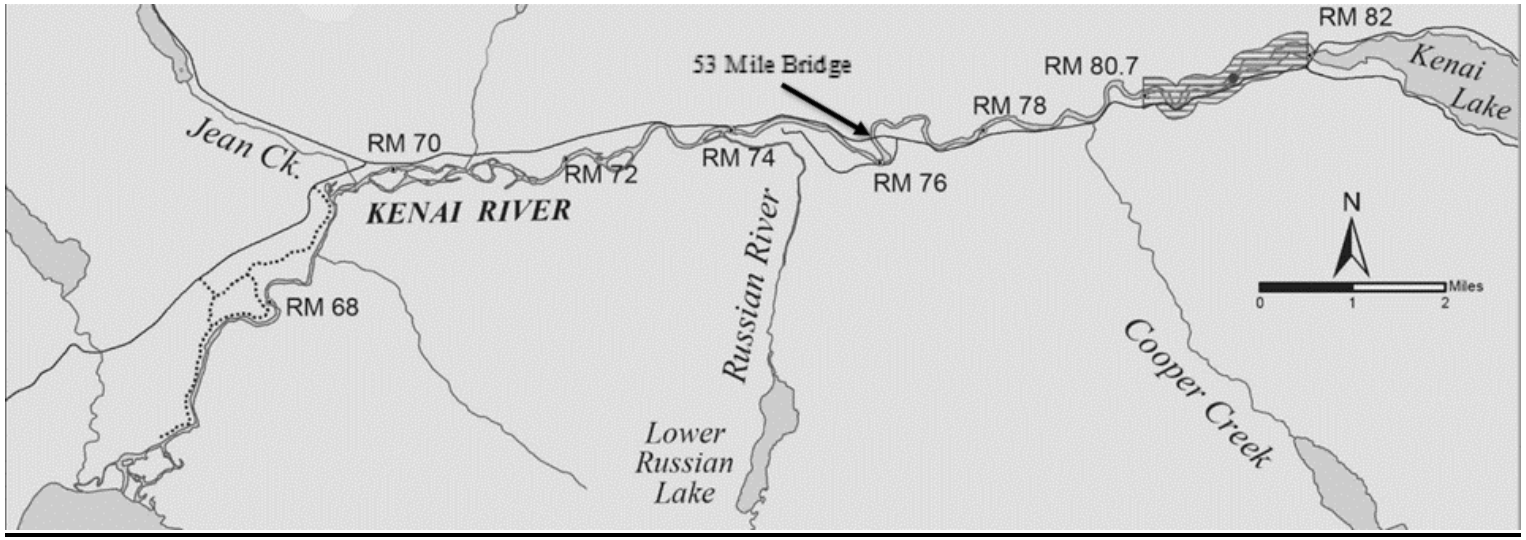

Figure 179-3.–Map of portion of the Middle Section of the Kenai River

PROPOSAL 180 – 5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Close waters of the Kenai River to sportfishing from January 1 to April 1.

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close additional waters to sport fishing on the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From May 1–June 10 all flowing waters of the Upper Section of the Kenai River are closed to sport fishing. Additionally, from September 15–October 31 the Quartz Creek drainage upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge including Devils Creek, Johns Creek, Jerome Creek, Summit Creek, Slate Creek, and the South Fork of the Snow River are closed (Figure 179-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the sport fishing closure from May 1–June 10 to January 1–April 1 in a portion of the Middle Section of the Kenai River from the outlet of Kenai Lake to a bridge located at approximately mile 53 of the Sterling Highway (Figure 179-3). The closure in these waters of the Middle Section of the Kenai River (between Skilak Lake and Kenai Lake, figure 179-2) was implemented to protect spawning rainbow trout from May 1–June 10.

Regardless of the waters, the extended closure of all sport fishing would reduce opportunity for anglers to enjoy the resource on stocks that can sustain the effort with an unknown impact on illegal coho salmon fishing.

BACKGROUND: Closures are in place for species that need additional protection (rainbow trout spawning closures) and the season for coho salmon closes October 31 in the Upper and Middle Sections. Fishing for coho salmon from November 1 through June 30 is already prohibited in these sections.

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 181 – 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Close waters of the Kenai River to sportfishing from January 1 to June 10.

PROPOSED BY: Josh Hayes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close additional waters to sport fishing on the Lower Section of the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Waters of the Kenai River in the Lower Section are closed to sport fishing May 1–June 10 from the mouth of the Lower Killey upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake (Figure 181-1 and Figure 181-2).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the closure to sport fishing from May 1–June 10 to January 1–June 10 in a portion of the Lower Section of the Kenai River from the Lower Killey River upstream to Skilak Lake (Figure 181-2).

The extended closure of all sport fishing would reduce opportunity for anglers to enjoy the resource on stocks that can sustain the effort with an unknown impact on illegal coho salmon fishing.

BACKGROUND: Closures are in place for species that need additional protection (rainbow trout spawning closures) and the season for coho salmon closes November 30 in the Lower Section. Fishing for coho salmon from December 1 through June 30 is already prohibited in the Lower Section.

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.

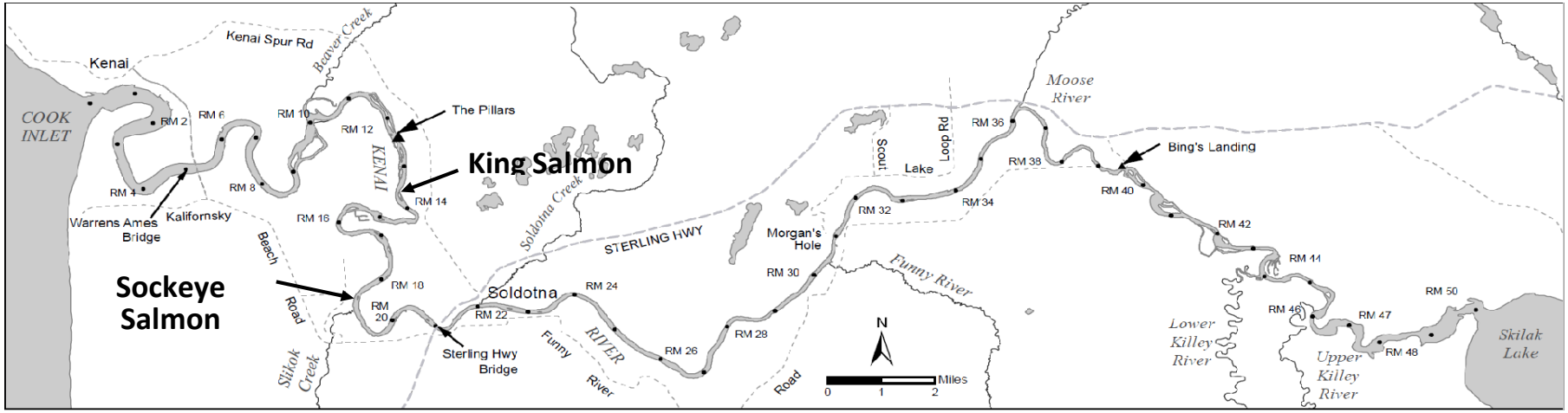

Figure 181-1.–Map of the lower Kenai River.

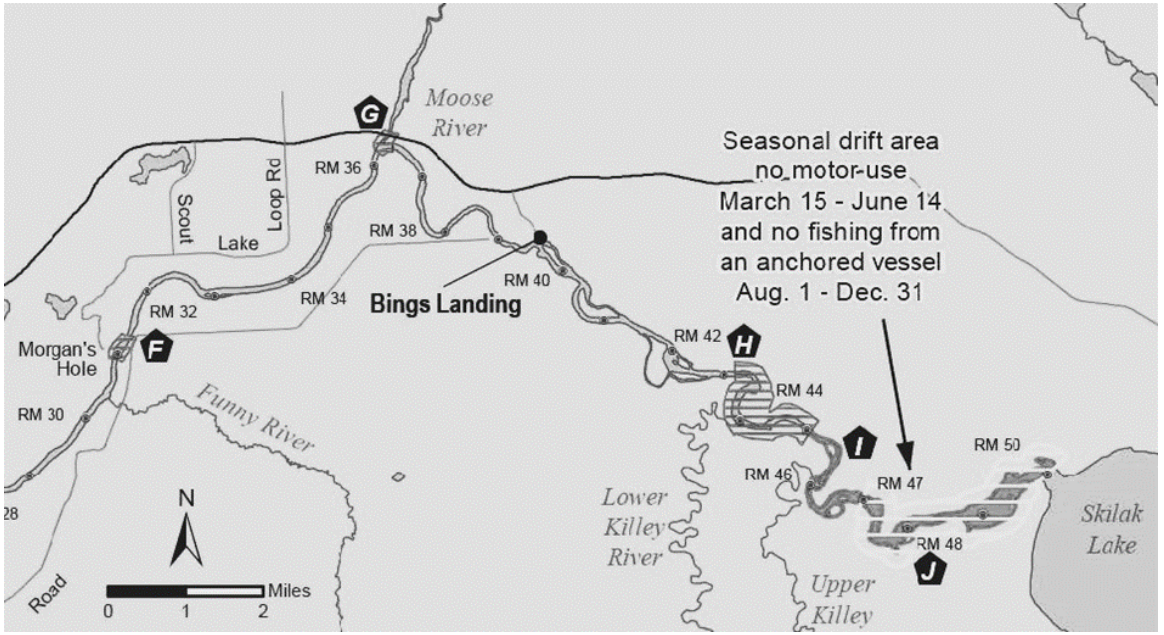

Figure 181-2.–Map of a portion of the Lower Section of the Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 182 – 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage. Prohibit nonresident sport fishing on the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit nonresidents from sport fishing on the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Anglers with a valid Alaska Sport Fishing License may participate in Kenai River sport fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The Kenai River is a popular draw for Alaska residents and nonresident anglers visiting Alaska. This would reduce effort and crowding on the Kenai River but would also be harmful to the local economy and businesses as nonresident anglers would not be able to participate in the Kenai River sport fishery and utilize the local services. It may increase nonresident fishing effort on other water bodies on the Kenai Peninsula as nonresident anglers look for other fisheries to participate in. It would add regulatory complexity and inconsistency with other area sport fisheries and increase sockeye salmon escapement in the Kenai River.

BACKGROUND: Kenai River supports several 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.

An economic study published by Southwick Associates found nonresidents spent roughly $358 million in the Cook Inlet region in 2017. Although that was roughly the same amount as Alaska residents spent that year ($358.5 million) the nonresident's made a larger economic contribution (more jobs and income) because of the kinds of expenditures made by each group. Resident anglers spent more of their money on equipment while nonresident anglers spent most of their money on trip-related purchases such as guides, lodging and meals provided by local businesses.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal but **OPPOSES** prohibiting nonresidents from participating in Kenia River fisheries that that have harvestable surpluses and that can support 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 cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 183 – 5 AAC 57.150. Russian River Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.
Allow the department to react to large Russian River sockeye salmon runs.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the department to increase the limit for sockeye salmon on the Russian River if the escapement goal is projected to be achieved.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commissioner may increase sport fish bag and possession limits and annual limits and liberalize methods and means by emergency order when the escapement of an anadromous fish species is projected to exceed the escapement goal and the total harvest under the increased limits will not reduce the escapement below the goal.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow the department to liberalize limits for sockeye salmon on the Russian River earlier in the run resulting in more fishing opportunity for anglers to harvest larger limits. Increasing the bag limit earlier may reduce crowding as anglers would have more days with the higher bag limit to fish.

