

I would like to question the intent of RC233:

Submitted by Board Member Carlson-Van Dort, prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game¹.

March 4, 2024

Substitute Language for proposal 200:

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

5 AAC 77.540(b) is amended to read:

(b) Salmon may be taken with a set gillnet in the Central District as follows:

(7) if the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery as described in 5 AAC 57.160 or the Kasilof River king salmon sport fishery are closed, (needs clarified) then the Kasilof River personal use set gillnet fishery shall close and immediately reopen with dip nets as the only legal gear type.

Clarifying statement: Based on the actions of the board by adopting the stock of concern recovery plan and possible actions on upcoming proposals, specifically proposal 150.

Why is this restriction only paired one way? We have substantive genetic data from setnets in the exact area that this personal use setnet fishery takes place. Interception of large Kenai Kings is very low at the mouth of the Kasilof. Furthermore, in 2023, the Kasilof PU setnet fishery was completely closed for King conservation, while the Kasilof Sport King fishery was open the entire summer, for the purpose of harvesting "ER" Crooked Creek hatchery fish. The entire river was open to King fishing with bait in 2023 till June 30, despite Crooked Creek being on the lower river. Lower river fishing for "ER" Crooked Creek Kings was then left open without bait until July 31, on top of the already struggling Kasilof natural King Run. CROOKED CREEK DID NOT ACHIEVE ITS KING SEG IN 2023, DESPITE ZERO KING HARVEST BY SETNETS. We have absolutely zero reliable data to indicate mortality in the Kasilof "ER" fishery that operates from May 15 – July 31, and all indications are that this fishery had the largest impact on natural Kasilof Kings in 2023.

This is not conservation. This is the elimination of a gear type. If board members want to pair restrictions in two completely different fisheries, they should at least pair them equally. This proposal does not pass the red-face test, and puts the burden of King conservation squarely on Alaskans trying to fill their freezer.

Furthermore, I believe this entire idea of switching from setnets to dipnets holds zero conservation value, and is completely untested and unproven in our fishery. How many people have actually tried to release a 50-60# King unharmed from a dipnet? I have, many times. I'm 6'3", 240lb, and have been picking fish from gillnets and dipnets my entire life. There is no easy or gentle way to get a 50# King out of a dipnet.

Todd Smith