

PROPOSAL 213

5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Adopt new 'paired restrictive' management measures for the Northern District commercial salmon set gillnet fishery as follows:

(1) (A) Starting August 1 through Until there is adequate projected coho and sockeye abundance to extend the Lower Susitna River Personal Use Fishery (as specified in 5 AAC 77.540 (h) (1)), the commercial fishery in the Northern District may use one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length per permit holder.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Think of the Northern Cook Inlet salmon resource users as a family. One of the family's core values is sharing. As the family grows their value of sharing requires older individuals to allow newer family members a portion of the salmon resource, thereby reducing older members' shares to provide a portion for the new. There is lag time in resource sharing, as the youngest family members do not eat much, and the youngsters must also grow and develop their fishing skill, before they catch much. As the family expands, however, even if the salmon resource level remains constant, older members' portions continue to decline through time.

The Northern District Salmon Management Plan family has grown so large, and the shared resource portions so small, that over 99% — if not all members - are now more dependent on other food sources and means of employment than salmon. While some members have little fish interest, many continue to highly value the resource and traditional opportunities to fish, harvest, and enjoy meals of salmon. As a whole, the family desires to maintain their salmon resource and their shared traditional salmon-related opportunities.

The oldest family member, Subsistence, once harvested salmon throughout Northern Cook Inlet. As the family population exploded, Subsistence was banished from her home when a city called "NonSubsistence Area" grew around it. When Subsistence wanted to live and continue her traditions in what is now called a "Subsistence" area, she was made to beg, refused traditional use, and finally granted traditional use by separate court orders in two small portions of rural Northern Cook Inlet. Without further court order or board action, Subsistence Fishing has legally expired from the largest portion of her subsistence area.

Following Subsistence's untimely death, her son, Lower Susitna River Personal Use, was adopted at the 2020 Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting. The board allowed young Personal Use up to 7-days of July salmon harvest opportunity within a limited portion of Subsistence's rural area. An additional board stipulation would have allowed Personal Use to fish through August, if adequate salmon abundance could be projected at upriver locations. While that specific abundance of salmon may have been caught somewhere, it was never projected inriver, so Personal Use fished only during July.

In 2020, 2021, and 2022 Personal Use harvested modest numbers of salmon each year. Reading the family's salmon management plan, after his last abbreviated fishing season, Personal Use found a primary plan purpose was to provide inriver users a reasonable opportunity to harvest

salmon resources over the entire run. “I am an inriver user,” he thought, “but 3 years in a row, I could only harvest during July.”

Personal Use inspected the plan closer along with other fishing regulations and concluded, specific family members (Subsistence, Personal Use, and Commercial permit holders) might be allowed larger harvest opportunities of the shared salmon resources. The intent of the plan, however, was to limit excessive commercial harvests — before they could reduce the more modest harvest opportunities of all other family members — and specifically, inriver users.

Within the plan Personal Use found three separate “minimize the harvest of coho salmon” passages and understood they were specifically referring to commercial harvest of coho salmon. Regulations and management practices, however, were not even allowing enough coho salmon upriver for him to fish a single day in August. Commercial regulations and management practices, allowed increased number of commercial nets after July 30, even where and when coho salmon were likely to be the most abundant fish caught. Management to “minimize the commercial harvest of coho salmon” was clearly broken.

Lower Susitna River Personal Use realized lag time exists before regulations within the plan, could be updated to allow all inriver users more reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon resources “over the entire run.” While studying the plan, fishing regulations, and salmon resource management, he concluded that inriver family members (some with meager opportunity compared to his) were shouldering excessive conservation burden — and therefore, receiving less harvest benefit than they should.

In hopes of providing both adequate salmon for spawning escapement needs and more reasonable harvest opportunity over the entire run for all inriver users, Personal Use suggested an amendment to his family’s plan with his first fishery regulation proposal:

PROPOSED BY: South Central Alaska Dipnetters Association (EF-F23-065)