BACKGROUND: The Russian River is a popular sockeye salmon fishery in the Kenai River drainage. The department's Russian River sockeye salmon assessment weir is located at the outlet of Lower Russian Lake, upriver of the fishery for those stocks. The truncated run timing of the early run and frequent strong performance of the late run has limited the department's ability to increase harvest potential since the escapement goal must be projected to be exceeded prior to liberalizing the sockeye salmon bag limit.

The early-run Russian River sockeye salmon goal (BEG 22,000–42,000) and the late-run goal (SEG 44,000–85,000) have been exceeded three of the last four years (Tables 183-1 and 183-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Liberalizing the inriver fisheries sooner on a stock with a harvestable surplus will provide additional opportunity for anglers to harvest surplus 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.

Table 183-1.–Daily escapement of early-run sockeye salmon at the Russian River weir from 2020 to 2023.

	2020			2021			2022			2023		
Date	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day
5 Jun	0	0	0.000	0	0	0.000	0	0	0.000	0	0	0.000
6 Jun	0	0	0.000	2	2	0.000	0	0	0.000	0	0	0.000
7 Jun	0	0	0.000	3	5	0.000	0	0	0.000	0	0	0.000
8 Jun	0	0	0.000	6	11	0.000	0	0	0.000	18	18	0.000
9 Jun	55	55	0.002	0	11	0.000	0	0	0.000	194	212	0.003
10 Jun	124	179	0.007	0	11	0.000	0	0	0.000	333	545	0.008
11 Jun	300	479	0.018	0	11	0.000	0	0	0.000	732	1,277	0.019
12 Jun	375	854	0.032	80	91	0.002	9	9	0.000	889	2,166	0.032
13 Jun	423	1,277	0.047	98	189	0.004	57	66	0.001	1,530	3,696	0.055
14 Jun	414	1,691	0.062	658	847	0.018	389	455	0.007	2,257	5,953	0.089
15 Jun	218	1,909	0.070	891	1,738	0.037	619	1,074	0.018	2,162	8,115	0.121
16 Jun	470	2,379	0.088	1,130	2,868	0.061	740	1,814	0.030	2,265	10,380	0.155
17 Jun	472	2,851	0.105	1,200	4,068	0.087	2,263	4,077	0.067	2,566	12,946	0.194
18 Jun	763	3,614	0.133	1,359	5,427	0.116	2,477	6,554	0.107	2,901	15,847	0.237
19 Jun	1,116	4,730	0.175	1,910	7,337	0.156	2,603	9,157	0.150	3,731	19,578	0.293
20 Jun	1,358	6,088	0.225	1,817	9,154	0.195	1,915	11,072	0.181	5,977	25,555	0.382
21 Jun	1,871	7,959	0.294	1,893	11,047	0.235	2,008	13,080	0.214	4,875	30,430	0.455
22 Jun	817	8,776	0.324	2,492	13,539	0.288	4,254	17,334	0.284	1,490	31,920	0.478
23 Jun	1,358	10,134	0.374	2,055	15,594	0.332	4,599	21,933	0.359	3,037	34,957	0.523
24 Jun	802	10,936	0.403	2,119	17,713	0.377	5,497	27,430	0.449	2,560	37,517	0.561
25 Jun	607	11,543	0.426	2,106	19,819	0.422	4,598	32,028	0.524 [a]	2,236	39,753	0.595
26 Jun	710	12,253	0.452	2,305	22,124	0.471	4,853	36,881	0.604	1,697	41,450	0.620
27 Jun	702	12,955	0.478	2,085	24,209	0.515 [a]	3,475	40,356	0.661	1,750	43,200	0.647
28 Jun	348	13,303	0.491	1,807	26,016	0.554	3,241	43,597	0.714	2,396	45,596	0.682
29 Jun	352	13,655	0.504 [a]	2,322	28,338	0.603	2,659	46,256	0.757	1,993	47,589	0.712
30 Jun	682	14,337	0.529	2,453	30,791	0.655	778	47,034	0.770	2,122	49,711	0.744
1 Jul	569	14,906	0.550	1,938	32,729	0.697	1,052	48,086	0.787	1,923	51,634	0.773
2 Jul	545	15,451	0.570	1,482	34,211	0.728	1,730	49,816	0.815	2,198	53,832	0.806
3 Jul	508	15,959	0.589	1,015	35,226	0.750	1,443	51,259	0.839	1,683	55,515	0.831
4 Jul	827	16,786	0.619	821	36,047	0.767	986	52,245	0.855	879	56,394	0.844
5 Jul	1,796	18,582	0.686	782	36,829	0.784	1,121	53,366	0.873	1,018	57,412	0.859
6 Jul	1,930	20,512	0.757	1,186	38,015	0.809	1,271	54,637	0.894	708	58,120	0.870
7 Jul	1,575	22,087	0.815	1,503	39,518	0.841	716	55,353	0.906	1,821	59,941	0.897
8 Jul	1,690	23,777	0.877	1,017	40,535	0.863	518	55,871	0.914	1,762	61,703	0.923
9 Jul	671	24,448	0.902	1,376	41,911	0.892	765	56,636	0.927	1,434	63,137	0.945
10 Jul	574	25,022	0.923	1,143	43,054	0.917	685	57,321	0.938	1,230	64,367	0.963
11 Jul	704	25,726	0.949	717	43,771	0.932	855	58,176	0.952	867	65,234	0.976
12 Jul	431	26,157	0.965	622	44,393	0.945	816	58,992	0.966	505	65,739	0.984
13 Jul	333	26,490	0.977	1,160	45,553	0.970	1,023	60,015	0.982	511	66,250	0.991
14 Jul	613	27,103	1.000	1,423	46,976	1.000	1,083	61,098	1.000	568	66,818	1.000

Source: L. Hynes, Fish and Wildlife Technician III, ADF&G, Soldotna, unpublished data, 2020-2023

[a] Mid-point of run.

Table 183-2.–Daily escapement of late-run sockeye salmon at the Russian River weir from 2020 to 2023.

	2020			2021			2022			2023		
Date	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day	Daily count	Total count	Cumulative proportion by day
15 Jul	610	610	0.008	969	969	0.008	1,550	1550	0.012	414	414	0.003
16 Jul	794	1,404	0.018	788	1,757	0.014	898	2,448	0.020	519	933	0.006
17 Jul	801	2,205	0.028	826	2,583	0.021	906	3,354	0.027	685	1,618	0.010
18 Jul	632	2,837	0.036	1,020	3,603	0.029	1,019	4,373	0.035	889	2,507	0.016
19 Jul	1,115	3,952	0.050	1,122	4,725	0.038	1,747	6,120	0.049	501	3,008	0.019
20 Jul	1,323	5,275	0.067	1,241	5,966	0.048	662	6,782	0.054	579	3,587	0.023
21 Jul	1,210	6,485	0.083	959	6,925	0.056	688	7,470	0.060	784	4,371	0.028
22 Jul	1,349	7,834	0.100	691	7,616	0.061	652	8,122	0.065	1,208	5,579	0.035
23 Jul	896	8,730	0.111	1,213	8,829	0.071	1,028	9,150	0.073	988	6,567	0.041
24 Jul	1,744	10,474	0.133	510	9,339	0.075	835	9,985	0.080	895	7,462	0.047
25 Jul	621	11,095	0.141	778	10,117	0.082	893	10,878	0.087	902	8,364	0.053
26 Jul	768	11,863	0.151	958	11,075	0.089	1,974	12,852	0.103	1,422	9,786	0.062
27 Jul	1,112	12,975	0.165	1,208	12,283	0.099	3,945	16,797	0.135	1,426	11,212	0.071
28 Jul	2,326	15,301	0.195	2,481	14,764	0.119	4,071	20,868	0.168	1,102	12,314	0.078
29 Jul	2,730	18,031	0.230	1,596	16,360	0.132	8,199	29,067	0.233	881	13,195	0.083
30 Jul	1,360	19,391	0.247	1,002	17,362	0.140	7,968	37,035	0.297	1,029	14,224	0.090
31 Jul	1,866	21,257	0.271	1,503	18,865	0.152	5,744	42,779	0.344	1,416	15,640	0.099
1 Aug	1,155	22,412	0.286	1,703	20,568	0.166	4,865	47,644	0.383	990	16,630	0.105
2 Aug	984	23,396	0.298	3,160	23,728	0.191	3,404	51,048	0.410	1,627	18,257	0.115
3 Aug	1,915	25,311	0.322	4,899	28,627	0.231	2,853	53,901	0.433	3,302	21,559	0.136
4 Aug	1,541	26,852	0.342	4,026	32,653	0.263	1,977	55,878	0.449	10,342	31,901	0.201
5 Aug	2,934	29,786	0.379	3,876	36,529	0.295	2,405	58,283	0.468	10,621	42,522	0.268
6 Aug	2,179	31,965	0.407	5,268	41,797	0.337	2,335	60,618	0.487	10,245	52,767	0.333
7 Aug	1,658	33,623	0.428	5,263	47,060	0.380	2,084	62,702	0.503[a]	8,259	61,026	0.385
8 Aug	2,160	35,783	0.456	4,921	51,981	0.419	2,832	65,534	0.526	7,566	68,592	0.433
9 Aug	3,157	38,940	0.496[a]	5,084	57,065	0.460	1,836	67,370	0.541	3,724	72,316	0.456
10 Aug	2,780	41,720	0.531	4,824	61,889	0.499[a]	2,510	69,880	0.561	3,459	75,775	0.478
11 Aug	2,240	43,960	0.560	4,522	66,411	0.536	2,324	72,204	0.580	4,110	79,885	0.504[a]
12 Aug	1,565	45,525	0.580	4,010	70,421	0.568	3,965	76,169	0.612	3,487	83,372	0.526
13 Aug	1,319	46,844	0.597	4,618	75,039	0.605	3,229	79,398	0.638	3,312	86,684	0.547
14 Aug	1,222	48,066	0.612	4,019	79,058	0.638	4,026	83,424	0.670	3,102	89,786	0.566
15 Aug	1,250	49,316	0.628	3,481	82,539	0.666	3,897	87,321	0.701	3,223	93,009	0.587
16 Aug	2,148	51,464	0.656	3,584	86,123	0.695	2,392	89,713	0.720	3,602	96,611	0.610
17 Aug	1,855	53,319	0.679	4,032	90,155	0.727	2,867	92,580	0.743	3,401	100,012	0.631
18 Aug	2,158	55,477	0.707	2,935	93,090	0.751	2,528	95,108	0.764	4,397	104,409	0.659
19 Aug	1,897	57,374	0.731	2,830	95,920	0.774	1,924	97,032	0.779	3,927	108,336	0.684
20 Aug	2,111	59,485	0.758	3,627	99,547	0.803	2,116	99,148	0.796	3,250	111,586	0.704
21 Aug	2,263	61,748	0.787	2,422	101,969	0.823	2,056	101,204	0.813	3,372	114,958	0.725
22 Aug	1,818	63,566	0.810	1,552	103,521	0.835	1,752	102,956	0.827	4,623	119,581	0.754
23 Aug	1,992	65,558	0.835	2,166	105,687	0.853	2,036	104,992	0.843	4,366	123,947	0.782
24 Aug	1,232	66,790	0.851	2,481	108,168	0.873	1,299	106,291	0.853	4,125	128,072	0.808
25 Aug	1,262	68,052	0.867	2,132	110,300	0.890	1,543	107,834	0.866	3,383	131,455	0.829
26 Aug	1,438	69,490	0.885	1,621	111,921	0.903	1,639	109,473	0.879	2,923	134,378	0.848
27 Aug	1,073	70,563	0.899	1,656	113,577	0.916	1,534	111,007	0.891	2,977	137,355	0.867
28 Aug	1,037	71,600	0.912	1,375	114,952	0.927	1,665	112,672	0.905	2,539	139,894	0.883
29 Aug	1,088	72,688	0.926	1,265	116,217	0.938	1,914	114,586	0.920	3,047	142,941	0.902
30 Aug	962	73,650	0.938	1,188	117,405	0.947	1,569	116,155	0.933	2,934	145,875	0.920
31 Aug	990	74,640	0.951	1,619	119,024	0.960	1,292	117,447	0.943	1,788	147,663	0.932
1 Sep	931	75,571	0.963	1,323	120,347	0.971	1,265	118,712	0.953	2,038	149,701	0.944
2 Sep	895	76,466	0.974	1,014	121,361	0.979	1,251	119,963	0.963	1,546	151,247	0.954
3 Sep	643	77,109	0.982	760	122,121	0.985	1,048	121,011	0.972	1,508	152,755	0.964
4 Sep	515	77,624	0.989	482	122,603	0.989	1,101	122,112	0.981	1,873	154,628	0.976
5 Sep	545	78,169	0.996	597	123,200	0.994	1,017	123,129	0.989	1,597	156,225	0.986
6 Sep	330	78,499	1.000	600	123,800	0.999	687	123,816	0.994	1,251	157,476	0.994
7 Sep	317	78,816	1.000	150	123,950	1.000	720	124,536	1.000	1,025	158,501	
8 Sep	16	78,832	1.000				25	124,561	1.000	691	159,192	1.004
9 Sep										711	159,903	1.009
10 Sep										527	160,430	1.012

