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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON
COMMERCIAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE
REGULATORY PROPOSALS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 1–5
FOR

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AND UPPER COPPER/UPPER SUSITNA RIVERS AND SHELLFISH (EXCEPT SHRIMP)

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING
CORDOVA, ALASKA

December 10–16, 2024

Regional Information Report No. 5J-09

The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, December 10–16, 2024, in Cordova, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following acronyms and abbreviations, and others approved for the Système International d'Unités (SI), are used without definition in the following reports by the Divisions of Commercial Fisheries, Sport Fish, and Subsistence: All others, including deviations from definitions listed below, are noted in the text at first mention, as well as in the titles or footnotes of tables, and in figures or figure captions.

Weights and measures (metric)

centimeter	cm
deciliter	dL
gram	g
hectare	ha
kilogram	kg
kilometer	km
liter	L
meter	m
milliliter	mL
millimeter	mm

Weights and measures (English)

cubic feet per second	ft^3/s
foot	ft
gallon	gal
inch	in
mile	mi
nautical mile	nmi
ounce	oz
pound	lb
quart	qt
yard	yd

Time and temperature

day	d
degrees Celsius	°C
degrees Fahrenheit	°F
degrees kelvin	K
hour	h
minute	min
second	s

Physics and chemistry

all atomic symbols	
alternating current	AC
ampere	A
calorie	cal
direct current	DC
hertz	Hz
horsepower	hp
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH
parts per million	ppm
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰
volts	V
watts	W

General

Alaska Administrative Code	AAC
all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.
all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.
at	@
compass directions:	
east	E
north	N
south	S
west	W
copyright	©
corporate suffixes:	
Company	Co.
Corporation	Corp.
Incorporated	Inc.
Limited	Ltd.
District of Columbia	D.C.
et alii (and others)	et al.
et cetera (and so forth)	etc.
exempli gratia (for example)	e.g.
Federal Information Code	FIC
id est (that is)	i.e.
latitude or longitude	lat or long
monetary symbols (U.S.)	$, ¢
months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan,...,Dec
registered trademark	®
trademark	™
United States (adjective)	U.S.
United States of America (noun)	USA
U.S.C.	United States Code
U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)

Acronyms

Acceptable Biological Catch	ABC
Alaska Board of Fisheries	board
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	department /ADF&G
Amount Necessary for Subsistence	ANS
Alaska Wildlife Troopers	AWT
Biological Escapement Goal	BEG
Central Gulf of Alaska	CGOA
Coded Wire Tag	CWT
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission	CFEC
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association	CIAA
Customary and Traditional	C&T
Department of Natural Resources	DNR
Demersal Shelf Rockfish	DSR
Emergency Order	EO
Guideline Harvest Level	GHL
Gulf of Alaska	GOA
Global Positioning System	GPS
Individual Fishing Quota	IFQ
Local Area Management Plan	LAMP
Lower Cook Inlet	LCI
Mean Low Water	MLW
Mean Lower Low Water	MLLW
No Data	ND
National Marine Fisheries Service	NMFS
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon	NDFL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council	NPFMC
Optimum Escapement Goal	OEG
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	PSR
Prince William Sound	PWS
Prior Notice of Landing	PNOL
Private Nonprofit Salmon Hatchery	PNP
River Mile	RM
Special Harvest Area	SHA
Sustainable Escapement Goal	SEG
Trail Lakes Hatchery	TLH
Upper Cook Inlet	UCI
Western Gulf of Alaska	WGOA

REGIONAL INFORMATION REPORT NO. 5J24-09

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON COMMERICAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE REGULATORY PROPOSALS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE–GROUPS 1–5 FOR

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AND UPPER COPPER/UPPER SUSITNA RIVERS AND SHELLFISH (EXCEPT SHRIMP)

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING CORDOVA, ALASKA

DECEMBER 10–16, 2024

by
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Sport Fish, Research and Technical Services
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518–1565

November 2024

ABSTRACT

This document contains Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence regulatory proposals for Prince William Sound and Upper Copper/Upper Susitna Rivers and shellfish (except shrimp). These comments were prepared by the department for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, December 10–16, 2024, in Cordova, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change, as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Keywords: Alaska Board of Fisheries (board), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department), staff comments, regulatory proposals, fisheries, Prince William Sound, Upper Copper River, commercial, personal use, sport, subsistence, shellfish, groundfish, finfish

This document should be cited as follows:

ADF&G (Alaska Department of Fish and Game). 2024. Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence regulatory proposals, Committee of the Whole–Groups 1–5 for Prince Willam Sound and Upper Copper/Upper Susitna Rivers and shellfish (except shrimp), Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, Cordova, Alaska, December 10–16, 2024. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Information Report No. 5J24-09, Anchorage.

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals for prince William sound and upper copper/upper Susitna rivers finfish and shellfish (except shrimp), Cordova, December 10–16, 2024.

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
1	N / S	Establish pot gear as legal gear for sablefish in PWS subsistence, sport, and personal use fisheries
2	O	Reopen waters closed to the harvest of groundfish in Prince William Sound
3	N / S	Modify Prince William Sound groundfish pot specifications
4	N	Restrict gear in Prince William Sound relative to the rockfish guideline harvest level
5	S	Adopt a provision to close waters to specific groundfish gear types for rockfish conservation
6	S	Allow for release of rockfish in mechanical jig and hand troll fisheries
7	N	Establish gear specifications for directed lingcod fisheries in Prince William Sound
8	N	Modify the Prince William Sound pacific cod fishery guideline harvest level
9	N / S	Combine the Pacific cod longline and pot gear allocations and close the longline fishery for Pacific cod when the commercial halibut fishery is closed
10	N / S	Modify pot limit in the Prince William Sound Pacific cod fishery
11	N / S	Reduce the Prince William Sound Pacific cod jig/hand troll allocation and create a new, larger allocation for pot and longline gear
12	N / S	Increase Pacific cod allocation for jig and pot gear to 50%
13	O	Increase bycatch limits for skates in the Prince William Sound Pacific cod fishery
14	O	Close the Prince William Sound walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery
15	O	Modify bycatch limits in the Prince William Sound pelagic trawl fishery
16	O	Close the Prince William Sound pelagic trawl fishery
17	O	Establish observer requirements in the Prince William Sound pelagic trawl fishery
18	N	Extend the season dates in the Prince William Sound sablefish fishery
19	N	Modify the commercial fishing season for sablefish in Prince William Sound
20	N	Modify the commercial fishing season for sablefish in Prince William Sound
21	S	Allow the concurrent use of longline gear and sablefish pot gear in Prince William Sound
22	S	Allow the concurrent use of longline gear and sablefish pot gear in Prince William Sound
23	N	Prohibit the retention of sablefish from state waters
24	N	Lengthen the commercial fishing season for sablefish in Prince William Sound
25	N / S	Establish a personal use sablefish fishery in Prince William Sound
26	N / S	Establish a Prince William Sound groundfish personal use fishery
27	S	Modify rockfish bag and possession limits
28	O	Modify the rockfish area, bag and possession limit
29	S	Create additional provisions for yelloweye rockfish management
30	N	Increase subsistence Tanner crab pot limit in portions of Prince William Sound
31	O	Repeal closed waters for the Prince William Sound subsistence and commercial Tanner crab fisheries
32	O	Reopen the subsistence and commercial Dungeness crab fisheries in Prince William Sound

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
33	N	Adopt community-based subsistence harvest permits and reporting requirements for shellfish in the Prince William Sound Area
34	O	Repeal the Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy
35	O	Modify the harvest strategy for Prince William Sound Tanner crab
36	O	Increase the pot limit in the Prince William Sound Tanner crab fishery
37	O	Establish a pot limit of 30 pots per vessel in the Prince William Sound Tanner crab fishery
38	O	Allow vessels participating in the Prince William Sound Tanner crab fishery to also tender Tanner crab
39	O	Establish season dates for a commercial golden king crab fishery in Prince William Sound
40	O	Adopt a harvest strategy for golden king crab in Prince William Sound
41	O	Adopt new Prince William Sound king and Tanner crab harvest strategies
42	O	Open a sport king crab fishery and liberalize the personal use king and Tanner crab fisheries in Prince William Sound
43	N	Establish a directed octopus fishery in Prince Willilam Sound
44	O	Allow more than the legal limit of gillnet gear to be onboard a vessel used in the subsistence salmon fishery
45	O	Allow subsistence fishing for salmon in the Copper River inside closure area
46	N	Require harvest reporting within seven days of harvest in the lower Copper River district subsistence salmon fishery
47	N	Require inseason reporting in subsistence and personal use fisheries
48	N	Repeal the prohibition of subsistence guide services in the Glennallen Subdistrict
49	N	Prohibit transport services in the Glennallen Subdistrict
50	O	Prohibit the use of chartplotters or fish finders in the Chitina and Glennallen Subdistricts
51	N	Reduce commercial salmon fishing opportunity in the Copper River District
52	N	Reduce commercial salmon fishing opportunity in the Copper River District
53	N	Allow the Copper River District commercial salmon fishery to open for the first two periods, then close until the Copper River cumulative salmon management objective is met
54	O	Restrict use of Copper River District inside closure area during statistical weeks 20 and 21
55	N / O	Restrict commercial guide services in the Upper Copper River District when the Copper River District commercial fishery is restricted
56	N	Allow permit stacking by Prince William Sound commercial salmon drift gillnet permit holders
57	N	Allow dual permit operations in the Prince William sound commercial drift gillnet salmon fishery
58	S	Provide EO authority to liberalize personal use king salmon limits when escapement goal is exceeded
59	S	Provide EO authority to liberalize personal use sockeye salmon limits when escapement goal is exceeded
60	N	Modify the annual limit for the Chitina Subdistrict
61	N	Modify the annual limit and establish a supplemental permit for the Chitina Subdistrict

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
62	N / O	Allow inseason adjustment of the Copper River personal use maximum harvest level
63	O	Amend the opening date of the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery
64	O	Prohibit a household from possessing permits for multiple personal use salmon fisheries in the same year
65	N	Require a weekly permit and inseason reporting in the Chitina Subdistrict
66	O	Manage the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery to achieve the Gulkana Hatchery broodstock goal
67	O	Prohibit removing king salmon from the water if it is to be released in the Chitina Subdistrict
68	O	Prohibit dipnetting from a boat in the Chitina Subdistrict
69	O	Establish restrictions when dipnetting from a boat in the Chitina Subdistrict
70	N	Extend the lower boundary of the Chitina Subdistrict
71	O	Prohibit guiding in the Chitina Subdistrict
72	O	Close sport fishing for salmon based on water temperature in the Gulkana River
73	N	Allow permit stacking by Prince William Sound commercial salmon purse seine permit holders
74	N	Allow permit stacking in the Prince William Sound commercial salmon purse seine fishery
75	N	Amend the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan
76	N	Amend the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan to increase access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict by drift gillnet permit holders.
77	N	Include salmon produced by Valdez Fishery Development Association in the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan.
78	O	Reduce Prince William Sound hatchery permitted pink salmon egg take level by 25%
79	N	Close Main Bay to all fishing during hatchery cost recovery operations
80	N	Manage the Main Bay sport fishery based on the hatchery corporate escapement goal
81	N	Modify the area open to sport fishing near the Main Bay Hatchery
82	O	Modify the Prince William Sound management area marine waters into two units
83	O	Allow a resident sport angler to use two rods when fishing for salmon
84	N	Prohibit charter operators and crew from retaining king salmon and rockfish while clients are on board the vessel
85	O	Modify the bag and possession limit for coho salmon
86	O	Modify the sport fishing area and season dates in Ibeck Creek
87	O	Modify the sport fishing area and season in a Copper River Delta system
88	N	Modify coho salmon fishery bag limits and methods and means if the commercial fishery is closed
89	S	Increase the bag and possession limit for burbot in Lake Louise
90	O	Modify bag and possession limits of burbot in Crosswind Lake
91	S	Modify seasons, bag, possession, and size limits for Arctic grayling in Mendeltna Creek, Moose Lake, and Our Creek
92	S	Modify the seasonal bait closure in Paxson and Summit Lakes

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
93	S	Modify area closed to sport fishing in Hungry Hollow Creek
94	S	Repeal definition of “bow and arrow” in area regulations
95	N / O	Make numerous changes to management of commercial herring fisheries in Prince William Sound
96	N	Change herring management year dates for the Prince William Sound District and create a new food and bait fishery allocation
97	O	Reduce the minimum herring spawning biomass threshold
98	S	Align Prince William Sound herring and salmon management area descriptions
99	S	Define commercial herring fishery districts in Prince William Sound
100	S	Adopt a Kayak Island District herring management plan
101	O	Adopt a new exploratory fishery for herring in the eastern portion of the Prince William Sound Management Area
102	S	Allow commercial fishery permit holders to harvest herring for the own use as bait
103	O	Allow dual permit commercial herring purse seine operations in Prince William Sound

N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action, WS = Withdrawn Support

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – GROUP 1:
PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND GROUNDFISH (29 PROPOSALS)

SUBSISTENCE GROUNDFISH (1 PROPOSAL)

PROPOSAL 1 – 5 AAC 01.620. Lawful gear and gear specifications; 5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for season, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area; and 77.XXX New Section.

PROPOSED BY: Michael Phillips.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the use of pot gear for sablefish subsistence, sport, and personal use fisheries in Prince William Sound (PWS).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In subsistence fisheries groundfish may only be taken by a single hand troll line, single hand-held line, or a single longline, none of which may have more than five hooks attached (5 AAC 01.620(h)). In sport fisheries groundfish may only be taken using a closely attended single line having attached to it not more than one plug, one spoon, one spinner, two artificial flies, or two hooks (5 AAC 75.020). There are currently no personal use fisheries for groundfish in PWS.

There is a positive customary and traditional use (C&T) finding for groundfish in those portions of the Prince William Sound Area that are outside the boundaries of the Valdez nonsubsistence area (5 AAC 01.616(c)). The board has found that 16,000 to 24,000 pounds of groundfish, other than rockfish and lingcod, are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in PWS (5 AAC 01.616(d)(3)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow the harvest of sablefish using pot gear in subsistence and sport fisheries and create a new personal use fishery for sablefish in Prince William Sound. Sablefish harvest would likely increase by an unknown amount depending on fishing effort and sablefish abundance and gear conflicts by multiple user groups could be an issue.

BACKGROUND: Sablefish sport harvest in PWS is low with between 1 and 87 fish harvested annually from 2013 to 2023. Sablefish harvests are documented in subsistence household harvested surveys. Household survey data for Prince William Sound communities of Cordova, Chenega, Tatitlek, Whitter, and Valdez range from 1984 to 2014. Sablefish harvest during study years has ranged from zero to 7,351 pounds, and households harvested sablefish with a combination of commercial retention, rod and reel, and longline. Please refer to Proposal 18 and Proposal 21 for background information on the commercial sablefish fishery in PWS and Proposal 25 and Proposal 26 for information on proposed personal use sablefish fisheries in PWS.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal but **SUPPORTS** providing additional harvest opportunity when available. The commercial sablefish guideline harvest level (GHL) has not been achieved in the PWS sablefish fishery since 2002, and from 2021 to 2023 average annual sablefish harvest was 64% of the GHL (Table 26-1). This is not a conservation concern but is due to a combination of small, limited entry quota sizes, an overlap in the sablefish season with more lucrative opportunities fishing for salmon, and sablefish price in relation to other fisheries. The unharvested sablefish quota in the PWS commercial sablefish fishery represents approximately 15,000 fish.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

COMMERCIAL GROUNDFISH (23 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 28.250. Closed waters in Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth B Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open closed waters in Prince William Sound (PWS) to groundfish pot fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Groundfish may not be taken with pots in southeastern PWS designated by geographic coordinates and Port Gravina (Figure 2-1), except that groundfish may be taken with pots as designated within Orca Bay and in waters less than 75 fathoms deep in Hinchinbrook Entrance (5 AAC 28.250(a)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Pot fishing for groundfish would be allowed in previously closed waters. An undetermined number of Tanner crab could be at risk due to handling mortality or crushing by pots.

BACKGROUND: See Proposal 34 for background on PWS Tanner crab stocks and Proposal 11 for background on the Pacific cod fishery in PWS. The groundfish pot closure area in PWS was created in 1997 to protect immature and mature Tanner crab habitat for a recovering Tanner crab population (Figures 2-1). The PWS Tanner crab trawl survey provides information on Tanner crab abundance within Port Gravina and the western and eastern portions of the groundfish pot closure area but does not extend into Hinchinbrook entrance, a large part of the closure area (Figure 2-2). Immature Tanner crab are distributed throughout the western portion of the pot closure area. During the most recent 3-year period from 2021 to 2023 an average of 6,141 pounds of Pacific cod have been harvested in the longline Pacific cod fishery in the groundfish closure area. Rockfish bycatch from the longline Pacific cod fishery in the groundfish pot closure area has been less than 500 pounds on average during the same period.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Recent groundfish pot effort for Pacific cod in PWS has been prosecuted using slinky pots, and the use of pots generally reduces bycatch of nontarget species. However, the department has no information on whether slinky pots are less likely to catch Tanner crab than traditional pots.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

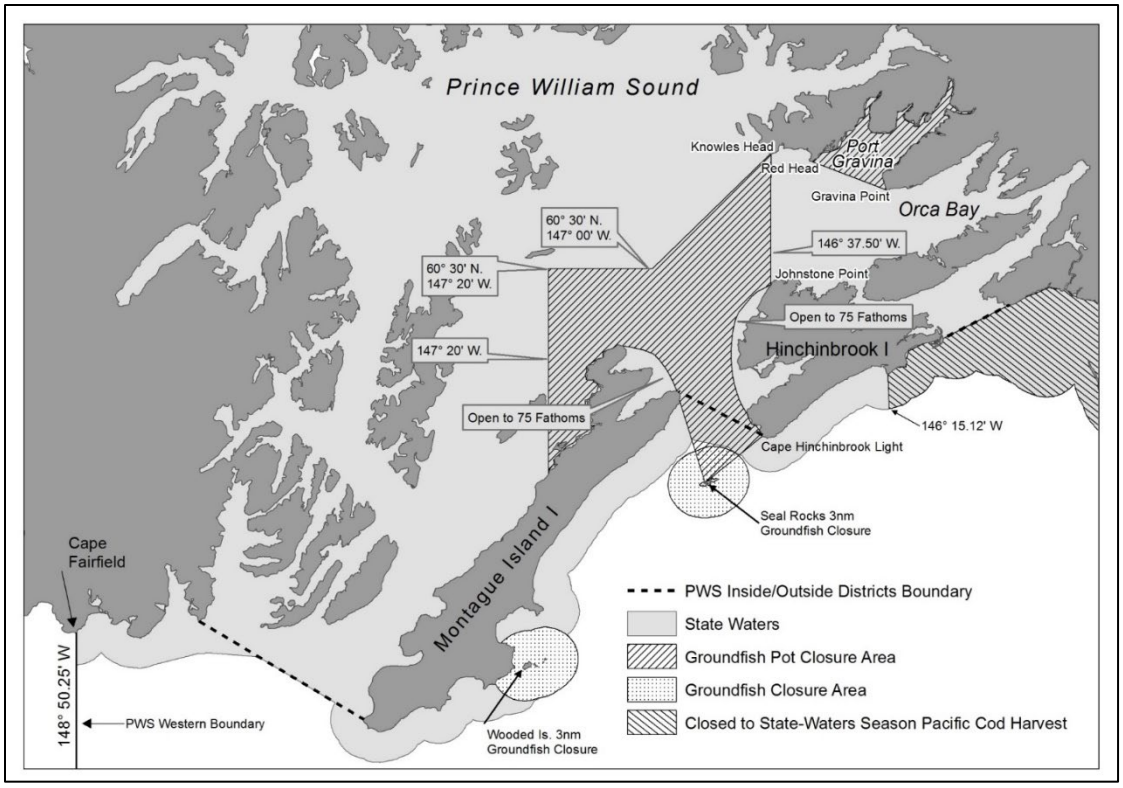

Figure 2-1.–Prince William Sound groundfish fishing closures implemented for Stellar sea lion and Tanner crab protection.

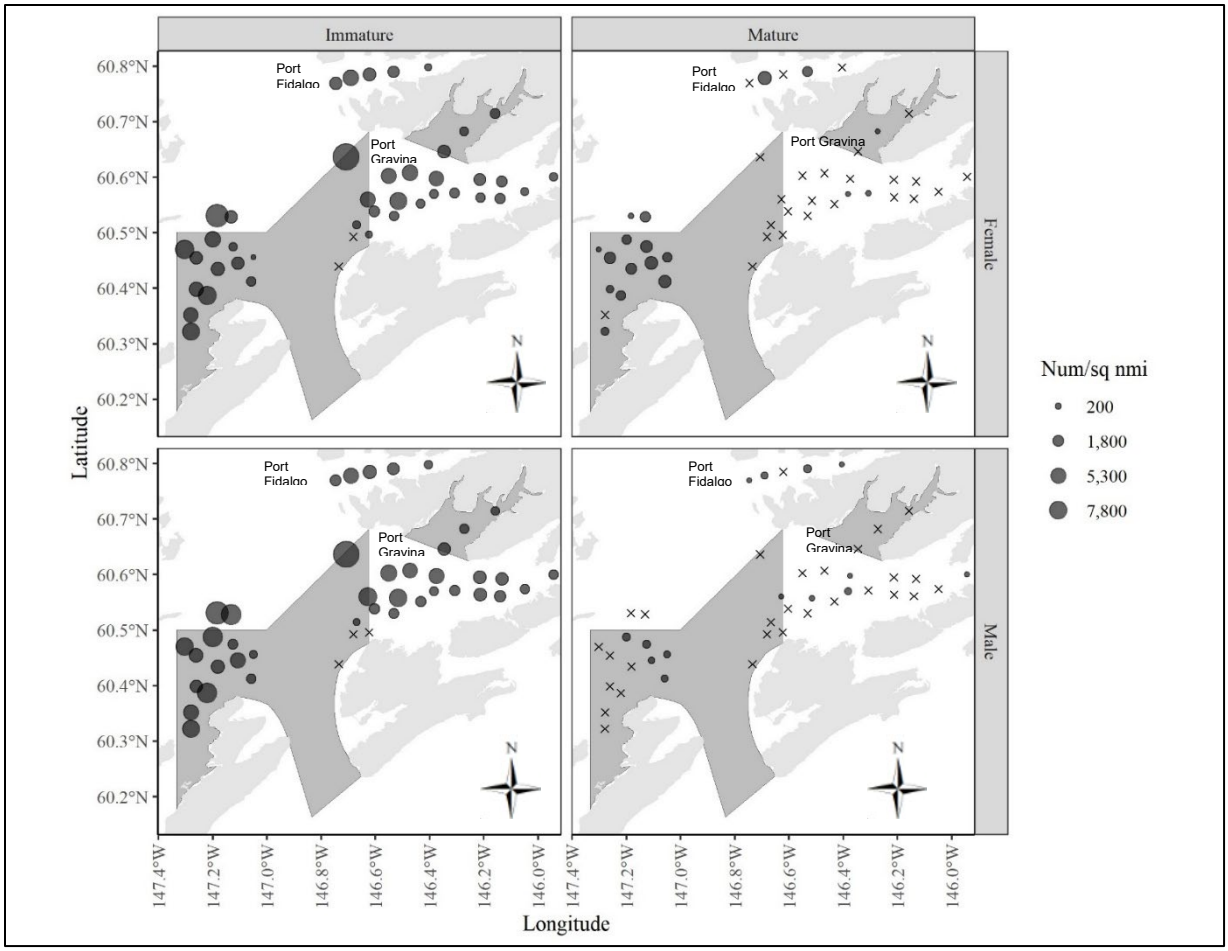

Figure 2-2.–Tanner crab abundance (number of crab per square mile) from 2023 PWS trawl survey. Groundfish pot closure area shaded in grey. Stations with no Tanner crab are denoted on map as an x.

PROPOSAL 4 – 5 AAC 34.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kalistrat Kuzmin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit use of longline automatic baiting machines in Prince William Sound (PWS) when rockfish harvest reaches 80% (120,000 pounds) of the 150,000 pound guideline harvest level (GHL).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In PWS, there is no directed commercial fishery for rockfish and rockfish must be retained as bycatch in other directed groundfish and Pacific halibut fisheries under the *Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.265). The GHL for all rockfish species combined is 150,000 pounds in PWS. Bycatch allowances have been established for rockfish in the following directed fisheries: 20% to sablefish, 5% to Pacific cod, 0.5% during the walleye pollock trawl fishery, and 10% to all other directed species including Pacific halibut. All rockfish in excess of the bycatch allowances must be reported as a bycatch overage. Proceeds from any bycatch overage are surrendered to the state. Trip limits are established such that a vessel may not land or have on board more than 3,000 lb of rockfish within five consecutive days. Automatic baiting machines are not defined or described in regulation.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Prohibiting use of automatic baiting machines in the longline fishery would likely reduce the amount of hooks that could be set each day and reduce the daily rockfish bycatch. This could extend the duration of time that permit holders are fishing with longline gear in PWS because it would reduce efficiency. Extending the number of days a vessel is fishing with longline gear may offset reductions in daily rockfish bycatch and result in little overall annual change in rockfish bycatch.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on proposal 5 for background information on rockfish harvest in PWS. Automatic baiting gear allows more efficient baiting of longline hook gear. During recent years automatic baiting machines have been used in the PWS Pacific cod and Pacific halibut fisheries, which together harvest 85% of the PWS rockfish GHL (Figure 3-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal but **SUPPORTS** potential rockfish conservation benefits that may occur if this proposal is adopted. If this proposal is adopted, a definition of *automatic baiting machine* would need to be developed.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal could result in increased costs for fishermen who would be required to modify fishing operations. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 5 – 5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would adopt a provision to close waters to specific groundfish gear types for rockfish conservation in Prince William Sound (PWS).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In PWS, there is no directed commercial fishery for rockfish and rockfish must be retained as bycatch in other directed groundfish and Pacific halibut fisheries under the *Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.265). The guideline harvest level (GHL) for all rockfish species combined is 150,000 pounds in PWS.

