

Proposal 84**Submitted by: Dan Norman**

The Board of Fisheries and the public have gone through a lot of work to create and manage escapement goals for Kenai River Later Run Chinook Salmon for many board cycles. The department and sport fish advocates continually reinforce that we are in times of low productivity. The source of that low productivity is no doubt multifaceted and many of which cannot be dealt with at this Upper Cook Inlet meeting. One thing does hold true and that is the ESSN has shouldered the majority of the burden of conservation. The ESSN fleet continues to sacrifice more and more at every board cycle with gear, time and area restrictions. The in-river users remain status quo. No changes to reduce area, no changes to reduce time, no changes to reduce gear.

I think it's time that this Board implement something different for the in-river users rather than stick with the status quo for the last decade or 2 salmon lifecycles.

What proposal 84 would do is create a larger conservation area for salmon to spawn in relative peace. The Department testified that 40% of Late run Chinook spawn between the tide water and the Soldotna Bridge. The current regulation closes the river above the Soldotna Bridge. This leaves 40% of the run to harvest pressure or mortality from catch and release. During my times as a guide I have personally seen lots of big spawners caught at Big Eddy, Harry Gaines, Airplane Hole, Poacher's Cove, Sunken Island, College Hole, etc. I would argue that I have seen more big fish spawning lower in the river. If the goal is to allow "big fish" to spawn then we should do more to protect them where they spawn.

There is likely to be more harvest pressure below the sonar counter at river mile 14, but that's not the point. The point is to protect chinook salmon when and where they are spawning. The fish have made an amazing journey and run the gauntlet out to sea as fry and back as adults. We need to provide greater protection when they make it to the spawning grounds.

Substitute language for Proposal 84.

When the preseason or in-season projection of Late Run Chinook Salmon is below 18,750 fish, the department shall close sport fishing for king salmon above river mile 14 effective July 1 until the in season projection of 18,750 fish is achieved.