Source: L. Hynes, Fish and Wildlife Technician III, ADF&G, Soldotna, unpublished data, 2020-2023

[a] Mid-point of run.

PROPOSAL 184 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.
Move 3-mile boundary marker to Old Kasilof Landing (RM4).

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would move the ADF&G regulatory marker on the Kasilof River approximately one mile upstream.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From January 1–July 31, a motor may be used only between the mouth of the Kasilof River and an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately three miles upstream.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow anglers to use 10 hp motors after fishing is done for the day to motor upstream to the Old Kasilof Landing site. The site is owned by Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and construction is scheduled to develop parking and a drift boat retrieval site. Development of this site would provide needed access for drift boats on the Kasilof River.

BACKGROUND: The Kasilof River provides sport fishing opportunity for anglers on the Kenai Peninsula but lacks access and retrieval points for this largely drift boat fishery. Development of this site would benefit anglers and moving the regulatory marker would allow them to fish the lower stretch of the Kasilof River and motor back upstream to pull their boat.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The department supports improving access to areas with sustainable resources.

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 185 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.
Allow only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures in the Kasilof River.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would only allow unbaited, single-hook artificial lures in the Kasilof River upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge from January 1–June 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Regulations above and below the Sterling Highway Bridge (Figure 185-1) are as follows:

From the Sterling Highway Bridge upstream to Tustumena Lake:
January 1–September 15: Bait and multiple hooks are allowed
September 16–December 31: Only unbaited single-hook artificial lure is allowed

From the mouth of the Kasilof River upstream to the Sterling Highway Bridge:
May 16–September 15: Bait and multiple hooks are allowed.
September 16–May 15: Only unbaited single-hook artificial lure is allowed

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit the use of bait and treble hooks through June in upper river section which would likely reduce the catch of steelhead and naturally-produced king salmon and will likely reduce the catch and release mortality of both steelhead and naturally-produced king salmon. It will add some regulation complexity with gear regulations between river sections during early-run king salmon fishery.

BACKGROUND: The Kasilof River supports a diversity of sport fishing opportunities throughout the year. From January through April, the majority of the river will be iced over which limits fishing opportunity. When the ice recedes, anglers start targeting steelhead near the mouth of Crooked Creek and in the 9 river miles upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge to Tustumena Lake. Retention of steelhead is prohibited in regulation and there is no stock assessment. Early-run king salmon start returning to the Kasilof River in late May and king salmon management is complicated by the release of Crooked Creek stock king salmon to provide additional opportunity for anglers (Table 185-1). King salmon harvested in the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge are a mix of naturally produced and hatchery reared king salmon. Upstream of the bridge the harvest is predominantly naturally-produced fish. Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport fishery is managed to achieve a sustainable escapement goal of 700–1,400 naturally-produced king salmon as monitored through an ADF&G weir located on Crooked Creek (Table 185-2). Due to the run timing at this monitoring location, the vast majority of the run is counted after the early-run fishery occurs. The Kasilof River also supports a run of late-run king salmon that start returning in late June and continue through August with the mid-point of the run above the Sterling Highway Bridge occurring in the first week of August. Based on recent escapement monitoring, approximately 2,500-5,000 late-run king salmon spawn above the Sterling Highway

Bridge (Figure 185-2, 185-3). Currently, there is no escapement goal for late-run Kasilof River king salmon.

In combination with other restrictions to Cook Inlet salt and fresh water sport fisheries, the Kasilof River early-run and late-run king salmon sport fisheries have been restricted or closed in recent years by preseason and inseason emergency orders. These actions were based on the recent king salmon escapement trends with Crooked Creek and other Kenai Peninsula stocks. These actions also were also structured to continue to provide sport fishing opportunities and maximize the harvest of hatchery king salmon. This has included restricting the use of bait and treble hooks. When possible, the department has attempted to align the actions for early-run king salmon with the actions taken in the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery given the similarities in hatchery supplementation programs. At the 2023 Lower Cook Inlet board meeting, the board adopted a proposal to modify the gear regulations to single-hook (prohibiting treble hooks) and allowing the use of bait for the hatchery king salmon fishery. The board also closed the Ninilchik River to the harvest of naturally-produced king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. In the absence of an escapement goal or assessment program for Kasilof River steelhead and late-run king salmon the department supports conservative management. Based on status of Cook Inlet king salmon, it is likely that the department will continue to restrict the early-run and late-run king salmon sport fisheries by emergency order including gear. Given the run timing of late-run king salmon above the Sterling Highway Bridge, it may be appropriate to extend the effective date of this proposal through August 15. If the board considers modifying the gear regulations for early-run king salmon below the Sterling Highway Bridge, the department recommends language similar to what was adopted for the Ninilchik River king salmon 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.

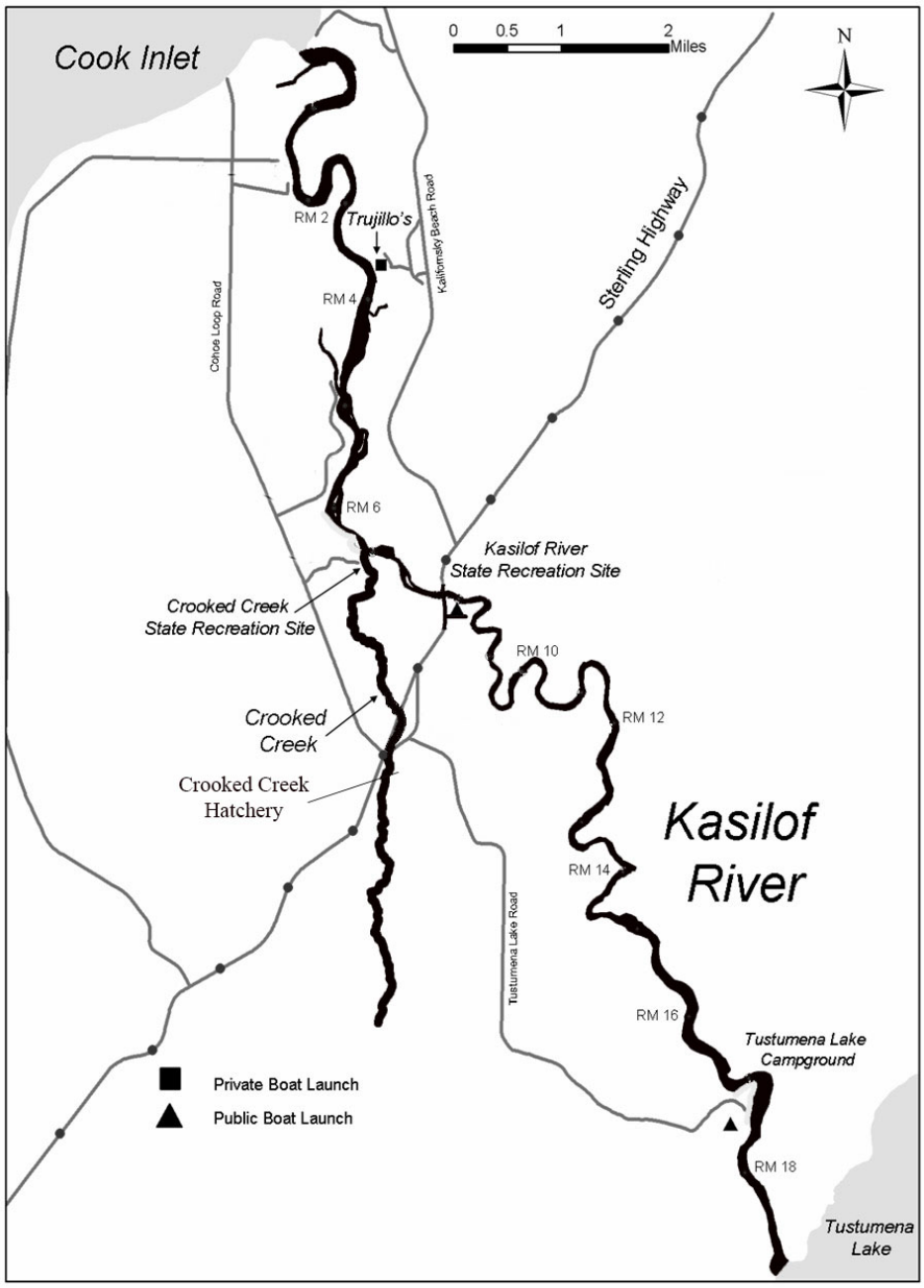

Figure 185-1.–Map of the Kasilof River.

