

Submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at the request of Board Chairman Jensen
October 19, 2016

PROPOSAL XX – 5 AAC 07.365. Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan. Clarify when 4-inch mesh set gillnets may be used during the early season king salmon subsistence fishery closure, as follows:

5 AAC 07.365 Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan.

...

(c) In the king salmon fishery,

(1) when the projected escapement of king salmon is below the drainagewide escapement goal range, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the commercial, sport, and subsistence king salmon fisheries;

(2) when the projected escapement of king salmon is within the drainagewide escapement goal range, the commissioner shall open and close fishing periods, by emergency order, as follows:

(A) the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the commercial, sport, and subsistence king salmon fisheries, and after June 11, to the extent practicable, the commissioner shall open, by emergency order, at least one fishing period per week for a directed subsistence king salmon fishery to provide harvest opportunity on surplus king salmon in excess of escapement needs;

(B) after June 11, fishing may be opened for commercial and sport fisheries to provide harvest opportunity on surplus king salmon in excess of escapement and subsistence needs;

(C) notwithstanding (c)(2)(A) of this section, before June 12 the commissioner shall, by emergency order, open at least one fishing period per week with four inch or smaller mesh gillnets; the gillnet may only be operated as a set gillnet and no part of the set gillnet may be more than 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark;

(3) when the projected escapement of king salmon exceeds the drainagewide escapement goal range,

(A) the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the commercial, sport, and subsistence king salmon fisheries, and after June 11, the directed subsistence king salmon fishery will be open seven days per week; and

(B) after June 11, the commercial and sport fisheries will be managed to provide harvest opportunity on surplus king salmon in excess of escapement and subsistence needs;

(C) notwithstanding (c)(3)(A) of this section, before June 12 the commissioner shall, by emergency order, open fishing with four inch or smaller mesh gillnets seven days a week; the gillnet may only be operated as a set gillnet and no part of the set gillnet may be more than 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark;

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current subsistence regulations provide for the use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to harvest non-salmon species during times of king salmon conservation. In recent years of depressed king salmon runs on the Kuskokwim River when subsistence king salmon fishing was closed, some subsistence users were targeting king salmon with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets traditionally used to harvest non-salmon species only. During the January 2016 Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Board of Fisheries meeting a regulation was passed that closes the Kuskokwim River king salmon subsistence fishery through June 11 annually. In 2016 the department did not allow the use of 4-inch or less mesh gillnets during the pre-June 11 king salmon subsistence fishing closure given expectations of directed king salmon harvest from this gear type. This proposal seeks clarification on the use of 4-inch or less mesh gillnets during the early season king salmon subsistence fishery closure.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries.