

Alaska Board of Fisheries Committee Summary

COMMITTEE A

Cook Inlet Area wide and Northern Cook Inlet Sport Fisheries
February 23-March 8, 2017

Board Committee Members:

1. Reed Morisky
2. Sue Jeffrey
3. Israel Payton

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Staff Members:

1. Charles Swanton-Deputy Commissioner, SFD
2. Tom Brookover- Director, SFD
3. Tom Taube – Deputy Director, SFD
4. Matt Miller- Regional Management Coordinator, SFD
5. Dan Bosch- Regional Management Coordinator, SFD
6. Sam Ivey- Area Management Biologist, SFD
7. Sam Oslund- Assistant Area Management Biologist, SFD
8. Jay Baumer- Area Management Biologist, SFD
9. Adam St. Saviour,-Fisheries Biologist, SFD
10. Krissy Dunker- Fisheries Biologist, SFD
11. Daryl Lescanec- Fisheries Biologist, SFD
12. Steve Dotomain- Fisheries Biologist, SFD
13. Taylor Hendricks- Fisheries Biologist, SFD
14. Donald Arthur, Fish & Wildlife Tech III, SFD

Alaska Wildlife Troopers

1. None.

Alaska Department of Law

1. Seth Beausang

Advisory Committee Members:

1. John McCombs- Central Peninsula AC
2. Joel Doner-Anchorage AC
3. Andy Couch- Mat Valley AC
4. Mike Crawford- Kenai/Soldotna AC
5. Martin Meigs- AK Sportfishing Association

6. Dwight Kramer-KAFC
7. George Heinman-Copper Landing AC
8. Howard Delo- Mat Su Fish & Wildlife Commission

Public Panel Members:

1. Neil Dewitt- Anchorage AC
2. Luke Graham
3. Scott Crowther

Federal Subsistence Representative:

1. None.

The Committee met March 2, 2017 at 2:24 p.m. and adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

PROPOSALS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE WERE: (18 total) 14, 34, 144, 145, 146, 233, 225, 232, 228, 235, 236, 234, 224, 237, 238, 240, 239, 241.

PROPOSAL 14 - 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area., 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area., 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area., 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area., and 5 AAC 62.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area. Allow snagging for sockeye salmon in all Cook Inlet freshwater lakes.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Oppose.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:.

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Unsure what lakes are included in proposal 14.
- Mat Su AC opposed.
- There is confusion or misinterpretation of what hooked in the mouth means.
- This proposal includes Russian lakes, Tustemena Lake, and Skilak Lake.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to oppose.

PROPOSAL 34 - 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area., 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 58.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish., 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area., 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area., 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area., and 5 AAC 62.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area. Allow party fishing in Cook Inlet fresh and salt water for all species except king salmon.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Oppose.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Mat Su AC opposed.
- Would increase harvest of fish that are already near threshold.
- On the Little Susitna River this may conflict with current regulations, anglers are required to quit fishing after harvesting a bag limit of salmon.
- Would create conflict.
- Could see abuse of regulations where one angler helps harvest another angler's fish (e.g. husband filling wife's limit when she is tired, or parent filling child's limit).

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to oppose.