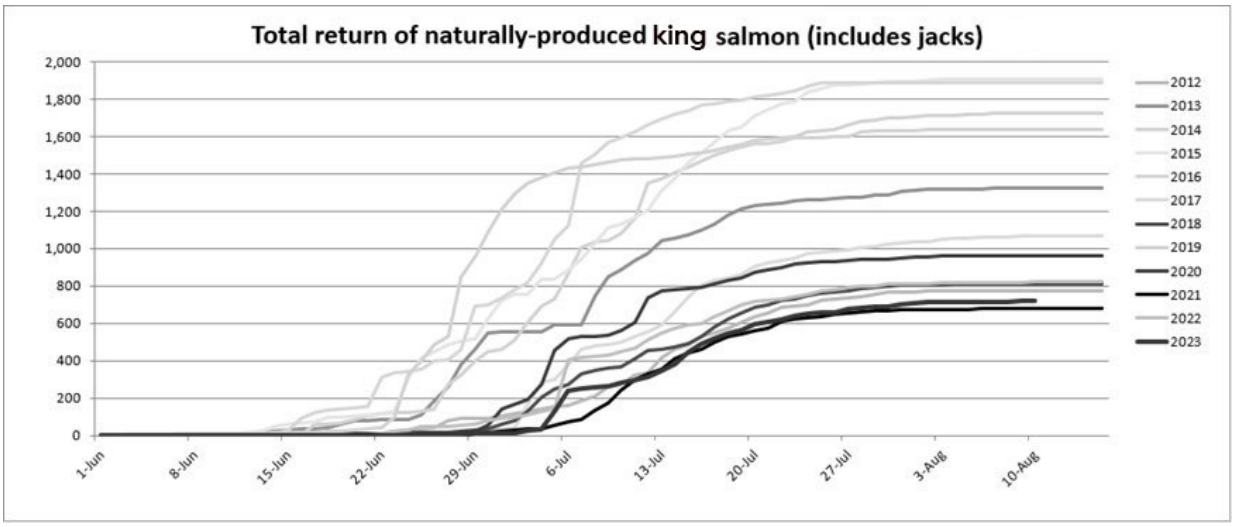

Figure 185-2.–Kasilof River naturally produced king salmon return to Crooked Creek (2012-2023).

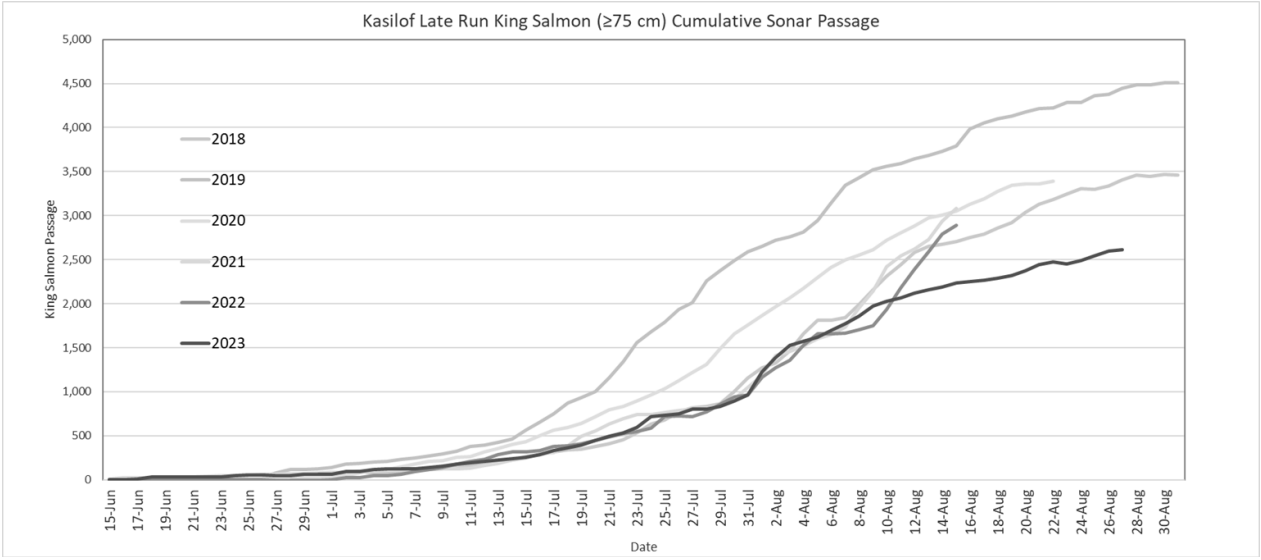

Figure 185-3.–Kasilof River king salmon (≥75 cm) sonar passage (2018-2023).

Table 185-1.–Historical releases of adipose finclipped (AFC) Crooked Creek king salmon, 1999–2022.

Release year	Broodstock origin	Hatchery	No. of smolt released	No. of AFC smolt released	% AFC
1999	Homer (Crooked Creek)[a]	Elmendorf	192,304	43,431	22.6
2000	Crooked Creek	Elmendorf	108,507	108,507	100.0
2001	Crooked Creek	Elmendorf	109,201	109,201	100.0
2002	Crooked Creek	Elmendorf	99,547	99,547	100.0
2003	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	98,800	98,800	100.0
2004	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	80,601	80,601	100.0
2005	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	113,613	113,071	99.5
2006	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	111,705	111,705	100.0
2007	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	111,382	111,271	99.9
2008	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	114,588	114,588	100.0
2009	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	115,035	114,734	99.7
2010	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	106,145	106,145	100.0
2011	Crooked Creek	Ft. Richardson	64,578	64,578	100.0
2012	Crooked Creek	Jack Hernandez	52,759	52,759	100.0
2013	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	0	0	ND
2014	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	143,751	143,191	99.6
2015	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	145,855	141,334	96.9
2016	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	143,280	139,054	97.1
2017	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	105,396	104,342	99.0
2018	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	149,622	142,897	95.5
2019	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	126,600	125,587	99.2
2020	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	141,331	140,481	99.4
2021	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	140,256	139,891	99.7
2022	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	97,562	96,879	99.3
2023	Crooked Creek	William Jack Hernandez	91,801	91,801	100.0
Average 1999–2021			111,950	104,596	96

Source: D. Loopstra and D. Starzynski, Sport Fish Biologist, ADF&G, Anchorage, personal communication.

Note: ND means no data collected. AFC means adipose finclipped.

[a] Broodstock collection occurred at the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon. Broodstock at this collection site were Crooked Creek progeny.

Table 185-2.─Historical summary of early-run Kasilof River-Crooked Creek king salmon stocks, 2004–2022.

	Harvest [a]			Run to weir [b]			Total run [b]			Spawning escapement [b]		
Year	Total	Naturally-produced	Hatchery-produced	Total	Naturally-produced	Hatchery-produced	Total	Naturally-produced	Hatchery-produced	Total	Naturally-produced	Hatchery-produced
2004	2,407	0	2,407	4,873	2,641	2,232	7,280	2,641	4,639	4,356	2,196	2,160
2005	2,665	572	2,093	3,168	2,108	1,060	5,833	2,680	3,153	2,936	1,909	1,027
2006	2,489	1,057	1,432	2,646	1,589	1,057	5,135	2,646	2,489	2,569	1,516	1,053
2007	2,654	1,107	1,547	1,527	1,038	489	4,181	2,145	2,036	1,452	965	487
2008[c]	1,984	832	1,129	1,414	1,018	396	3,398	1,850	1,525	1,181	879	302
2009[c]	1,532	576	956	929	674	255	2,461	1,250	1,211	734	617	117
2010[c,d]	1,333	273	1,060	1,352	1,090	262	2,685	1,363	1,322	1,348	1,088	260
2011[c,e]	2,054	ND	ND	933	677	256	2,987	ND	ND	782	654	128
2012[d]	872	ND	ND	796	633	163	1,668	ND	ND	731	631	100
2013[d]	1,073	ND	ND	1,409	1,211	198	2,482	ND	ND	1,213	1,102	111
2014[d]	323	ND	ND	2,433	1,522	911	2,756	ND	ND	2,148	1,411	737
2015[d]	589	ND	ND	2,240	1,639	601	2,829	ND	ND	1,903	1,456	447
2016[d,f]	1,810	ND	ND	4,017	1,833	2,184	5,827	ND	ND	3,847	1,747	2,100
2017	2,965	ND	ND	1,676	994	682	4,641	ND	ND	1,135	911	224
2018[d]	1,468	ND	ND	1,741	777	964	3,209	ND	ND	1,187	714	473
2019[d]	815	ND	ND	3,636	1,641	1,995	4,451	ND	ND	1,876	1,444	432
2020[d]	2,178	ND	ND	2,700	918	1,782	4,878	ND	ND	1,088	830	258
2021[d]	2,166	ND	ND	1,676	635	1,041	3,842	ND	ND	809	594	215
2022[d]	336	ND	ND	2,994	780	2,214	3,330	ND	ND	1,188	735	453
2023[d]	ND	ND	ND	1,385	563	822	ND	ND	ND	984	500	484
Average 2004-2021	1,743	245	590	2,176	1,258	918	3,919	810	910	1,739	1,148	591

Source: Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 2011– . Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited October 2023). Available from: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/; Begich et al. (2017); Cope (2012); J. Gates, Sport Fish Biologist, ADF&G, Soldotna, personal communication.

Note: ND means no data collected.

[a] Excludes ocean-age-1 fish for 2004–2022. Data for 2004–2010 are from inseason creel surveys. Data for 2011–present are from SWHS. These data do not include harvest from the Kasilof River personal use fishery.

[b] Excludes ocean-age-1 fish. Beginning in 2017, hatchery-produced fish were opportunistically culled.

[c] In 2008, regulations were changed to allow retention of naturally-produced Chinook salmon on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays only, with a limit of 2 Chinook salmon per day of which only one may be naturally-produced; annual limits applied.

[d] Restrictions were placed on harvest of Chinook salmon during these years. See Appendices for more details.

[e] The Kasilof River early-run Chinook salmon creel survey was discontinued in 2011.

[f] Incomplete weir count; weir pulled July 25.

PROPOSAL 186 – 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area. Update the stocked lakes list for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This updates the list of stocked lakes on the Kenai Peninsula.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The list of stocked lakes in 5 AAC 56.120(1)(B) is not accurate.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow anglers to fish greater bag limits in John Hedberg Lake and regulations would reflect area stocked lakes.

BACKGROUND: Stocking has been discontinued in two Kenai Peninsula lakes and started in another. The regulations need to be updated to reflect the change so stocked lakes bag limits are accurate.

