

PROPOSAL 42

5 AAC 06.361. Nushagak-Mulchatna King Salmon Management Plan.

Reduce fishing time in the Nushagak District commercial salmon fishery when the Nushagak River sport fishery is restricted for king salmon conservation, as follows:

Nush Chinook Option #2

When the Sport Fishing user group has had effort reduced by in-season EO's that restrict the group (ex: no bait, catch and release, closures, etc) Com Fish Biologist shall not permit Commercial Fishing, Drift or Set, on two consecutive high tides. Once the EO's are in force and restrictions applied to the Sport Fishing user group and the Com Fishers have fished a high tide, the district shall close to all commercial fishing 4 hours prior to the next published high tide at Clark's Point. The district can reopen 4 hours after that published high tide at Clark's Point.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The burden of conservation of the Nushagak Chinook Salmon run is 100% on the shoulders of the Sport Fishing industry. There are efforts made by Com Fish with mesh sizing that try to eliminate the by-catch of Chinook when targeting sockeye but there is still a large enough by-catch that it has an impact on the fishery. Sport Fish is not trying to prevent the Com Fish industry from catching sockeye and making a living. The impact on the number of Chinook making it in river is immediately diminished when commercial openers happen. This is not intended by the Com Fisher, but it happens. We need help in preserving the Nushagak Chinook run. When the Chinook run falls below acceptable escapement numbers, the sport fishery is restricted or potentially closed, yet com fish openings remain aggressive. The commercial fishery in the Nushagak district, although targeting sockeye, certainly has a by-catch or interception of Chinook bound for the Nushagak. At low estimates of 3 Chinook intercepted per vessel in a 12 hour opener and 400 vessels in the district we are talking about 1,200 Chinook. Many times the district is open for 23.5 or 24 hour periods thus hitting both tides and intercepting double that amount per day--2,400 Chinook in our example. That equates to 16,800 Chinook harvested via by-catch in one 7 day period. The Board is encouraged to take preventive measures to ensure that the Nushagak Chinook run survives.

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