Bycatch allowances have been established for rockfish in the following directed fisheries: 20% to sablefish, 5% to Pacific cod, 0.5% during the walleye pollock trawl fishery, and 10% to all other directed species including Pacific halibut. All rockfish in excess of the bycatch allowances must be reported as a bycatch overage. Proceeds from any bycatch overage are surrendered to the state. There is a trip limit, and a vessel may not land or have on board more than 3,000 pounds of rockfish within five consecutive days.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Currently the department does not have the ability to close longline hook fishing in PWS when the rockfish GHL is reached. This would allow the department to close waters to specific groundfish gear types when rockfish harvest is projecting to reach the GHL. In 2023, the department petitioned the board to make a finding of emergency to promulgate a new regulation delegating the department authority to close areas of high rockfish bycatch to commercial fishing with specific gear types. If the department had the authority to close areas of high rockfish bycatch by gear type, rockfish harvest could be curtailed before it reaches the GHL of 150,000 pounds.

BACKGROUND: There has been no directed commercial fishery for rockfish in PWS since 2001. However, rockfish are harvested as bycatch in a variety of fisheries with most harvest occurring in the Pacific cod and Pacific halibut longline fisheries. In recent years, rockfish bycatch occurs primarily in the Pacific halibut fishery. The current 150,000-pound rockfish bycatch GHL was established in 2000 and is based on historic harvest levels.

Rockfish harvest was high from the late 1980s through the late 1990s before the directed fishery in state and federal waters was closed, averaging 222,620 pounds from 1988 to 1998 (Table 5-1). Limiting rockfish harvest to bycatch only was effective in the early 2000s, and rockfish harvest averaged 61,975 pounds from 2001 to 2005. Beginning in 2006 rockfish harvest increased, ranging from 76,265 pounds in 2006 to 161,512 pounds in 2016. From 2014 to 2016, the rockfish GHL was exceeded each year. In 2014, walleye pollock trawl vessels caught nearly 70,000 pounds of rockfish, or 1.29 percent of the pollock harvest, the highest rockfish bycatch harvest in the history of the pollock fishery (established in 1995), and the fishery was closed after surpassing the rockfish bycatch limit of 0.5 percent. From 2017 to 2020 poor recruitment in the Pacific cod fishery and low rockfish bycatch in the walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery resulted in decreased rockfish harvest, averaging 67,594 pounds annually.

The rockfish GHL was exceeded twice during the most recent 3-year period, in 2022 and 2023. From 2021 to 2023 rockfish harvest averaged 167,205 pounds. Changes in harvest patterns in the federal Pacific halibut fishery are responsible for the increase in rockfish harvest compared with

2016 to 2020 (Figure 5-1). Rockfish harvest in the Pacific cod and walleye pollock fisheries was relatively stable from 2016 to 2020 versus 2021 to 2023.

The predominant rockfish harvested in PWS commercial fisheries are yelloweye, shortraker, and quillback rockfish (Figure 3-1). In recent years, primarily yelloweye and shortraker rockfish were harvested as bycatch in the Pacific halibut longline fishery and quillback rockfish in the Pacific cod longline fisheries (Figures 5-2, 5-3, and 5-4). From 2016 to 2020 average shortraker rockfish harvest was 27,077 pounds (1,814 fish) and from 2021 to 2023 harvest increased to an average of 82,592 pounds (7,795 fish;Table 5-2). During the same timeframes yelloweye rockfish also increased from an average of 21,668 pounds (3,331 fish) to 36,680 pounds (7,804 fish), respectively. Quillback rockfish harvest was more stable, averaging 14,846 pounds (4,522 fish) and 15,955 pounds (15,955 fish). Higher shortraker and yelloweye rockfish harvest in recent years is due to increased effort and bycatch in the PWS Pacific halibut fishery.

Recent management action to reduce rockfish harvest was taken in 2022 and 2023. In 2022, after reaching the rockfish GHL, an emergency order was issued, effective September 5 through December 31, that reduced allowable rockfish bycatch levels by half in all directed commercial fisheries in PWS. In 2022, rockfish harvest reached 196,843 pounds by December 31. In 2023, the department projected that the rockfish GHL would be exceeded and an emergency order was issued effective June 7 through December 31 reducing allowable rockfish bycatch levels by half in all directed commercial fisheries in PWS. In addition, in 2023 the department did not open the fall parallel fishery for Pacific cod in PWS. Rockfish harvest continued to increase and the department petitioned the board to make a finding of emergency to promulgate a new regulation delegating the department authority to close areas of high rockfish bycatch in waters of Alaska to commercial fishing with specific gear types. The rockfish GHL was achieved on September 4 and with the authority delegated by the board through the emergency petition, an emergency order was issued on October 28 closing specific statistical areas where the majority of bycatch was occurring in the commercial longline fisheries. The 2023 GHL for rockfish was exceeded (163,254 pounds). In 2024, current harvest of rockfish is 120,566 pounds as of November 11 and the final harvest numbers will be determined after December 31 when the season is closed.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Adoption of this proposal will provide the department a critical tool to conserve rockfish in PWS.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 5-1.–Prince William Sound Area commercial rockfish harvest by gear type, including black and dark rockfish from federal waters, 1991–2023.

			Harvest (pounds)				
Year	Vessels	Landings	Jig	Trawl/Other	Longline	Pots	Total
1991	89	247	15,624	11,162	129,864	0	156,650
1992	114	299	9,946	28,510	152,945	a	191,401
1993	80	209	13,905	12,610	81,978	a	108,493
1994	92	211	94,588	a	104,799	a	199,387
1995	148	284	168,777	267	127,616	a	296,660
1996	99	257	57,103	3,507	124,077	0	184,687
1997	106	266	34,047	1,294	130,141	a	165,482
1998	88	220	2,903	1,079	104,889	a	108,871
1999	92	244	1,130	1,951	68,906	0	71,987
2000	100	284	2,401	2,061	117,210	247	121,919
2001	101	233	1,165	4,495	68,400	a	74,060
2002	87	190	0	30,553	44,059	0	74,612
2003	89	243	256	4,752	42,982	0	47,990
2004	71	197	283	3,735	48,783	0	52,801
2005	80	206	a	8,863	51,547	0	60,410
2006	72	226	1,008	12,391	62,866	a	76,265
2007	72	209	a	10,970	69,419	0	80,389
2008	70	202	a	21,656	85,113	0	106,769
2009	88	256	a	22,359	95,663	a	118,022
2010	87	262	a	6,500	98,117	a	104,617
2011	81	232	0	8,113	110,497	a	118,610
2012	94	245	881	18,054	94,587	a	113,522
2013	84	269	a	29,680	119,561	a	149,241
2014	90	211	0	69,039	88,419	0	157,458
2015	79	280	0	23,293	128,835	0	152,128
2016	86	262	966	25,110	135,436	a	161,512
2017	66	202	433	4,413	54,859	a	59,705
2018	91	203	129	4,402	51,920	0	56,452
2019	100	230	a	9,715	61,307	a	71,022
2020	94	238	a	20,558	61,509	a	82,067
2021	105	291	a	8,918	132,411	799	142,128
2022	106	341	45	19,839	176,349	a	196,233
2023	110	296	308	14,690	146,132	2,123	163,254
Averages							
1988–2015	88	239	–	–	109,129	18	147,486
2016–2020	87	227	–	12,840	73,006	–	86,152
2021–2023	107	309	–	14,482	151,631	–	167,205

Note: En dash means average for 2016-2020 could not be computed because data was not available for all years.

Note: Total harvest does not include confidential data.

[a] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

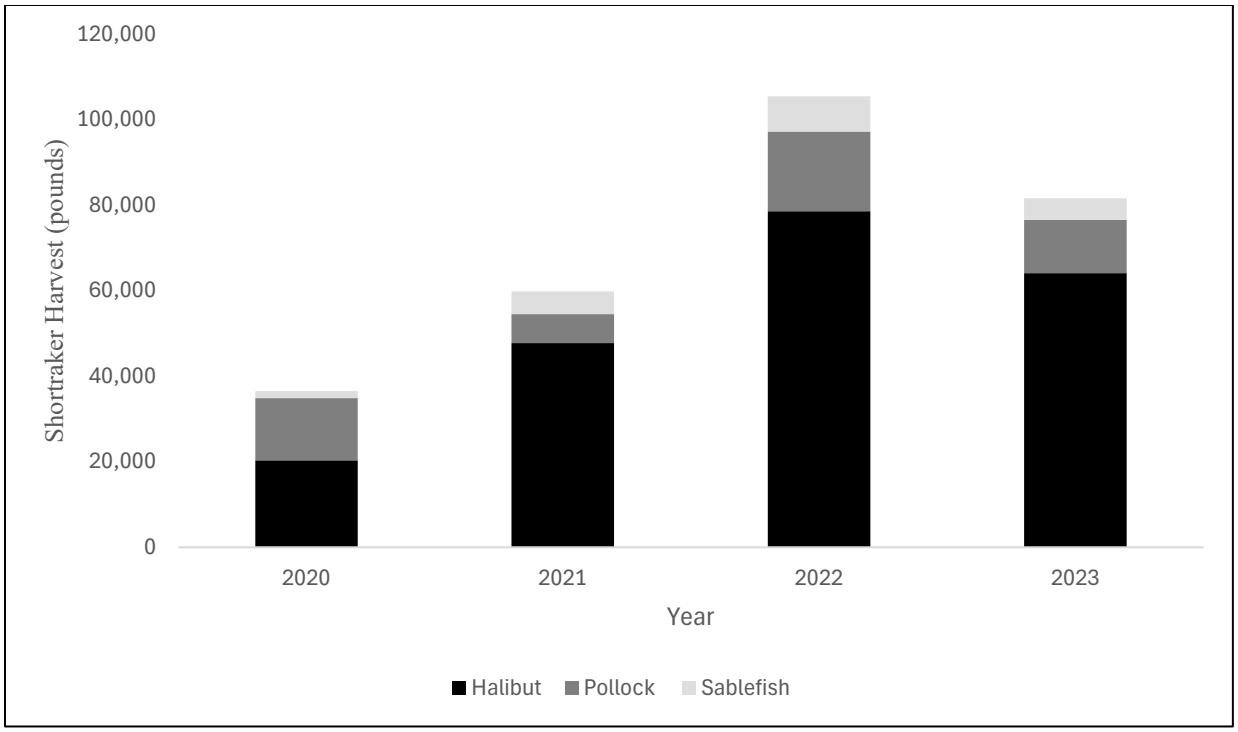

Figure 5-2.–Shortraker rockfish harvest by fishery in the Prince William Sound Area 2020-2023.

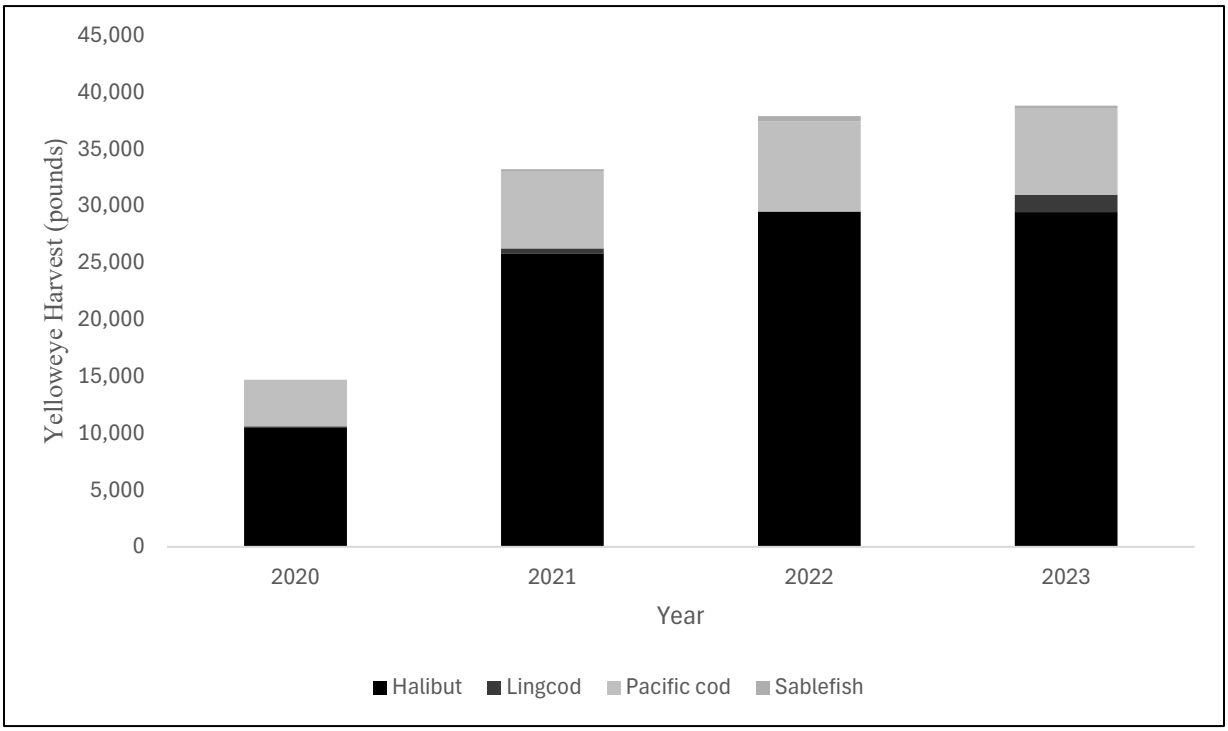

Figure 5-3.–Yelloweye rockfish harvest by fishery in the Prince William Sound Area, 2020-2023.

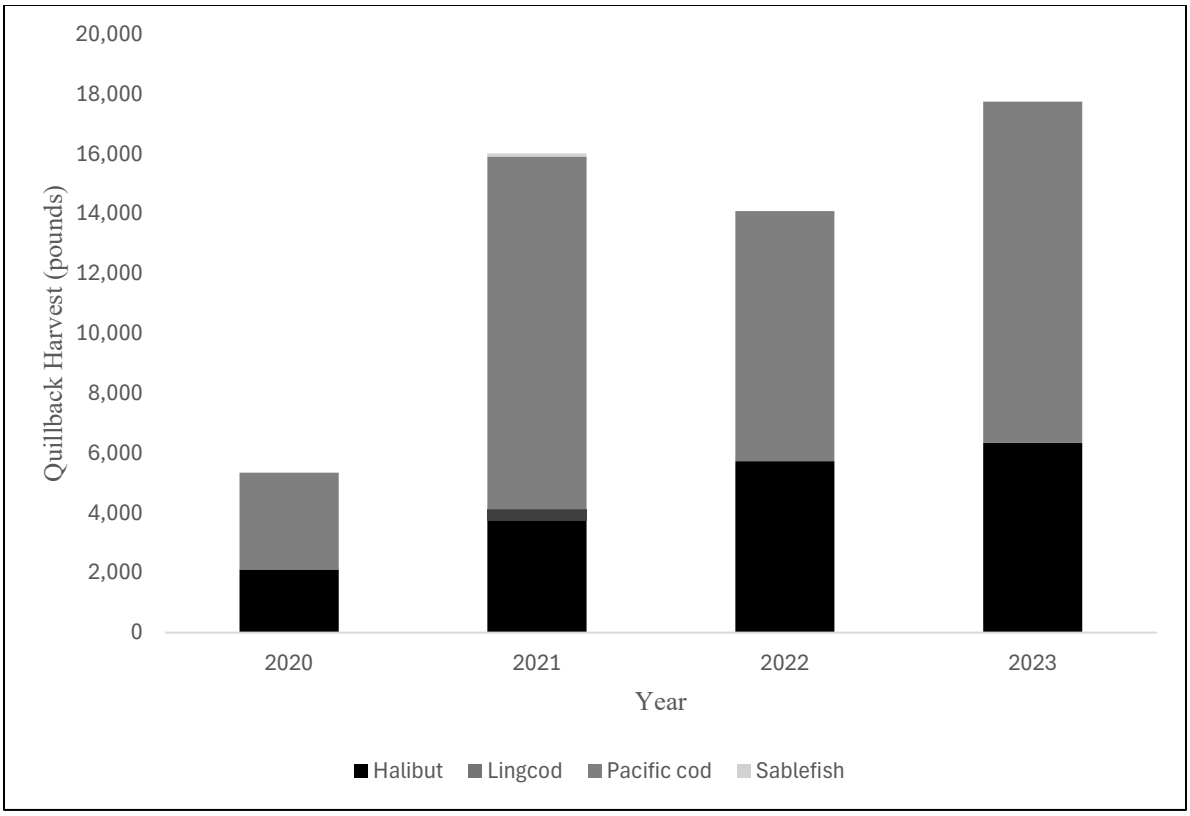

Figure 5-4.–Quillback rockfish harvest by fishery in the Prince William Sound Area, 2020-2023.

Table 5-2.–Prince William Sound Area commercial rockfish harvest in pounds and estimated number of fish based on mean weight, 2007-2023.

	Yelloweye Harvest		Shortraker Harvest		Quillback Harvest	
Year	Pounds	# of fish	Pounds	# of fish	Pounds	# of fish
2007	22,432	3,189	25,071	2,014	1,359	428
2008	21,813	2,587	36,652	2,763	1,646	519
2009	28,815	3,701	42,847	3,443	2,798	882
2010	22,794	3,059	45,648	3,562	1,840	580
2011	36,629	4,319	26,373	1,971	9,630	3,019
2012	27,343	4,073	46,750	3,281	10,052	3,064
2013	37,402	5,563	56,883	4,028	12,142	3,681
2014	16,972	2,468	91,774	6,039	13,869	4,011
2015	37,783	5,549	48,249	2,649	21,228	6,685
2016	46,665	8,047	41,433	2,965	46,393	13,956
2017	15,919	2,120	12,498	743	9,867	3,035
2018	12,791	1,613	20,037	1,230	4,746	1,437
2019	18,265	2,776	24,773	1,731	7,878	2,481
2020	14,699	2,100	36,642	2,401	5,346	1,700
2021	33,323	6,822	60,112	5,565	16,019	5,458
2022	37,903	8,133	105,673	10,708	14,092	4,640
2023	38,812	8,457	81,991	7,112	17,754	6,950
Averages						
2007–2015	27,998	3,834	46,694	3,306	8,285	2,541
2016–2020	21,668	3,331	27,077	1,814	14,846	4,522
2021–2023	36,680	7,804	82,592	7,795	15,955	5,682

Note: If sample size was less than 50 mean weight was used from 2007-2015 or 2016-2023 to estimate number of fish harvested.

PROPOSAL 6 – 5 AAC 28.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the release of rockfish in Prince William Sound (PWS) using approved deepwater release mechanisms (DRM) when participating in a jig fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan* specifies that a CFEC permit holder must retain all rockfish caught in PWS (5 AAC 28.265(b)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Participants in PWS jig fisheries would be permitted to release rockfish using DRM. While there are no directed jig fisheries for rockfish in PWS there are small amounts of rockfish bycatch in directed jig fisheries and permitting the use of DRM would likely reduce rockfish bycatch in these fisheries.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 5 for background information on rockfish harvest in directed fisheries in PWS. When utilized correctly a DRM has been estimated to increase the survival rate of yelloweye rockfish from 22% when released at the surface without a DRM to over 98% when released at depth with a DRM. Survival rates after deepwater release for 5 other species (dark, dusky, silvergray, copper, and quillback rockfish) harvested in the PWS sport fishery ranged from 85% to 100%. In March 2018, the board adopted a regulation that mandated the use of DRM for all rockfish released by sport anglers in Alaska to take effect in January 2020.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The department has conservation concerns for rockfish in PWS and supports efforts to reduce harvest of nontarget species.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 8 – 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Dia Kuzmin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the Prince William Sound (PWS) state-waters Pacific cod allocation from the federal Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA) Area from 25% to a minimum of 35% and a maximum of 50%. If the PWS state-waters Pacific cod harvest reaches 90% of the PWS state-waters guideline harvest level (GHL) or more, the allocation will increase by 5% the following year. If the PWS state-waters Pacific cod harvest is less than 90% of the PWS state-waters Pacific cod GHL the allocation will decrease by 5% the following year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan* specifies that during a state-waters season, the GHL for Pacific cod in the PWS Area is 25 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest (TAH) of Pacific cod for the federal Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA) Area (5 AAC 28.267(e)). The management plan also specifies that groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear is allocated 15% of the state waters Pacific cod GHL and longline gear is allocated 85%. If the groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear allocation is taken in any calendar year, the allocation will increase by 5% to a maximum of 30% of the GHL and the longline allocation will decrease by 5% beginning the following year. If the groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear allocation is not taken in any calendar year, the allocation will decrease by 5% to a minimum of 15% and the longline allocation will increase by 5% (5 AAC 28.267(e)). Currently the step-up provision is at 20% mechanical jig, hand troll, and groundfish pot gear and 80% longline gear.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The PWS state-waters Pacific cod GHL would increase from an average of 1.5 million pounds at the 25% allocation to 2.2 million pounds at the 35% allocation during the first year, based on 2021 to 2023 state-waters Pacific cod GHL levels. At the 50% allocation the PWS state-waters Pacific cod GHL could increase to 3.1 million pounds, based on 2021 to 2023 values, if the Pacific cod harvest reaches 90% of its allocation during successive years. This would reduce the amount of Pacific cod available in the federal EGOA fishery. Under the current gear type allocation an increase in the PWS Pacific cod GHL would result in increased rockfish bycatch.

BACKGROUND: In 2002 the board reduced the state-waters Pacific cod allocation from the federal EGOA Area from 25% to 10% due to harvest not achieving the GHL since the beginning of the state-waters Pacific cod fishery in 1997 (Table 8-1). The board also introduced a step-up provision allowing the GHL to increase to 15% if the GHL is reached in any calendar year and subsequently to 25% if the GHL is reached in any calendar year. In 2009, after the board allowed longline gear as a legal gear type in the PWS state-waters Pacific cod fishery, the PWS state-waters Pacific cod GHL was achieved, triggering the first of 2 increases in the GHL (Table 8-1). Since 2011, the GHL has remained at 25% of the EGOA Area allowable biological catch (ABC). The EGOA ABC has not been met in recent years, with an average of 70% of the ABC remaining unharvested from 2021-2023.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal and is concerned that increasing the Pacific cod allocation would also increase rockfish bycatch in this fishery if the majority of Pacific cod harvest is taken with longline gear.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 8-1.–Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA) Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and percent allocation for Prince William Sound state-waters Pacific cod fishery guideline harvest level (GHL), 1997-2023.

Year	EGOA ABC	Percent Allocation	GHL	Harvest (pounds)	Percent of GHL Harvested
1997	3,527,396	@ 25%	881,849	200,520	22.7%
1998	3,439,211	@ 25%	859,803	418,994	48.7%
1999	3,725,812	@ 25%	931,453	394,134	42.3%
2000	11,794,731	@ 25%	2,948,683	291,142	9.9%
2001	10,471,957	@ 25%	2,617,989	228	0.0%
2002	7,616,971	@ 25%	1,904,243	0	0.0%
2003	7,054,792	@ 10%	705,479	a	a
2004	9,700,340	@ 10%	970,034	a	a
2005	8,966,200	@ 10%	896,620	a	a
2006	9,107,296	@ 10%	910,730	2,353	3.1%
2007	9,107,296	@ 10%	910,730	345,684	38.0%
2008	5,864,296	@ 10%	586,430	7,557	1.3%
2009	4,876,625	@ 10%	487,663	701,759	143.9%
2010	5,231,569	@ 15%	784,735	a	a
2011	5,740,837	@ 25%	1,435,209	1,594,590	111.1%
2012	5,793,748	@ 25%	1,448,437	a	a
2013	7,125,340	@ 25%	1,781,335	1,275,245	71.6%
2014	5,853,273	@ 25%	1,463,318	1,384,749	94.6%
2015	6,234,673	@ 25%	1,558,668	228,454	14.66%
2016	19,367,610	@ 25%	4,841,902	1,059,915	21.9%
2017	17,352,585	@ 25%	4,338,146	a	a
2018	3,968,321	@ 25%	992,080	350,909	35.4%
2019	3,747,858	@ 25%	936,965	408,778	43.6%
2020	1,749,699	@ 25%	437,425	432,968	99.0%
2021	4,376,176	@ 25%	1,094,044	877,891	80.2%
2022	6,871,809	@ 25%	1,717,952	543,371	31.6%
2023	5,158,817	@ 25%	1,289,704	1,305,426	101.2%

Note: Confidential data in 2003-2005, 2010, 2012 and 2017. Harvest and percent does not include confidential data in all years.

Table 8-2.–Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA) Pacific cod Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), harvest, and percent unharvested, 2018-2023.

Year	EGOA ABC	Total ABC Harvest (pounds)	Percent Unharvested
2018	3,968,321	763,244	80.8%
2019	3,747,858	911,518	75.7%
2020	1,749,699	1,039,343	40.6%
2021	4,376,176	1,323,301	69.8%
2022	6,871,809	1,200,461	82.5%
2023	5,158,817	2,257,986	56.2%

PROPOSAL 9 – 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would combine the Prince William Sound (PWS) state-waters Pacific cod allocations for groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll with the longline allocation creating a single guideline harvest level (GHL) for the fishery regardless of gear type. This proposal would also delay the season for longline gear in the PWS Pacific cod fishery to coincide with start of the Pacific halibut fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan* specifies that PWS state-waters Pacific cod seasons for groundfish pot, mechanical jig and hand troll, and longline gear open 24 hours after closure of the gear type in the initial federal season in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) Area and close when the gear type allocation of the state-waters GHL is taken, a parallel season is opened, or December 31, whichever comes first. Additionally, if any GHL is remaining on September 1, the remaining GHL can be opened to any legal gear type.

The PWS state-waters Pacific cod GHL is allocated 15% to groundfish pot and mechanical jig and hand troll gear combined and 85% to longline gear. A step-up provision applies, which increases the groundfish pot and mechanical jig and handtroll allocation in 5% increments if the GHL allocated to the gear type is taken in any calendar year to a maximum of 30%. If the groundfish pot and mechanical jig and hand troll allocation is not taken in any calendar year the allocation is reduced in 5% increments to a minimum of 15%.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Reduced longline effort in the initial parallel season would result in a decrease of rockfish bycatch. The initial PWS parallel hook and line (longline) Pacific cod fishery would not open in years when the GHL is achieved before 7 days after the opening of the Pacific halibut fishery. The groundfish pot and mechanical jig parallel Pacific cod fisheries would continue. Additionally, the PWS state-waters GHL would be available to all gear types instead of allocated by gear type, increasing the GHL available to groundfish pot and jig gear during the state-waters season. If the adoption of slinky pot gear continues following the legalization of longline pot gear in the PWS Pacific cod fishery, the proportion of the GHL taken by pot gear may increase and this will reduce longline harvest and rockfish bycatch. Adoption of this proposal might also result in a shorter state-waters season due to competition between gear types.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 11 for background information on PWS Pacific cod fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department **SUPPORTS** the use of pot gear in PWS to reduce bycatch of nontarget species, whale depredation, and to support more efficient prosecution of fisheries.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 9-1.–Season dates for groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and longline gear types in Prince William Sound state-waters Pacific cod fishery.

