

**Alaska Board of Fisheries Meeting Presentation
January 15, 2019
Sheraton Hotel, Anchorage**

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Proposals AYK #63-67 and #69**

I'm here to speak in support of Proposals #63 through 67, and #69 for the A-Y-K Management Areas. All of these proposals, and this petition signed by 170 concerned citizens, are attempts by residents of the Interior to increase the area of protection in the Chatanika Harvest Area for the large female spawner Northern Pike, so these females are allowed to survive the through-the-ice winter subsistence fishery.

Unlike in some areas of Alaska where Pike might be thought of as invasive, according to Fish & Game they are one of the most important game fish in Interior Alaska. 20 years ago, Minto Flats was still a world class pike fishery, and it was not uncommon to land 40 to 48" fish.

For the last thirty years, 500 to 1000 Northern Pike have been taken annually in this through-the-ice fishery. Per Fish & Game, in 2018 alone 740 fish were taken, almost hitting once again the 750 mark which would restrict sport fishing.

As you've heard, 100% of the Northern Pike in Minto Flats migrate down Goldstream Creek to the Chatanika River in the winter. Most of them overwinter upstream from the confluence of Goldstream Creek and the Chatanika River over a 15 mile area in what is called the Chatanika Harvest Area. From the two studies by F&G, we see that their overwintering placement varies from less than 5% in the first mile to 50% within the first 2.4 miles, to 33% in the first mile and 50% in the first 1.4 miles. In other words, we just can't be sure where they will be, but we know that they are minimal in the first mile.

The spawner females – those over 30" – you've heard ALL fish over 30" are female - are the most aggressive and are often the first to be caught. In the last test by F&G, over 46% of the pike harvested through-the-ice are greater than 30" so are spawner females.

As you can also imagine, those 40-48" fish that used to be caught in Minto Flats are no longer there. Fish & Game has determined that there currently quite a few pike, but it's the big ones that are the females that we are worried about.

The residents of Minto Village used to fish this area, but they no longer fish subsistence there because they say it's been overfished. They want the regulations to go back to the 3 mile restriction so that the large pike have a protected area where they can grow larger, and the spawner females will be protected. Please refer to Proposal 63 from the Minto Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

We can turn this around if we act on it now. We may not see the difference, but our children and grandchildren might. These 30" spawner females are 8 to 10 years old. Add another 7-15 years for the 40 to 48" fish. What are the odds of a pike surviving 20+ years from being caught through the ice under the current regulations of this subsistence fishery?

They need protection. And, it's up to us! We are concerned that the normal 60 subsistence Fairbanks fishermen who wish to fish in this area have a harvest, but if managed properly there will be plenty for everyone. It's in all of our best interests to protect these sizeable spawners. There are many other areas close by where subsistence fishing is available year-round, with no limits on size or take, and gillnets are even approved.

Please either reinstate the 3 mile closure in the Chatanika Harvest Area, as so many want, to at least be assured that you are protecting at least half of the fish under any conditions. Or, at a minimum, close fishing in the first 2 miles and restrict the ten fish caught to no more than two over 30". The future of this fishery depends on us getting this right and not taking the chance of having one disastrous year. To assist further, please restrict, under Proposal 78, the use of multiple hooks to single hooks only in the Minto Lakes sport fishery.

Thank you for listening to our pleas to protect this fishery!