

Amy Foster. Proposal 131 and History of Southeast District Mainland

During the past 150 years, economic necessity forced some local residents off several small communities moving them to larger communities having deeper ports and fish processing facilities a few miles away. My early childhood years were spent in Unga, a prominent indigenous village that is currently abandoned today. We must never take anything for granted, if people could leave old historical townsites that are dependent upon the sea then no town or village is safe.

Commercial salmon fisheries in the South Peninsula date back to at least 1888 when canneries were reportedly constructed at Orzinski Bay in SEDM and Thin Point Cove. Earliest catch records for the South Peninsula date back to 1908, while permits and landings have only been documented since 1970. Early catches in the South Peninsula were predominantly sockeye salmon with Thin Point, Middle Lagoon and Orzinski Lake being the largest sockeye producing systems. Orzinski Lake is located in Southeast District Mainland (SEDM).

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service operated a weir at Orzinski from 1929 through 1941. In 1990 ADFG reinstated the weir because of the importance of Orzinski Lake Sockeye in determining fishing time in Northwest Stepovak.

Since 1978 set gillnet gear is the only legal gear type allowed through July 10 and after July 10 seine gear.

Prior to 1974, the SEDM fishery was regulated by set weekly fishing periods which were generally 5 days per week in duration. From 1974 through 1977 the fishery was open on a day by day basis with Chignik Lagoon. During some years such as 1977, only short fishing periods were required to harvest large runs in Chignik Lagoon while daily harvest rates and the total harvest in the SEDM fishery were low.

In 1978 the BOF restricted fishing periods to three days per week for set gillnet gear only through July 10. In 1978 harvest rates were low despite strong Chignik runs resulting in a SEDM catch of only 31,197 sockeye, of which 21,952 sockeye were considered Chignik destined salmon. From 1973 through 1978 an average of about 36 set permits fished in SEDM. Years of no fishing was not included in this average. No fishing transpired in 2022 in SEDM; however, there were 35 set net permit holders in 2022 in the South Alaska Peninsula.

Several changes transpired throughout the years in SEDM. During the winter of 1978 -79, the BOF increased fishing time from three days to five days per week but specified that no more than 60,000 estimated Chignik sockeye salmon could be harvested through July 10. The Board of Fish also stipulated that the fishery could be closed if it became apparent that the Chignik escapement requirements were not assured. The BOF also stated that if the CMA catch exceeded 1,000,000 sockeye before July 10, the SEDM fishery could continue beyond the 60,000 sockeye salmon ceiling. This management plan remained in effect until 1985.

**In 1985 the BOF developed a management plan based on the Cape Igvak Salmon Plan instead of using a set fishing schedule and a percentage. The percentage of sockeye salmon allocated to the SEDM is 7.6% of the total number of sockeye salmon harvested in the CMA through July 25.**

**Generally, no commercial salmon fishing occurs in SEDM unless the department believes at least 600,000 sockeye salmon will be harvested in CMA.**

First, I would like to point out Chignik had a bust a few years in their fishery. Noted also is the fact that it wasn't a good season for us also. We would like to point out to the board that under the current regulations of the SEDM for fishermen that historically fish there, it is a bust for us also, not only the past five years but several intermittent years since these regulations have been implemented. Some fishermen, not all, along with some from Chignik areas moved to another area trying to scrape away a season moving away from a historical, traditional area of fishing.

Last summer 30 permit holders fished in Area L, the Chignik Area, for 34 straight days. 334,704 sockeye salmon were harvested during 2022 in Area L. In SEDM no fishery occurred in 2022. No fishery has occurred in SEDM in 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2014, 2008, 2007 and 1997.

**Please note that the allocation criterion (80% of sockeye salmon harvested in SEDM are considered Chignik bound) is based on a tagging study conducted in eastern SEDM in 1961 in which 8 out of 10 tag recoveries were recovered in Chignik Lagoon.**

The more reading I do, the more research I find, an onsite participant in the SEDM fishery has me wondering if the historical method is based on assumption. Where we assume all fish caught in the CMA are Chignik Bound fish and we assume 80 percent of the select SEDM harvest is Chignik bound fish in SEDM from June through July 25.

Is the Chignik harvest actually being overestimated, because genetic data indicates mixed stocks in CMA. The regulations for SEDM do not match current genetic information.

Chignik's escapement goals for 2022 was 808,086 with 412,228 the early run and 395,858 the late run of sockeye salmon. 2023 Chignik Management Area predicted sockeye salmon harvest is expected to be in the week category with an estimate of 937,000. If nothing is done the trend will continue with no fishing in SEDM.

Many set netters have recorded DNR shore fishery leases that are paid yearly to the State of Alaska and some of those leases are in the SEDM. The majority of those shore fishery leases have been in place in the same location for over 100 years. The only difference is hands have changed on who holds title to the shore fishery lease; the locations are still the same throughout the years.

There was one year in 2011 Chignik fishermen realized historic returns of red salmon despite continuous fishing in the SEDM by the set net fleet. The set net fleet only realized moderate

returns with no impact or obvious effect on Chignik. The SEDM fishery was open in June for over 30 days with setnet fishermen catching very low numbers of red salmon daily not making an impact or obvious effect on the Chignik fishery.

Subsistence states in the ADFG report state and federal subsistence was open for sockeye salmon the entire season in the Chignik Management Area. It is unknown what subsistence harvests are until this spring.

The main issue is we are either extremely limited in time to fish or we cannot fish at all. One missed escapement goal does not prove we have a huge impact on their fishery. If nothing is done, and more restrictions are put forth upon our fishery, the local fishermen will continue to be denied access to a historical fishing area which in turn is affecting the viability of set netting as there are few fishable areas in the Shumagin Islands due to overcrowding.

**Putting a Proposal forth, Amending the Southeastern District Mainland Management Plan to allow commercial salmon fishing with set gillnet gear and after July 11 seine gear concurrent to the Chignik Area Commercial Salmon Fishery to:**

- 1. Conduct concurrent fishing periods between Area L and SEDM.**
- 2. The Elimination of the harvest of 300,00 to 600,000.**

Fishing the same time as Chignik openings is just the minimum fishing time solution along with the elimination of the harvest of 300,000 to 600,000. The SEDM Fishery presents no risk to conservation or management of the Chignik run even if opened on a regular schedule