	Groundfish pot		Mechanical jig		Longline	
Year	Open	Close	Open	Close	Open	Close
2021	23-Jan	31-Dec	N/A	N/A	6-Mar	20-Mar
2022	17-Feb	1-Sep	N/A	N/A	22-Mar	1-Sep
2023	27-Feb	3-Apr	N/A	N/A	10-Mar	23-Mar

Note: State-waters mechanical jig season did not open 2021-2023 due to parallel mechanical jig season not closing.

PROPOSAL 10 – 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow up to 120 groundfish pots lighter than 30 pounds and 60 groundfish pots heavier than 30 pounds in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Pacific cod fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? During a state-waters season no more than 60 groundfish pots may be operated from a vessel registered to fish Pacific cod, except that the commissioner may remove the limits on groundfish pots after October 30 if it is determined that the guideline harvest level (GHL) will not be reached (5 AAC 28.267(e)(3)(A) and 5 AAC 28.267(g)). A groundfish pot may be attached to a line connected to another groundfish pot. Groundfish pots may be connected if each end of the buoy line is marked as specified in 5 AAC 28.050 (d) and (5 AAC 28.230(c)). Additionally, each groundfish pot must have an identification tag on either the main, or trailer, buoy for single pots and on each pot for longline pots (5AAC 28.050(f)(1)(A) and (B)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The groundfish pot and jig allocation in the PWS state-waters Pacific cod fishery could be harvested more quickly under an increased pot limit. Increasing the pot limit for slinky pots could incentivize participants in the Pacific cod fishery to switch from longline gear to pot gear, which has lower levels of bycatch. This proposal could reduce rockfish bycatch in this fishery.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on proposal 11 for background information on PWS Pacific cod fisheries. Groundfish pots under 30 pounds are assumed to be slinky pots.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department **SUPPORTS** the use of pot gear in PWS to reduce bycatch, whale depredation, and support more efficient prosecution of fisheries.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department

PROPOSAL 11 – 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth B. Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allocate 95% of the Prince William Sound state-waters Pacific cod guideline harvest level (GHL) to groundfish pot and longline gear combined and allocate 5% of the PWS state-waters Pacific cod GHL to mechanical jig and hand troll gear combined. If the PWS state-waters Pacific cod mechanical jig and hand troll allocation is taken in any calendar year, the mechanical jig and hand troll allocation will increase by 5% beginning the following calendar year, up to a maximum of 15%. If the mechanical jig and hand troll allocation is not taken in any calendar year, the mechanical jig and hand troll allocation will decrease by 5% the following calendar year, down to a minimum of 5%

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan* specifies that during a state-waters season, the GHL for Pacific cod in the PWS Area is 25 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest (TAH) of Pacific cod for the federal Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area (5 AAC 28.267(e). The management plan also specifies that groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear is allocated 15% of the state waters Pacific cod GHL and longline gear is allocated 85%. If the groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear allocation is taken in any calendar year, the allocation will increase by 5% to a maximum of 30% of the GHL and the longline allocation will decrease by 5% beginning the following year. If the groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear allocation is not taken in any calendar year, the allocation will decrease by 5% to a minimum of 15% and the longline allocation will increase by 5% (5 AAC 28.267(e)). Currently the step-up provision is at 20% mechanical jig, hand troll, and groundfish pot gear and 80% longline gear.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could decrease rockfish bycatch. The PWS state-waters Pacific cod allocations by gear type would change from a combined mechanical jig, hand troll, and groundfish pot allocation of 15% to a combined groundfish pot and longline gear allocation of 95%. Pacific cod harvest opportunity from groundfish pot gear would increase by an unknown amount and harvest opportunity from longline gear could decrease by an unknown amount if harvest from pot gear is 15% or more of the state-waters GHL. Bycatch from longline gear would decrease if pot gear use became more common, resulting in conservation benefits to rockfish stocks in PWS.

BACKGROUND: Prior to 1997, all Pacific cod harvest in PWS occurred in parallel seasons managed concurrently with seasons set by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA). During this period, peak parallel season harvest occurred between 1990 and 1995 with an average of 1.7 million pounds annually (Table 11-1). From 1996 to 2000, harvests declined to less than 1.0 million pounds in all years, except 1999, when the harvest surpassed 1.3 million pounds. Harvest continued to decline through 2006 with the lowest historic harvest in 2005 of 11,294 pounds. From 2005 to 2015 harvest steadily increased to over 3.0 million pounds and then decreased again to 75,279 pounds in 2019, due to warmer than average water temperature in the Gulf of Alaska. In 2020 the parallel Pacific cod seasons did not open due to low abundance levels as determined by NMFS stock assessment. The parallel season opened again in 2021, but harvest remained low at 45,109 pounds, then increased again during 2022 and 2023 to 662,723 pounds and 486,337 pounds, respectively. Longline gear accounts for nearly all the parallel season Pacific cod harvest.

The PWS Pacific cod state-waters season was established in 1997. From 1997 to 2008 the total harvest ranged from 0 to 418,994 pounds for pot and jig gear combined (Table 11-1). Like the parallel fishery, harvest was low in the state-waters fishery from 2001 to 2006 due to low Pacific cod prices and lack of interest in pot gear. In 2008 the board approved the only state-waters longline fishery for Pacific cod, in PWS. After approval of the new longline fishery, the 2009 GHL of 487,663 pounds was achieved in 13 days, with harvest reaching 701,759 pounds from longline vessels alone. Harvest increased from 2011 to 2017 as the state-waters fishery allocated percentage of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA) allowable biological catch (ABC) moved through step-up provisions, reaching its maximum of 25% after the GHL was achieved for 3 consecutive years. Over 1.0 million pounds were harvested annually during this time, except for in 2015 when the Parallel season remained open through June resulting in lower effort in the state-waters season.

Like in the parallel season, low Pacific cod abundance levels resulted in lower state-waters GHL's and harvest from 2018 to 2020. During recent years from 2021 to 2023, GHL's averaged 1.3 million pounds and harvest averaged 908,896 pounds, mostly from longline gear. Harvest from jig and hand troll gear has been extremely low. In 2023 pot gear accounted for 20% of the state-waters Pacific cod harvest after the board approved longlining of groundfish pots in the state-waters Pacific cod fishery at the 2023 Arctic/Yukon/Kuskokwim meeting in Anchorage. This change allowed the efficient use of collapsible or slinky pots, which have become increasingly popular in groundfish fisheries. The 15% allocation to pot and jig gear combined was met in 2023, triggering the step-up provision outlined in regulation to 20% for groundfish pot and jig gear combined in 2024. The step-up provision allows a maximum 30% allocation groundfish pot and jig gear combined. Generally, pot gear has been shown to reduce bycatch, whereas longline and jig gear have higher levels. The department supports longlining of groundfish pots to avoid rockfish bycatch common in hook and line fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department **SUPPORTS** the use of pot gear in PWS to reduce bycatch and whale depredation and to support more efficient prosecution of fisheries.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 11-1.–Prince William Sound Area parallel Pacific cod season annual effort and harvest by gear type, 1988–2023.

			Harvest (pounds)[a]				
Year	Vessels	Landings	Longline	Pot	Jig/Hand troll	Other[b]	Total[d]
1988	39	87	330,718	0	0	0	330,718
1989	23	45	71,845	e	e	e	71,845
1990	84	307	1,203,118	e	e	e	1,203,118
1991	88	234	1,248,218	961,912	e	17,074	2,227,204
1992	140	524	1,359,176	594,741	e	e	1,953,917
1993	57	205	810,831	466,202	e	e	1,277,033
1994	46	197	316,550	1,584,722	e	0	1,901,272
1995	75	205	359,765	1,204,450	6,982	24,539	1,595,736
1996	50	135	214,021	420,183	1,663	218,170	854,037
1997	60	172	334,086	582,324	4,333	1,506	922,249
1998	50	150	534,553	138,243	0	5,879	678,675
1999	54	196	687,169	641,523	e	1,909	1,330,601
2000	58	175	403,230	332,310	0	e	735,540
2001	23	63	143,641	e	e	e	143,641
2002	22	51	17,700	0	0	e	17,700
2003	26	45	14,051	e	e	234	14,285
2004	17	45	13,247	e	0	e	13,247
2005	24	38	11,073	**e**	0	221	11,294
2006	30	59	18,407	e	0	587	18,988
2007	31	82	64,807	e	e	e	64,807
2008	35	78	66,563	0	0	0	66,563
2009	41	93	169,297	0	0	e	166,190
2010	40	93	88,700	0	0	326	89,026
2011	39	93	359,402	e	0	345	359,747
2012	32	82	420,544	e	0	1,963	422,507
2013	32	92	806,281	e	e	182	806,463
2014	33	82	791,448	e	0	415	791,863
2015	44	188	3,045,972	0	0	782	3,046,754
2016	49	145	1,138,283	0	82,109	5,766	1,224,099

-continued-

Table 11-1.–Page 2 of 2.

Year	Vessels	Landings	Harvest (pounds)[a] Longline	Pot	Jig/Hand troll	Other[b]	Total[d]
2017	36	121	845,947	0	e	197	846,144
2018	45	90	238,296	480	e	1,323	240,099
2019	42	65	73,749	e	0	1,530	75,279
2020				Closed			
2021	58	114	44,647	0	e	462	45,109
2022	72	174	662,222	e	0	501	662,723
2023	58	123	476,537	0	9,460	340	486,337
Averages							
1988-2015	46	136	496,586	–	–	–	754,108
2016-2019	43	105	574,069	–	–	2,204	596,405
2021-2023	63	137	394,469	–	–	434	398,056

Note: No GHL between 1988-1996; en dash means averages could not be computed because data was not available for all years.

[a] Harvest includes Pacific cod bycatch to other groundfish fisheries.

[b] Other" includes trawl and gillnet gear.

[d] Total does not include confidential data

[e] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

Table 11-2.–Prince William Sound Area state-waters Pacific Cod season annual effort, guideline harvest level (GHL), and harvest by gear type, 1997–2023.

					Harvest (pounds)			
Year	Vessels	Landings	GHL (lb)	% of GHL	Longline	Pot	Jig/Hand troll	Total[a]
1997	9	36	881,849	22.7%	Closed	192,142	8,378	200,520
1998	9	33	859,803	48.7%	Closed	385,817	33,177	418,994
1999	7	27	931,453	42.3%	Closed	314,987	79,147	394,134
2000	12	36	2,948,683	9.9%	Closed	268,765	22,377	291,142
2001	3	3	2,617,989	0.0%	Closed	0	228	228
2002	0	0	1,904,243	0.0%	Closed	0	0	0
2003	b	b	705,479	43.0%	Closed	b	0	b
2004	b	b	970,034	32.9%	Closed	b	0	b
2005	b	b	896,620	13.6%	Closed	b	0	b
2006	b	b	910,730	3.1%	Closed	b	b	2,353
2007	3	20	910,730	38.0%	Closed	b	b	345,684
2008	4	6	586,430	1.3%	Closed	0	7,557	7,557
2009	18	34	487,663	143.9%	701,759	0	0	701,759
2010	24	45	784,735	b	822,747	b	0	b
2011	25	63	1,435,209	111.1%	1,594,590	0	0	1,594,590
2012	38	70	1,448,437	b	1,395,483	0	a	b
2013	25	77	1,781,335	71.6%	1,275,245	0	0	1,275,245
2014	30	61	1,463,318	94.6%	1,384,749	0	0	1,384,749
2015	9	15	1,558,668	14.66%	b	0	b	228,454
2016	27	75	4,841,902	21.9%	1,059,916	0	b	1,059,915
2017	b	b	4,338,146	b	b	0	0	b
2018	16	36	992,080	35.4%	350,909	0	0	350,909
2019	15	40	936,965	43.6%	408,778	0	0	408,778
2020	7	23	437,425	99.0%	b	0	b	432,968
2021	17	39	1,094,044	80.2%	877,891	b	0	877,891
2022	14	30	1,717,952	31.6%	543,371	0	0	543,371
2023	19	50	1,289,704	101.2%	1,043,761	261,664	0	1,305,426
Averages								
1997-2015	14	35	1,267,548	40.7%	1,195,762	89,362	10,058	488,958
2016-2020	16	44	2,309,304	50.0%	606,534	0	3,526	563,142
2021-2023	17	40	1,367,233	71.0%	821,674	130,832	0	908,896

a Total does not include confidential data.

b Confidential data due to limited number of participants

PROPOSAL 12 – 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Dia Kuzmin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the Prince William Sound (PWS) state-waters Pacific cod allocation for groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear from a step-up provision between 15% and 30% to a static 50% allocation.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan* specifies that groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear is allocated 15% of the state waters Pacific cod GHL and longline gear is allocated 85%. If the groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear allocation is taken in any calendar year, the allocation will increase by 5% to a maximum of 30% of the GHL and the longline allocation will decrease by 5% beginning the following year. If the groundfish pot, mechanical jig, and hand troll gear allocation is not taken in any calendar year, the allocation will decrease by 5% to a minimum of 15% and the longline allocation will increase by 5% (5 AAC 28.267(e)). Currently the step-up provision is at 20% mechanical jig, hand troll, and groundfish pot gear and 80% longline gear.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Pacific cod harvest opportunity from groundfish pot, jig, and hand troll gear would increase by 35%, or 474,000 pounds based on 2021 to 2023 averages, and harvest opportunity from longline gear would decrease by a minimum of 35%. Bycatch from longline gear would decrease, resulting in a decrease in rockfish harvest by an unknown amount depending on fishing effort and rockfish abundance.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 11 for background information on PWS Pacific cod fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department **SUPPORTS** the use of pot gear in PWS to reduce bycatch, whale depredation, and to support more efficient prosecution of fisheries.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 13 – 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Dia Kuzmin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow 100% retention of big and longnose skates during the Prince William Sound (PWS) state-waters longline fishery for Pacific cod until 25% of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA) Total Allowable Catch (TAC) has been reached for skates.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Skates may be retained and sold as bycatch during directed groundfish fisheries. Allowable bycatch levels are set annually by emergency order (EO) and have been set at 5% of the directed groundfish harvest since 2016.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Participants in PWS directed groundfish fisheries would be permitted to retain all big and longnose skates caught up to 25% of the EGOA TAC. Average annual skate catch from 2021 to 2023 was 52,238 pounds, of which an average of 39,262 pounds were retained and the remainder discarded. Skate harvest could increase by an unknown amount up to 25% of the EGOC TAC, which averaged 1.8 million pounds for big skate and 1.1 million pounds for longnose skate during the same period.

BACKGROUND: Skates are not specified in PWS groundfish fishery regulations and are therefore classified as a miscellaneous groundfish. A directed fishery for big and longnose skates occurred under a commissioner's permit in PWS during 2009 and 2010 following the department's receipt of a capital budget increment, which allowed for management of this fishery. In years following these two directed fisheries, most of the skate harvest occurred as bycatch in the state-waters Pacific cod fishery. Big and longnose skates are the two most frequently landed skate species in PWS. Skates are also harvested in other directed longline groundfish fisheries. Both species are long lived, have slow growth rates, and mature late in life, making them vulnerable to overfishing. In the 2009 and 2010 directed skate fisheries 258,389 pounds and 104,509 pounds were harvested, respectively for big and longnose skates combined.

The department has not issued directed skate fishery commissioner's permits since 2010 for several reasons: lack of comprehensive stock assessment data, relative catch and composition of skate species, bycatch in the directed skate fishery, particularly Pacific halibut, and other existing skate harvest opportunities as bycatch in directed groundfish fisheries.

There is no directed fishery for skates in federal waters; skates may only be retained as bycatch. Concern over skate abundance levels derived from National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) stock assessment surveys in recent years resulted in a reduction in maximum retainable amounts from 20% to 5% for skate bycatch in federal waters fisheries in 2016. NMFS was reacting to concerns about the skate population stock assessment information and of vessels "topping off" their harvest with maximum allowed bycatch. Additionally, the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) TAC was achieved for big skate in 2013 through 2016, and big skate was closed to retention in federal waters adjacent to PWS. The department closed big skate in state waters of PWS in those years to mirror the NMFS action as there was no statewide GHL set for skate species. In 2016, ADF&G reduced allowable skate bycatch levels by EO from 15% to 5%, mirroring federal bycatch levels. Allowable skate bycatch has remained at 5% since 2016.

Following the 5% skate bycatch allowance implemented in 2016, annual skate harvest ranged from 17,000 pounds to 92,000 pounds. Between 2021 and 2023 skate harvest averaged 39,262 pounds annually (Figure 13-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because of conservation concerns for big and longnose skates. The department has no comprehensive skate stock assessment in PWS and has concerns about increased harvest under a 100% bycatch retention allowance.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

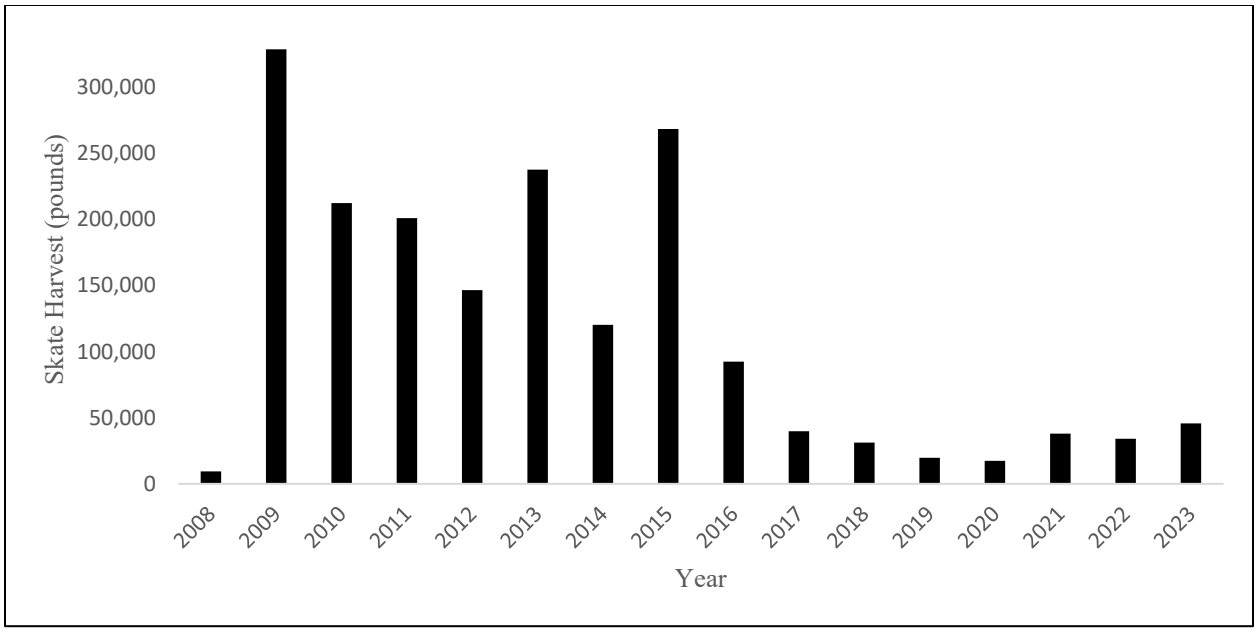

Figure 13-1.–Skate harvest (pounds) in the Prince William Sound Area, 2008-2023.

PROPOSAL 14 – 5 AAC 34.263. Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Outdoor Council.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit a directed walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery in Prince William Sound (PWS) unless no part or attachment to pelagic trawl gear contacts the seafloor habitat and there is no bycatch of king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.263) allows for a directed pelagic trawl fishery from January 20, which coincides with the opening of federal Gulf of Alaska walleye pollock trawl fishery, through March 31. This fishery occurs in three defined sections of PWS and no more than 60% of the harvest may come out of any one section. Additionally, regulations allow only 5% of the total weight of the harvest to be bycatch (5 AAC 28.263 (d)), and the department has further allocated percentages for rockfish, salmon, sharks, squid, and miscellaneous species by emergency order (EO).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A verifiable method for establishing whether pelagic trawl gear contacts the seafloor habitat would need to be established. King salmon bycatch in the PWS walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery would be prohibited. Pollock harvest and effort would decrease by an unknown amount depending on whether king salmon bycatch can be avoided. From 2021 to 2023, 96% of pollock landings had some salmon bycatch.

BACKGROUND: The PWS walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery begins January 20, which coincides with the opening of federal Gulf of Alaska walleye pollock trawl fishery. Harvest in this state-waters fishery has ranged between a high of 9.82 million pounds in 2015 and 1.40 million pounds in 2008 (Table 15-1). Annual participation has ranged from fewer than 3 vessels to 22 vessels. Vessel participation has been stable in recent years with an average of 14 vessels participating annually from 2016 to 2019 and 15 vessels participating annually from 2021 to 2023. During the most recent three seasons, from 2021 to 2023, average ex-vessel value has been $1,022,928 annually at an average price of 17 cents per pound.

In 2002, when there was a dramatic increase in bycatch rates for all species (Table 15-2), and during board meetings it was determined that ADF&G would encourage cleaner fishing practices by instituting bycatch limits; bycatch is restricted to no more than 5% of the total round weight of pollock harvested, and ADF&G further manages bycatch by apportioning the percentage among the following species groups by EO: rockfish (0.5%), salmon (0.04%), shark (0.96%), squid (3.0%), and other species (0.5%). The department has emergency order authority to raise or lower these bycatch percentages in response to conservation concerns or other factors. However, in 2014, the rockfish bycatch limit of 0.5% during the directed pollock pelagic trawl fishery was adopted into regulation by the board.

In-season management during the PWS directed pollock fishery is intensive, with close contact between the fleet and managers with attention to the section harvest and bycatch limits. ADF&G management requirements include mandatory check-in and check-out procedures before fishing in or leaving a management section, as well as recording fishing information in log sheets. The majority of the fleet transits from Kodiak, which increases the lead time necessary to make management decisions. Trip limits of 300,000 pounds are established in regulation and are an

important management tool to control the rate of harvest in the fishery. Historically, vessels have often achieved this harvest trip limit in less than 12 hours of fishing time.

Although bycatch rates in this fishery are low relative to other groundfish fisheries, bycatch has sometimes warranted management measures. Because bycatch levels are a percentage of the directed harvest, as pollock GHLs increase, bycatch allowances increase. For recent years bycatch in excess of bycatch allowances resulted in section closures in 2014 for rockfish, 2020 and 2024 for squid, and 2020 and 2021 for salmon.

In recent seasons, ADF&G has worked with the fleet to rotate vessels through PWS and limit the number of vessels fishing at a given time, with the goal of minimizing bycatch harvest and monitoring the GHL closely.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department has the management tools necessary to monitor bycatch closely and stay within the 5% limit specified in regulation and the assemblage bycatch limits specified in EO. The provision of this proposal related to sea floor contact would be difficult to enforce.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 15 – 5 AAC 34.263. Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: The Chenega IRA Council.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would replace the current 5% bycatch limit in the *Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan* with a limit set in pounds that does not fluctuate with the walleye pollock guideline harvest level. Additionally, this would require full retention of all bycatch.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.263) allows for a directed pelagic trawl fishery from January 20, which coincides with the opening of federal Gulf of Alaska walleye pollock trawl fishery, through March 31. This fishery occurs in three defined sections of PWS and no more than 60% of the harvest may come out of any one section (Figure 15-1). All walleye pollock brought on board a vessel when a directed fishery for walleye pollock is open must be retained (5 AAC 28.070(e)(2)). Additionally, regulations allow only 5% of the total weight of the harvest to be bycatch (5 AAC 28.263(d)), and the department has further allocated percentages for rockfish, salmon, sharks, squid, and miscellaneous species by emergency order (EO).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Bycatch in the PWS walleye pollock trawl fishery would be limited by weight instead of a percentage of the pollock harvest. Depending on the limit set, bycatch could be higher or lower under a weight limit than under a percentage of harvest limit in any given year.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to proposal 14 for background information on the PWS walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Emergency order authority provides the department with the tools necessary to adjust the bycatch limits by species or assemblage within the 5% limit set in regulation.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

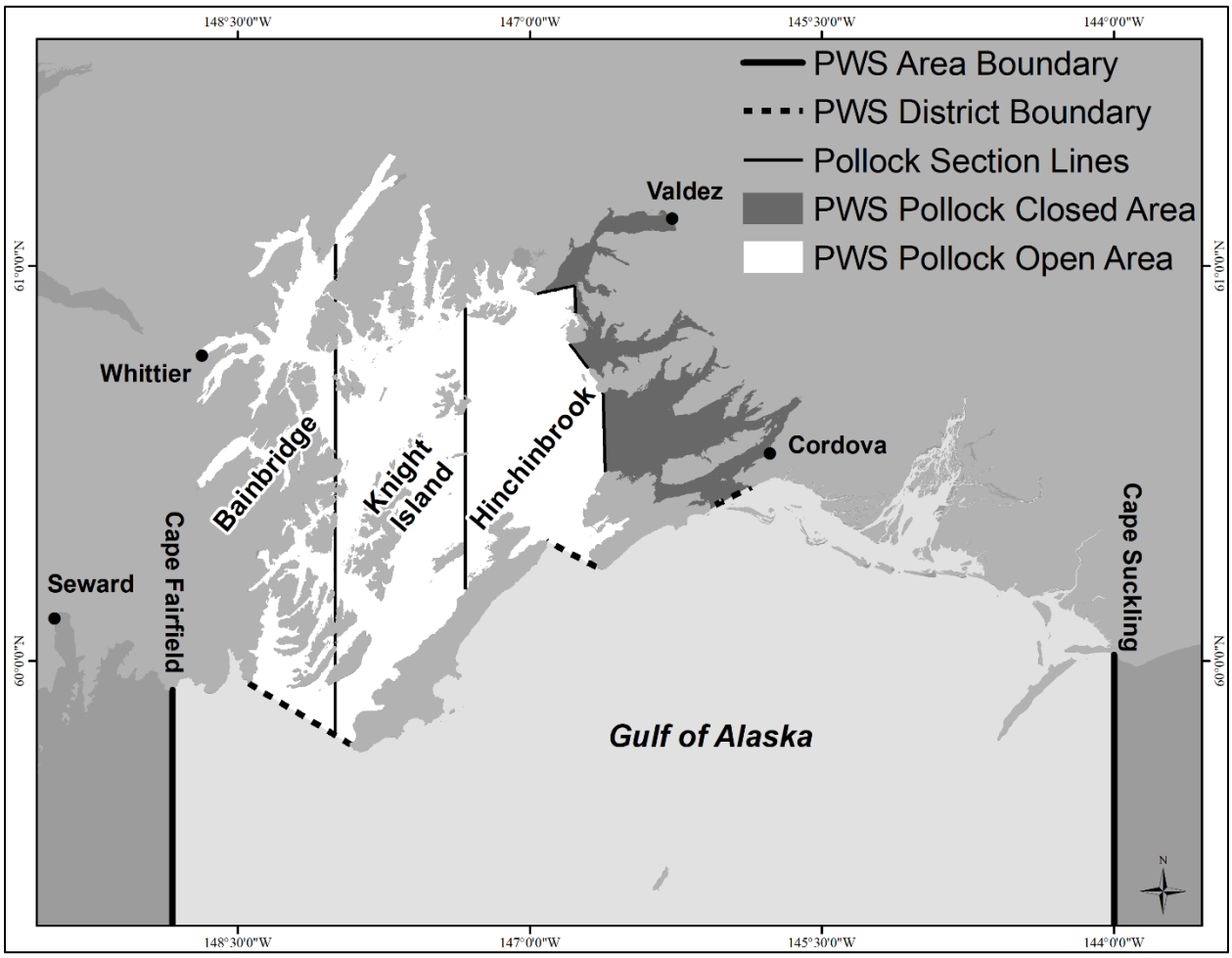

Figure 15-1.–Prince William Sound Inside District walleye pollock management sections for the directed commercial trawl fishery.