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 187 – 5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.
Close Hidden Lake to fishing for lake trout from September 15 to November 30.

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close Hidden Lake to sport fishing for lake trout from September 15–November 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Hidden Lake is open year-round to fishing for all species except king salmon and burbot. Bait and multiple hooks are allowed. Lake trout bag and possession limits are 1 fish, less than 16 inches in length.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create a spawning closure for lake trout on Hidden Lake which may reduce the harvest of lake trout and reduce opportunity for anglers to fish Hidden Lake in the fall.

BACKGROUND: Hidden Lake is a tributary of Skilak Lake (Figure 187-1). The department has no assessment data on lake trout for Hidden Lake but Statewide Harvest Survey reports some effort with modest harvest of lake trout (Table 187-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to protect lake trout during spawning on a system where catch and harvest rates have dropped.

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 187-1.–Map of the Middle Section of the Kenai River with Sterling Highway as reference.

Table 187-1.–Kenai Peninsula lake trout catch (C) and harvest (H) as determined by Statewide Harvest Survey 1999–2022.

	Hidden Lake		Kenai Lake		Kenai River		Skilak Lake		Tustumena Lake		Kasilof River		Other lakes [a]		Other rivers [a]		Total	
Year	C	H	C	H	C	H	C	H	C	H	C	H	C	H	C	H	C	H
1999	1,452	545	1,950	623	2,155	293	1,408	621	89	81	690	284	473	446	36	27	8,253	2,920
2000	437	318	221	202	988	115	1,561	543	184	175	182	155	631	350	27	0	4,231	1,858
2001	734	160	1,490	980	658	156	249	72	118	44	332	81	384	270	0	0	3,965	1,763
2002	653	200	3,220	886	1,228	173	824	147	248	20	466	293	424	180	0	0	7,063	1,899
2003	443	285	405	226	1,423	243	713	230	87	45	15	0	90	68	224	0	3,400	1,097
2004	1,188	482	199	199	400	80	696	529	287	151	275	211	130	115	16	32	3,191	1,799
2005	728	216	890	631	0	0	145	54	468	130	160	128	156	70	0	0	2,547	1,229
2006	580	386	306	190	224	41	94	23	110	10	239	161	42	20	31	31	1,626	862
2007	1,084	420	540	226	352	0	42	14	230	9	0	0	35	0	0	0	2,283	669
2008	891	210	0	0	392	153	153	122	36	21	8	0	75	61	23	23	1,578	590
2009	2,351	616	1,011	185	541	22	47	0	129	58	11	0	78	34	0	0	4,168	915
2010	1,396	235	1,099	117	447	129	51	51	274	206	0	0	41	0	0	0	3,308	738
2011	1,124	61	12	12	17	0	33	16	320	104	0	0	348	211	0	0	1,854	404
2012	369	123	171	114	15	7	27	27	0	0	95	79	64	16	0	0	741	366
2013	612	197	820	639	43	0	856	343	172	172	0	0	0	0	85	64	2,588	1,415
2014	330	61	1,458	466	203	62	160	37	0	0	0	0	283	49	0	0	2,434	675
2015	741	82	1,304	375	218	0	59	20	0	0	40	0	178	178	0	0	2,540	655
2016	0	0	531	231	457	439	0	0	172	172	0	0	310	237	0	0	1,470	1,079
2017	293	52	721	594	102	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	343	13	0	0	1,459	679
2018	74	19	95	0	8	0	57	19	0	0	0	0	76	0	17	17	327	55
2019	152	0	1,862	390	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	37	0	0	2,051	427
2020	132	0	314	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	121	111	0	0	567	111
2021	57	0	50	40	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	60	0	0	187	100
2022	0	0	62	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	105	21	0	0	167	42
Average																		
2012–2021	276	53	733	285	106	53	116	45	34	34	14	8	148	70	10	8	1,436	556
2017–2021	142	14	608	205	24	4	11	4	0	0	0	0	129	44	3	3	918	274

Source: Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 1999–present. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited November 2023). Available from: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/. Other data source D. Loopstra, Sport Fish Biologist, ADF&G, Anchorage, personal communication.

[a] Includes other NKPMA not listed here individually; does not include "Unspecified" category in the SWHS.

PROPOSAL 188 – 5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage.
Prohibit bait and multiple hooks in Hidden Lake.

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit bait and multiple hooks in Hidden Lake year-round.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Hidden Lake is open year-round to fishing for all species except king salmon and burbot. Bait and multiple hooks are allowed. Lake trout bag and possession limits are 1 fish, less than 16 inches in length.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit multiple hooks and bait to reduce lake trout fishing mortality.

BACKGROUND: Hidden Lake is a tributary of Skilak Lake (Figure 187-1). The department has no assessment data on lake trout for Hidden Lake but Statewide Harvest Survey reports some effort with modest harvest of lake trout (Table 187-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal to require one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure on a fishery with a conservative bag limit of 1 lake trout less than 16 inches. Hidden Lake also supports a burbot 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.

Kenai and Kasilof rivers Personal Use (15 proposals)

PROPOSAL 189 – 5 AAC 77.5XX. New Section.
Require personal use guides in Cook Inlet to adhere to sport guiding requirements.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require guides in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries to register and be licensed similar to sport fishing guide requirements.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently no guide requirements for personal use fisheries in Alaska. Participation in personal use fisheries is limited to users with a valid Alaska resident sport fishing license or by an Alaska resident exempt from licensing. Statewide sport fishing regulations require businesses and guides to register with the department prior to conducting any sport fishing guide services. Businesses and guides operating in salt water must obtain and report their trips in a Saltwater Charter Logbook issued by the department.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Businesses and guides in personal use fisheries would need to register with the department. Registration would provide the department the business and guide's name, address and current Alaska business or sport fishing license number.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540) provides for a personal use salmon gillnet fishery near the mouth of Kasilof River, and salmon dip net fisheries in the Kenai, Kasilof, and Susitna Rivers, Fish Creek, and in Beluga River for residents 60 years of age or older. This plan was in effect for the 1981 season and later adopted into regulation by the board in 1982. The plan has undergone several amendments since that time.

At the March 2023 Statewide Finfish meeting, the board failed to adopt a public proposal to establish registration and reporting requirements for personal use guides and transporters.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on 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 would result in an additional cost to the department to implement a personal use guide registration program and to issue guide licenses. The department does not have funding identified for this activity and would need to seek additional money before it could be implemented.

PROPOSAL 190 – 5 AAC 77.540. ***Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.***
Establish requirements to guide in Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require guides in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries to register and be licensed similar to sport fishing guide requirements.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently no guide requirements for personal use fisheries in Alaska. Participation in personal use fisheries is limited to users with a valid Alaska resident sport fishing license or by an Alaska resident exempt from licensing. Statewide sport fishing regulations require businesses and guides to register with the department prior to conducting any sport fishing guide services. Businesses and guides operating in salt water must obtain and report their trips in a Saltwater Charter Logbook issued by the department.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Businesses and guides in personal use fisheries would need to register with the department. Registration would provide the department the business and guide's name, address and current Alaska business or sport fishing license number.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540) provides for a personal use salmon gillnet fishery near the mouth of Kasilof River, and salmon dip net fisheries in the Kenai, Kasilof, and Susitna Rivers, Fish Creek, and in Beluga River for residents 60 years of age or older. This plan was in effect for the 1981 season and later adopted into regulation by the board in 1982. The plan has undergone several amendments since that time.

At the March 2023 Statewide Finfish meeting, the board failed to adopt a public proposal to establish registration and reporting requirements for personal use guides and transporters.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on 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 would result in an additional cost to the department to implement a personal use guide registration program and to issue guide licenses. The department does not have funding identified for this activity and would need to seek additional money before it could be implemented.

PROPOSAL 191 – 5 AAC 77.525. Personal Use Salmon Fishery.
Adjust limits in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries based on abundance.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? In Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries, this would reduce the household annual limit from 25 to 15 salmon for the head of household until the optimal escapement goal (OEG) is projected to be exceeded, then the annual limit would increase to 30 salmon for the head of household and increase from 10 to 20 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The total annual limit for each personal use permit is 25 salmon for head of household and 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder in Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries.

There is no OEG for late-run sockeye salmon in the Kenai River but there is an inriver goal and Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG). There is an OEG in place for Kenai River late-run king salmon. The Kasilof River has an OEG for sockeye salmon. In the Susitna River drainage, there is an OEG for Yentna River drainage king salmon and SEGs for Chelatna, Judd, and Larson Lake sockeye salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would significantly reduce salmon harvest opportunity in all Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries for most of the season. It is unclear how this proposal would affect most of the personal use salmon fisheries since only a few stocks have OEGs. For stocks with an OEG, it may provide more harvest opportunity later in the season in years with salmon runs that are expected to exceed the goals. Reduced limits early in the season would likely redistribute effort later in the run, disproportionately harvesting late-returning fish. It would add regulatory complexity and require the department to manage these fisheries inseason and inform up to 36,000 permit holders of changes. It is unclear from the proposal if the intent is to include all Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries, if all relevant OEGs would need to be exceeded to increase the annual limit, or if the proposer intended to increase annual limits in separate fisheries within the UCI personal use permit.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540) provides for six personal use fisheries, including a personal use salmon gillnet fishery near the mouth of Kasilof River, and salmon dip net fisheries in the Kenai, Kasilof, and Susitna Rivers, Fish Creek, and in Beluga River for residents 60 years of age or older. All Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries are managed under one permit with the Cook Inlet annual limit regulations.

Sockeye and king salmon escapement are monitored in the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers and are used to manage the Kasilof set gillnet and dipnet fisheries in Kasilof and Kenai Rivers. In the Sustina River, sockeye and coho salmon escapement monitoring are used to manage the Susitna River personal use fishery. In Fish Creek, the commissioner may open the personal use fishery if the sockeye salmon escapement is projected to be more than 35,000 fish (SEG 15,000–45,000). The

department has sustainable or biological escapement goals for all of these associated stocks, and the board has an inriver goal for Kenai River sockeye salmon, and optimal escapement goals for Kasilof River sockeye salmon and early-run and late-run Kenai River king salmon.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal due to the loss of harvest opportunity on a stock that has harvestable surpluses and that adds unnecessary additional regulatory complexity. It is unclear which fisheries and goals this proposal was attempting to address. The sockeye salmon harvest in some of these personal use fisheries such Kasilof set gillnet will be unnecessarily restricted because escapement monitoring occurs after the fishery season. The commissioner can and has extended season and area by emergency order in these personal use fisheries in years of higher 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 cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 192 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Close personal use fisheries based on commercial openings.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Norman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries when the commercial fishery in the Central District is restricted with reduced hours from regular periods.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.360) directs the department to manage the Kenai River personal use fishery (and sport and commercial fisheries) to meet the SEG, inriver goals, and distribute the escapement evenly throughout the SEG range. This plan outlines closing the Kenai River personal use fishery when the run is not expected to reach the lower end of the SEG. The plan also allows the fishery to be liberalized when the inriver run is expected to exceed the 2,300,000 sockeye salmon. There are no inseason prescribed management actions to restrict sockeye salmon harvest in all other Upper Cook Inlet salmon personal use fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce sockeye salmon harvest opportunity for Alaska residents in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries by closing them when the commercial fishery in the Central District is fishing reduced hours. The reduced sockeye salmon harvest would likely be on average 2,500 fish per day in the Kasilof River and 13,000 fish per day in the Kenai River, which would significantly increase the sockeye salmon escapement (Table 192-1). It would add regulatory complexity and require the department to manage inriver fisheries on a daily schedule and inform up to 36,000 permit holders of changes. It is unclear from the proposal if the intent is to include all Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5AAC 77.540) provides for a personal use salmon gillnet fishery near the mouth of Kasilof River, and salmon dip net fisheries in the Kenai, Kasilof, and Susitna Rivers, Fish Creek, and in Beluga River for residents 60 years of age or older. All Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries and are all managed under one permit with the Cook Inlet annual limit regulations.

