

PROPOSAL 175

5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.

Allow commercial fishing with set gillnets in the North Kalifornsky Beach area starting July 1, as follows:

ON July 1, until the Kenai Section set net fishery opens by regulation, NKB may open for regular periods and up to 24 emergency hours per week. Gillnets will be allowed within 600 ft of mean high tide.

Gillnets must be no more than 29 meshes in depth and mesh size will not be larger than 4 ¾ in.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue here is lack of traditional and historic harvest of Kasilof River stocks on North Kalifornsky Beach (NKB), statistical area 244-32.

ADF&G staff has stated that Kasilof stocks are predominately "beach orientated". The ESSN fishery catches 58% of the Kasilof harvest, while the Drift fleet harvests 27%.

NKB since before Statehood was a traditional and historic harvester of Kasilof sockeye. With management changes that went into place in 1999, the opportunity to harvest Kasilof stocks was greatly diminished for NKB.

At the 2017 BOF meeting, the BOF by regulation put in a fishery to fish NKB within 600 ft of mean high tide (MHT), fishing up to 29 beach nets. In 2018 this directed Kasilof stock fishery was fished July 19 and 21. Genetics from these two days showed that over 50% of the harvest was of Kasilof origin.

If the NKB fishery was to start on July 1, with gear restrictions, the Kasilof component would be considerably higher. A 2009 report from ADF&G- Genetic Stock Identification of Upper Cook Inlet Sockeye Salmon Harvest, showed that the harvest of Kenai and Kasilof sockeye on ALL NKB was close to a 50/50 split between the two stocks (page 52). This study was taken from samples of the entire NKB section, from the MHT out to 9000 ft. If samples were taken only from nets fishing 600 ft of MHT, with restricted gear, Kasilof stocks would be considerably higher.

From 1999 the Kasilof River sockeye salmon has exceeded its BEG, 17 out of 20 years. ADF&G data from 2008-2015, showed in the Kasilof section setnet fishery, two ocean and younger age classes (smaller fish) comprise 33% of the harvest. While at the same time, these two ocean and younger age classes make up 61% of the Kasilof River escapement. In the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) data showed 73% of the harvest is comprised of two ocean and younger age classes, in certain years.

This proposal would help many ways. It would help keep the Kasilof from exceeding its BEG, OEG, and thus staying out of the KRSHA.

Using restricted gear, 4 ¾ in mesh size or smaller will target the smaller age class fish that make up the 61% of the Kasilof River escapement.

Additionally a study done by KINTAMA, Chinook and Sockeye Salmon Migration Patterns in Cook Inlet (author David Welch), a few years backed showed that tagged King Salmon off the Kenai River swam at an average depth of 16 ft. A traditional 45 mesh deep set net fishes about 18 ft deep at slack tide. A 29 mesh deep net at slack tide fishes about 12 ft deep. King salmon off the Kenai River swim in deep water off shore, rarely in shallow water closer to the beach.

Fishing this restricted gear will target abundant Kasilof stocks and will greatly reduce the harvest of any Kenai River King Salmon.

It is the intent of this proposal that this NKB fishery may open on July 1, even if that date does not fall on a regular scheduled period.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Hollier

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