Table 15-1.–Prince William Sound Area walleye pollock harvest (in pounds) and effort by gear type, guideline harvest level (GHL), and season length, 1995–2023.

	Effort			Harvest					
Year	Vessels	Landings	Season Length (days)	Directed	Test fishery	Bycatch	Total	GHL (million lb)	% of GHL
1995	9	35	26	6,325,575	215,025	10,220	6,540,600	2.1-4.4	144%
1996	11	24	5	3,265,740	420,571	7,905	3,686,311	3.1	105%
1997	10	31	8	4,319,707	539,123	7,184	4,858,830	3.9	111%
1998	11	29	7	4,013,725	631,751	2,680	4,645,476	3.9	103%
1999	6	38	36	4,673,074	490,761	11,890	5,163,835	4.6	102%
2000	4	20	70	2,256,504	366,724	8,045	2,623,228	3.1	73%
2001	a	a	64	a	381,502	a	381,502	3.1	100%
2002	3	22	70	2,364,143	177,003	68	2,541,146	3.8	62%
2003	3	17	84	2,421,772	53,595	1,221	2,475,367	3.8	64%
2004	3	9	68	1,928,458	400,403	824	2,328,861	2.0	96%
2005	6	8	48	1,677,157	317,183	805	1,994,340	2.0	84%
2006	8	15	58	3,486,499	ND	590	3,486,499	3.6	97%
2007	5	11	69	2,339,978	259,155	a	2,599,133	3.6	65%
2008	5	7	56	1,395,933	ND	a	1,395,933	3.6	39%
2009	7	12	60	3,243,959	300,806	a	3,544,765	3.6	90%
2010	11	14	42	3,662,919	311,853	4,939	3,974,772	3.6	102%
2011	7	12	17	3,377,325	339,683	13,608	3,717,008	3.6	94%
2012	9	21	24	5,785,295	ND	a	5,785,295	6.1	95%
2013	14	22	14	5,779,241	488,666	a	6,267,907	5.8	99%
2014	19	22	8	5,220,121	ND	1,096	5,220,121	8.6	61%
2015	17	35	16	9,818,616	ND	3,674	9,818,616	9.3	99%
2016	9	30	71	8,573,163	779,979	13,265	9,353,142	13.1	72%
2017	8	15	71	4,143,533	ND	3,720	4,143,533	9.4	44%
2018	16	24	42	6,802,350	926,066	2,358	7,728,416	7.1	96%
2019	22	25	24	6,539,859	935,114	1,295	7,474,973	6.6	99%
2020	14	23	41	5,090,676	928,792	a	6,019,468	5.1	100%
2021	10	20	12	4,710,088	898,250	256	5,608,338	4.9	96%
2022	17	23	27	6,174,300	960,297	1,737	7,134,597	6.4	96%
2023	19	27	68	7,167,286	539,582	4345	7,706,868	7.3	98%
Averages									
1995-2015	8	20	40	3,554,586	355,863	5,077	3,661,546	4.2	90%
2016-2019	14	23	43	3,738,430	892,488	5,160	6,943,906	8.3	86%
2021-2023	15	23	46	4,017,768	799,376	2,113	6,816,601	6.2	83%

Table 15-2.–Prince William Sound Area walleye pollock fishery bycatch by species or species group, in pounds and as a percentage of the directed pollock harvest, 2008–2023.

	Harvest												
	Pollock	Rockfish		Chinook Salmon		Shark		Squid		Other		Total Bycatch	
Year	Pounds	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent	Pounds	Percent
2008	1,395,933	20,790	1.49%	48	0.00%	1,550	0.11%	30,619	2.19%	1,066	0.08%	54,073	3.87%
2009	3,249,441	21,093	0.65%	142	0.00%	19,101	0.59%	15,747	0.48%	14,115	0.43%	70,199	2.16%
2010	3,662,919	3,594	0.10%	223	0.01%	3,133	0.09%	17,052	0.47%	21,854	0.60%	45,856	1.25%
2011	3,377,325	5,290	0.16%	50	0.00%	411	0.01%	15,006	0.44%	2,410	0.07%	23,167	0.69%
2012	5,785,295	16,904	0.29%	1,431	0.02%	1,810	0.03%	8,123	0.14%	12,682	0.22%	40,950	0.71%
2013	5,779,241	27,824	0.48%	61	0.00%	3,230	0.06%	86,116	1.49%	3,401	0.06%	120,632	2.09%
2014	5,220,121	67,446	1.29%	260	0.00%	526	0.01%	171,946	3.29%	24,322	0.47%	264,500	5.07%
2015	9,818,616	20,785	0.21%	442	0.00%	889	0.01%	240,125	2.45%	7,337	0.07%	269,578	2.75%
2016	8,573,163	21,992	0.26%	1,067	0.01%	2,720	0.03%	41,993	0.49%	12,286	0.14%	80,058	0.93%
2017	4,143,533	2,552	0.06%	177	0.00%	117	0.00%	259	0.01%	2,857	0.07%	5,962	0.14%
2018	6,802,350	3,437	0.05%	1,172	0.02%	477	0.01%	1,732	0.03%	20,421	0.30%	27,239	0.40%
2019	6,539,859	6,995	0.11%	258	0.00%	679	0.01%	31,744	0.49%	5,358	0.08%	45,034	0.69%
2020	5,090,676	17,436	0.34%	2,240	0.04%	10,357	0.20%	153,959	3.02%	2,562	0.05%	186,554	3.66%
2021	4,710,088	8,198	0.17%	2,268	0.05%	2,959	0.06%	39,027	0.83%	2,422	0.05%	54,874	1.17%
2022	6,174,300	14,736	0.24%	2,464	0.04%	4,489	0.07%	58,970	0.96%	3,311	0.05%	83,970	1.36%
2023	7,167,286	14,211	0.20%	2,473	0.03%	1,405	0.02%	53,980	0.75%	4,565	0.06%	76,634	1.07%
Averages													
1995-2015	3,868,061	12,510	0.37%	477	0.01%	6,937	0.26%	44,845	1.15%	7,968	0.23%	72,737	2.03%
2016-2020	6,229,916	10,482	0.16%	983	0.02%	2,870	0.05%	45,937	0.81%	8,697	0.13%	68,969	1.16%
2021-2023	6,017,225	12,382	0.20%	2,402	0.04%	2,951	0.05%	50,659	0.85%	3,433	0.06%	71,826	1.20%

Note: Bycatch allowances are 0.5% for rockfish, 0.04% for salmon, 3% for squid, 0.96% for sharks, and 0.5% for other species.

Table 15-3.–Estimated number of rockfish and king salmon harvested in the Prince William Sound walleye pollock trawl fishery, 2010-2023.

Year	Number of Rockfish	Number of king salmon
2010	220	46
2011	324	33
2012	1036	448
2013	1704	14
2014	4132	65
2015	1273	142
2016	1347	262
2017	156	50
2018	135	265
2019	429	77
2020	1068	754
2021	502	789
2022	903	895
2023	871	980
Averages		
2010-2015	1,448	125
2016-2020	627	282
2021-2023	759	888

Note: Number of rockfish is estimated based on the average weight of shortraker and rougheye rockfish sampled for 2010-2023.

PROPOSAL 16 – 5 AAC 34.263. Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: The Chenaga IRA Council.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close the directed walleye pollock trawl fishery in Prince William Sound (PWS).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.263) allows for a directed pelagic trawl fishery from January 20, which coincides with the opening of federal Gulf of Alaska walleye pollock trawl fishery, through March 31. This fishery occurs in three defined sections of PWS and no more than 60% of the harvest may come out of any one section. Additionally, regulations allow only 5% of the total weight of the harvest to be bycatch (5 AAC 28.263 (d)), and the department has further allocated percentages for rockfish, salmon, sharks, squid, and miscellaneous species by emergency order (EO; Figure16-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Walleye pollock harvest in PWS would be reduced by 99%. Annual revenue for the PWS pollock fishery is approximately $1,000,000 shared by 15 vessels from 23 landings. Rockfish and king salmon harvest would be reduced by approximately 12,000 pounds and 2,400 pounds, respectively based on average bycatch from 2021 to 2023 (Figure 16-2).

BACKGROUND: Please refer to the comments on Proposal 15 for background information.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This would eliminate fishing opportunity on a stock where there are no conservation concerns and where a portion of the stock has been harvested sustainably for many years. The department has the management tools necessary to closely monitor bycatch and stay within the 5% limit specified in regulation and the assemblage bycatch limits specified in EO.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

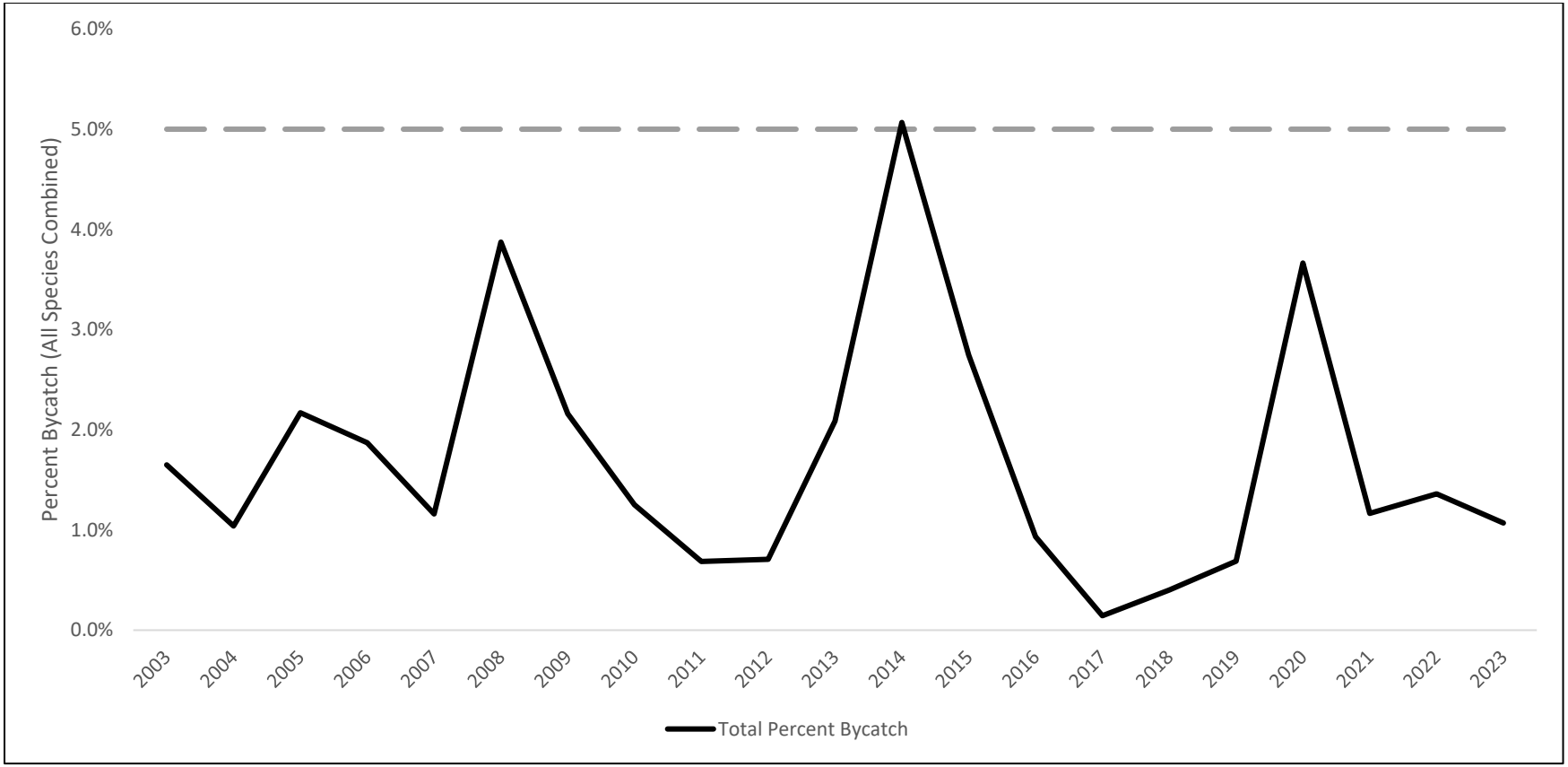

Figure 16-1.–Total percent bycatch in the PWS Trawl Fishery as a percentage of directed walleye pollock harvest in pounds, 2003-2023. Dashed line represents 5 percent cap on all bycatch.

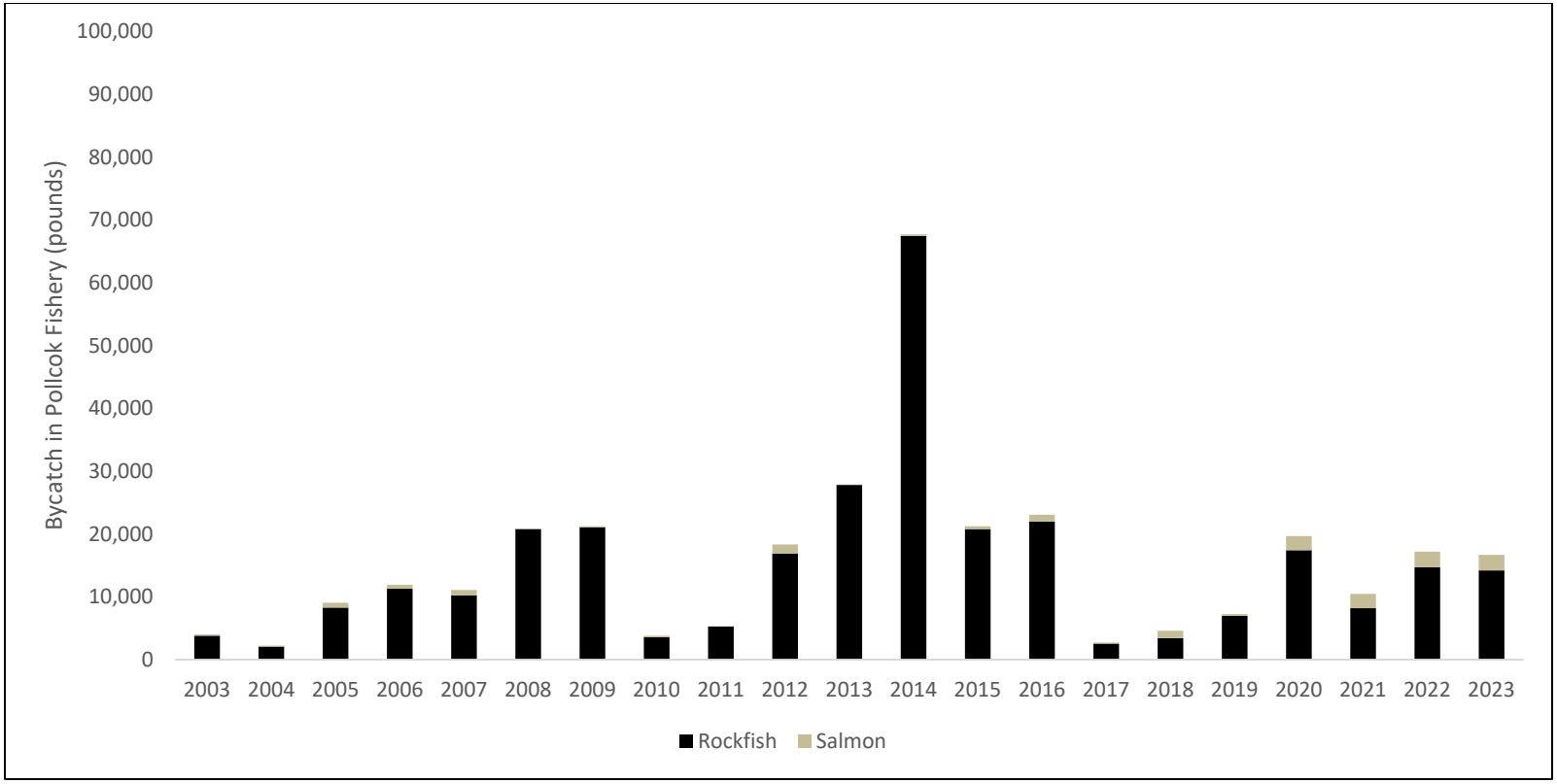

Figure 16-2.–Bycatch of rockfish and salmon in pounds during the directed PWS walleye pollock fishery, 2003-2023.

PROPOSAL 17 – 5 AAC 34.263. Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: The Chenega IRA Council.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require 100% onboard electronic monitoring and 50% physical onboard observation in the PWS walleye pollock trawl fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Walleye Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Management Plan* provides the commissioner with the authority to require onboard observers on a vessel during fishing operations (5 AAC 28.263(h)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would establish an electronic and on-board observer program to assess the accuracy of walleye pollock harvest and bycatch data from the PWS walleye pollock trawl fishery. This would result in considerable costs to the department and industry to implement.

BACKGROUND: Observers are deployed by the department in Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab and statewide weathervane scallop fisheries to collect biological and fishery data at sea. This is done for two reasons – first, most scallops and some crab are processed at sea, making shorebased biological data sampling not possible; second, data on the nonretained portion of the catch is a critical component of stock assessment models and requirement of the Federal Fishery Management Plan for these fisheries. In the PWS walleye pollock trawl fishery directed harvest and bycatch are delivered to shorebased facilities for processing. In-season assessment of bycatch limits is based on fish tickets from processors and call in data from the fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department has the authority but not the resources to deploy onboard observers in the walleye pollock fishery. If the board were to adopt this proposal it is unlikely the department could mobilize a walleye pollock observer program and identify a funding source for the program by the 2025 fishery. Additionally, the board does not have authority to require electronic monitoring.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal will result in additional direct cost for the department to implement an observer program and additional direct cost to private persons participating in the fishery. The estimated cost of an onboard observer program for the PWS pollock fishery would depend on coverage levels determined by the board or department and the type of observers deployed in the fishery. The department currently administers an observer program for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab and statewide scallop fishery. Observers in those fisheries are either contracted third-party or department employees and costs are covered either by vessels required to carry an observer or through test fishery revenues generated by the department. Additional costs would be incurred to hire new department employees to administer an observer program.

PROPOSAL 18 - 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Brad Von Wichman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the Prince William Sound (PWS) sablefish fishery through October 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In state waters of PWS, sablefish may only be retained in the Inside District during the directed sablefish season from April 15 through August 31 by a limited-entry permit holder who registered to participate by the registration deadline of 5:00 p.m. April 1 (5 AAC 28.206(c) and 5 AAC 28.210(b)). The PWS sablefish permit holder may not take more than the annual amount (quota specific to permit type) specified by the department; log sheets and 6-hour prior notice of landing are required in the fishery (5 AAC 28.272 (c), (e), and (f)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the PWS state-waters sablefish season two months. A longer fishing season could result in increased likelihood of achieving the GHL, which has not been achieved since 2002. Extending the fishery could increase fall fishing activity and sablefish harvest by allowing fishers to skip the early season when whale depredation often occurs.

BACKGROUND: The board adopted a shared quota approach for the PWS sablefish fishery in 2003 (5 AAC 28.272). This approach lengthened the season to at least 82 days in all subsequent years and achieved a reduction in gear loss. Quota allocations were derived such that half of the guideline harvest level (GHL) was allocated equally among registered participants and the balance of the GHL allocated according to the permit's vessel size class: Classes A and B (90 ft and 60 ft maximum length) vessels receive 18.53%; Class C (50 ft maximum length) vessels receive 70.33%; and Class D (35 ft maximum length) vessels receive 11.14%. Quota allocations were originally based on vessel size but currently any size permit can be fished on any size vessel.

From 1988 to 1995 annual sablefish harvest and effort ranged from 188,788 pounds by 25 vessels in 1989 to 577,315 pounds by 126 vessels in 1995 (Figure 18-1). The 1995 peak in catch and effort was attributed to speculation about qualifying for the limited entry program. Since implementation of the limited entry program in 1996 to 2015, harvest and effort averaged 265,324 pounds and 46 vessels. Beginning in 2015, the sablefish GHL was tied to the Gulf of Alaska sablefish allowable biological catch. Following 22 years of a static GHL at 242,000 pounds, the 2015 GHL was set at 122,000 pounds, nearly a 50% decrease, which was consistent with the poor fishery performance that year. Since annual adjustment of the GHL began in 2015, the GHL decreased to its historic low in 2016 of 110,823 pounds, and then began to steadily rise, up to 269,000 pounds in 2023 (Figure 18-1). Sablefish harvest reached a fishery low 16,910 pounds in 2015.

From 2016 to 2020 PWS sablefish harvest remained low, ranging from 40,457 pounds in 2016 to 95,877 pounds in 2020. Both sablefish GHLs and harvest increased during the most recent 3-year period from 2021 to 2023, ranging from 139,917 pounds in 2021 to 194,908 pounds in 2022. Harvest in relation to the GHL has been relatively low with 57% of the GHL achieved from 2016 to 2020 and 64% of the GHL achieved from 2021 to 2023.

A persistent problem in the PWS sablefish fishery is whale predation. The board has adopted regulations to curb depredation in several ways. In December 2005 the board approved a proposal to allow longline pot gear to be used in the PWS sablefish fishery to encourage pot fishing, which has lower depredation than longline gear. Longline pot gear has become more common in the

fishery recently with the adoption of slinky pots. In 2005 the board also changed the fishery from a split season beginning in March to a season from April 15 to August 31 to encourage fishing later in the season when depredation is lower.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal and has no biological concern or management concerns with the proposed extension.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

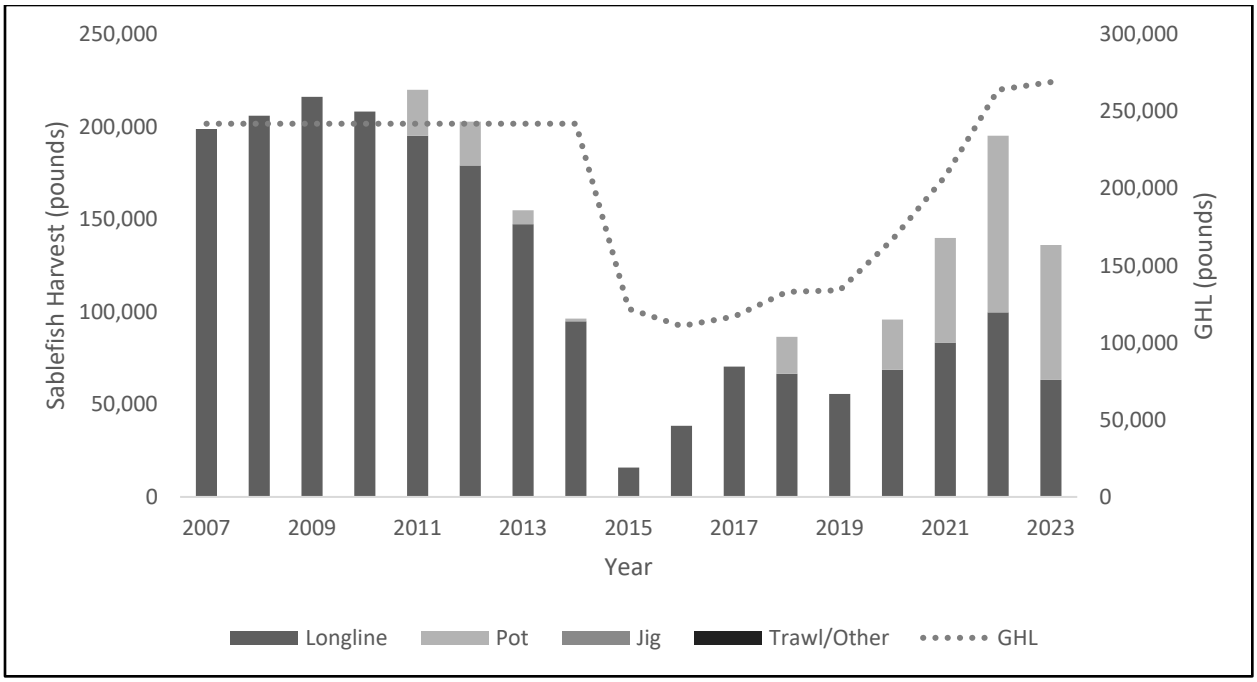

Figure 18-1.–Sablefish harvest (bars) and GHL (dotted line) in Prince William Sound by gear type, 2007-2023.

PROPOSAL 19 – 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area; 5 AAC 28.206. Prince William Sound Area registration; and 5 AAC 28.272. Sablefish harvest, possession, and landing requirements for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the PWS sablefish season by establishing a new second fishing period from September 1 through December 31 and reallocating quota after the first fishing period to registrants in the second fishing period.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In state waters of PWS, sablefish may only be retained in the Inside District during the directed sablefish season from April 15 through August 31 by a limited-entry permit holder who registered to participate by the registration deadline of 5:00 p.m. April 1 (5 AAC 28.206(c) and 5 AAC 28.210(b)). Limited entry permit holders are allocated a share of the GHL according to four permit type categories (5 AAC 28.272(c)(1) and 5 AAC 28.272(c)(2).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create a new second fishing period or "B Season" to allow participants the chance to harvest any remaining GHL from the first fishing period, or "A Season." Establishing a second season could increase fall fishing activity and utilization of the GHL.