PROPOSAL 144 - 5 AAC 56.XXX. Sport fishing by proxy., 5 AAC 57.XXX. Sport fishing by proxy., 5 AAC 58.XXX. Sport fishing by proxy., 5 AAC 59.XXX. Sport fishing by proxy., 5 AAC 60.XXX. Sport fishing by proxy., and 5 AAC 61.XXX. Sport fishing by proxy. Require that when proxy fishing in Upper Cook Inlet, once a bag limit is taken the next legal bag limit must be retained.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Opposed.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Anchorage AC in favor of proxy concept; proxy abuses unenforceable; this could be a placeholder in trying to come up with remedies for proxy abuse.
- Once bag limit is kept anglers have to keep a bag limit of another species.
- If undesirable fish are caught anglers would have to keep them.
- Central Peninsula AC supports.
- Mat SU AC opposed.
- Abuse of proxy in valley, people catch a limit of fish then go back out and catch and release, then continue with proxy harvest.
- Troopers spend a lot of time enforcing.
- Kenai River AC opposed.
- If opposed to proxy process, deal with it through statute, not with a proxy regulation.
- Anchorage AC is disappointed; want to hear more about proxy abuse and how to avoid it.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 145 - 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area., 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area., 5 AAC 61.112. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 61.120. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., and 5 AAC 61.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Allow only barbless hooks in Upper Cook Inlet flowing waters closed to salmon fishing.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Oppose.
- Studies show no significant difference in mortality rates of fish caught on barbed vs. barbless hooks.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Hook placement is more of an issue with mortality than hook type.
- Mat SU Borough AC opposed.
- Studies show fish foul hooked die whether barbless or barbed hooks are used, against regulation.
- Kenai AC for and against catch and release.
- Cooper Landing AC supports.
- There are ethical issues with proper release and handling.
- Issue is not mortality its harming fish, mutilating mouth, important to catch nice healthy fish.
- Anglers have a hard enough time catching fish with barbed hooks.
- If fishing to target northern pike, barbed hooks could not be used.
- Counterproductive when trying to eradicate northern pike.
- If a person wants to catch-and-release, they certainly have a choice to use a barbless hook.
- Definition of barbless is important, barbless hooks more expensive and not as readily available.
- Central Peninsula AC supports.
- Complicates the regulations, keep it simple.

