

Northern District Salmon Management Plan (4 proposals)

PROPOSAL 204

5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* to specify management priority of sockeye, pink, and chum salmon includes inriver users, as follows:

(a) The purposes of this management plan are to minimize the harvest of coho salmon bound for the Northern District of upper Cook Inlet and to provide the department direction for management of salmon stocks. The department shall manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks [PRIMARILY] for commercial uses **and in-river uses** to provide [COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN WITH AN ECONOMIC YIELD FROM THE] **an opportunity to** harvest [OF] these salmon resources based on abundance. The department shall also manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, to provide sport and guided sport fisherman **and other in-river users** a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of in-river restrictions, or as specified in this section and other regulations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This new language gives direction to the department to provide all users of the salmon resource more equal sharing.

PROPOSED BY: Kristine Ogonowski

(EF-F19-060)

PROPOSAL 205

5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Clarify the definition of "minimize" in the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

I would like to see the BOF specifically define what is meant by the term "minimize." This could take the form of a specified percentage of the harvestable surplus or it could be a specific cap number based on the five-year average of sport harvested silvers in the Northern District or, perhaps, more specific restrictions on time and area for the commercial fishery than currently exist.

I don't have a specific methodology in mind other than having a specific definition as guidance for ADF&G to manage to. When the commercial drift fleet harvests 191,490 silvers, as they did in 2017 and the entire Northern District sport harvest was 47,706, it doesn't appear that any "minimization" of the commercial harvest is occurring.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? When the Board of Fisheries developed this plan, they included purpose and direction for ADF&G to follow when managing under this plan. The plan starts, "(a) The purposes of this management plan are to minimize the harvest of Coho salmon bound for the Northern District of upper Cook Inlet and to provide the department direction for management of salmon stocks ... The department shall also manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District Coho salmon, to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restriction "

The term "minimize" has never been defined in regulation. Over the last ten years, using available data from Fish and Game (2008 to 2017), the Central District commercial drift fishery has harvested more Coho bound for the Northern District than the entire Northern District sport catch in eight of the last ten years. At the 2017 UCI meeting, I was personally told by the Soldotna commercial fisheries management biologist that 95% of all coho salmon harvested by the drift fleet had been shown by genetic sampling to be northern-bound silvers. If the Northern District commercial set net fishery is included, then the commercial fishery has harvested significantly higher numbers of coho salmon in all ten years. How is this "minimizing" the commercial harvest of northern-bound coho?

The commercial data comes from Fisheries Management Report No. 18-10, Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Fisheries Annual Management Report, 2017, by Pat Shields and Alyssa Frothingham. The sportfishing data comes from Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 1996--. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited April 7, 2019).

PROPOSED BY: Howard Delo (HQ-F19-086)

PROPOSAL 206

5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* to allow for regular amounts of set gillnet gear in the Northern District commercial sockeye salmon fishery during times of reduced effort in the Central District, as follows:

5 AAC 21.258 (h) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.358(a), from July 20 through August 6, if a regular Monday or Thursday regular fishing period in the Central District drift gillnet fishery is restricted or closed to reduce the harvest of Central District sockeye salmon, the commissioner may, by emergency order, rescind subsection (c) and return a full complement of fishing gear to the Northern District set gillnet fishery. The regular period restriction referred to in this subsection is for Drift Area 1 or full Central district fishing periods.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? When the Northern District Salmon Management Plan was adopted the plan was based on the assumption that Kenai River sockeye salmon stocks would likely dominate ADF&G's management strategy for use of the Central District drift gillnet fleet to harvest these fish. The plan assumed that the bulk of the harvestable surplus of Northern Cook Inlet (NCI) sockeye salmon would be caught by the Central District drift fleet. When Susitna River sockeye salmon were later classified as a Stock of Yield concern, 5 AAC 21.358(c) was adopted to stabilize the Northern District set net fishery with limited opportunity to catch the remaining portion of the harvestable surplus of NCI sockeye salmon. From July 21 through August 6, ADF&G was provided with authority to reduce gear in the Northern District set gillnet fishery to reduce the harvest of Susitna River sockeye salmon. The drift fleet was also restricted to meet the same objective.

During the 2018 UCI commercial fishery, the Kenai River sockeye salmon run did not return as predicted, and the Central District drift fisheries were greatly restricted and closed. These Central District closures meant that some of the harvestable surplus of NCI sockeye salmon was not harvested by the drift fleet. However, the Northern District setnet fishery was not given opportunity to harvest any of these fish.

Under the existing language of 5 AAC 21.358 increasing the fishing opportunity in the Northern District is not explicit and the regulation could be interpreted to not allow it. This proposal seeks to clarify the regulation to explicitly state that during times of low abundance of Central District sockeye salmon stocks, which results in reduced fishing effort there, the Northern District sockeye salmon fishery should be managed to catch the harvestable surplus normally caught in the Central District.

PROPOSED BY: Northern District Set Netters Association of Cook Inlet/Stephen Braund
(HQ-F19-062)

PROPOSAL 207

5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Remove the Eastern Subdistrict gear restrictions in the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 21.358(c) would be amended to read:

(c) From July 20 through August 6, if the department's assessment of abundance indicates that restrictions are necessary to achieve the escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the **General Subdistrict of the** Northern District and immediately reopen a season during which the number of set gillnets that may be used is limited to the following options selected at the discretion of the commissioner, except that from July 31 through August 6, the commissioner may allow the use of two set gillnets in that portion of the General Subdistrict south of the Susitna River:

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Susitna River sockeye salmon were designated as a Stock of Yield (SOY) concern by the board in 2008. An action plan was developed to conservatively manage UCI commercial fisheries that harvest this stock while research continued to better understand limitations on stock productivity. For the set gillnet fishery in the Northern District, the board provided the department with authority to reduce gear from July 20 through August 6 in order to reduce sockeye salmon harvest and to achieve escapement goals at Judd, Chelatna, and Larson lakes.

From 2006 to 2014 ADF&G sampled the Eastern Subdistrict set gillnet commercial sockeye salmon harvest for Genetic Stock Identification (GSI). From these data, it was determined that from an average harvest of 13,121 sockeye salmon per year, only 13.3% or 1,777 fish per year were of Susitna River origin. The average annual run of sockeye salmon to the Susitna River from 2006-2014 was 413,747 fish per year, which means the Eastern Subdistrict harvest of this stock is only 0.5% of the annual run. Based on this very small harvest of Susitna River sockeye salmon,

this proposal seeks to remove the Eastern Subdistrict set gillnet fishery from the gear restrictions found in the 5 AAC 21.358(c) *Northern District Salmon Management Plan*.

PROPOSED BY: Russell Clark

(HQ-F19-073)