BACKGROUND: Please see Proposal 18 for background on the PWS sablefish fishery. Throughout the history of this fishery the season dates have shifted in favor of a later starting date to avoid whale depredation. Current season dates were established in 2008.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal and has no biological or management concerns. The department issued extensions to the fishery from 2020 to 2022 due to loss of opportunity during the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic. During these years 21% of the quota was harvested after the August 31 closure date in regulation for 2020-2022.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 20 – 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would adjust the Prince William Sound (PWS) sablefish season by opening the season concurrently with the federal sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The fishing season for sablefish in PWS is April 15 through August 31 in the Inside District state-waters only with a registration deadline of 5:00pm April 1.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would open the PWS state-waters sablefish season approximately one month earlier. A longer fishing season could result in increased utilization of the GHL, which has not been achieved since 2002. Whale depredation is reported to be higher in the early spring and sablefish and rockfish bycatch could be depredated at higher rates during an earlier fishery.

BACKGROUND: As mentioned in the background of Proposals 18 and 19, the season for sablefish in Prince William Sound has been shifting to allow fishers the opportunity to harvest their allocation of the shared quota later in the season to mitigate loss of sablefish due to whale depredation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 3 – 5 AAC 28.230. Lawful Gear for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Brett Roth.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow groundfish pots with a tunnel eye perimeter greater than 36 inches in Prince William Sound (PWS) when unused Pacific halibut IFQ is on board the vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current statewide regulations define a groundfish pot as a pot with individual tunnel eye openings with perimeters 36 inches or less (5 AAC 28.050(c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Groundfish pots in PWS would be permitted to have individual tunnel eye openings with a perimeter greater than 36 inches if unused Pacific halibut IFQ is on board and if complementary regulations are also adopted by either the IPHC or North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982 does not provide the Board with authority to allow halibut retention in state water sablefish or other groundfish pot fisheries. If pot gear is authorized in the Pacific halibut IFQ fishery in PWS, rockfish harvest would likely be reduced. The Pacific halibut fishery harvests most rockfish in recent years in PWS (Figure 3-1).

BACKGROUND: Please refer to Proposal 21 for background information on the PWS sablefish fishery and proposal 5 for background information on PWS rockfish harvest. Since 2023 the National Marine Fisheries Service has allowed an exception to the federal maximum 9-inch tunnel eye opening for vessels participating in Gulf of Alaska (GOA) sablefish fisheries with unused Pacific halibut and sablefish IFQ. In the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) region there is an exception to the federal maximum 9-inch tunnel eye opening for vessels participating in Pacific halibut and sablefish fisheries with unused Pacific halibut IFQ onboard.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department **SUPPORTS** the use of pot gear in PWS to reduce bycatch and whale depredation and to support more efficient fisheries. However, as written this proposal would allow pots with larger tunnel eye openings in all groundfish pot fisheries in PWS, and this could conflict with federal regulations which allow larger tunnel eye openings only in sablefish (GOA) or Pacific halibut and sablefish fisheries (BSAI).

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

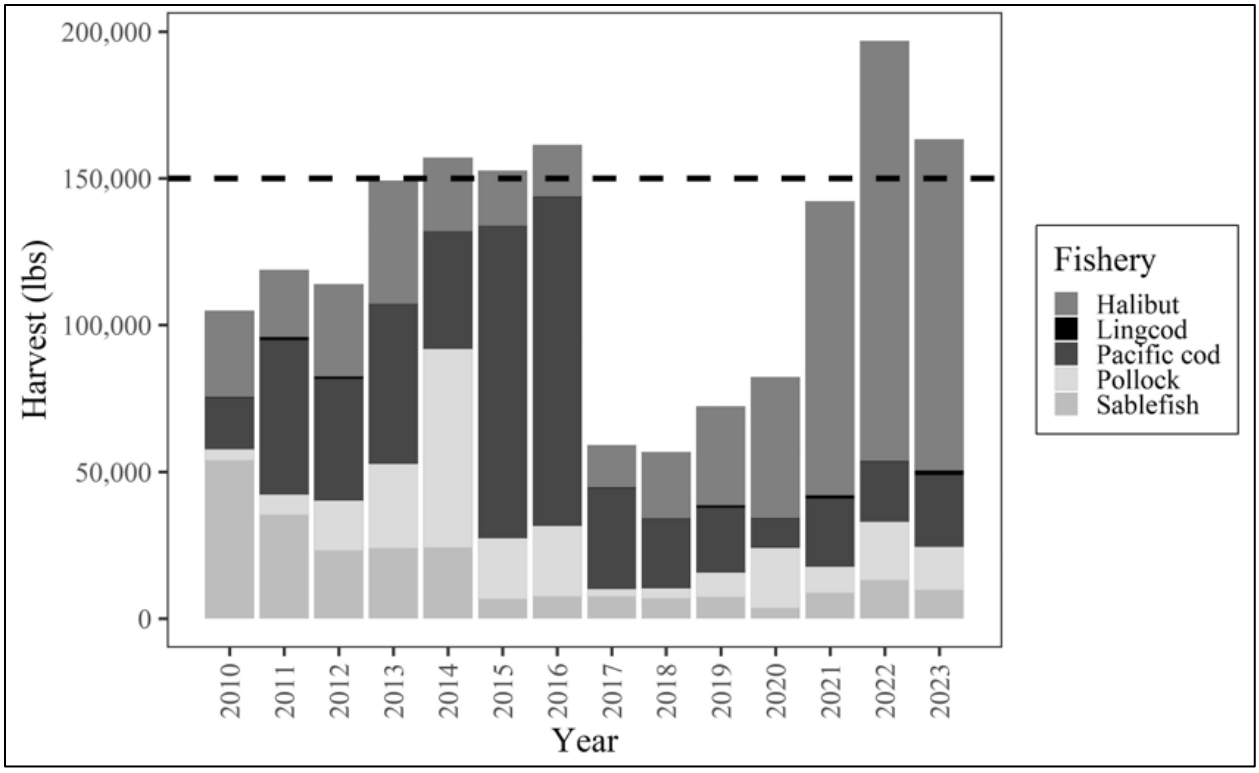

Figure 3-1.–Rockfish harvest (pounds) in the Prince William Sound Area by fishery, 2010-2023. Dashed line is 150,000 pound guideline harvest level.

PROPOSAL 7 – 5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow lingcod in Prince William Sound (PWS) to be taken only by mechanical jig or hand troll gear.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations do not define the guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for the PWS Outside and PWS Inside Districts, which are set preseason by the department. Since 2008, the PWS commercial lingcod GHLs for the Outside District and Inside District have been set at 25,300 pounds and 7,300 pounds, respectively.

Lingcod may be taken only from July 1 through December 31, unless closed by emergency order and only in a directed fishery and as bycatch up to 20 percent by weight of the directed finish species, unless the commissioner closes the season and opens another season in which the bycatch is prohibited or further limited (5 AAC 28.210(c)). Groundfish may be taken by trawls, hand troll gear, seines, mechanical jigging machines, dinglebar troll gear, longlines, or pots except that groundfish may not be retained by nonpelagic trawl gear (5 AAC 28.050 and 5 AAC 28.230).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Lingcod harvest would only be permitted in the directed fishery using mechanical jigging machines or hand troll gear. The directed harvest of lingcod in longline fisheries in PWS, which allows participants to retain 100% of caught lingcod, would no longer be permitted. Lingcod bycatch would continue to be permitted at the 20% retention rate allowed in regulation. On average, 7,176 pounds of lingcod would become available to participants in the directed jig fishery or as bycatch in other finfish fisheries (Figure 7-1). Additionally, there would be less incentive for participants in PWS longline fisheries to set gear in lingcod habitat, which could also reduce rockfish bycatch.

BACKGROUND: The department does not have a fishery-independent stock assessment program for lingcod in PWS. Beginning in 1998, the department established a lingcod fishery GHL calculated as 50% of the most recent (1986–1995) 10-year harvest. In 2000, the GHL was increased to 75% of the average for those years, which was consistent with the most conservative alternative used by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council when considering fisheries with little data on abundance or stock structure. This resulted in a 5,500 pound GHL for the Inside District and a 19,000 pound GHL for the Outside District and adjacent federal waters. Since 2008, the GHL has been set at 7,300 pounds for the Inside District and 25,300 pounds for the Outside District and adjacent federal waters, which is 100% of the historical harvest.

Prior to 2008 the directed lingcod fishery and bycatch retention closed when GHL's for PWS Outside and PWS Inside were achieved. In 2008, the board adopted a regulation allowing retention of lingcod as bycatch at 20% following the closure of the directed lingcod season. The total lingcod harvest, including directed and bycatch, increased in 2009 to 72,472 pounds from 40,601 pounds in 2008. Harvest steadily decreased to a low of 12,622 pounds in 2017 and then stabilized at approximately 25,000 pounds through 2023, averaging 25,713 pounds from 2021 to 2023.

Participants in PWS longline fisheries can purchase a lingcod landing card and retain 100% of their lingcod while targeting other groundfish, primarily Pacific halibut. In recent years, from 2021 to 2023, lingcod in PWS Inside District were harvested primarily as bycatch in the Pacific halibut fishery and in the directed jig fishery, with very little directed lingcod harvest occurring in the Pacific halibut fishery (Figure 7-1). During the same timeframe in the PWS Outside District directed lingcod harvest in the Pacific halibut fishery averaged 7,098 pounds and bycatch lingcod

harvest in the Pacific halibut fishery averaged 12,818 pounds, with no harvest occurring in the directed jig fishery and little harvest as bycatch in other fisheries.

Since 1998, the directed lingcod season in the Outside District and federal waters has closed as early as July 14 and as late as December 31, which is the end of the season. Likewise, the directed lingcod season in the Inside District has closed as early as August 6 and stayed open as late as December 31.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This proposal would reduce rockfish harvest in PWS and also align PWS regulations for lingcod with Cook Inlet, where directed fishing for lingcod using longline gear is not permitted.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

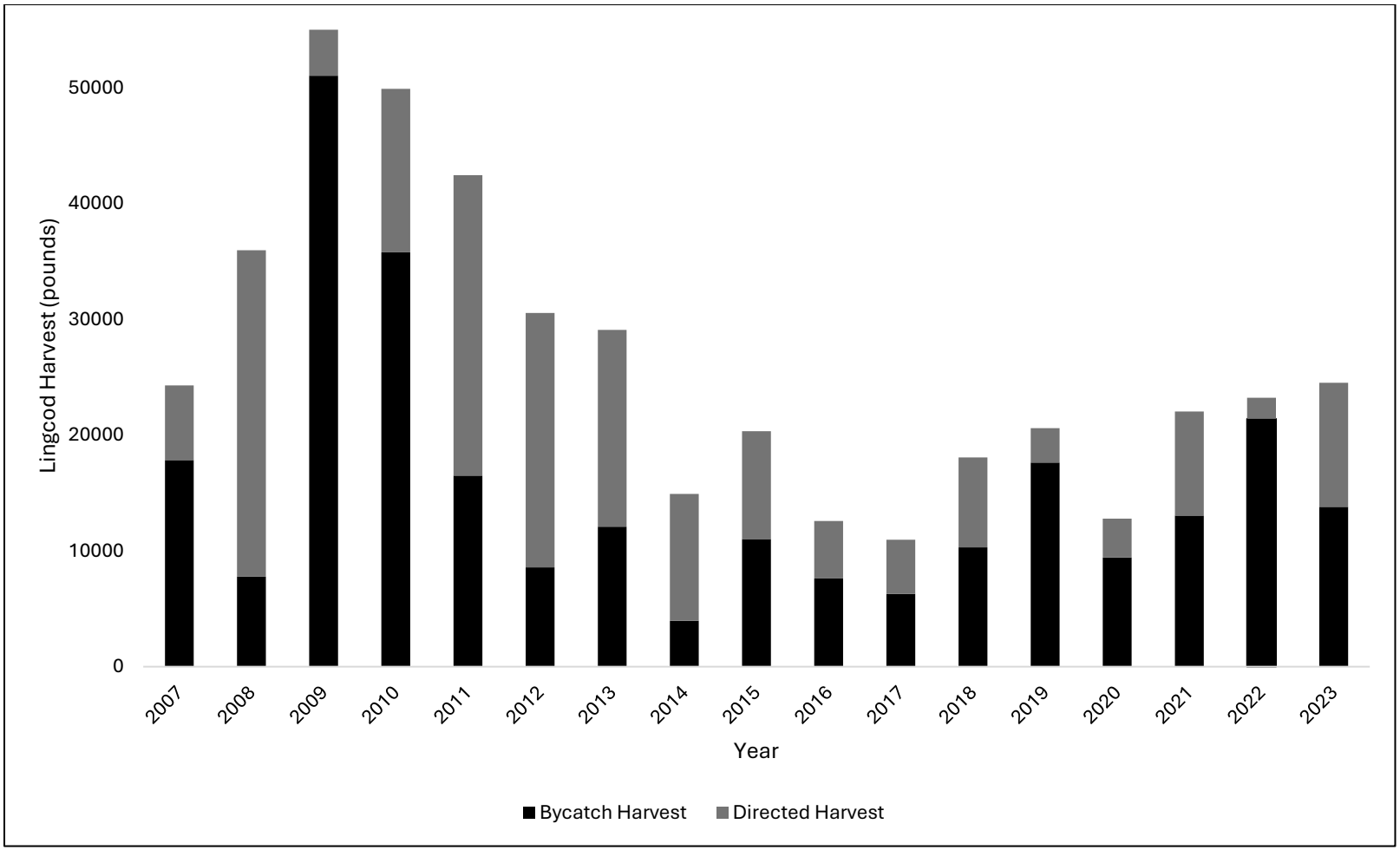

Figure 7-1.–Directed and bycatch harvest of lingcod in Prince William Sound Area for longline fisheries, 2007-2023.

PROPOSAL 21 and 22 – 5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Brett Roth, proposal 21, and CDFU, proposal 22.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the concurrent use of longline and groundfish pot gear in the Prince William Sound (PWS) sablefish and Pacific halibut fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations specify that in a groundfish fishery in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Area, a person may have only one type of legal gear on board the vessel except that mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear may be used at the same time (5 AAC 28.230(j) and (k)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Participants in the PWS sablefish and Pacific halibut fisheries could target Pacific halibut with hooks and sablefish with pots during the same trip, reducing the number of trips necessary to fill quota. Allowing both gear types on the same trip would encourage the use of groundfish pot gear during times of high whale depredation and high rockfish bycatch, resulting in more efficient fisheries with lower bycatch. This proposal would also align with federal regulations which allow both gear types to be used concurrently and reduce enforcement issues from vessels transiting through PWS state-waters with two gear types on board. Catch accounting would become more difficult, however in the federally managed sablefish and Pacific halibut fisheries both gear types are permitted on the same trip and catch is accounted for by gear type.

BACKGROUND: The state managed sablefish (SMS) fishery in PWS is a limited entry fishery with relatively small shares of quota assigned to each permit (3,500 to 8,000 pounds in 2024). These permits are fished during directed trips utilizing either longline or groundfish pot gear or concurrently with a Pacific halibut trip using longline gear (Figure 21-1.). Prior to 2018 most sablefish in the SMS fishery were harvested using longline gear (Table 21-1). Since 2018 pots have become a popular alternative for directed SMS trips, primarily because they are more efficient to use and avoid whale depredation. From 2021 to 2023 approximately 40-50% of sablefish were harvested using pots and with the widespread adoption of lighter slinky pots, this trend is expected to continue. However, due to small quota size for individual permits, some permit holders will still choose to prioritize the Pacific halibut fishery and harvest their sablefish using longline gear.

Federal fisheries for sablefish and Pacific halibut allow the use of groundfish pot and longline gear types on the same trip. Participants in these fisheries using both gear types must first return to port and unload either groundfish pot or longline gear to operate in state waters with a single gear type. However, even if this proposal were adopted, a participant in the federal sablefish fishery, regardless of which gear type used, would not be permitted to operate gear in state waters after retaining sablefish in federal waters (5 AAC 28.272(g)). Proposal 23 addresses this.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The increased use of longline pot gear, and subsequent decrease in the number of longline hooks in the water, has proven effective in decreasing rockfish bycatch and whale depredation. The department's primary concern with utilizing multiple gear types during the same trip is the ability to attribute harvest to gear type. However, logbook data could be utilized to estimate harvest by gear type.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal could result in an additional direct cost for a private person to purchase additional pot gear. Approval of this proposal will not result in an additional cost for the department.

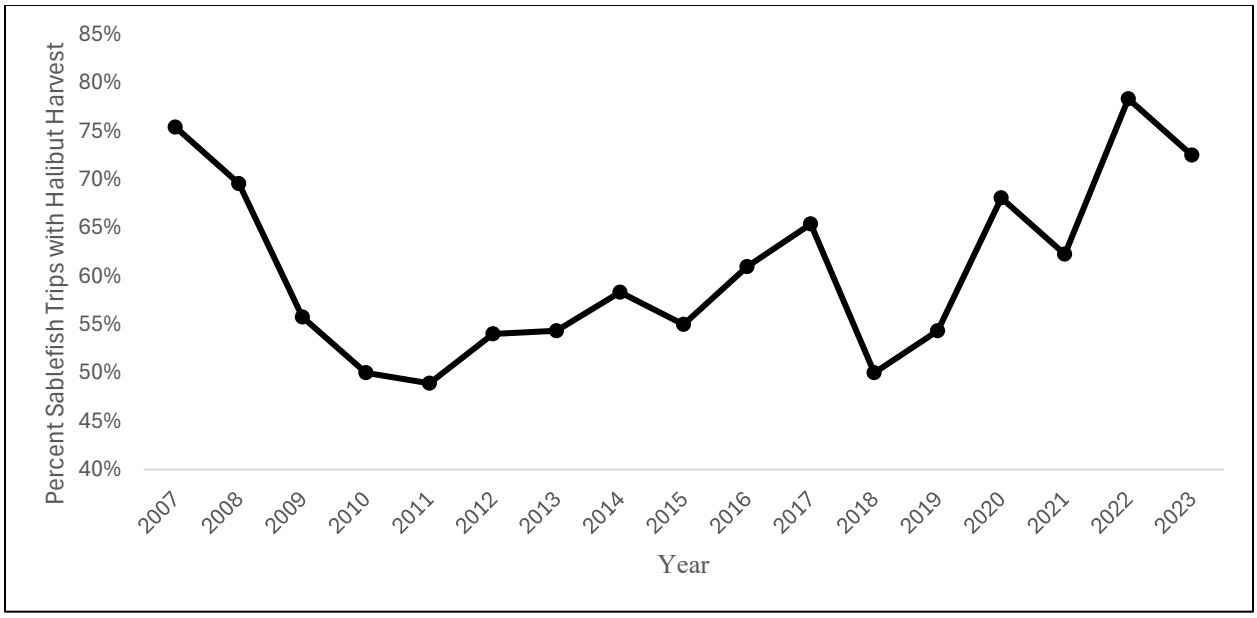

Figure 21-1.–Percent of sablefish trips that have IFQ Pacific halibut landed from the same trip, 2007-2023.

Table 21-1.–Prince William Sound sablefish harvest, by gear type, 2007-2023

	Sablefish harvest (pounds)			
Year	Longline	Groundfish pot	Other	Total
2007	198,818	0	395	199,213
2008	206,012	0	877	206,888
2009	216,198	0	3,240	219,437
2010	208,221	0	4,008	212,229
2011	195,177	24,860	2,042	222,078
2012	179,127	23,670	1,028	203,824
2013	147,371	7,561	517	155,448
2014	94,853	1,430	443	96,726
2015	15,878	0	1,032	16,910
2016	38,462	0	1,987	40,449
2017	70,409	581	2,123	73,113
2018	66,550	20,007	1,560	88,117
2019	49,857	36,911	1,258	88,026
2020	68,140	27,140	0	95,280
2021	83,951	56,564	0	140,514
2022	99,467	95,442	0	194,908
2023	63,221	72,912	0	136,132
Averages	32,428	21,148	0	53,576
2007-2020	125,362	10,154	1,465	136,981
2021-2023	82,213	74,972	0	157,185

PROPOSAL 23 – 5 AAC 28.272. Sablefish harvest, possession, and landing requirements for Prince William Sound.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow vessels fishing Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) sablefish in federal waters to operate gear in Prince William Sound (PWS) state-waters during the same trip.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In state waters of PWS, sablefish may only be retained in the Inside District during the open directed sablefish season from April 15 through August 31 by a limited-entry permit holder who registered to participate by the registration deadline of 5:00 p.m. April 1 (5 AAC 28.206(c) and 5 AAC 28.210(b)). The PWS sablefish permit holder may not take more than the annual amount (quota specific to permit type) specified by the department; log sheets and 6- hour prior notice of landing are required in the fishery (5 AAC 28.272 (c), (e), and (f)).

The operator of a fishing vessel may not take sablefish in PWS while sablefish taken in another registration area are on board the vessel (5 AAC 28.272(b)). As provided in 5 AAC 28.070(c)(2), a CFEC permit holder, while taking fish in an area or having taken fish in an area during the same trip, may not have on board an aggregate amount of a groundfish species that exceeds the amount allowed by regulation for that area, regardless of where the groundfish were taken.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require mandatory release of sablefish in state-waters if sablefish were retained in federal waters instead of prohibiting fishing in state waters if sablefish were retained in federal waters. The ability to move between federal and state waters could encourage participants to avoid areas of high rockfish bycatch by providing opportunity in areas of lower rockfish bycatch.

BACKGROUND: Please see Proposal 21 for background on utilization of state managed sablefish (SMS) concurrently with the Pacific halibut fishery. SMS and federal IFQ sablefish fisheries are managed separately, and harvest occurs in either state or federal waters, respectively. Therefore, under current regulations, a vessel may not fish in both federal and state waters on the same trip when retaining sablefish at any point during that trip, regardless of where they fished first.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 24 – 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing Seasons for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Ken Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the Prince William Sound (PWS) sablefish fishery through October 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In state waters of PWS, sablefish may only be retained in the Inside District during the directed sablefish season from April 15 through August 31 by a limited-entry permit holder who registered to participate by the registration deadline of 5:00 p.m. April 1 (5 AAC 28.206(c) and 5 AAC 28.210(b)). The PWS sablefish permit holder may not take more than the annual amount (quota specific to permit type) specified by the department; log sheets and 6-hour prior notice of landing are required in the fishery (5 AAC 28.272 (c), (e), and (f)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would extend the PWS state-waters sablefish season two months. A longer fishing season could result in increased utilization of the GHL, which has not been achieved since 2002. Extending the fishery could increase fall fishing activity and sablefish harvest by allowing fishers to skip the early season when whale depredation often occurs.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to Proposal 18 for background information, which also proposes to extend the sablefish fishery through October 31.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal and has no biological concerns or conflict with the proposed extension.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal will not result in significant additional cost for a private person participating in PWS directed sablefish fisheries. Approval of this proposal will not result in an additional cost for the department.

PERSONAL USE GROUNDFISH (2 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 25 and 26 – 5 AAC 77.XXX. New section.

PROPOSED BY: Robert Swanson, proposal 25, and Garrett McLean, proposal 26.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a personal use fishery for sablefish in Prince William Sound (PWS) using groundfish pot gear. A personal use fishery would only allow residents of Alaska to participate.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations do not allow personal use fishing for sablefish in PWS. There is a positive customary and traditional use (C&T) finding for groundfish in those portions of the Prince William Sound Area that are outside the boundaries of the Valdez nonsubsistence area (5 AAC 01.616(c)). The board has found that 16,000 to 24,000 pounds of groundfish, other than rockfish and lingcod, are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in PWS (5 AAC 01.616(d)(3)). In the subsistence fishery, groundfish may be taken by a single hand troll, single hand-held line, or a single longline, none of which may have more than five hooks attached to it, except groundfish taken incidentally in a subsistence net fishery may be retained for subsistence purposes.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A personal use fishery for sablefish in PWS would be established similar to that found in Southeast Alaska, with the exception that longline gear would not be permitted. Sablefish harvest in PWS would increase by an unknown amount depending on personal use effort and sablefish abundance.

BACKGROUND: Sablefish sport harvest in PWS is low with between 1 and 87 fish harvested annually from 2013 to 2023. Sablefish harvests are documented in subsistence household harvested surveys. Household survey data for Prince William Sound communities of Cordova, Chenega, Tatitlek, Whitter, and Valdez range from 1984 to 2014. Sablefish harvest during study years has ranged from zero to 7,351 pounds, and households harvested sablefish with a combination of commercial retention, rod and reel, and longline. Please refer to Proposal 18 and Proposal 21 for background information on the commercial sablefish fishery in PWS. .

