

**PROPOSAL 129 – 5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan.** Amend plan to prioritize the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks and to maximize economic yield and the overall benefits from salmon stocks managed under the plan, as follows:

**5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan.**

...

(3) in adopting the specific management plans described in (2) of this subsection the board will consider:

(A) the need for sustainable fisheries for all salmon stocks and salmon species throughout the Cook Inlet basin;

(B) the protection of the fisheries habitat both in the fresh water and the marine environment throughout the Cook Inlet basin; and

(C) the various needs and demands of the user groups of the salmon resources of upper Cook Inlet;

**(D) the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks to ensure sustainable runs;**

(4) in these management plans, the board **must** [MAY, AS APPROPRIATE] address the following considerations:

(A) the need to allocate the harvestable surplus among commercial, sport, guided sport and personal use fisheries; and

(B) the need to allocate the harvestable surplus within user groups;

**(C) the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks to maximize the benefit and the economic yield of these resources;**

....

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Unharvested surplus salmon describes those salmon in excess of escapement needs that are not harvested by commercial, sport or personal use fisheries. Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) has some of the largest wild, native salmon returns in Alaska. ADF&G does not enumerate the return of all stocks but based on the actual harvest and research data, the 2014 returns of all UCI salmon stocks could be estimated at around 30,000,000 fish. After escapement needs (7,000,000), there were approximately 23,000,000 salmon available for harvest. Of the 23 million salmon available for harvest, only around 4.5 million were utilized.

These abundant salmon stocks should be available for harvest; however, the effects of current BOF and ADF&G management plans and policies result in over 80% of these stocks going unharvested. In 2014, about 88% of the Chinook, 19% of the sockeyes, 84% of the coho, 96% of the pinks and 87% of the chums were in excess of all harvests or escapement needs and not utilized.

Unharvested surplus salmon also cause much more variability in returns. These erratic returns are more difficult to predict, more difficult to manage to achieve escapement goals and, as ADF&G reports assert, are not sustainable (SP 07-17, FMS 14-06).

Fisheries management needs to be focused on fully utilizing these abundant renewable resources with the understanding that allocation and daily management decisions have direct economic consequences to the welfare of the state.

The unharvested surplus stocks represent millions of lost tax revenue dollars to the State Treasury, tens of millions of dollars in lost economic benefit to the regional economies, loss of food products and by-products, and lost jobs. These same non-utilized salmon represent an opportunity for growth and diversification in local, regional and state economies.

The commercial sector is the only user group that has the capacity or the ability to harvest and monetize these surplus stocks.

**PROPOSED BY:** United Cook Inlet Drift Association (HQ-F16-012)

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