

PROPOSAL 143 – 5 AAC 01.244. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan. Reduce the bag and possession limit of northern pike in the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 01.244(b)(2)(B) Minto Flats Norther Pike Management Plan to read:

(B) there is no daily or annual bag limit, except that in the area described in (G) of this paragraph, the bag limit is 5 [10] fish and the possession limit is 5 [20] fish and any fish that exceeds 30" will be handled carefully and immediately returned to the river.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? My concern is with the reduced population of pike in Minto Lakes as evidenced by the poor results of summer bait and fly fishing. I'm especially aware of the slow decline over the past 15 years. As a cabin owner and constant visitor to Minto for over 50 years, it's obvious to me that there is an issue. I believe that the main issue is the subsistence fishery in the Chatanika Special Harvest Area (SHA) that is really a glorified sports fishery that occurs during the winter. After the lakes freeze, the pike migrate to the confluence of Goldstream and the Chatanika. Due to this concentration, the fishing is easy and the fish plentiful. Fishermen are high-grading and taking the larger, female pike and that has a large consequence on the overall population of pike in the system. Of the 80 permits that were issued in 2014/15, 300 pike were reported as taken. Since most of these were large pike, those were mostly female spawners. The average catch for the past 15 years, as reported, exceeds 500 fish per year -that's a minimum of 7,500 large fish gone, which increases significantly when you consider that many of these are the spawning females.

Minto used to be a wonderful fishing experience for the hundreds of people from the Fairbanks North Star Borough who fly or boat into the Lakes each summer. Now, 80 people (permit holders) are allowed to effectively destroy the largest pike fishery in the United States. That's not right or o.k. If thru-the-ice fishing isn't reduced, the population will continue to decline from the low it is now, and it will be very difficult to recover based on the fact that it takes 15 to 20 years to grow a large pike.

My ideal solution would be to close the winter pike fishery down in the Chatanika SHA for 10 to 15 years. I understand that you cannot close subsistence fishing without also closing sport fishing, so at a minimum I would like to see the bag limit and possession limit the same as sport fishing and size restrictions in place to help protect the larger females.

PROPOSED BY: Marv Hassebroek

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