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal but **SUPPORTS** additional harvest opportunity when available. The commercial sablefish guideline harvest level (GHL) has not been achieved in the PWS sablefish fishery since 2002, and from 2021 to 2023 average annual sablefish harvest was 64% of the GHL (Figure 25-1). This is not a conservation concern but is due to a combination of small, limited entry quota sizes, an overlap in the sablefish season with more lucrative opportunities fishing for salmon, and sablefish price in relation to other fisheries. The unused sablefish quota in the PWS commercial sablefish fishery represents approximately 15,000 fish. If the proposal is adopted, personal use and commercial sablefish management in PWS may need to be revisited in the future depending on sablefish harvest and abundance.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

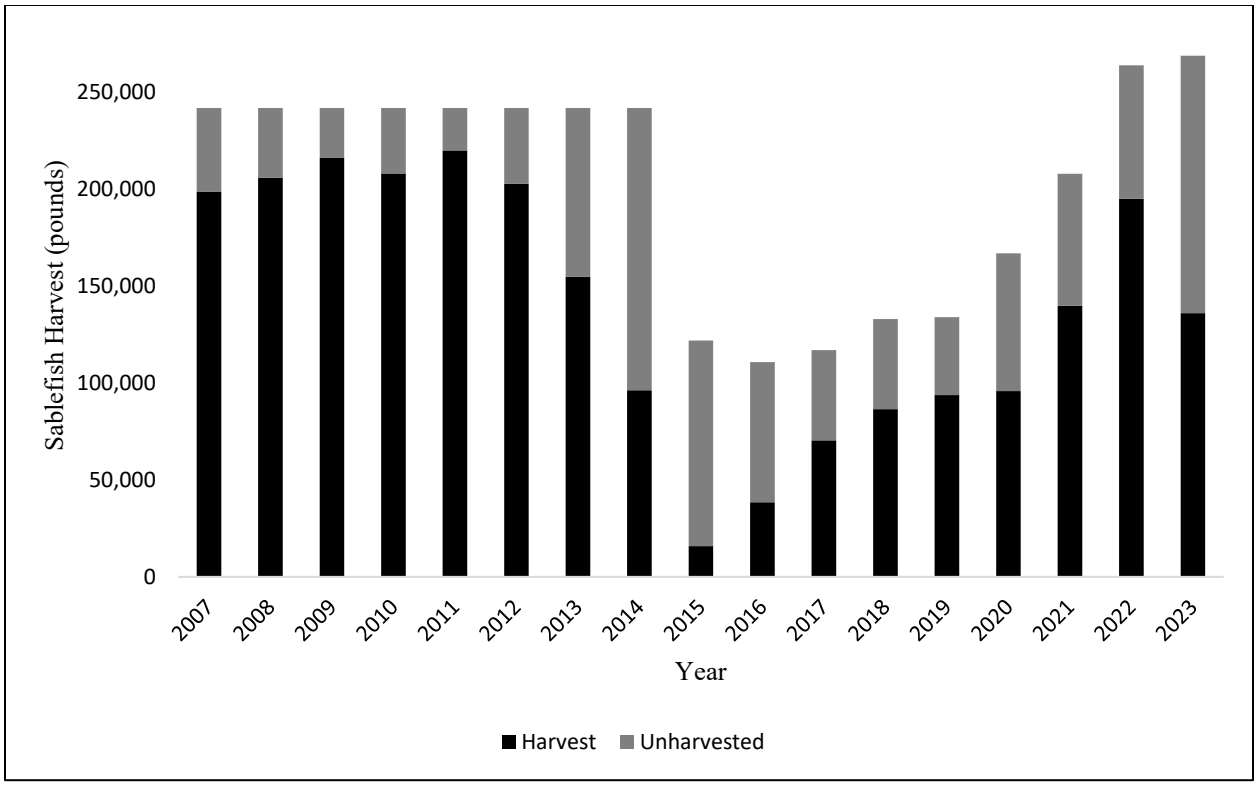

Figure 25-1.–Prince William Sound sablefish harvest and unharvested GHL in pounds, 2007-2023.

SPORT GROUNDFISH (3 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 27 – 5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would decrease the rockfish bag limit to 3 fish and 6 in possession and establish a seasonal closure for the retention of yelloweye rockfish in the Prince William Sound Management Area (PWSMA).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The rockfish bag limit is 4 fish per day and 8 in possession, of which only 1 per day and in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish, year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the total rockfish sport harvest by approximately 18% and it would align the bag and possession limits for rockfish with regulations in Cook Inlet and North Gulf Coast (NGC) areas. The nonpelagic possession limit (1 fish) would continue to differ between PWSMA and the two nearby management areas (2 fish). In addition, there would be a seasonal closure for yelloweye rockfish, which is anticipated to reduce harvest for this species by approximately 25–30% during a seasonal closure.

BACKGROUND: In the PWSMA, pelagic and nonpelagic rockfish support sport and subsistence fisheries and are also harvested as bycatch in commercial fisheries. There are no rockfish sport fisheries management plans. Rockfish sport harvest in the PWSMA has ranged from 35,268 fish in 2006 to 113,703 fish in 2019. Recent harvest average (2018–2022) of 97,281 fish is approximately 25% higher than the previous 10-year average of 72,877 fish (2008–2017; Table 27-1). Pelagic rockfish account for just over 60% of the total rockfish sport harvest with black rockfish accounting for 82% of the pelagic rockfish harvested. Yelloweye rockfish account for nearly half of the nonpelagic sport rockfish harvested with harvest levels increasing since 2014. In addition, harvest by the charter fleet accounts for approximately 56% of the rockfish harvest in recent years.

There are no annual estimates of subsistence harvests of rockfish in PWS; subsistence harvests are documented in comprehensive subsistence harvest data for PWS communities. There is a positive C&T for groundfish in the PWSMA outside of the nonsubsistence area and the board has found that 7,500–12,500 rockfish is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) in the Prince William Sound subsistence areas.

The sport fish bag and possession limits for rockfish in PWSMA have been modified by the board since 1989. Prior to 1989, there was no bag limit for rockfish. In 1989, they were set to 20 per day with no more than 5 being "red" rockfish. In 1991, total rockfish bag and possession limits were further reduced to 5 per day (summer) and 10 per day (winter) and in 2009 reduced to 4 per day (summer) and 8 per day (winter). In 2000, provisions were put into regulation requiring the retention of the first 2 nonpelagic rockfish, regardless of species or size. From 2000–2017, nonpelagic rockfish bag and possession limits remained at 2 per day and in possession and in 2018 these were reduced further to 1 fish. In 2020, the mandatory use of deepwater release mechanisms was effective in regulation.

In 2017, the department organized the Statewide Rockfish Initiative with a goal to establish long-term management strategies and stabilize black and yelloweye rockfish harvest. Preliminary PWS

Inside yelloweye rockfish and NGC black rockfish stock assessment models are indicating a declining stock status. In 2023 and 2024, the department used emergency order authority to restrict rockfish harvest to 3 per day and 6 in possession and further implemented a (2- and 3-month, respectively) closure for yelloweye rockfish. The closure period included the primary gestation period (April–June) when yelloweye rockfish are gravid with fertilized eggs and larvae, and in addition, it aligned with the sport and commercial fisheries closure period for lingcod.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 27-1.–Sport rockfish harvest by user in the Prince William Sound Management Area, 2006–2022.

Rockfish Harvest in Prince William Sound Management Area			
	Unguided	Charter	Total
2006	18,608	16,660	35,268
2007	28,413	24,493	52,906
2008	24,897	22,811	47,708
2009	29,394	21,896	51,290
2010	21,287	24,892	46,179
2011	43,995	26,944	70,939
2012	27,208	30,033	57,241
2013	44,639	33,975	78,614
2014	48,853	36,214	85,067
2015	47,585	44,589	92,174
2016	49,481	58,173	107,654
2017	47,088	44,820	91,908
2018	36,610	39,230	75,840
2019	64,938	48,765	113,703
2020	46,413	38,268	84,681
2021	51,464	55,456	106,920
2022	46,935	58,328	105,263
2023	34,500	42,651	77,151
Average			
2008-2017	38,443	34,435	72,877
2018-2022	49,272	48,009	97,281

PROPOSAL 28 – 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area

PROPOSED BY: Raymond Nix.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would implement differential bag and possession limits for rockfish within the Prince William Sound Management Area (PWSMA) depending on the area fished. It would reduce the rockfish bag and possession limit to three per day, six in possession and maintain that only one rockfish per day and in possession may be a nonpelagic rockfish for PWSMA inside waters. Additionally, it would increase the possession limit to two for nonpelagic rockfish for PWSMA outside waters; however, only one nonpelagic in possession may be a yelloweye rockfish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The rockfish bag limit is four fish per day and eight in possession, of which only one per day and in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish, year-round, in the entire PWSMA.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Bag and possession limits would be different within the PWSMA. The possession limit in the North Gulf Coast (NGC) area and PWSMA outside waters would align for nonpelagic rockfish; however, the PWS outside waters bag limit would be higher than both the NGC area and PWSMA inside waters (Figure 28-1). Rockfish harvest would decrease by an unknown amount in PWSMA inside waters, but this would potentially result in a small increase in harvest of nonpelagic rockfish, other than yelloweye, in outside waters.

BACKGROUND: In the PWSMA, pelagic and nonpelagic rockfish support sport and subsistence fisheries and are also harvested as bycatch in certain commercial fisheries. There are no rockfish sport fisheries management plans. Rockfish sport harvest in the PWSMA has ranged from 35,268 fish in 2006 to 113,703 fish in 2019. Recent harvest average (2018–2022) of 97,281 fish is approximately 25% higher than the previous 10-year average of 72,877 fish (2008–2017; Table 27-1). Pelagic rockfish account for just over 60% of the total rockfish harvest with black rockfish accounting for 82% of the pelagic rockfish harvested. Yelloweye rockfish account for nearly half of the nonpelagic rockfish harvested with harvest levels increasing since 2014. In addition, harvest by the charter fleet accounts for approximately 56% of the rockfish harvest in recent years.

There are no annual estimates of subsistence harvests of rockfish in PWS; subsistence harvests are documented in comprehensive subsistence harvest data for PWS communities. There is a positive C&T for groundfish in the PWSMA outside of the nonsubsistence area and the board has found that 7,500–12,500 rockfish is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) in the Prince William Sound subsistence areas.

The sport fish bag and possession limits for rockfish in PWSMA have been modified by the board since 1989. Prior to 1989, there was no bag limit for rockfish. In 1989, they were set to 20 per day with no more than five being "red" rockfish. In 1991, total rockfish bag and possession limits were further reduced to five per day (summer) and 10 per day (winter) and in 2009 reduced to four per day (summer) and eight per day (winter). In 2000, provisions were put into regulation requiring the retention of the first two nonpelagic rockfish, regardless of species or size. From 2000–2017, nonpelagic rockfish bag and possession limits remained at two per day and in possession and in 2018 these were reduced further to one fish. In 2020, the mandatory use of deepwater release mechanisms was effective in regulation.

Charter logbook data could be used to estimate harvest locations of rockfish; however, rockfish were historically not a target species for charter operators and harvest locations documented are not always species specific when efforts are focused on multiple species. Harvest by private anglers is estimated using the Statewide Harvest Survey and harvest locations are estimated using port sampling interview data. The majority (~70%) of the rockfish sport harvest is estimated to occur within the inside waters of the PWSMA.

Currently, the sustainable level of harvest for rockfish in the PWSMA is unknown and the department has attempted to stabilize rockfish harvest for the entirety of the PWSMA. While nonpelagic rockfish harvest would not likely increase by much in outside waters, the department has conservations concerns for rockfish in the PWSMA. The department currently has the emergency order authority to implement different bag limits by area, including differentiating limits between the inside and outside waters, when stock assessment data becomes available, or harvest trends warrant action.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. It would increase regulatory complexity by establishing different rockfish bag limits within the PWSMA and between the PWSMA and NGC areas. Additionally, there would be different nonpelagic possession limits within the waters of PWSMA.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

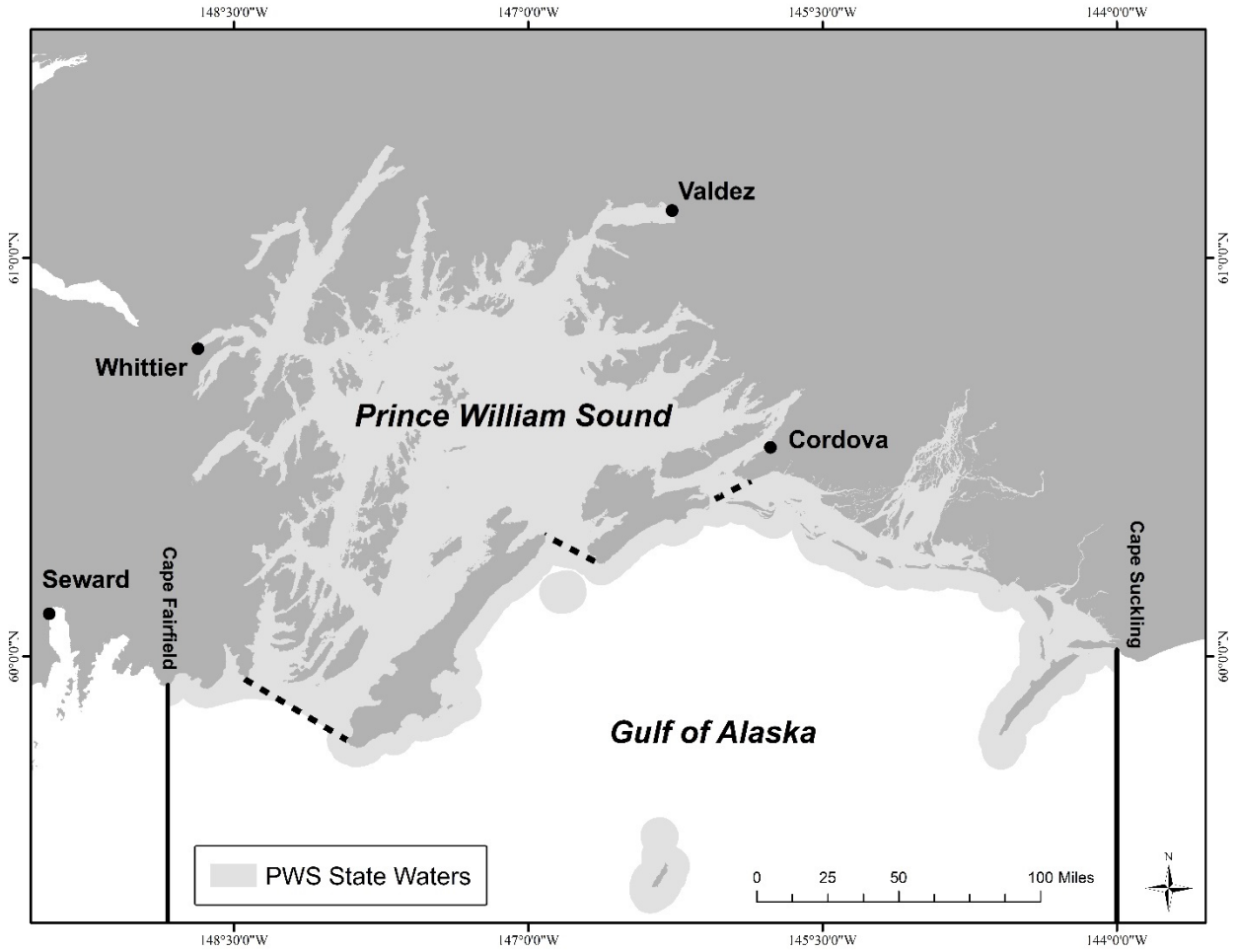

Figure 28-1.–Prince William Sound Management Area. The dashed indicates the approximate split for inside and outside water proposed areas.

PROPOSAL 29 – 5 AAC 55.XXX. Yelloweye rockfish delegation of authority and provisions for management for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would provide additional management tools for yelloweye rockfish in the Prince William Sound Management Area (PWSMA) sport fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The rockfish bag limit is 4 fish per day and 8 in possession of which only 1 per day and in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide the department with additional management authority to manage yelloweye rockfish for conservation purposes. This authority would allow for the restrictions that are in use in other areas of the state for rockfish conservation and not currently an option for PWSMA rockfish.

BACKGROUND: Rockfish harvest occurs throughout the PWSMA and has been increasing. In recent years, approximately 75-80% of yelloweye rockfish harvest occurs in the sport fishery while the remaining harvest occurs in commercial fisheries as bycatch (Table 29-1) or in the subsistence fishery. The commercial fishery has 5 AAC 28.265. *Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan* which includes a GHL of 150,000 lb for all rockfish combined; however, the sport fishery has no harvest guidelines.

The department is working towards determining sustainable rockfish harvest levels for yelloweye and black rockfish through species-specific stock assessment efforts. Preliminary Prince William Sound Inside (PWSI) yelloweye rockfish and North Gulf Coast black rockfish stock assessment models are indicating a declining stock status. Based on this information, the department took action by emergency order in 2023 and 2024 to reduce yelloweye rockfish harvest in the sport fishery by reducing the yelloweye rockfish season.

To reduce harvest, a partial season closure was implemented in 2023 and 2024 for yelloweye rockfish, which prohibited the retention of this rockfish species until July 1 which also protected female yelloweye rockfish, that were gravid with eggs and larvae, in the entire PWSMA. In 2023, it was estimated that charter harvest was reduced by 28%, exceeding the anticipated reduction. The 2024 harvest of yelloweye rockfish has not yet been estimated as the data is not finalized but according to charter logbook data, it was anticipated that a seasonal closure period for yelloweye rockfish would reduce harvest by approximately 25%.

With the preliminary stock assessment results for PWSI yelloweye rockfish indicating that current harvest levels are not sustainable long-term, additional tools would be beneficial to manage the yelloweye rockfish sport fishery to a sustainable level. This delegation of authority would allow for additional management options if necessary to further reduce harvest of yelloweye rockfish. It includes options such as differentiating bag and annual limits based on residency and prohibiting retention by charter operators and crewmembers, which are utilized in Southeast Alaska and Kodiak rockfish management plans. Unless specified in a management plan, the department does not have authority to restrict specific users within the sport fishery or implement a species-specific size restriction.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted this proposal and **SUPPORTS** the board delegating additional authority to the department for conservative management of rockfish species in the PWSMA.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 29-1.–Yelloweye rockfish sport and commercial harvest in pounds (lbs) of fish, Prince William Sound Inside waters, 2003– 2022.

	Yelloweye Rockfish Harvest (PWS Inside)		
	Commercial (lbs)	Sport (lbs)	Toal Combined
2003	11,725	44,752	56,477
2004	12,354	60,354	72,707
2005	8,354	99,828	108,182
2006	10,059	45,172	55,231
2007	9,807	46,904	56,711
2008	9,585	44,451	54,036
2009	10,243	43,297	53,540
2010	11,373	41,952	53,324
2011	26,160	56,537	82,697
2012	14,915	75,516	90,431
2013	29,493	51,179	80,672
2014	12,147	94,641	106,789
2015	30,728	137,796	168,523
2016	39,209	77,080	116,289
2017	11,417	70,388	81,806
2018	10,681	35,317	45,997
2019	11,913	78,065	89,978
2020	8,825	35,229	44,054
2021	16,473	44,026	60,499
2022	23,585	87,552	111,137
Average			
2003-2012	12,457	55,876	68,334
2013-2022	19,447	71,127	90,574

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – GROUP 2: PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SHELLFISH (14 PROPOSALS)

SUBSISTENCE SHELLFISH (4 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 30 – 5 AAC 02.207. Lawful gear for subsistence king and Tanner crab fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase subsistence Tanner crab pot limit in Prince William Sound (PWS) from two pots per vessel to eight pots per vessel in statistical areas 466033, 466032, 466003, 466005, 466002, 466031, 456031, 456032, 456032, 456002, 456003, 466001, 4560001, and 446001 (Figure 30-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Pot limits for the PWS subsistence king and Tanner crab fishery are no more than two pots per person with a maximum of two pots per vessel (5 AAC 02.207). Golden king crab may be taken only in the waters west of 147°20.00'W (5 AAC 02.225). A daily bag and possession limit of 12 male Tanner crab and an annual limit of 3 male golden king crab applies (5 AAC 02.220 and 5 AAC 02.225). Only male Tanner crab with a shell width five inches or greater and only male golden king crab with a shell width seven inches or greater may be possessed (5 AAC 02.220 and 5 AAC 02.225).

There is a positive customary and traditional use (C&T) finding for king and Tanner crab in the Prince William Sound Area (5 AAC 02.208). The board has found that 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in PWS (5 AAC 02.208(c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the efficiency of the subsistence harvest of legal male Tanner crab in the proposed statistical areas, though the daily possession limit of 12 Tanner crab would still apply under an increased pot limit.

BACKGROUND: Participation in the PWS Tanner crab subsistence fishery was low from 2008 through 2011, with fewer than 50 permits fishing with an average of 100 or fewer legal male crab reported caught (Table 30-1). Tanner crab catch peaked in 2012 at 3,514 crab but decreased to a low of 292 crab in 2019. Effort was higher from 2020 to 2022, however catch averaged only 457 crab annually during that time period compared to a historical harvest of 1,211 crab annually. From 2020 to 2022 an average of 31 permits were issued for the community of Cordova annually, the community nearest to the area proposed for a vessel pot limit increase. From 2020 to 2022 an average of 168 legal Tanner crab were caught from 33 pots annually in the area proposed for a vessel pot limit increase, comprising 37% of the legal Tanner crab caught in the PWS subsistence fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. This proposal would increase fishing efficiency and could increase harvest by an unknown amount.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a non-subsistence area? Yes. Portions of the stocks are located in the Valdez Nonsubsistence Area as described at 5 AAC 99.015(a)(5).

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. In 2008, the boardmade positive customary and traditional use findings for shrimp, Dungeness crab, Tanner crab, king crab and miscellaneous shellfish in PWS (5 AAC 02.208).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? There is an ANS of 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab for PWS (5 AAC 02.208(c)).

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence use? This is a board determination.

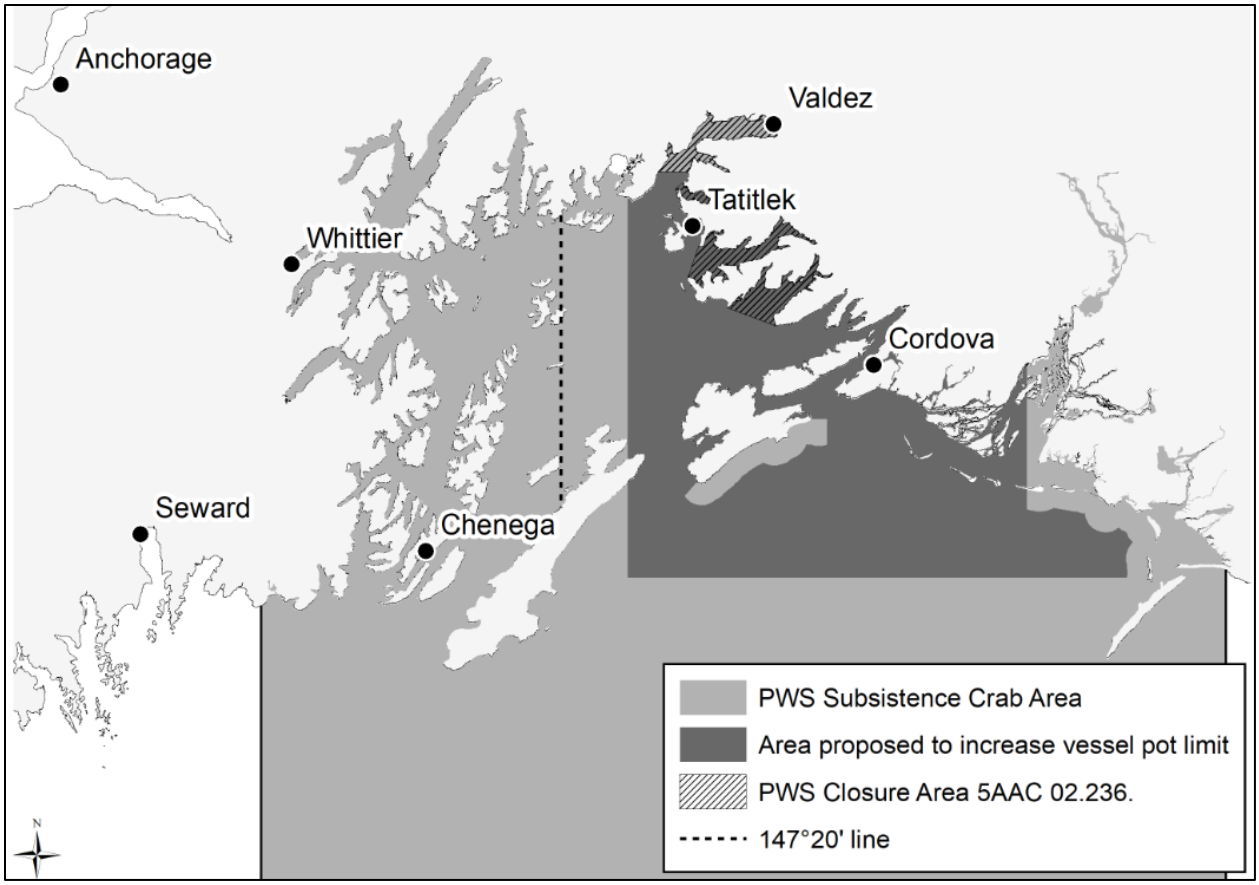

Figure 30-1.–Area for proposed increase to vessel pot limit for PWS subsistence crab area. GKC may only be retained west of the 147° line.

Table 30-1.–Subsistence Tanner crab harvest and effort in the Prince William Sound Management Area, 2008-2022.

	Effort				Harvest (count)			
Year	Permits Issued	Permits Fished	Participation %	Trips	Legal Males Kept	Legal Males Released	Sublegal Males Released	Avg Harvest per Permit Fished
2008	115	40	35%	82	44	5	127	1
2009	93	33	35%	74	85	16	265	3
2010	73	29	40%	61	78	11	223	3
2011	79	34	43%	91	213	41	465	6
2012	151	87	58%	368	2,067	1,447	4,892	24
2013	173	80	46%	186	629	274	1,515	8
2014	211	91	43%	221	793	1,249	1,679	9
2015	206	93	45%	225	816	2,370	1,582	9
2016	183	91	50%	192	548	1,259	1,050	6
2017	179	70	39%	196	1,073	344	740	15
2018	192	96	50%	202	624	252	713	7
2019	251	83	33%	115	281	11	139	3
2020	358	126	35%	134	435	81	301	3
2021	271	91	34%	125	370	88	312	4
2022	240	85	35%	177	371	25	461	4
Averages								
2008-2019	159	69	43%	168	604	607	1,116	8
2020-2022	290	101	35%	145	392	65	358	4

PROPOSAL 31 – 5 AAC 02.236. Closed waters, 5 AAC 35.312. Closed waters in Registration Area E.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove closed waters in Port Valdez, Galena Bay, Port Fidalgo, and Port Gravina in the Prince William Sound (PWS) commercial and subsistence Tanner crab fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Waters in Port Valdez, Galena Bay, Port Fidalgo, and Port Gravina are closed to the taking of Tanner crab in the commercial fishery and Tanner crab and king crab in the subsistence fishery (5 AAC 35.312 and 5 AAC 02.23636; see Figure 31-1).

There is a positive customary and traditional use (C&T) finding for king and Tanner crab in the Prince William Sound Area (5 AAC 02.208). The board has found that 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in PWS (5 AAC 02.208(c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The closed waters of Port Valdez, Galena Bay, Port Fidalgo, and Port Gravina would open when either the Northwestern or Northeastern districts are opened to Tanner crab fishing. Areas identified as Tanner crab nursery grounds would be open to fishing for Tanner crab.

BACKGROUND: The Tanner crab harvest strategy for PWS was adopted by the board in March 2021 (5 AAC 35.308). In 2020 and 2021 a Tanner crab test fishery was prosecuted in the Northern and Hinchinbrook districts and closed areas were defined for the test fishery. In 2022 closed areas were defined for both the regulatory commercial fishery and the test fishery. These same areas were already defined in regulation as closed waters for the subsistence Tanner crab fishery and were adopted as a conservation measure to provide a refuge for Tanner crab and protect nursery grounds. During recent Tanner crab trawl surveys immature and mature Tanner crab were sampled in the closure areas (Figure 31-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Closure areas were adopted by the board as part of the PWS Tanner crab harvest strategy in March 2021 to provide a refuge for Tanner crab and protect Tanner crab nursery grounds.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a non-subsistence area? Yes. Portions of the stocks are located in the Valdez Nonsubsistence Area as described at 5 AAC 99.015(a)(5).