Season and fishing periods differ for Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries. The Kasilof set gillnet fishery occurs from June 15 through June 24 with daily fishing periods from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The Kasilof River dip net fishery occurs 24 hours per day from June 25 through August 7. The Kenai River dip net fishery occurs from July 10 through July 31 from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. In Fish Creek, the commissioner may open the personal use fishery if the sockeye salmon escapement is projected to be more than 35,000 fish and fishing periods are from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The Susitna River dip net fishery occurs on Wednesdays and Saturdays from July 10 through July 31 from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The Beluga River dip net fishery occurs 24 hours per day from July 10 through July 31.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** additional regulatory complexity and loss of harvest opportunities on sockeye salmon stocks with a harvestable surplus. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of 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.

Table 192-1.–Kenai and Kasilof Rivers personal use salmon fisheries season and harvest, 1999-2022.

	Kenai River- Dip net				Kasilof River							
					Set gillnet				Dip net			
Year	Days open to fishing	King salmon	Sockeye salmon	Sockeye salmon/ per day	Days open to fishing	King salmon	Sockeye salmon	Sockeye salmon/ per day	Days open to fishing	King salmon	Sockeye salmon	Sockeye salmon/ per day
1999	22	488	149,504	6,796	10	442	12,832	475	27	127	37,176	1,377
2000	22	410	98,262	4,466	13	514	14,774	547	27	134	23,877	884
2001	22	638	150,766	6,853	8	174	17,201	637	27	138	37,612	1,393
2002	22	606	180,028	8,183	10	192	17,980	409	44	106	46,769	1,063
2003	22	1,016	223,580	10,163	10	400	15,706	357	44	57	43,870	997
2004	22	792	262,831	11,947	10	163	25,417	578	44	44	48,315	1,098
2005	22	997	295,496	13,432	11	87	26,609	605	44	16	43,151	981
2006	20	1,034	127,630	6,382	10	287	28,867	656	44	55	56,144	1,276
2007	22	1,509	291,270	13,240	10	343	14,943	340	44	35	43,293	984
2008	22	1,362	234,109	10,641	10	151	23,432	533	44	46	54,051	1,228
2009	22	1,189	339,993	15,454	10	127	26,646	606	44	34	73,035	1,660
2010	22	865	389,552	17,707	10	136	21,924	498	44	31	70,774	1,609
2011	22	1,243	537,765	24,444	10	167	26,780	609	44	24	49,766	1,131
2012	22	40	526,992	23,954	10	103	15,638	355	44	16	73,419	1,669
2013	22	11	347,222	15,783	5	46	14,439	328	44	18	85,528	1,944
2014	22	0	379,823	17,265	10	50	22,567	513	44	0	88,513	2,012
2015	22	66	377,532	17,161	10	61	27,567	627	44	0	89,000	2,023
2016	22	638	259,057	11,775	10	141	26,539	603	44	26	58,273	1,324
2017	22	1,194	297,049	13,502	10	118	21,927	498	44	14	78,260	1,779
2018	20	7	165,028	8,251	10	120	14,390	327	44	6	92,034	2,092
2019	22	30	331,408	15,064	10	131	15,864	361	44	3	80,730	1,835
2020	22	23	257,864	11,721	10	70	14,745	335	44	12	94,064	2,138
2021	22	50	326,491	14,841	10	94	18,212	414	44	9	96,454	2,192
2022	22	13	282,085	12,822	10	19	6,329	144	44	21	158,734	3,608
Averages												
1999–2018	22	705	281,674	12,870	41	191	20,809	505	41	46	59,643	1,426
2019–2022	22	29	299,462	13,612	44	79	13,788	313	44	11	107,496	2,443

PROPOSAL 193 – 5 AAC 77.540. ***Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.***

Require king salmon caught and released in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries not be removed from the water.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require that king salmon caught in Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries are not removed from the water prior to releasing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no regulations in the Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries requiring that king salmon may not be removed from the water prior to releasing.

King salmon 20 inches or greater in length caught in Upper Cook Inlet fresh water and salt water sport fisheries may not be removed from the water before releasing.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It may reduce the release mortality of king salmon caught and released in the Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries. Requiring in water release may make it more difficult to release king salmon, which would increase handling time. It can be difficult to distinguish a small king salmon from a sockeye salmon in a dip net which may result in Alaska residents getting cited for unintentionally removing it from the water.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540) provides for personal use salmon dip net fisheries in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. This plan was in effect for the 1981 season and later adopted into regulation by the board in 1982. The plan has undergone several amendments since that time.

In recent years when the department has prohibited the retention of king salmon by emergency order, the following verbiage has been included in the accompanying Advisory Announcement: "Any king salmon caught incidentally may not be removed from the water, must be released immediately, and returned to the water unharmed."

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Providing this language in the personal use fisheries will be consistent with Kenai Peninsula Area sport fishery regulations and may improve the survival of released 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 194 – 5 AAC 77.540. *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan*.
Allow retention of Dolly Varden in Kenai/Kasilof personal use dipnet fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Jon Madison.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow harvest of 15 Dolly Varden/Arctic char per household in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers personal use dip net fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries allow households 25 salmon for the head of the household and 10 for each additional member. A person may retain 10 flounder in addition to their salmon limit. Dolly Varden and other resident species are not allowed to be retained.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would provide dip net personal use participants in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers an opportunity to harvest Dolly Varden, which would increase the harvest by an assumed small, but unknown, amount. It would also create regulation complexity amongst the Upper Cook Inlet personal use fisheries by allowing the harvest of Dolly Varden only in two of the six fisheries.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540) provides for personal use salmon dip net fisheries in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. This plan was in effect for the 1981 season and later adopted into regulation by the board in 1982. The plan has undergone several amendments since that time. The retention of flounder has been allowed since 2006, after the board adopted a public proposal to allow 10 per person.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. There is no information on the number of Dolly Varden caught and released in these fisheries. Currently, there is no stock assessment for Dolly Varden in the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers and the sport fishery regulations are conservative with small bag limits of one fish <16" in the Kenai River and two fish any size in the Kasilof River.

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 195 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Restrict emergency order (EO) authority to only the shore-based fishery in the Kenai River personal use fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prevent the department from using emergency order authority to extend the boat-based portion of the Kenai River dip net personal use fishery to 24 hours per day.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Kenai River personal use fishery is open to Alaska residents from July 10 through July 31, seven days a week, from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The commissioner may extend the fishery to be open 24 hours per day if the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon abundance is determined to be greater than 2,300,000 fish. A boat may be used to take salmon between an ADF&G marker near the Kenai city dock upstream to the downstream side of the Warren Ames Bridge; however, salmon may not be taken from a boat using a two-stroke motor, other than a motor manufactured as a direct fuel injection motor. Salmon may also be taken from shore, in the area from department regulatory markers located on Cook Inlet beaches outside the terminus of the river upstream to a line at the mouth of the Kenai River from No Name Creek on the north shore to an ADF&G regulatory marker on the south shore.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Some personal use harvest opportunity would be lost during years the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon abundance was 2,300,000 fish or greater. Reducing harvest opportunity during periods of high sockeye salmon abundance would also result in an increase in the escapement. This proposal may result in increased crowding in the area open to dipnetting from shore. It also adds regulatory complexity within the personal use dip net fishery, which could result in a lack of compliance.

BACKGROUND: 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, unless it was a direct fuel injection motor. Beginning in 2013, all power boats operating in the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) were required to use either four-stroke or direct fuel injection motor.

As stipulated in the *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540), the department has extended the dip net fishery to 24 hours in four of the last 10 years when the abundance of late-run sockeye salmon was projected to be 2,300,000 or more and the sustainable escapement goal (750,000 – 1,300,000) was projected to be achieved. In these years, sockeye salmon harvest has been 15% higher than other recent years when the fishery was not liberalized (Table 192-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. There are no harvest estimates available for the number of personal use sockeye salmon harvested from a boat or from shore for the Kenai River personal use fishery. In years that the Kenai River late-run sockeye salmon abundance is greater than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon, there

would be less opportunity for boat-based personal use participants to harvest sockeye salmon and a higher likelihood that inriver sockeye salmon inriver and escapement goals would be exceeded.

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.