- Anchorage AC opposes barbless hook regulation.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 146 - 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area., 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 58.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish., 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area., 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area., 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area., and 5 AAC 62.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area. Require the use of circle hooks when fishing for sockeye salmon.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Oppose.
- Not aware of any studies on circle hooks. Circle hooks will reduce efficiency of sockeye salmon fishing.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Central Peninsula AC supports.
- Cooper landing AC supports.
- Would reduce snagging on body but not in the mouth.
- Experimented with circle hooks while fishing for sockeye salmon, reduces foul hooking but not in the fins.
- Did not notice any difference in foul hooking than fishing with j hooks, started using other plugs for fishing sockeye salmon.
- Would limit sockeye salmon fishing to strictly flossing and would cause other issues.
- Studies suggest sockeye salmon die from catch-and-release.
- Is there any information on sockeye hooking mortality?
- Is the statement “sockeye salmon die from catch-and-release, is this correct or just a statement”?
- Have tried using circle hooks, did not work well in river for salmon, circle hook is for bait fishing; most sockeye salmon fishing is not bait fishing.
- Not sure small enough circle hooks are made, hook must go all the way in the mouth for hook set to be effective; would be more difficult to catch sockeye salmon; snagging still happens.
- Kenai River Sport Fishing Association opposes.
- Department does not factor in sockeye salmon catch-and-release mortality in harvest estimates.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 233 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Extend the area closed to sport fishing downstream of the Little Susitna weir.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Anchorage AC supports.
- Mat Su Borough Fish & Wildlife Commission voted to support with amendment to move from 1500ft to 3400ft downstream. Would meet SEG earlier in the year and lead to increased opportunity for harvest.
- Mat Su AC committee supported, but would oppose 3400ft amendment.
- When approaching weir, common practice to ask people at weir how many fish have gone through weir. When coming back downstream, boater's spook fish back down into area legal to fish.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 225 - 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the know Arm Drainages Area. Reduce the bag limits for salmon, other than king salmon, and prohibit releasing coho salmon.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Oppose.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Central Peninsula AC supports.
- Currently have restrictive coho limits in Little Susitna River.
- Regulation says if bag limit of other "Salmon" is kept before anglers catch a limit of coho salmon, anglers must quit fishing.
- Limits anglers from targeting other species.
- Limits catch-and-release.
- If there is no coho salmon conservation concern, why would we reduce bag limit and not allow catch and release?
- Pro catch-and-release.
- Could result in anglers having to keep a fish of poor quality.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 232 – 5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
Modify the Fish Creek personal use fishery to accommodate a new Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) range.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Department has recommended a new SEG.
- Departments supports.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Central Peninsula AC supports.
- Kenai AC supports.
- Mat SU AC advisory committee would like to see increased opportunity to harvest sockeye salmon in the Fish Creek PU fishery.
- Concerned about lowering goal of Fish Creek sockeye salmon.
- Mat SU AC not opposed, but were concerned about lowering the goal.
- If the SEG was lowered, fishery would start later.
- Issue with fishery starting late if you had an early run.
- Mat Su Borough AC- objection to lowering of SEG.
- The Department's response to poor returns is to lower the SEG.
- Would be more in favor if OEG was placed on top of SEG.
- Mat Su Fish & Wildlife Commission also concerned with lowering the goal.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 228 - 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Increase the hours open to fishing in Fish Creek.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Neutral, but oppose increasing fishing hours only on Fish Creek without including Cottonwood Creek and Wasilla Creek for regulatory consistency.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- KSRA supports combining 228, 235, 236.
- Mat Su Borough AC- Should be amended to include Cottonwood Creek and Wasilla Creek; would provide more opportunity for anglers.
- Mat Su AC- Fish Creek usually has harvestable surplus of coho salmon; fishery does not open for any salmon fishing until first weekend of August.
- Surplus numbers have been available for additional harvest.
- Central Peninsula AC opposes.
- Anchorage AC supports.
- Salmon would move at night after 10pm.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 235 - 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Increase the hours open to fishing on Cottonwood Creek.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- See comments proposal 228.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 236 - 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Increase the hours open to fishing in the Wasilla Creek/Rabbit Slough drainage.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- See comments proposal 228.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 234 – 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Open waters in a closed area on Wasilla Creek within 300 feet of Palmer Fishhook Road to sport fishing.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- This area is well above salmon fishery.
- This area will remain closed to salmon fishing.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 224 - 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Restrict hours and dates open to fishing on Jim Creek.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Snagging occurs at Jim Creek during nighttime hours.
- Water is shallow near the mouth of Jim Creek where fish are highly catchable, a night time closure might allow these fish free passage upstream.
- Where Jim Creek's mouth hits the Knik River to a mile above, there is a high chance of catching fish.
- Will provide hours in the day when fish migrate and could get up into the stream.
- Poor return this year and fishery closed early.
- Central Peninsula AC supports.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 237 – 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Amend the regulations for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages to allow harvest of salmon, other than king salmon, that are less than 16 inches in length.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Department proposal, support.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- None.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 238 – 5 AAC 59.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Add Lower Sixmile Lake to the list of stocked lakes.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Support.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Mat Su Borough AC supports.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support.

PROPOSAL 240 – 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Close all fishing on a portion of Campbell Creek when that portion is not open to coho salmon fishing.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Central Peninsula AC supports.
- Mat SU AC did not support closing throughout winter and opposed to dates of closure.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support, but Mat SU AC did not like dates.

PROPOSAL 239 - 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Create a youth-only fishery on Ship Creek.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- Neutral.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Graying of population of participants in fisheries; getting more youth involved is beneficial for future of sport fishing.
- Mat Su Fish & Wildlife Commission supports.
- Mat SU Borough AC supports.
- Kenai AC is 100% in support.
- Central Peninsula AC opposed; kids can go fishing with their families.

Public Panel Recommendation: No consensus.

PROPOSAL 241 – 5 AAC 59.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area. Extend the area closed to sport fishing on Ship Creek.

Comment Summary:

Department:

- None.

Department of Law:

- None.

Federal Subsistence Representative:

- None.

Public Panel Comments:

- Kenai AC supports.
- This area is important for hatchery brood collection and egg takes.
- Do not want to see potential shortage of eggs.
- Concern that wording is incorrect in proposal; make sure wording is correct.
- Need special permission to fish above Elmendorf dam and WJH hatchery.

Public Panel Recommendation: Consensus to support, but be sure language is clean.