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. In 2008, the board made positive customary and traditional use findings for shrimp, Dungeness crab, Tanner crab, king crab and miscellaneous shellfish in PWS (5 AAC 02.208).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? There is an ANS of 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab for PWS (5 AAC 02.208(c)).

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence use? This is a board determination.

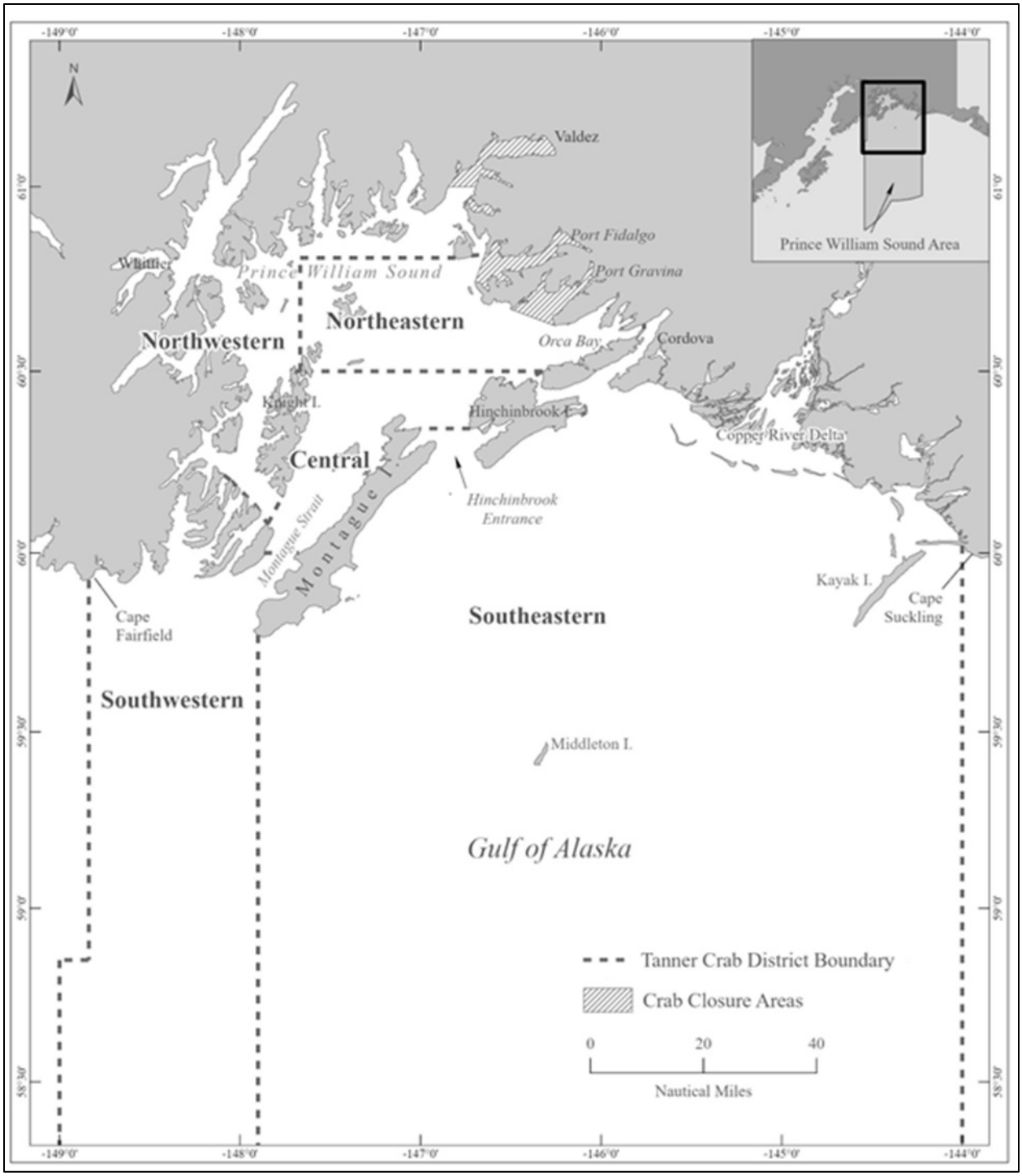

Figure 31-1.–Tanner crab commercial fishery districts in the Prince William Sound Area and closed waters.

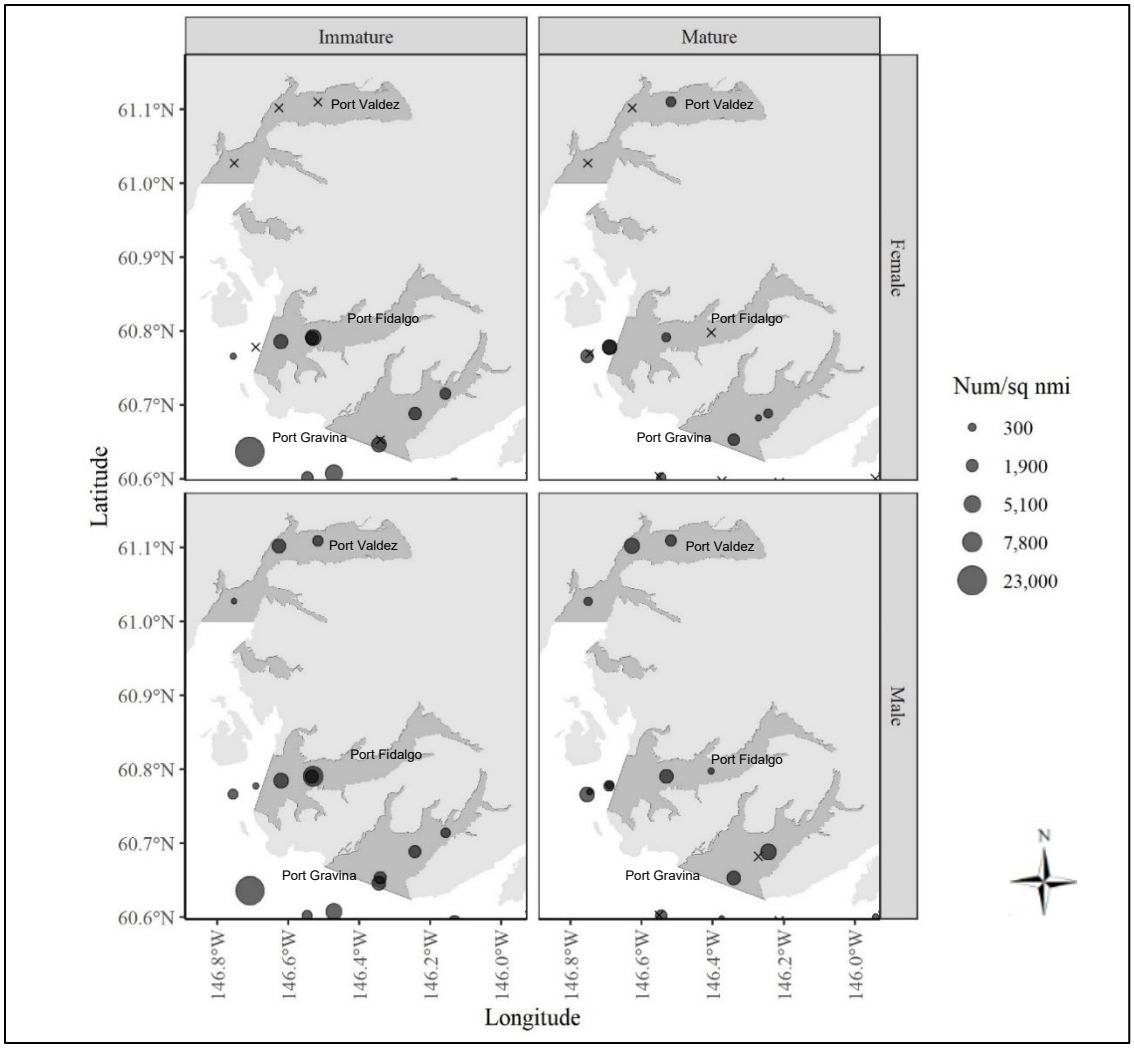

Figure 31-2.–Tanner crab abundance (number of crab per square mile) from 2023 PWS trawl survey (except Port Valdez 2018 trawl survey). Tanner crab closure areas shaded in dark gray.

PROPOSAL 32 – 5 AAC 02.215. Subsistence Dungeness Crab fishery; 5 AAC 32.210. Fishing seasons for Registration Area E; and 5 AAC 32.290. Prince William Sound Dungeness Crab Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen subsistence and commercial Dungeness crab fisheries in Prince William Sound (PWS). The subsistence season would be from March 20 to May 20 and from August 25 to December 31, would have a bag limit of 5 crab per person, and a pot or ring net limit of 10 per person and 20 per vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for shellfish in PWS, including Dungeness crab (5 AAC 02.208). However, Dungeness crab subsistence fisheries are closed in Prince William Sound (5 AAC 02.215), and the board has not yet determined an ANS due to the lack of harvest data for this species. Commercial fishing for Dungeness crab in PWS is also closed (5 AAC 32.210). Though the fishery is closed, regulations still specify a 250-pot limit except that in the PWS Inside District the pot limit is 100 pots (5 AAC 32.225). Statewide Dungeness crab regulations provide for a male only harvest of Dungeness crab 6.5 inches or greater in shoulder width (5 AAC 32.055). PWS is a super exclusive registration area for Dungeness crab and the fishery was open access when prosecuted (5 AAC 32.206). When the commercial fishery was open it was managed under size, sex, and season (3-S) management.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If the Dungeness crab subsistence or commercial fishery in PWS was opened, the amount of harvest and effort towards Dungeness crab is unknown and sustainable harvest levels are currently unknown in addition to no stock assessment currently in place.

BACKGROUND: While the subsistence Dungeness crab fishery in Prince William Sound has been closed, ethnohistorical record show that Dungeness crab was an important spring resource for the Eyak, when crab could be speared in shallow water. Noncommercial pots were used to harvest crab, and Dungeness crab were occasionally caught in salmon nets. Subsistence household harvest surveys indicate that harvest of Dungeness crab by Cordova residents was significantly higher before the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, with 3,478 lb harvested in 1985, 2,721 harvested in 1988, and only 319 lb harvested in 1991.

Dungeness crab commercial harvests historically occurred within Orca Inlet, the Copper River Delta, and Controller Bay areas. Orca Inlet, immediately adjacent to Cordova, once provided a Dungeness crab commercial fishery for small vessels in an area protected from adverse sea conditions. Harvests ranged from 35,000 pounds in 1976 to over 1.5 million pounds in 1960, but this area has been closed since 1980 due to low crab abundance (Table 32-1).

The Copper River Dungeness crab commercial fishery occurred along the eastern portion of the Copper River Delta and in the Controller Bay area. Harvests ranged from 70,000 pounds in 1991 to 1.5 million pounds in 1981, with average catch and effort of approximately 590,000 pounds and 12 vessels annually during 1983–1992, the most recent fishing years (Table 32-1). The Copper River Delta fishery has been closed since 1992 due to low crab abundance.

Historically, the department has used standardized Dungeness crab pot surveys to collect data on size, sex, shell condition, and catch rates of Dungeness crab in the PWS Management Area. Survey catches of legal male Dungeness crab in the Copper River area declined from 16.0 per pot in 1986 to a low of 0.1 per pot in 1997. From 1998 through 2003, survey catches averaged 0.9 legal male

crab per pot. Yields increased in 2005 and 2006 with 2.3 and 2.2 legal male crab respectively per pot and then markedly declined in 2008, 2010, and 2013 to 0.2, 0.1, and 0.3 legal male crab per pot, respectively (Table 32-1). The last Dungeness crab survey in PWS was conducted in 2013. The PWS Dungeness crab survey was not directly used to set guideline harvest levels (GHL) for the fishery, however declining survey catch was used to close Orca Bay to fishing in 1980 and the Copper River Delta and Controller Bay in 1992.

The decline in abundance of the Copper River Delta Dungeness crab coincides with the collapse of other shellfish populations in the PWS area and northwest Gulf of Alaska waters. Possible explanations for the decline and failure to recover include overfishing, sporadic recruitment, bycatch, predation, and environmental changes that affect disease, growth, and larval survival. For example, the 1964 earthquake had dramatic effects on Dungeness crab habitat in the Copper River Delta and Controller Bay area including changes in salinity and sedimentation due to uplift and subsidence across the region. Additionally, expansion of the remnant Southwestern PWS sea otter population to Eastern PWS during the late 1970's and 1980's likely played a role in the collapse of the fishery.

When recovery is evident, a management plan will be developed for consideration by the board and user groups.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not have a stock assessment program for Dungeness crab. Because Dungeness crab fisheries are managed under 3-S regulations, it is difficult to reopen closed fisheries without a mechanism to assure that harvest will be sustainable.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 32-1.–Commercial Dungeness crab harvest and effort in Prince William Sound, 1960–2024.

	Outside District		Inside District				
			Orca Inlet		Other Areas		
Year	Vessels	Harvest (lb)	Vessels	Harvest (lb)	Vessels	Harvest (lb)	Total harvest (lb)
1960	0	0	ND	1,524,326	0	0	1,524,326
1961	0	0	ND	990,242	0	0	990,242
1962	0	0	ND	1,353,190	0	0	1,353,190
1963	0	0	ND	1,216,846	0	0	1,216,846
1964	0	0	ND	1,290,929	0	0	1,290,929
1965	0	0	ND	1,240,372	0	0	1,240,372
1966	0	0	ND	999,341	0	0	999,341
1967	0	0	ND	ND	0	0	0
1968	0	0	ND	579,279	0	0	579,279
1969	ND	336,696	ND	541,822	0	0	878,518
1970	ND	78,223	ND	660,411	0	0	738,634
1971	ND	78,848	ND	430,976	0	0	509,824
1972	ND	437,865	ND	286,808	0	0	724,673
1973	ND	458,613	ND	347,764	0	0	806,377
1974	ND	290,149	ND	269,015	0	0	559,164
1975	ND	654,410	ND	163,631	0	0	818,041
1976	4	254,933	3	35,399	0	0	290,332
1977	4	506,751	23	228,858	0	0	735,609
1978	12	1,319,451	34	648,439	17	49,571	2,053,461
1979	19	504,770	32	123,245	16	20,924	652,924
1980	10	659,667	closed		5	31,152	690,819
1981	18	1,503,574	closed		5	5,683	1,509,257
1982	16	757,911	closed		2	4,221	762,182
1983	9	379,094	closed		2	511	379,605
1984	10	826,778	closed		2	150	826,938
1985	17	1,006,196	closed		1	[a]	1,007,429
1986	16	1,090,477	closed		0	0	1,090,477
1987	13	887,713	closed		2	[a]	893,174
1988	8	602,969	closed		0	0	602,969
1989	9	635,976	closed		0	0	635,976
1990	17	397,913	closed		0	0	397,913
1991	14	70,259	closed		0	0	70,259
1992	2	[a]	closed		0	0	[a]
1993–[illegible]	Fishery closed						

Note: ND = no data.

[a] Confidential data.

Table 32-2.–Prince William Sound, Copper River Delta Area, Dungeness crab survey and fishery results, 1986–2024.

		Survey number of crab per pot					Commercial fishery harvest		
Year	Pots	Legal crab	New shell recruits	Sublegal crab	New shell sublegal	Female crab	Pots	Number of crab	CPUE (crab/pot)
1986	65	16	12.1	10.8	3.8	3.1	85,669	542,941	6.3
1987	80	9.9	4.3	13.1	5.9	10.5	66,742	441,846	6.6
1988	80	8	4.8	11.8	4.1	9.2	34,015	302,091	8.9
1989						No survey		–	
1990	80	8.3	3	8.6	1.9	8	28,236	196,266	7.0
1991	80	3.5	2.2	12.6	3.2	6.8	13,275	38,675	2.9
1992	80	1.1	0.3	10	3.4	2		–	
1993	37	3.5	1.6	15.8	4.5	3.7		–	
1994	78	1.4	0.3	9.2	3.1	1.4		–	
1995	80	1.5	0.3	9.9	3	0.7		–	
1996	80	1.1	0.3	3.5	1.3	0.1		–	
1997	45	0.1	0	3.3	1	0.4		–	
1998	65	0.3	0.1	7.4	3.8	0.3		–	
1999	80	0.7	0.5	9.7	2.9	0.6		–	
2000	80	0.7	0.5	5.6	3.2	0.4		–	
2001	80	0.7	0.2	3.9	1.8	0.2		–	
2002	80	1.7	0.6	10.8	5	0.6		–	
2003	80	1.5	0.2	9.3	3.5	0.2		–	
2004						No survey		–	
2005	80	2.3	0.3	7.5	2.8	0.8		–	
2006	79	2.2	0.51	3.5	1.8	0.25		–	
2007						No survey		–	
2008	65	0.2	0	0.5	0.2	0.02		–	
2009						No survey		–	
2010	70	0.1	0.03	0.8	0.6	0.01		–	
2011						No survey		–	
2012						No survey		–	
2013	60	0.3	0.3	9.9	8.8	0.78		–	
2014-2024						No survey		–	

PROPOSAL 33 – 5 AAC 02.XXX. New Section

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish community-based subsistence harvest permits and reporting requirements for shellfish in some areas of Prince William Sound (PWS; Figure 30-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently no regulatory provisions for the issuance of community-based subsistence harvest permits for shellfish in PWS.

In PWS, subsistence permits are required for the harvest of Tanner crab and golden king crab (GKC), shrimp, and razor clams (5 AAC 02.206, 5 AAC 02.210, and 5 AAC 02.230). Subsistence harvest of Dungeness crab and all king crab, excluding GKC, is prohibited (5 AAC 02.215 and 5 AAC 02.215). All other shellfish may be taken for subsistence purposes within PWS at any time (5 AAC 02.005).

The board found that shrimp, Dungeness crab, Tanner crab, king crab, and miscellaneous shellfish are customarily and traditionally used for subsistence in the Prince William Sound Area (5 AAC 02.208 (a)). There is an amount necessary for subsistence (ANS) of 9,000 to 15,000 pounds of shrimp, 550 to 2,050 pounds of Tanner crab, and 15,000 to 25,000 pounds of shellfish other than shrimp and crab for PWS (5 AAC 02.208 (b-d)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Subsistence effort and harvest of shellfish may increase by an unknown amount in PWS proposed for a community harvest permit depending on effort, success, and permit stipulations.

BACKGROUND: Customary and traditional use findings were established by the board in 2008 for shrimp, Dungeness crab, Tanner crab, king crab, and miscellaneous shellfish. The subsistence fishery for Tanner crab was also opened in 2008, however an ANS was not determined with the intent to collect data from the newly established fishery to inform the decision. The board established an ANS for Tanner crab in 2021. From 2008 to 2020, 38% of subsistence Tanner crab permits were issued to residents of PWS while the majority were issued to residents of Anchorage, the Kenai Peninsula, and Mat-Su borough. Please refer to proposal 34 for additional background on the subsistence permit Tanner and king crab fisheries in PWS. The PWS subsistence shrimp permit fishery is managed with the same pot limits and season as the sport fishery. Approximately 19% of shrimp permits issued for the PWS shrimp fishery in recent years are subsistence permits. The sport permit is preferred over the subsistence permit because the Valdez non-subsistence area may not be fished using the subsistence shrimp permit. Information on miscellaneous shellfish harvest in PWS is collected by the ADF&G Division of Subsistence through comprehensive household harvest surveys.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. When deliberating this proposal, the board should consider if current regulations provide for a reasonable opportunity to harvest shellfish for subsistence.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a non-subsistence area? Yes. Portions of PWS shellfish stocks are located in the Valdez non-subsistence Area as described at 5 AAC 99.015(a)(5).

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. In 2008, the board made positive customary and traditional use findings for shrimp, Dungeness crab, Tanner crab, king crab and miscellaneous shellfish in PWS (5 AAC 02.208).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? There is an ANS of 9,000 to 15,000 pounds of shrimp, 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab, and 15,000 to 25,000 pounds of shellfish other than shrimp and crab for PWS.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence use? This is a board determination.

TANNER CRAB (5 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 34 – 5 AAC 35.308. Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy (5 AAC 35.308).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy* establishes guideline harvest levels (GHLs) based on abundance thresholds of mature-size male Tanner crab and utilizes abundance estimates derived from department trawl surveys to determine whether the Northeastern, Central, and Southwestern districts open to commercial fishing (5 AAC 35.308). The GHL for total legal male Tanner crab harvest for each district is set at 10, 15, or 20% of the estimated abundance of total mature males. Tanner crab may be taken in the PWS Area from January 15 until April 15, during periods established by emergency order (5 AAC 35.310). Only male Tanner crab five inches or greater in width of shell may be taken or possessed (5 AAC 35.320).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? In the absence of a new harvest strategy for PWS Tanner crab, commissioners permit, or test fishery, there would be no commercial fishing permitted.

BACKGROUND: Commercial harvest of Tanner crab in PWS began in 1968 when 1.2 million pounds of crab were landed. The fishery peaked during the 1972 season when more than 13.9 million pounds were landed. In 1976, a minimum size limit of 5.3 inches in carapace width was implemented. After this, harvest decreased during the late 1970s and early 1980s, followed by large area closures during the 1984 and 1985 seasons. Stable harvests of around 500,000 pounds occurred during the 1986, 1987, and 1988 seasons before the fishery was closed due to lack of recruitment documented by the annual stock assessment pot survey (Table 34-1). The commercial Tanner crab fishery in PWS was closed from 1989 through 2021, when a new Tanner crab harvest strategy was adopted by the board. The decline of Tanner crab abundance in the early years of the commercial fishery was likely due to overharvest of reproductive males and females prior to implementation of the legal male size limit and prohibition of harvesting females.

The department has assessed Tanner crab abundance in PWS since 1977, using a pot survey until 1991 and a trawl survey from 1991 to the present. The pot survey provided relative abundance indices of legal Tanner crab and was used to set GHLs for the commercial fishery. The trawl survey has occurred annually from 1991–1995 and 2013–2015, 2017-2023 and biennially from 1997–2011, with no survey in 2016; data from this survey are used to estimate abundance and catch per unit effort (CPUE) in number of crab per square nautical mile of all male recruit classes and females. CPUE is the most useful indicator of stock health over time (Figure 34-1).

Estimates of legal male abundance declined from 101,746 crab in 1993 to the lowest level of 3,677 crab in 1999. Since then, estimates of Tanner crab gradually increased and peaked in 2011 and 2013. The 2011 and 2013 trawl surveys produced legal male estimates at historical high levels of 182,448 and 184,993 crab, respectively. Abundance estimates from the trawl survey decreased by 65% from these levels down to ~75,000 legal male crab in 2018 and ~63,000 legal male crab in 2019, well below the threshold to trigger a commercial fishery (Figure 34-1). This 65% decline in

abundance estimate is the primary indicator of lack of harvestable surplus that has guided the department to keep the fishery closed.

Since 2020, the year prior to adoption of the new Tanner crab harvest strategy, trawl surveys have been completed in the new Northeastern, Central, and Southwestern districts. Mature male abundance estimates are used as the threshold to determine whether each fishery opens. The Central district was surveyed twice, in 2020 and in 2023 with abundance estimates of 166,711 and 146,755 mature males, respectively. The Southwestern district was surveyed in 2021 and in 2024 with abundance estimates of 166,983 mature males and 84,984 mature males, respectively. The Northeastern district was surveyed in 2022 with an abundance estimate of 45,792 mature males. Since the adoption of the new harvest strategy in 2021 only the Northeastern district in 2022 has had a regulatory commercial fishery.

The fishery in the Northeastern district opened with a pot limit of 25 pots per vessel and a GHL of 61,800 pounds of legal male Tanner crab (5.0 inches or greater in carapace width). All other districts remained closed (except in the 2022 Test Fishery). The Northeastern district GHL was not achieved, with less than 40% of the GHL harvested, and the season closed March 31. There were 17 vessels registered with 38 total landings in the 2022 regulatory fishery (Table 34-2). The total harvest was 24,360 pounds from 13,781 crab in 2,767 pot lifts resulting in an overall fishery catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 5.0 crab/pot.

A Commissioner's Permit Tanner crab fishery was prosecuted in the Eastern and Western Districts from 2018 to 2021. The commissioners permit fishery was removed from regulation in 2021 concurrent with the adoption of a modified harvest strategy. The highest harvest and catch per pot occurred in 2019, 124,707 pounds with an average of 15.4 legal Tanner crab per pot (Table 34-3). In 2020, there was the highest amount of effort, for both pot lifts and vessels, at 5,885 pot lifts from 22 vessels. The last year of the fishery had the lowest number of pot lifts (2,923) and harvest (56,351 pounds) with 10 participating vessels.

The Department offered test fisheries in 2016 and from 2020 to 2022. Test fisheries were introduced as a response to public interest in a pot survey like the historical ADF&G index pot survey and were continued as an assessment tool in areas overlapping with the trawl survey and in habitat not conducive to trawling. Bids were solicited for up to six, 5,000 pound lots in each year the test fishery took place. Within each lot 25 pots had to be fished at locations specified by Department staff while additional pot locations within each lot were selected by the vessel operator.

Tanner crab harvest in test fisheries ranged from a low of 3,946 pounds in 2016, when only 2 lots were awarded, to a high of 23,771 pounds in 2020, when 6 lots were awarded (Table 34-4). CPUE was highest in 2020 and 2021 at 16.2 and 15.2 crab per pot, respectively. CPUE was 7 crab per pot in 2016 and 10.4 crab per pot in 2022. Mandatory pot locations in the test fishery will establish a long-term dataset in habitat not conducive to trawling and provide an additional metric to assess the Tanner crab stock in areas where trawl surveys take place.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The current harvest strategy provides a mechanism to conserve stocks at low abundance and ensure sustainable harvest when there is surplus crab abundance.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 34-1.–Commercial Tanner crab harvest in the Prince William Sound Management Area, 1977 through 2021.

