

Matanuska Susitna Fish and Wildlife Commission

PROPOSAL 207 AMENDED

5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of king salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the Northern District king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guided sport uses in order to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon over the entire run as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The department shall manage the Northern District for the commercial harvest of king salmon as follows:

(1) except as specified in (8) of this section, the season will open for commercial fishing periods with the first fishing period beginning on the first Monday on or after May 25, except when May 25 falls within a closed period, in which case the season opens the next following open period and continues through June 24, unless closed earlier by emergency order;

(2) fishing periods are from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays;

(3) the harvest may not exceed -1,500 king salmon;

(4) set gillnets may not exceed 35 fathoms in length and six inches in mesh size;

(5) no CFEC permit holder may operate more than one set gillnet per permit at a time;

(6) no set gillnet may be set or operated within 1,200 feet of another set gillnet;

(7) no CFEC permit holder may set a gillnet seaward of a set gillnet operated by another CFEC permit holder;

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

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

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

(A) Escapement projected between 9,000 to 15,000 conducted as a no bait fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per commercial set gillnet fishing period provided for in this section to no more than nine hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.;

(B) Escapement projected less than 9,000 to 10,000 conducted as a catch and release fishery, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, reduce the time allowed per fishing period provided for in this section to no more than six hours in duration, or from 7:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.;

(C) Escapement projected less than 9,000 closed, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the commercial king salmon fishery throughout the Northern District;

(11) if the Chuitna River is closed to sport fishing, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the area from a point at the wood chip dock located approximately at 61° 02.77' N. lat., 151° 10.04' W. long., to the Susitna River to commercial king salmon fishing for the remainder of the directed king salmon fishery;

(12) if the inseason Deshka River run projection is below the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial salmon set gillnet fishery throughout the Northern District.

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

Rationale for Amendment

- 1) The change from harvest cap from 12,500 to 1,500 more accurately establishes expectations in alignment with recent historical performance.
- 2) Incorporation of triggers based on SEG and inriver indicators allow for a more predictable management actions for the public and clear management direction for the Department.

Stock Status of the Deshka River King Salmon

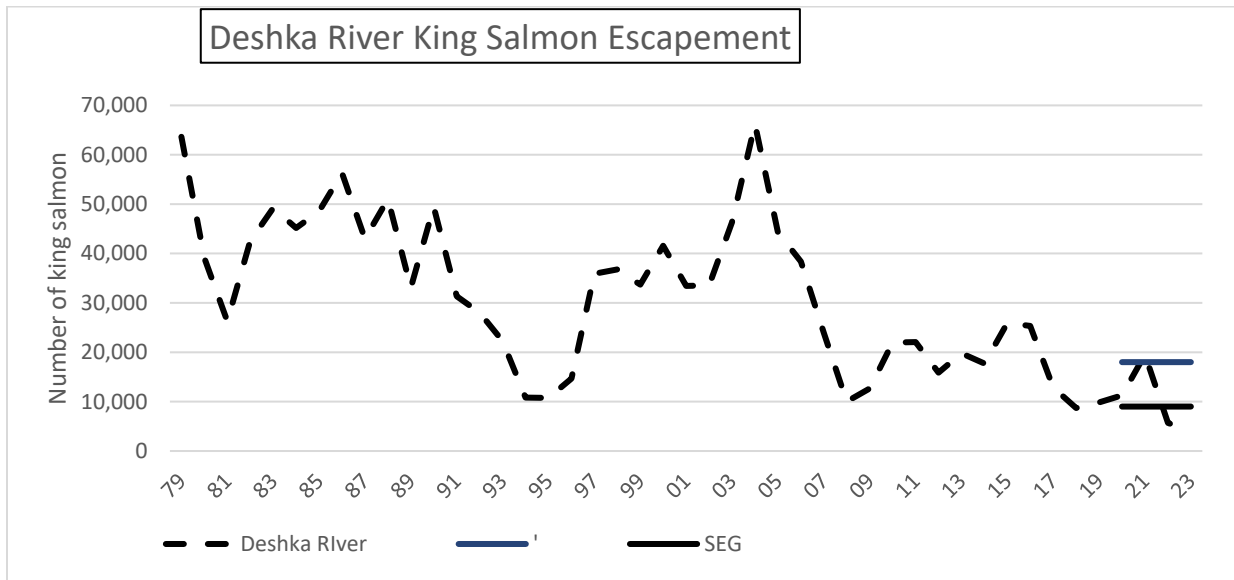


Figure 1.