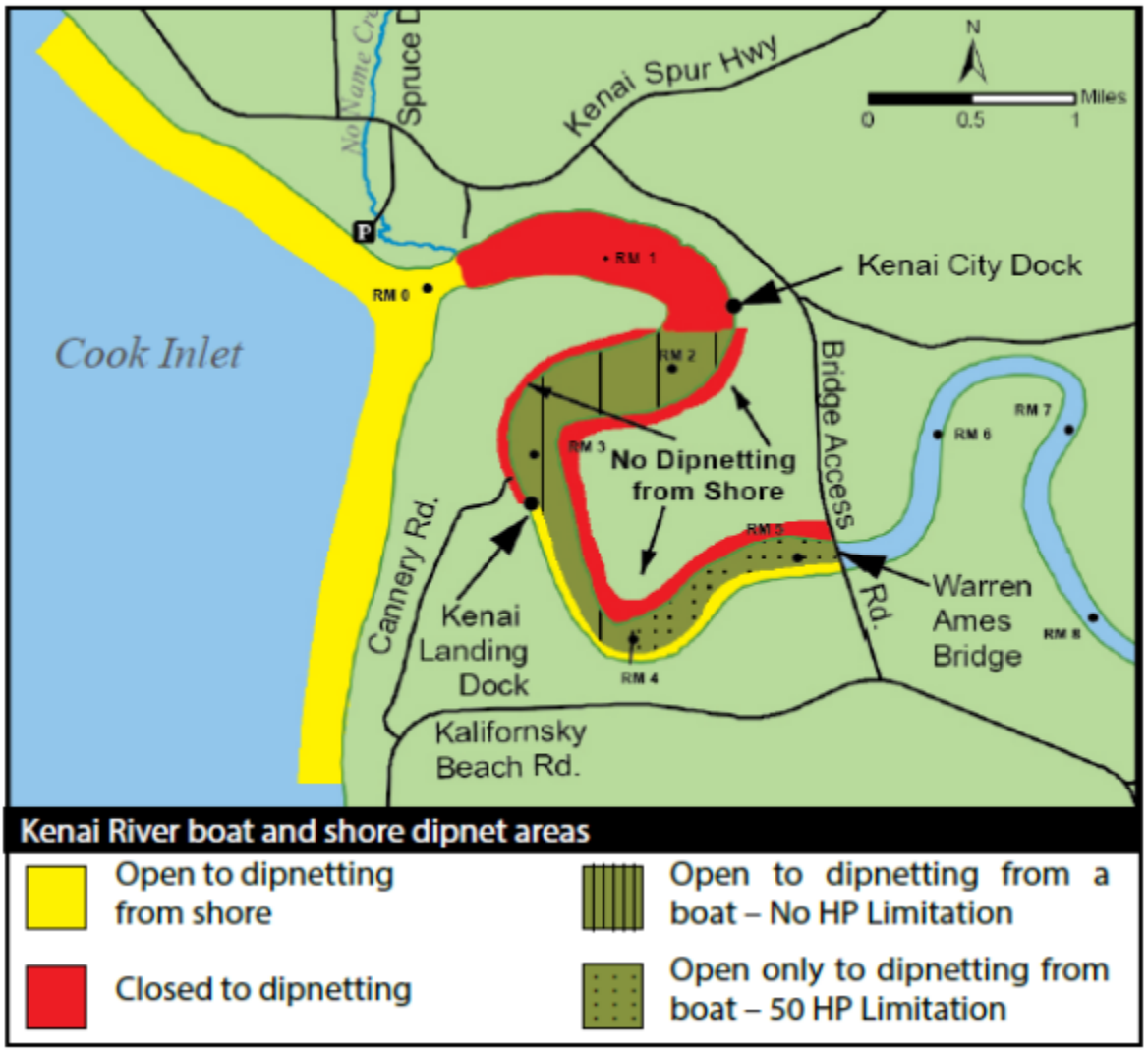

Figure 195-1.–The area open to personal use dip net fishery in the Kenai River.

PROPOSAL 196 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Prohibit personal use fishing on the Kenai River from an anchored vessel.

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit personal use fishing on the Kenai River from an anchored vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Kenai River personal use fishery, a boat may be used to take salmon between an ADF&G marker near the Kenai city dock upstream to the downstream side of the Warren Ames Bridge; however, salmon may not be taken from a boat using a two-stroke motor, other than a motor manufactured as a direct fuel injection motor.

No one may anchor a boat on the Kenai River that obstructs a primary traffic channel or drift fishing channel. Sport fishing regulations prevent sport fishing from a boat that is anchored in an approximate 3-mile section of the Kenai River beginning at the outlet of Skilak Lake from August 1 through December 31. Anchor dragging is also prohibited while sport fishing in all waters of the Kenai River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Boats participating in the Kenai River personal use fishery would not be able to anchor while fishing. It would add regulatory inconsistency between the Upper Cook Inlet personal use salmon fisheries that allow fishing from a boat.

BACKGROUND: The majority of boat-based participants drift while personal use fishing. The extent of anchoring to personal use fish is unknown.

In 2008, the board adopted a regulation prohibiting the taking of fish in the Kenai River personal use dipnet fishery from a boat powered by a two-stroke motor, unless it was a direct fuel injection motor. Beginning in 2013, all power boats operating in the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) were required to use either four-stroke or direct fuel injection motor.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** creating regulations prohibiting vessels from anchoring while dipnetting without demonstrating any conservation or management benefit. In some parts of the river at certain points in the tide it may be appropriate to fish from an anchored vessel.

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 197 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Prohibit retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use fishery by regulation allowing retention by emergency order.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? If bait or the retention of king salmon is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery as specified in the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359), then the retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use fishery is also prohibited. In the Kenai River dip net fishery, one king salmon 20 inches or greater in length and 10 king salmon less than 20 inches in length per household permit may be retained.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would likely have little effect on the retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery. The proposal ties retention in the dipnet fishery to achievement of the OEG while current regulations tie it to restrictions to the inriver sport fishery when it has been restricted to achieve the king salmon OEG.

BACKGROUND: From 1996–2011, when retention of king salmon was allowed in the Kenai River personal use fishery, the harvest of king salmon in the Kenai River dip net fishery ranged from 254 to 1,509 fish and averaged 816 (Table 192-1). Harvest of king salmon was allowed in 2016 and 2017 and the harvest was 638 and 1,194, respectively. Due to poor returns of Kenai River late-run king salmon and restrictions to the sport fishery, retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery has been prohibited for the entire season from 2012–2014, and 2018–2023.

The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* specifies that the commissioner has emergency order authority to prohibit the retention of king salmon in the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery in order to meet the OEG.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. Consistent with criteria in the *Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Management Plan,* retention of king salmon in the personal use dipnet fishery has been prohibited when inriver fishery has been restricted to achieve the OEG 10 of the last 12 years. This fishery will 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 198 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Prohibit transport of Kenai personal use fish by motorized vessel.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit transport of Kenai River personal use caught fish by motorized vessel upstream of the Warren Ames Bridge.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no restrictions on using a motorized vessel for transporting personal use caught fish in any part of the Kenai River. Personal use fishing from a boat is allowed between an ADF&G marker near the Kenai city dock upstream to the downstream side of the Warren Ames Bridge (Figure 195-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit vessels that have personal use caught fish on board from using launches upstream of the Warren Ames Bridge. It would cause increased congestion at the Kenai City Dock.

BACKGROUND: There are three public launches and private facilities that are utilized by personal use boaters upstream of the Warren Ames Bridge and downstream of the Soldotna Highway Bridge.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal and supports providing Alaska residents access to their fisheries. There are no biological or conservation reasons to limit the access points to this fish resource with a harvestable surplus. Allowing multiple access points to the fishery reduces crowding.

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 199 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Prohibit transport of Kasilof personal use fish by motorized vessel.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Smith.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit transport of Kasilof River personal use caught fish by motorized vessel upstream of the ADF&G regulatory marker at river mile 3.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no restrictions on using a motorized vessel for transporting personal use caught fish in any part of the Kasilof River. Personal use fishing from a boat is allowed between ADF&G markers near the mouth of Kasilof River to ADF&G markers located near river mile 1 (Figure 199-1).

From January through July, sport fishing from a motorized vessel is prohibited downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge. 10 hp or less motors may be used downstream of river mile 3. If not engaged in sport fishing activities on the same day, there are no motor use restrictions from the mouth to Tustumena Lake.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would prohibit boats that have personal use caught fish on board from using the public launches upstream of river mile 3.

BACKGROUND: Boat-based access to the Kasilof River personal use salmon fisheries is limited to beach launching with small vessels at the mouth of the river, private launch facilities between river miles 1 and 2, and state park facilities at the Sterling Highway Bridge at river mile 8.

Since 2019, the Kasilof River personal use dip net fishery has been liberalized by emergency order to expand the fishery area to encourage the harvest of sockeye salmon. The area open to fishing from a boat has been extended from river mile 1 to river mile 3, while the area open to dipnetting from shore has been extended from river mile 1 to the Sterling Highway Bridge at river mile 8. In these years when the fishery area is extended, some shore-based effort occurs from participants launching motorized boats from the state park facility at the Sterling Highway Bridge.

Kasilof River sockeye salmon have exceeded the upper end of the OEG (140,000-370,000) in 9 of the last 10 years, including all five years since 2019. In these recent years with liberalized area for the personal use fishery, sockeye salmon harvest has been 24% higher than other years with smaller runs and when the fishery was not liberalized (Table 192-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. There are no biological or conservation reasons to limit the access points to the personal use fishery on the Kasilof River, and it would further restrict the fishery during years in which the personal use area was expanded, which may further increase probability of exceeding the OEG.

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.

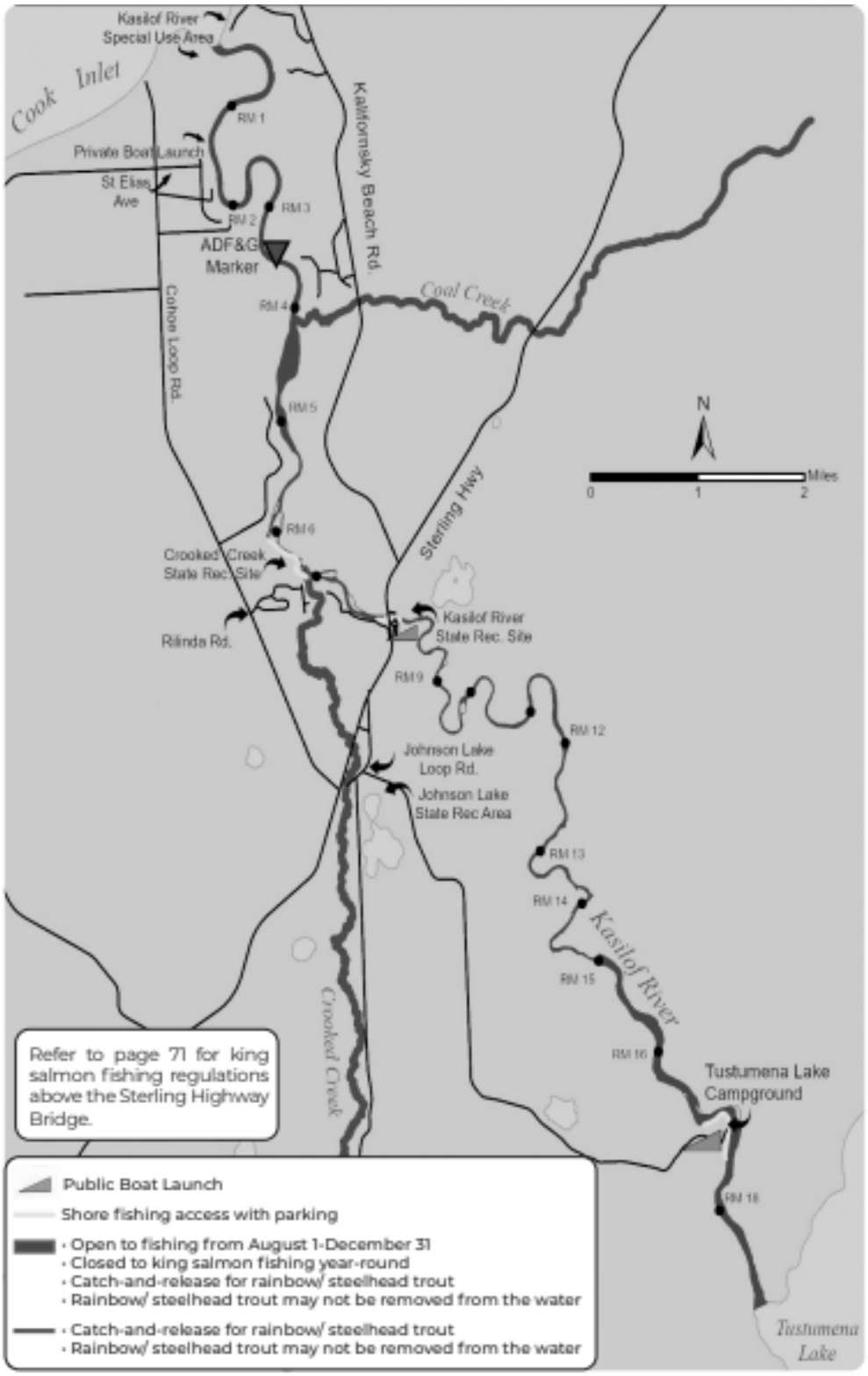

Figure 199-1.–Kasilof River boat access locations for sport and personal use fisheries.

