

PROPOSAL 94

5 AAC 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan.

Implement an additional 24-hour closure in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 Kenai River sockeye salmon, as follows:

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(c) (3) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon,

(A) the department shall manage for an inriver goal range of 1,100,000-1,500,000 sockeye salmon past the sonar counter at river mile 19;

(B) subject to the provisions of other management plans, the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will fish regular weekly fishing periods, as specified in 5 AAC 21.320, through July 20, or until the department makes a determination of run strength, whichever occurs first; if the department determines that the minimum inriver goal will not be met, the fishery shall be closed or restricted as necessary; the commissioner may, by emergency order, allow extra fishing periods of no more than 84 hours per week, except as provided in 5 AAC 21.365; and

(C) the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery will be closed for one continuous 36-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday **and for one continuous 24-hour period per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Monday and 7:00 a.m. Wednesday;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the 2017 BOF meeting for Upper Cook Inlet Fin Fish the board approved the elimination of the mandatory 24 hour commercial set net closure on “Tuesday” when the Kenai River Sockeye run strength is expected to be greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon.

A Department assessment of the Kenai River Sockeye run strength greater than 4.6 million initiates much more allowable potential commercial fishing hours for harvesting this bumper crop of additional surplus fish. The “Tuesday” 24 hour mandatory set net closure window in earlier management plans was designed to allow some of that surplus return to reach the Kenai River and provide additional harvest opportunities for the Personal Use fishers and the Sport fishers inriver.

There was no biological or scientific reasoning to support the elimination of the “Tuesday” 24 hour closure window. This action resulted in a major loss of opportunity of surplus sockeye salmon in the Inlet to reach the Kenai River for the other two major user groups to share in the bounty. This resource is “owned” by all participants in each user group and the noncommercial users were unfairly penalized when surplus numbers reach record levels and the closure window was eliminated.

This requested change in the management plan reinstates the “Tuesday” 24 hour set net closure window during periods when greater than 4.6 million Kenai River sockeye are expected.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Outdoor Journal/Gary Barnes

(HQ-F19-111)