- Figure 1. The low end of the SEG, 9,000 has not been achieved in 2022 and 2023. These escapements were 37% and 58% respectively BELOW the low end of the SEG.

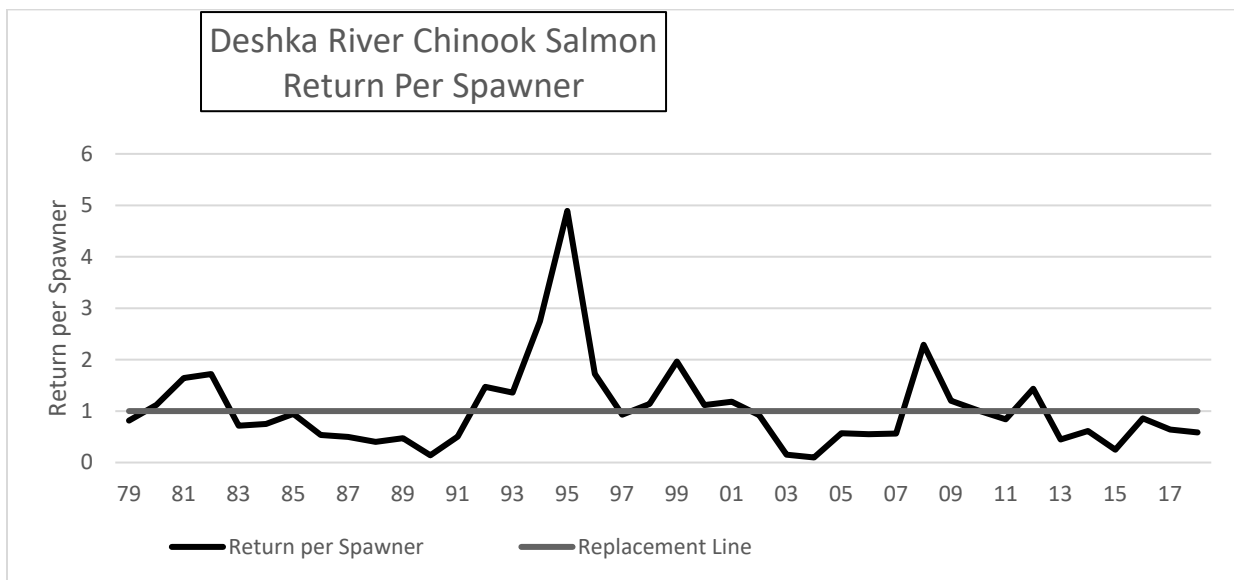


Figure 2.

- Figure 2. The Deshka River king salmon stock has NOT replaced itself for 17 of the last 21 brood years, from brood years, 2002-2018. (I included the 2018 brood year return per spawner because the age-6 component does not expect to add significantly to the return)
- Looking at the dramatic decline in the escapement, coupled with the poor return per spawner in the last 21 brood years, the overall harvest has been and continues to mine the escapement.

