

Submitted at the request of Board Member John Wood by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game

February 17, 2020

Additional documentation for proposal 81:

Proposal 183 from 2014 UCI BOF meeting

PROPOSAL 183 - 5 AAC 56.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 57.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 59.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 60.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 61.XXX. New Section; and 5 AAC 62.XXX. New Section. Adopt a policy that prohibits sport fishing within 50 percent of identified salmon spawning areas in all Upper Cook Inlet salmon waters, as follows:

I am not asking for a regulation; I am asking for a statement of policy that would result in the board of fish placing a call for proposals toward the establishment of spawning bed sanctuary on every salmon stream that empties into upper Cook Inlet.

ISSUE: The commercial spawning bed fishing fleet has been allowed unlimited growth until fish stocks inlet wide are imperiled. This proposal seeks to gain board of fish support for the proposition that important spawning beds should be sanctuary. Be it proposed that in every salmon stream that drains into upper Cook Inlet 50% of the spawning bed area, including the most important spawning beds, shall be sanctuary that is closed to fishing or harassment. Procedurally, the board of fish would put out a call for public proposals to help identify spawning bed areas that need protection by GPS coordinates, and also seek input the fish and game management. Over time, in a schedule workable considering the need for public notice and participation, every salmon stream in the Cook Inlet basin will have at least some spawning bed sanctuary.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE? If we allow spawning bed fishing to grow unrestrained forever, then we will witness the destruction of the salmon runs. Or we will see whipsaw management, where an area is open to spawning bed fishing, and then closed for years to allow the salmon to recover. Alaska's Constitution demands that renewable resources be managed for maximum sustainable yield. Our current policy of a free for all on spawning beds is incompatible with our responsibilities. The Matanuska Valley river systems are severely impaired by these practices. Kenai River king and silver salmon could benefit from spawning bed protection. West side spawning beds in the Big River Lakes and the Kusteatian River are seeing ever increasing spawning bed fishing. If we do not set aside some sanctuary areas where there is not fishing, except by emergency order when there are too many fish on the spawning bed, then we will witness a shameful collapse of the resource caused by greed and stupidity. Spawning beds are sanctuary!

WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR THE PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED? Yes, salmon caught on the spawning beds are low quality. When

spawning beds are sanctuary, more effort will be placed on catching salmon in migration when they have nutritional value.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? Foremost, the salmon will benefit. The public generally will benefit by maintaining healthy salmon runs. The commercial fishermen, who have been displaced by the ever growing spawning bed fishery would benefit as the salmon recover. Guides who switch their operations to environmentally sound methods of catching salmon in migration would benefit.

WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER? Primarily, certain sport fishing guides will be hurt by not being able to access spawning beds for their clients.

OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED? Spawning beds should be sanctuary, most people know this. As our population grows, and tourism grows, the salmon need protection where they are most vulnerable, on their spawning beds. There is no other rational option but to identify important spawning beds as sanctuary.

PROPOSED BY: David Chessik (HQ-F13-319) **

PROPOSAL 183 – 5 AAC 56.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 57.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 59.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 60.XXX. New Section; 5 AAC 61.XXX. New Section; and 5 AAC 62.XXX. New Section.

PROPOSED BY: David Chessik.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would adopt a policy that implements a call for proposals to prohibit sport fishing within 50% of identified salmon spawning areas in all Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) salmon waters.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are many area and date closures in place intended to protect stocks easily accessible in tributary streams and vulnerable stocks that lack inseason assessment. Many streams in the Kenai Peninsula, Anchorage, and the Mat-Su Valley areas are closed each spring to all fishing during rainbow trout spawning. Sections of streams at the head of Turnagain Arm are closed each year to all fishing after July 14 to provide additional protection to coho and king salmon stocks vulnerable in tributaries with no inseason assessment.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) would need to implement a new call for proposals. If a new specific call is made within the context of an existing call, it may cause considerable confusion for the public. If the call is made separately, it will sustain additional costs for the department. It is not clear from the proposal whether it would require a separate board meeting.

The department would need to define “major” spawning sites for all species of fish throughout Cook Inlet, which would also cause a substantial cost to the department. Regulations would become more complex, and fishing opportunity would be reduced or eliminated in many UCI waters.

BACKGROUND: The board of fish and game regulatory process is among the most open and transparent in the country. As currently crafted, the process is wholly supportive of the Alaska Constitution, Article 8.2 that calls for the utilization, development, and conservation of all natural resource belonging to the State for the maximum benefit of its people. The board currently solicits proposals on an area and fishery, rather than issue, basis.

Throughout much of the open-water season in Southcentral Alaska, freshwater systems host spawning salmon of one species or another. Spawning can take place throughout a system: from the intertidal reaches, where pink salmon spawn, throughout a river system, and into lakes where sockeye salmon spawn.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal due to administrative, budgetary, and policy considerations. Current calls for proposals already allow for proposals which suit the narrow preference of this submission. Calling out a narrowly defined use and action is redundant. While costs are modest for one additional public notice, costs for single topic meetings can be relatively high. This proposal seeks the board expressly call for proposals that limit opportunity. This is inconsistent with two of the three directives of Article 8.2 and reduces the objectivity of the current process. Current closures in many Cook Inlet streams are in place to protect king, coho, and sockeye salmon, and rainbow trout easily accessible in tributary streams.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.