

Submitted by Board Member Mike Wood, prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game¹.

February 29, 2024

Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon stock of concern action plan:

5 AAC 21.XXX. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon stock of concern management plan. (a) The department shall manage the late run of Kenai River king salmon to achieve an recovery goal of 15,000 - 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer as described in this section. Achieving the lower end of the Kenai River late-run king salmon recovery goal shall take priority over not exceeding the upper end of the escapement and inriver goal ranges for Kenai and Kasilof River sockeye salmon.

(b) The purposes of this management plan are to rebuild the Kenai River late-run king salmon stock to levels that consistently achieve management targets established by the board and provide sustainable harvest opportunity. The provisions of this management plan are in effect from June 20 through August 15, and supersede the provisions in 5 AAC 21.359. Until the recovery goal is achieved or exceeded for three consecutive years, one of which at or above 18,000 fish, which is the estimated number of spawners needed for maximum sustained yield (Smsy) and is expected to achieve the goal in future years, or is achieved four of six consecutive years, one of which at or above 18,000 fish and is expected to achieve the goal in future years. The Kenai River late-run king salmon will remain a stock of concern until the department recommends delisting to the board at a Board of Fisheries meeting.

(c) In the Kenai River sport fishery,

(1) the Kenai River is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; a king salmon that is caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(2) from July 1 through August 15, a person may not use more than one single hook unbaited artificial lure in the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake;

(3) the bag limit for Kenai River sockeye salmon is six per day, 12 in possession;

(4) that portion of the Kenai River downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake is open to unguided sport fishing from a nonmotorized vessel on Mondays in July; for purposes of this paragraph, a 'nonmotorized vessel' is one that does not have a motor on board.

(d) In the salt waters of Cook Inlet, the sport fisheries in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point are closed to the taking of king salmon.

(e) In the Central District Drift fishery, the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District is closed within two miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline.

(f) In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District set gillnet fishery

(1) From June 20 – June 30, when the preseason forecast, including harvest and projection error, of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 large fish, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery shall be opened as, follows:

(A) retention of king salmon is required and made available to the department for sampling;

(B) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(C) are open for no more than two eight hour periods;

(D) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(E) fishery openings shall be based around tides based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows: Niniichik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth plus 3 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth plus 4 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-31);

(2) From July 15 – July 27, when the inseason projection, including harvest and projection error, of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 large fish, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery shall be opened as follows:

(A) retention of king salmon is required and made available to the department for sampling;

(B) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(C) are open for no more than four eight hour periods;

(D) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(E) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows: Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth plus 3 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth plus 4 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point plus 5 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42);

(3) From July 28 – August 15, when the inseason projection, accounting for anticipated harvest, projection error and in season run strength of king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer is greater than 14,250 large fish, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery shall be opened as follows:

(A) retention of king salmon is required and made available to the department for sampling;

(B) each setnet permit holder may use up to one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth;

(C) are open for no more than two eight hour periods;

(D) with a 48-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday;

(E) fishery openings will be based upon Seldovia District Tide Tables by section as follows: Ninilchik River Mouth to Kasilof River Mouth plus 3 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-21, 244-22), Kasilof River Mouth to Kenai River Mouth plus 4 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-31, 244-32), Kenai River Mouth to Boulder Point plus 5 hours from Seldovia District low tide (Stat Areas 244-41, 244-42);

(4) in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery, notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 21.359, 5 AAC 21.365, and 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.

(g) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.365 Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan, the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) is closed to commercial fishing.

(h) In the Kenai and Kasilof Personal Use Fisheries

(1) in the Kenai River personal use fisheries, retention of king salmon is prohibited;

(2) a Kasilof River personal use set gillnet may not exceed 10 fathoms in length, four and three quarter inches in mesh size, and 29 meshes in depth.

(i) The department will, to the extent practicable, conduct habitat assessments on a schedule that conforms to the Board of Fisheries (board) triennial meeting cycle. The department is requested to report those findings to the board and submit proposals to the board for appropriate modification of this plan.

ⁱ Preparation of draft substitute language at the request of a Board member does not imply ADF&G support. The Department will state its position on the language during deliberation.