PROPOSAL 200 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Close the Kasilof personal use gillnet fishery when Kenai or Kasilof sport fisheries are closed.

PROPOSED BY: Joe Hanes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create paired management actions with the Kasilof River set gillnet personal use fishery with the Kenai and Kasilof River king salmon sport fisheries. If on June 14, the Kenai River is closed to the retention of king salmon, or if the Kasilof River is closed to the retention of naturally-produced king salmon, the Kasilof River set gillnet personal use fishery will be closed June 15 through June 25.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Kasilof River set gillnet fishery is open from June 15 through June 24 from 6:00 a.m. through 11:00 p.m. The Upper Cook Inlet annual household limit is 25 salmon for the head of the household and 10 salmon for each additional member. Any king salmon caught may be retained. King salmon cannot be retained in the Kasilof River personal use dip net fishery.

The *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 57.160) specifies management actions for the department to make in the sport fisheries to achieve the Kenai and Kasilof River early-run king salmon escapement goals. The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359) specifies management actions for the department to make in the sport, commercial, and personal use fisheries to achieve the Kenai River late-run king salmon OEG.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce sockeye salmon harvest opportunity for Alaska residents in Cook Inlet personal use fisheries by closing them when the king salmon sport fisheries are closed to retention of king salmon.

BACKGROUND: The Kasilof River set gillnet personal use fishery occurs about 1 mile north and south of the Kasilof River mouth and sites are on a "first come, first served" basis. An Upper Cook Inlet personal use permit and sport fishing license is required for Alaska residents to participate. The season occurs for 10 days and includes gear restrictions. Historically, the king salmon harvest in this fishery has averaged approximately 200 fish but in recent years has averaged less than 100 fish (Table 192-1). The stock composition of this king salmon harvest is comprised mostly of Kasilof River fish but a small percentage are Kenai River stocks. The department has restricted this fishery by emergency order to reduce the hours open to fishing in an effort to achieve the SEG of Kasilof River early-run king salmon in Crooked Creek. In 2023, this fishery was closed for the entire season by emergency order just prior to the start of the season based on the poor runs observed for early-run king salmon stocks on the Kenai Peninsula.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal but supports providing access for Alaskans to harvest surplus salmon when abundance warrants. In recent years of poor early-run Kenai River and naturally-produced Kasilof River king salmon runs, the

department has restricted the Kasilof River personal use gillnet fishery to protect returning king salmon. The department supports the board providing management direction for this fishery in years of low abundance of early and late-run Kenai and Kasilof River king salmon. This fishery will be reviewed with the development of the 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 201 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan. and 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.
Close the Kenai River personal use fishery when the drift fishery is restricted.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create paired management actions with the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District and the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery so that when the commercial drift gillnet fishery is restricted or closed, the Kenai River personal use fishery is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.360) directs the department to manage the Kenai River personal use fishery with the requirement of achieving the lower end of the sustainable escapement goal. This plan outlines closing the Kenai River personal use fishery when the run is not expected to reach the lower end of the SEG. The plan also allows the fishery to be liberalized when the run is expected to exceed the 2,300,000 sockeye salmon. The *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359) directs the department to restrict the Central District drift gillnet fishery if the late-run king salmon escapement is projected to be less than the OEG.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce sockeye salmon harvest opportunity for Alaska residents in the Kenai River personal use dip net fishery by closing it when the commercial fishery in the Central District is fishing reduced hours. It could increase the Kenai River sockeye salmon escapement. It would add regulatory complexity and require the department to manage inriver fisheries daily and inform approximately 27,000 Kenai River personal use permit holders of changes.

BACKGROUND: The *Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.540) provides for a personal use salmon dip net fishery in the Kenai River. This plan was in effect for the 1981 season and later adopted into regulation by the board in 1982. The Kenai River dip net fishery occurs from July 10 through July 31 from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

In 2006 and 2018, the Kenai River personal use fishery was closed inseason in response to low numbers of sockeye salmon when the projection indicated that the SEG was not likely to be achieved. The Kenai River personal use fishery has been closed to the retention of king salmon in 10 of the last 12 years.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** additional regulatory complexity and loss of harvest opportunities on sockeye salmon stocks with a harvestable surplus. Removing opportunity on sockeye salmon in the PU fishery will unnecessarily decrease harvest opportunities for Alaskans when harvestable surpluses are available and will increase the risk of exceeding the inriver and escapement goals. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of 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 202 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Reduce the legal mesh size of a set gillnet in the UCI personal use fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: James Allen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the legal maximum mesh size from 6 inches to 4 ¾ inches in the Kasilof River personal use gillnet fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The maximum gillnet mesh size is six inches. A set gillnet used in the Kasilof River personal use gillnet fishery may not exceed 10 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. Only one set gillnet may be operated per household, a set gillnet may not be operated within 100 feet of another set gillnet, and a person may not operate more than one set gillnet and must attend their net at all times.

Commercial gillnet regulations limit mesh size in Cook Inlet to a maximum of 6 inches.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would likely reduce the harvest of king salmon and large sockeye salmon in the Kasilof River personal use gillnet fishery. It would align the gear restrictions with the size of gear used to target sockeye salmon.

BACKGROUND: Gillnet mesh size used to target sockeye salmon in Cook Inlet is typically between 4 5/8 inches and 5 ¼ inches. Some other areas in the state, such as Bristol Bay, have limited mesh size to a smaller maximum, such as 5 ½ inches, when emergency orders are issued to protect king salmon.

Historically, the king salmon harvest in this fishery has averaged approximately 200 fish but in recent years has averaged less than 100 fish (Table 192-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Reducing the maximum mesh size allowed in the personal use gillnet fishery in the Kasilof River would reduce the number of Kenai and Kasilof River king salmon harvested.

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 203 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Move the regulatory markers for the Kasilof River personal use dip net fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Davin Holen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create new coordinates for the dip net personal use fishery regulatory marker on the north shore of the Kasilof River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Salmon may be taken by dip net in the Kasilof River from June 25 through August 7, 24 hours per day. The open area is from a line between ADF&G markers outside the terminus of the river on the north shore beach at 60° 23.25' N. lat., 151° 17.98' W. long., and on the south shore beach at 60° 23.27' N. lat., 151° 18.64' W. long., upstream for a distance of one mile.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create a new boundary near the mouth of Kasilof River delineating the waters open to the personal use dip net fishery. No new boundary was suggested in the proposal. Depending on the location chosen, it may increase compliance with the regulation (Figures 203-1 and 203-2).

BACKGROUND: The location of the north shore regulatory marker has caused confusion in recent years, particularly at low tide. The board adopted a department proposal at the 2017 UCI meeting that attempted to clarify the language and location of the boundary markers to reduce confusion.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on 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.

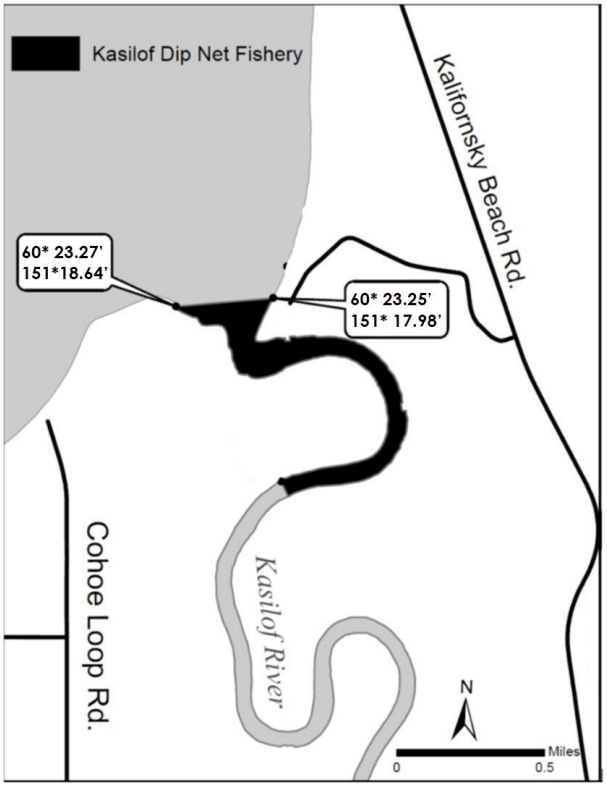

Figure 203-1.–Kasilof River personal use dip net salmon fishery boundaries

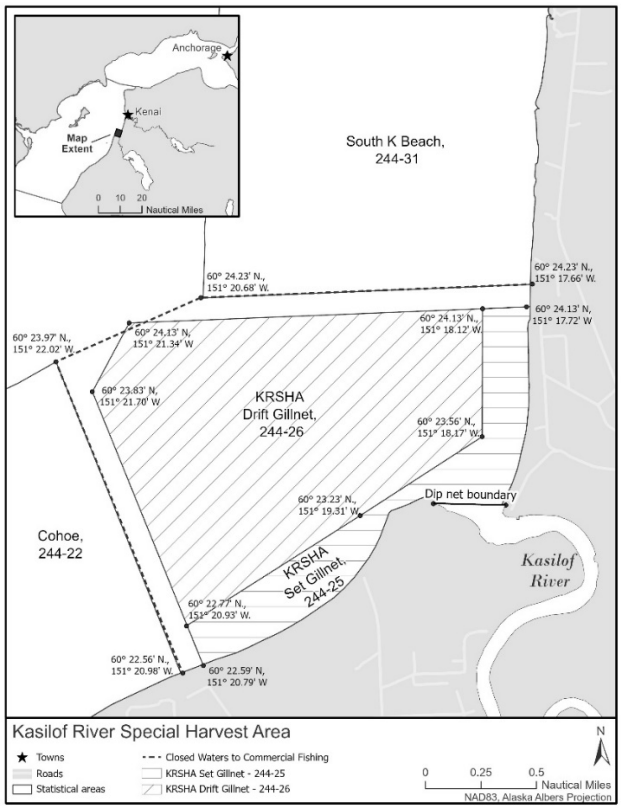

Figure 203-2.–Kasilof River personal use and other boundaries