

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Public Comment  
Submitted by Mitch Seybert

My name is Mitch Seybert. I am the chairman of the Lower Bristol Bay Advisory Committee. I am writing to you to reaffirm the Lower Bristol Bay AC's commitment to Proposal 126 which we submitted.

Proposal 126 seeks to restrict fishing in the northern portion of the Outer Port Heiden Section (see figure 126-1 below, excerpt from ADFG Staff Comments).

The purpose of this area restriction is to direct more commercial fishing effort on local Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks, particularly the Meshik River and Ilnik River stocks, that migrate within this area. This closure will also improve fish quality because of a shorter transport from fishery to processor.

The proposed line is about 1 statute mile North of North River (Reindeer Creek). The North River (Reindeer Creek) mouth can move as much as 3/8-1/2 statute mile from one year to the next and so the line proposed if adopted by the board will always have North River (Reindeer Creek) in the open area.

Escapements into the Meshik River have exceeded the high end of the current escapement goal (86,000) 4 out of the last 5 years. In the Ilnik River, sockeye salmon escapements have also exceeded the high end of the current escapement goal (60,000) 4 out of the last 5 years (see Table 126-1 below, excerpt from ADFG Staff Comments). This proposal seeks to adjust the Section so that more local Northern Peninsula salmon stocks are harvested, resulting in more appropriate escapement to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers. Note also that WASSIP indicated that Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks contributed an average of 48% to the SW Ilnik harvest (3 years); 30% to the NE Ilnik harvest (3 years); and 21% to the Outer Port Heiden Section harvest (2 years).

The quality of the fish delivered from this fishery suffers since most fisherman are fishing very near the northern boundary of the Outer Port Heiden district. Delivery of these fish is delayed by the long travel distance from the point of harvest to the processor.

If nothing is done, escapements to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers will continue to exceed the upper end of their respective escapement goals. Additionally, poor quality fish will continue to be delivered to processors because of the long travel distance and time.

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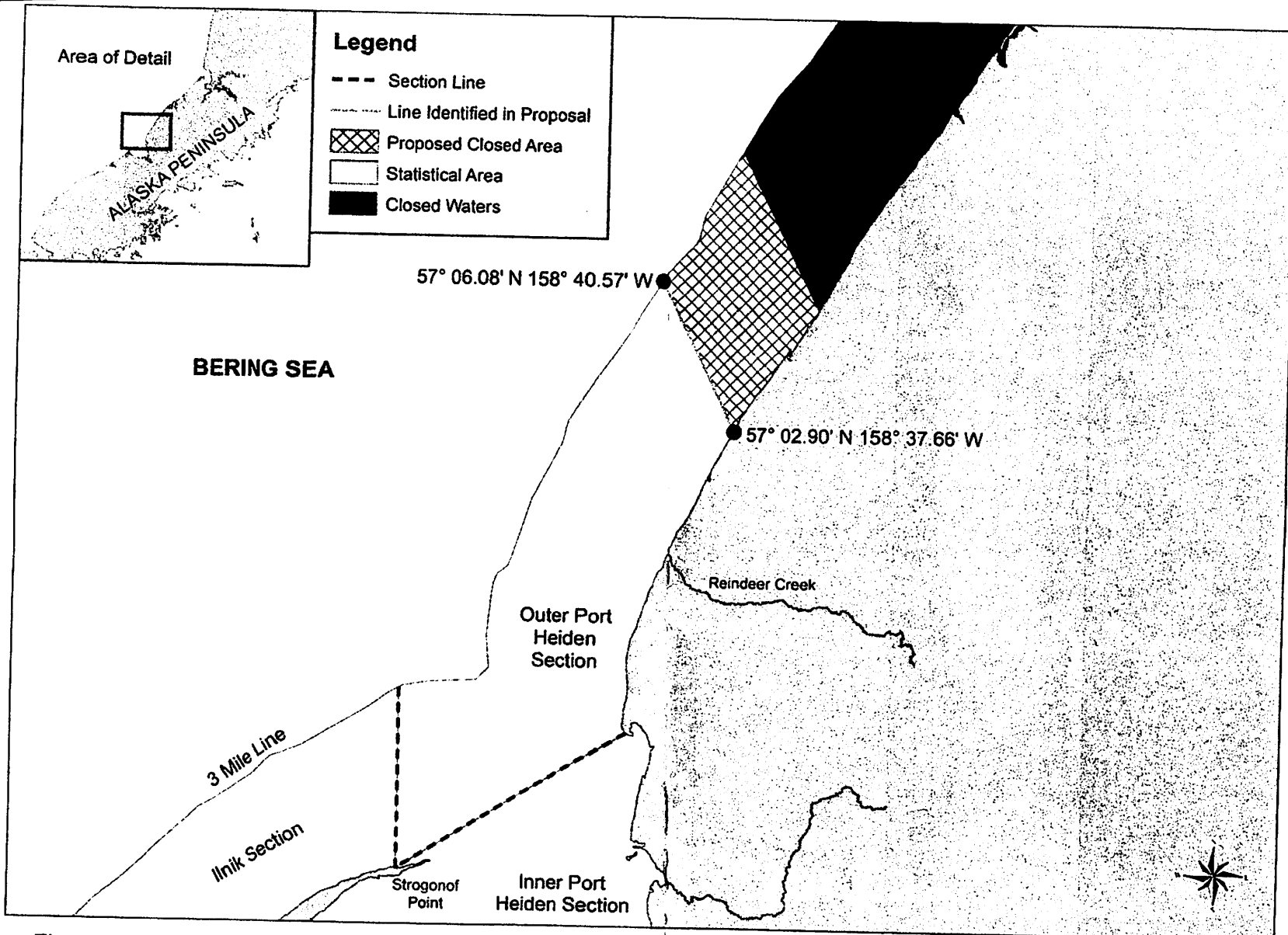


Figure 126-1.-Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections, with illustration of proposed closed waters.

Table 126-1.—Outer Port Heiden and Ilnik Section sockeye salmon harvest and Meshik River and Ilnik River sockeye salmon escapement and goals, 2013–2022.

	Harvest		Escapement			
	Outer Port Heiden Section	Ilnik Section	Meshik River	Escapement goal	Ilnik River	Escapement goal
2013	254,916	81,289	65,600		51,000	
2014	420,247	791,256	95,500	25,000–100,000	59,000	
2015	868,876	461,428	149,500		26,000	
2016	632,512	2,168,297	116,310		124,000	40,000–60,000
2017	502,531	2,528,535	191,725		238,000	
2018	356,014	1,067,597	134,100		81,000	
2019	527,343	1,528,127	107,200	48,000–86,000	75,000	
2020	787,773	473,491	64,550		41,000	
2021	427,327	1,746,023	117,500		70,211	
2022	1,098,130	2,023,876	112,900		110,500	
2013-2022 Average	587,567	1,286,992	115,489		87,571	