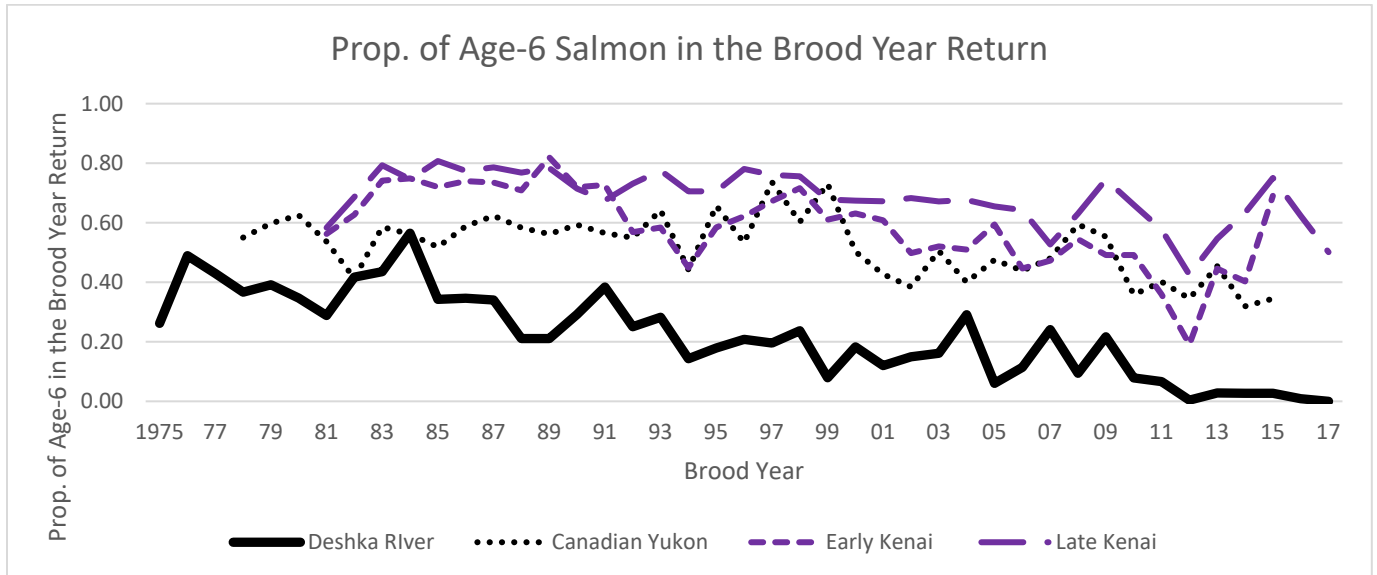


Figure 3.

- The age-6 component in the brood year return has dramatically decreased. In the 2023 escapement (brood 2017) was 0. The 6-year old component is comprised mainly of female salmon. It appears that the Deshka River is losing or has lost the driving force of reproduction.

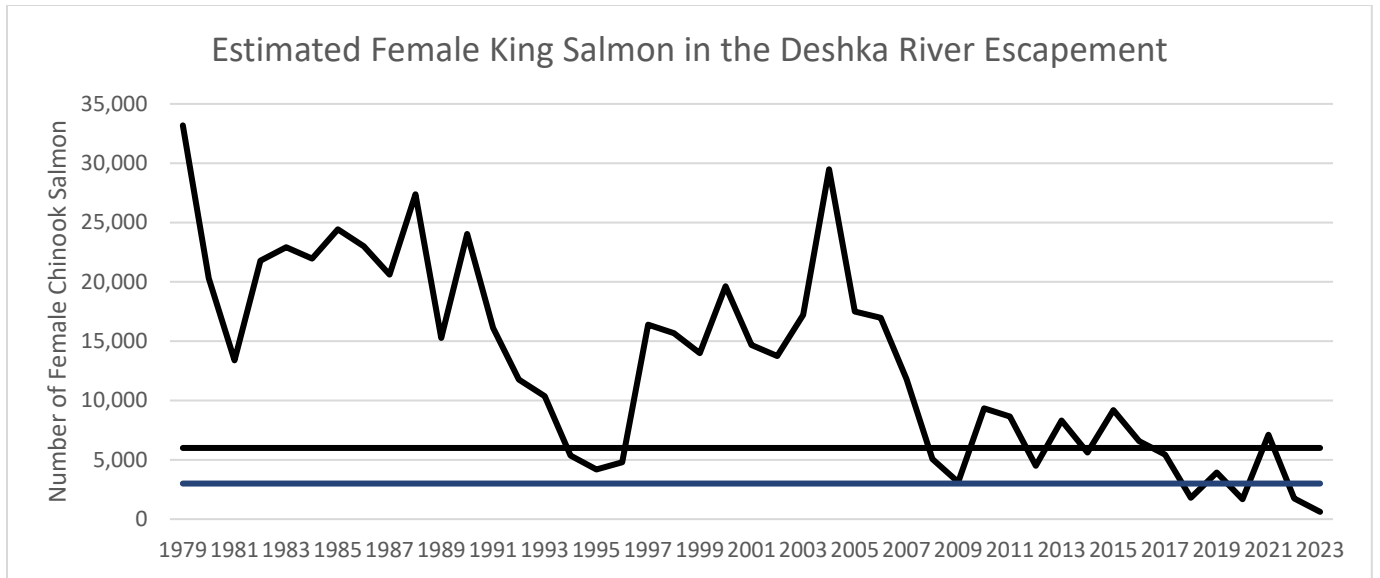


Figure 4.

- The estimated number of females in the Deshka River escapement now comprises only 16% of the escapement. And is 81% below the corresponding low end of the female salmon SEG (assuming a 2:1 male to female sex composition.)