Year	Vessels	Landings	Harvest (pounds) Northern	Hinchinbrook	Western	Eastern	Total Harvest (pounds)	Average weight (pounds)	Number of Crab
1977	23	316	782,048	766,650	701,725	70,925	2,321,348	ND	ND
1978	38	591	994,721	1,161,831	2,079,549	570,573	4,806,674	2.2	2,184,852
1979	51	783	649,977	708,562	2,248,545	3,443,471	7,050,555	2.1	3,357,408
1980	49	561	140,228	332,583	1,462,059	4,057,847	5,992,717	2.0	2,996,359
1981	30	304	152,196	812,352	1,561,207	250,076	2,775,831	2.1	1,321,824
1982	29	216	351,139	722,834	1,503,253	288,425	2,865,651	ND	ND
1983	40	304	471,422	31,447	921,663	45,308	1,469,840	2.1	699,924
1984	0	0	Closed	Closed	Closed	0	0	ND	0
1985	0	0	Closed	Closed	0	0	0	ND	0
1986	14	35	137,720	236,241	160,829	587	535,377	2.1	254,941
1987	23	65	152,834	222,052	196,246	0	571,132	2.1	271,968
1988	21	46	55,929	226,509	191,654	0	474,092	2.1	225,758
1989–2015					Closed				
2016[a]	1	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	3,946	ND	1,973
2017					Closed				
2018[b]	14	38	NA	NA	NA	NA	83,338	1.9	47,397
2019[b]	14	53	NA	NA	NA	NA	124,707	1.6	74,405
2020[ab]	27	65	NA	NA	NA	NA	132,630	1.7	77,474
2021[ab]	12	35	NA	NA	NA	NA	72,261	1.7	42,171
Averages									
1976-1989	27	268	388,821	522,106	1,002,430	727,268	2,405,268	ND	1,414,129
2016-2021	17	48	ND	ND	ND	ND	83,376	2	48,684

Note: ND = no data. NA= Not applicable.

Note: New districts and minimum legal size established in 1976, calendar year season established in 1984, Tanner crab harvest strategy and commissioners permit fishery established in 2017.

[a] Test fishery.

[b] Commissioners permit fishery.

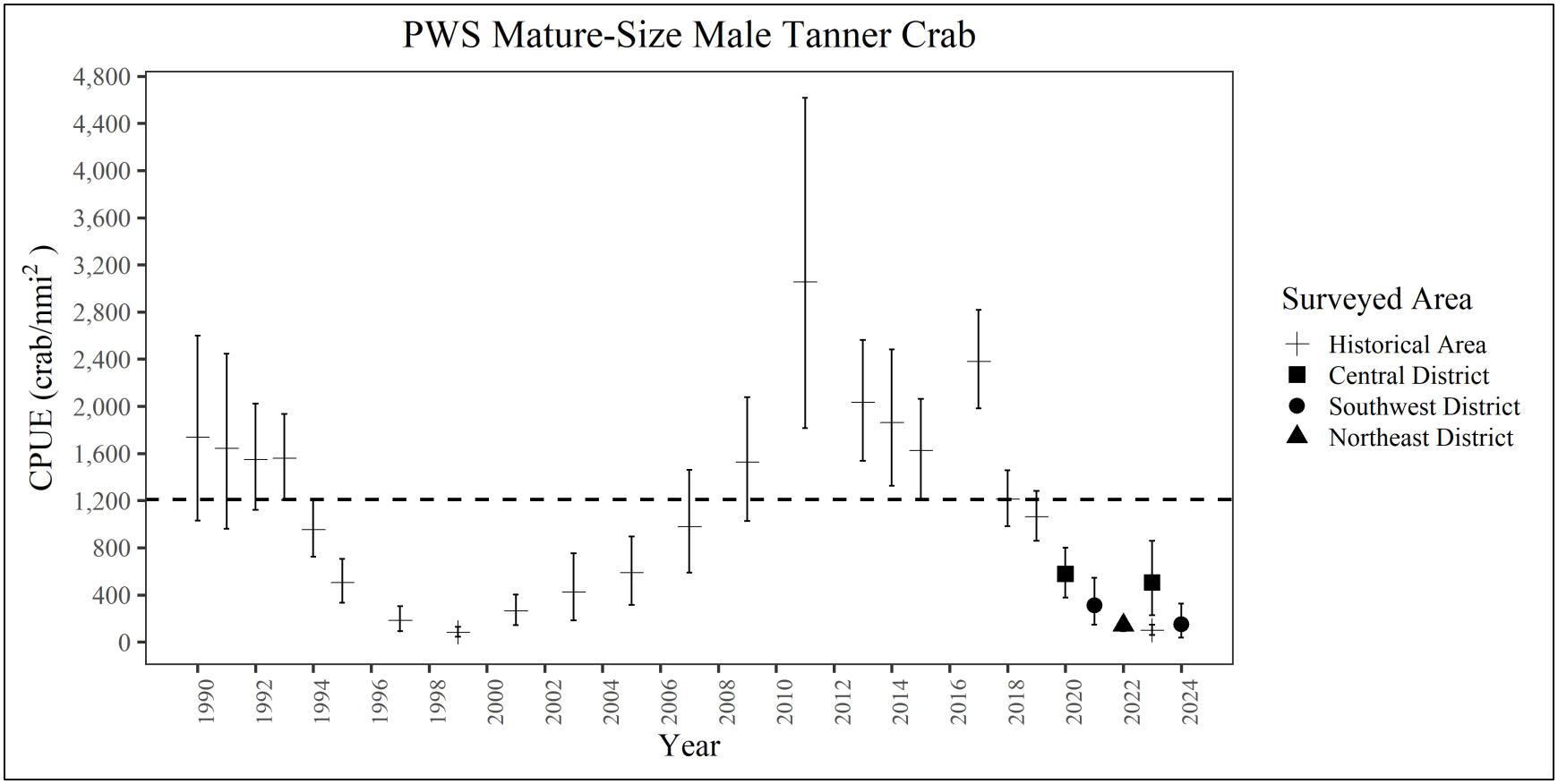

Figure 34-1.–Prince William Sound Area bottom trawl survey CPUE (crab per nmi^2) of mature-size male Tanner crab. *Note:* Vertical lines are 90% CI. The horizontal dashed line is historical area survey mean (1990–2015).

Table 34-2.–Commercial Tanner crab harvest in the Prince William Sound Management Area, 2022.

Season/year	Vessels	Landings	Harvest (lb)						Average weight (pounds)	Number of Crab
			Northwestern	Northeastern	Central	Southwestern	Southeastern	Total Harvest (pounds)		
2022[a]	17	43	11,575	24,360	1,066	5,273	0	42,274	ND	23,566

Note: ND = no data.

Note: New districts and minimum legal size established in 1976, calendar year season established in 1984, Tanner crab harvest strategy and commissioners permit fishery established in 2017.

a Test fishery. Both a test fishery and a commercial fishery took place in 2022.

b Commissioners permit fishery.

Table 34-3.–Prince William Sound Commissioners Permit Tanner crab fishery performance, effort, and management measures, 2018-2021.

	Fishery performance			Effort					Management	
Year	Harvest (No. of crab)	Harvest (lb)	CPUE (crab per pot)	Pot lifts	Vessels	Permits	Participants	Percent participation	Pot limit	Start date
2018	47,394	83,338	12.7	3,736	14	18	15	83%	50	1-Mar
2019	74,407	124,707	15.4	4,841	14	25	14	56%	25	1-Mar
2020	64,557	108,859	11	5,885	22	26	22	85%	25	2-Mar
2021	33,803	56,351	11.6	2,923	10	13	10	77%	25	2-Mar
Average 2018-2021	55,040	93,314	13	4,346	15	21	15	75%	31	

Table 34-4.–Prince William Sound Tanner crab test fishery performance, effort, and management measures, 2016–2022.

	Fishery performance			Effort			Management		
Year	Harvest (No. of crab)	Harvest (lb)	CPUE (crab per pot)	Pot lifts	Lots	Participants	Pot limit	GHL (lb)	Start date
2016	1,982	3,946	7	206	2	1	30	No GHL	20-Oct
2020	12,917	23,771	16.2	796	6	5	25	30,000	22-Feb
2021	8,368	15,910	15.2	552	5	2	25	25,000	22-Feb
2022	9,785	17,914	10.4	680	6	3	25	30,000	22-Feb
Average 2016-2022	8,263	15,385	12	559	5	3	26	28,333	

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 34.308. Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a harvest strategy for Prince Will0iam Sound (PWS) Tanner crab. The proposed strategy includes an initial GHL of 100,000 pounds. The GHL would increase or decrease based on fishery CPUE from the most recent season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy* establishes guideline harvest levels (GHLs) based on abundance thresholds of mature-size male Tanner crab and utilizes abundance estimates derived from department trawl surveys to determine whether the Northeastern, Central, and Southwestern Districts open to commercial fishing (5 AAC 35.308). The GHL for total legal male Tanner crab harvest for each district is set at 10, 15, or 20% of the estimated abundance of total mature males. Tanner crab may be taken in the PWS Area from January 15 until April 15, during periods established by emergency order (5 AAC 35.310). Only male Tanner crab five inches or greater in width of shell may be taken or possessed (5 AAC 35.320).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted a Tanner crab fishery would open in PWS in all areas where pot fishing is allowed. The fishery would increase the harvest of Tanner crab in PWS by up to 100,000 pounds annually during the first season of the fishery and to an unknown amount annually in future years depending on the GHL, fishing effort, and Tanner crab abundance.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 34 for background information on PWS Tanner crab.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The board established the harvest strategy for Tanner crab in PWS at the 2021 meeting and the department has conservation concerns associated with a CPUE managed fishery for Tanner crab in PWS.

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

PROPOSAL 36 – 5 AAC 34.325. Lawful gear for Registration Area E.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the pot limit in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Tanner crab fishery from 30 pots per vessel to 75 pots per vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Tanner crab may be taken only with Tanner crab pots (5 AAC 35.050). The number of Tanner crab pots that may be operated from a vessel will be established by emergency order (EO) before the opening of each commercial Tanner crab season, not to exceed 30 Tanner crab pots per vessel (5 AAC 35.325). In determining the annual pot limit, the department will consider the number of registered vessels, estimated catch per unit effort (CPUE), and the guideline harvest level (GHL).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The pot limit for Tanner crab in PWS would be increase to 75 pots per vessel, likely resulting in a faster paced fishery and a shorter season. This would make it more difficult to constrain harvest below the GHL and complicate orderly fishery closure.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 34 for background information on Tanner crab in PWS. Pot limits in the Kodiak Tanner crab fishery, which has a much higher GHL than a PWS Tanner crab fishery would have, are 70 pots per vessel.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 37 – 5 AAC 34.325. Lawful gear for Registration Area E.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove the department's ability to set pot limits by emergency order (EO) in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Tanner crab fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The number of Tanner crab pots that may be operated from a vessel will be established by EO before the opening of each commercial Tanner crab season, not to exceed 30 Tanner crab pots per vessel. In determining the annual pot limit, the department will consider the number of registered vessels, estimated catch per unit effort (CPUE), and the guideline harvest level (GHL) (5AAC 35.325).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The department would not have the ability to set the PWS Tanner crab pot limit by EO. An important management tool would no longer be available, possibly resulting in overharvest or localized depletion during years when participation in the fishery is high.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 34 for background information on Tanner crab.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The board established EO authority for Tanner crab pot limits in PWS at the 2017 meeting and the department has management concerns with being unable to set the annual pot limit in response to effort, estimated CPUE, and GHL.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 35.3XX. New Section. Tenders for Tanner Crab.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow vessels registered to commercially fish in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Tanner crab fishery to also operate as tenders in the PWS Tanner crab fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under statewide regulations for the commercial Tanner crab fishery, a vessel used to tender Tanner crab may not have Tanner crab gear or equipment on board and may not be used to take Tanner crab (5 AAC 35.033). Vessels operating as tenders must also register with the department within the Tanner crab registration area, district, or section in which the operator intends to operate that vessel.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The pace of the PWS Tanner crab pot fishery could increase, resulting in shorter seasons with lower pot limits. This change could also have enforcement issues because of the mixing of Tanner crab from multiple vessels on one vessel. Vessel specific harvest accounting, which is required and important for management, could become more difficult.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 34 for background information on PWS Tanner crab fisheries.

A vessel may act as a tender in commercial Tanner crab fisheries and accept deliveries of Tanner crab from multiple vessels for transport to port; the tender is required to comply with fish ticket reporting requirements (5 AAC 39.130) and may not participate as a catcher vessel in the Tanner crab fishery. No tenders participated in the recent commissioners permit fisheries, test fisheries, or the regulatory fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Successful management of this fishery has included a clear delineation between fishery participants and tender vessels.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

KING CRAB (4 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 39 – 5 AAC 34.210. Fishing seasons for Registration Area E, 5 AAC 34.225. Lawful gear for Registration Area E.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish season dates and fishing hours for a commercial golden king crab (GKC) fishery in Prince William Sound (PWS). It would also allow retention of GKC in Tanner crab pots if the permit holder fishing for Tanner crab is also registered for the GKC fishery and both fisheries are open at the same time. If only the GKC fishery is open the pot limit would be 30 king crab pots. If both the GKC and Tanner crab fisheries are open the pot limit would be 75 pots in aggregate for Tanner and king crab pots.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial harvest of king crab in PWS is closed until the board adopts a harvest strategy, except that the guideline harvest range (GHR) for GKC in PWS is 0 to 60,000 pounds (5 AAC 34.217). GKC may only be harvested in king crab pots (5 AAC 34.225(a)). There is no pot limit in regulation for GKC. Size limits for GKC, lawful gear, and pot storage requirements are also defined in 5 AAC Section 34, Chapter 2.

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for king crab in PWS (5 AAC 02.208). The board has not yet determined an ANS for golden king crab because harvest has occurred under a regime of restricted harvests, and harvest data has only been collected since 2008 when the subsistence fishery was opened.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A GKC fishery would be established with season dates from January 15 to March 31. GKC harvested in Tanner crab fisheries would be retained instead of released. Harvest of GKC in PWS would increase by an unknown amount depending on the GHL selected, participation in the fishery, and abundance of GKC.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 40 for background information on GKC in PWS.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department has conservation concerns associated with a GKC fishery without having a stock assessment in place and estimates of harvestable surplus golden king crab. If adopted, the board should consider the effect on the reasonable opportunity to harvest golden king crab for subsistence.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 40 – 5 AAC 34.215. Guideline harvest range for Registration Area E.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fisherman United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a harvest strategy for Prince William Sound (PWS) golden king crab (GKC). The proposed harvest strategy includes an initial GHL of 10,000 pounds which would increase or decrease based on fishery CPUE from the most recent season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial harvest of king crab in PWS is closed until the board adopts a harvest strategy, except that the guideline harvest range (GHR) for GKC in PWS is 0 to 60,000 pounds (5 AAC 34.217). GKC may only be harvested in king crab pots (5 AAC 34.225(a)). There is no pot limit in regulation for GKC. Size limits for GKC, lawful gear, and pot storage requirements are also defined in 5 AAC Section 34, Chapter 2.

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for king crab in PWS (5 AAC 02.208). The board has not yet determined an ANS for golden king crab due to limited harvest data and the annual limit of three crab per household.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A GKC fishery would open in PWS in all areas where pot fishing is allowed. The fishery would increase the harvest of GKC in PWS by up to 10,000 pounds annually during the first season of the fishery and to an unknown amount between 0 and 60,000 pounds annually in future years depending on GHL, effort, and GKC abundance.

BACKGROUND: The department does not have a king crab assessment program in PWS and no data is available to identify or quantify a harvestable surplus. Both red crab and golden king crab have been caught in the PWS trawl survey. Numbers of red king crab have ranged from 0 to 2 and none have been caught in the survey since 2005, while only 2 GKC have ever been captured (in 1995 and 1997) in the history of the survey. The department conducted a 3-year pot survey for GKC in western PWS from 2004 through 2006. Data obtained over the course of that 3-year survey provided an indication that the GKC numbers in the Knight Island Passage area of PWS are at low and stable levels, and not high enough to sustain commercial harvest.

The first commercial harvest of king crab in PWS was landed in 1957 and the fishery quickly developed; the second highest harvest of 246,965 pounds was landed in 1960 (Table 40-1). In 1972, the highest harvest of 296,200 pounds of primarily blue king crab were landed. Species separation of the king crab species in harvest reporting began in 1979. Between 1979 and 1984 both blue and red king crab harvest declined and commercial fisheries for both these species were closed by emergency order (EO) from 1984 through 1990, and from 1992 through 1994 before being closed by regulation in 1996. These closures coincided with the development of the GKC fishery from 1982 to 1989. Harvest of GKC was negligible during the first three seasons of species separation and then peaked during 1982 at 147,016 pounds before declining to relatively low levels from 1983 season through 1988 (Table 40-1). During the fishery, the average weight of GKC decreased from 9.7 pounds in 1982 to 6.6 pounds in 1988. Due to conservation concerns, the fishery was closed in 1989 by EO. Because of low harvest levels and the decrease in average size of harvested crab, the board established a guideline harvest range (GHR) of 40,000 to 60,000 lb. For the following years, the lower end of the GHR was not achieved, leading to a closure of the commercial fishery in 1992 and 1993. For years when pot effort data were available (beginning in 1984), catch per unit effort (CPUE) for GKC also declined to the lowest level of 0.6 crab/pot in

1991. Although the fishery did reopen for a month in 1994, participation and harvest were low, and the fishery was closed by EO until the board closed it by regulation in 1996.

In March 2008, the board made a positive customary and traditional use finding for king crab in PWS and subsequently opened a GKC subsistence fishery. The board has not adopted an ANS for king crab. Harvest in this fishery is monitored with a required permit and administered in conjunction with the subsistence Tanner crab fishery. Harvest and participation have remained low since the fishery opened in 2008. The reported number of trips with GKC harvest has ranged from 0 in 2012 to a high of 42 trips in 2018 (Table 40-2). The 2018 season produced the highest harvest of GKC since the subsistence fishery was implemented in 2008. During 2018, there were 181 legal male GKC reported caught with 47 crab retained, 230 sublegal male crab released, and 605 female crab released on 42 trips. During 2019, there were 38 legal male crab retained and 17 released with 97 females released; GKC were caught on 16 trips.

The department prosecuted a Commissioner's Permit Tanner crab fishery in the Eastern and Western Districts of PWS in 2018, 2019, and 2020 following adoption of a new regulation by the board in 2017. Logbooks were required in this fishery and in 2020 participants were asked to record any other crab species that were caught (and released) in their pots. Logbook data from 2020 indicated king crab were caught in 18 pots out of 6,068 pots total; in these pots 275 GKC were caught and 83 were legal males. Five records indicated "king crab" without noting the species, gender, or size of these king crab. GKC are generally caught at deeper depths than Tanner crab and historically are caught in different areas.

There was a PWS Tanner crab test fishery prosecuted in the Northern and Hinchinbrook Districts of PWS between February 22 and April 7, 2020. The department sent observers aboard 3 of the trips. In 2 out of the 3 trips, 11 sublegal GKC were caught. The harvest rates in these fishery and assessment programs suggest that there likely is not a commercially harvestable surplus of GKC.

Currently, the department does not have a king crab assessment program, which would be needed to determine if a harvestable surplus is available. Although subsistence harvest of GKC peaked in 2018, and GKC were caught in the commissioner's permit Tanner crab fishery, overall catch and CPUE remains low and does not indicate that abundance levels are high enough to support a commercial fishery. A GKC test fishery was prosecuted in 2020, however only 5,713 pounds out of the 15,000 allowable harvest was harvested.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not believe there is a GKC abundance with levels high enough to support a commercial fishery. The department has conservation concerns associated with a CPUE managed fishery without having a stock assessment in place and estimates of harvestable surplus GKC. If adopted, the board should consider the effect on the reasonable opportunity to harvest golden king crab for subsistence.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 40-1.–Prince William Sound Area commercial king crab harvest, 1970–2023.

Season	Vessels	Landings	King crab harvest (lb)				CPUE golden king	Average weight golden king
			Red	Blue	Golden	Total		
1970	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	94,300	ND	ND
1971	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	144,200	ND	ND
1972	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	296,200	ND	ND
1973	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	207,916	ND	ND
1974	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	85,379	ND	ND
1975	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	53,423	ND	ND
1976	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	17,087	ND	ND
1977	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	86,595	ND	ND
1978	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	114,000	ND	ND
1979	18	109	52,026	13,662	0	65,688	ND	ND
1980	14	65	32,433	7,282	20	39,735	ND	ND
1981	11	43	25,358	5,634	0	30,992	ND	ND
1982	31	187	30,809	10,433	147,016	188,258	ND	9.7
1983	18	69	16,467	5,324	50,535	73,226	ND	8.8
1984	4	14	closed		40,232	40,467	1	ND
1985	4	11	closed		51,800	51,800	1	5.8
1986	4	11	closed		65,674	65,837	3	6.1
1987	4	15	closed		68,270	68,270	2	6.6
1988	5	14	closed		48,442	48,442	3	6.6
1989				closed				
1990	a	a	closed		a	a	0.8	6.4
1991	a	a	closed		a	a	0.6	6.5
1992				closed				
1993				closed				
1994	a	a	closed		a	a	1.4	7.9
1995–2019				closed				
2020[b]	1	1	closed		5,713		1.9	8.0
2021-2023				closed				
Averages								
1960-1979	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	122,122	ND	ND
1980-1989	11	54	31,419	8,467	47,199	67,272	2	7.3

Note: Catch not reported by species prior to 1979.

[a] Data confidential.

[b] Test fishery.

Table 40-2.–Prince William Sound Area subsistence golden king crab fishery annual harvest, effort, and catch, 2008-2022.

Season	Number of Legal Crab Kept	Number of Legal Crab Released	Total Legal Crab Caught	Number of Sublegal Crab Released	Number of Female Crab Released	Number of Trips
2008	5	8	13	9	12	13
2009	3	7	10	21	22	9
2010	12	0	12	5	8	12
2011	10	8	18	23	39	9
2012	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	27	2	29	6	97	20
2014	35	22	57	15	179	24
2015	16	7	23	9	39	16
2016	5	0	5	4	7	15
2017	6	4	10	12	27	6
2018	47	134	181	230	605	42
2019	38	12	50	12	20	75
2020	19	8	27	140	134	101
2021	40	102	142	140	134	92
2022	40	102	142	291	324	93
Averages						
2008-2019	17	17	34	29	88	20
2020-2022	33	71	104	190	197	95

PROPOSAL 41 – 5 AAC 34.XXX. New Section and 5 AAC 35.308. Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy.

PROPOSED BY: Robert A. Smith and Waren Chappell.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a harvest strategy for king and Tanner crab consistent with board policy.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial harvest of king crab in PWS is closed until the board adopts a harvest strategy, except that the guideline harvest range (GHR) for GKC in PWS is 0 to 60,000 pounds (5 AAC 34.217). GKC may only be harvested in king crab pots (5 AAC 34.225(a)). There is no pot limit in regulation for GKC. Size limits for GKC, lawful gear, and pot storage requirements are also defined in 5 AAC Section 34, Chapter 2.

The *Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy* establishes guideline harvest levels (GHLs) based on abundance thresholds of mature-size male Tanner crab and utilizes abundance estimates derived from department trawl surveys to determine whether the Northeastern, Central, and Southwestern districts open to commercial fishing (5 AAC 35.308). The GHL for total legal male Tanner crab harvest for each district is set at 10, 15, or 20% of the estimated abundance of total mature males. Tanner crab may be taken in the PWS Area from January 15 until April 15, during periods established by emergency order (5 AAC 35.310). Only male Tanner crab five inches or greater in width of shell may be taken or possessed (5 AAC 35.320).

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for Tanner and king crab in PWS (5 AAC 02.208). The board has found that 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in PWS (5 AAC 02.208(c)) and has not yet determined an ANS for golden king crab due to limited harvest data and the annual limit of three crab per household.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A person could apply for a permit to participate in a commercial fishery for GKC in PWS. Harvest of GKC and Tanner crab in PWS would increase by an unknown amount depending on the GHL selected, participation in the fishery, and abundance of GKC and Tanner crab.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 34 for background on PWS Tanner crab fisheries and Proposal 40 for background information on PWS GKC fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not believe there is a GKC abundance with levels high enough to support a commercial fishery. The department has conservation concerns associated with a GKC fishery without having a stock assessment in place and estimates of harvestable surplus GKC. The board established a harvest strategy for Tanner crab in PWS at the 2021 meeting. If adopted, the board should consider the effect on the reasonable opportunity to harvest golden king crab for subsistence.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 42 – 5 AAC 77.577. Personal use king crab fishery; 5 AAC 77.558. Personal use Tanner crab fishery; and 5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Brian West.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a sport season for golden king crab (GKC) and Tanner crab in Prince William Sound (PWS) from April 15 to September 15. Participants in the summer sport fishery would be ineligible to participate in the established winter subsistence GKC and Tanner crab fishery. A 2-pot limit would be in effect for the new season and only one permit could be fished per vessel. A crab pot would not be allowed on the same line as a shrimp pot. An annual limit of 2 legal male GKC and 50 legal male Tanner crab and a daily limit of 10 male Tanner crab would apply.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is no personal use or sport harvest of Tanner crab permitted in PWS. Subsistence regulations include an annual limit of 3 legal GKC per household and a daily bag and possession limit of 12 legal Tanner crab per person with no annual limit (5 AAC 02.225 and 5 AAC 02.220). The subsistence GKC and Tanner crab fishery is monitored through a mandatory permit system (5 AAC 02.206). GKC and Tanner crab may be taken for subsistence purposes only from October 1 through March 31 with pots, ring nets, dip nets, diving gear, hooked or hookless hand lines, and by hand (5 AAC 02.205 and 5 AAC 02.207).

There is an ANS of 550 to 2,050 Tanner crab for PWS (5 AAC 02.208(c)). The board has not yet determined an ANS for golden king crab due to limited harvest data and the annual household limit of three crab.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A person could apply for a permit to participate in a sport or personal use fishery for GKC and Tanner crab in PWS during a summer season. If GKC and Tanner crab permits were issued harvest would increase by an unknown amount depending on fishing effort and crab abundance.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to comments on Proposal 31 for background on the PWS subsistence Tanner crab fishery and Proposal 40 for background information on the PWS subsistence GKC fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The proposed season would coincide with molting, resulting in increased stress to crab in soft shell condition. Fishing effort in PWS is also likely higher during the proposed summer fishery than the current winter subsistence fishery for GKC and Tanner crab. From 2017 to 2019 an average of 3,821 summer shrimp permits were issued compared with 210 winter GKC and Tanner crab permits from 2017 to 2019, illustrating the potential for an increase in effort for GKC and Tanner crab should this proposal pass. If adopted, the board should consider the effect of increased harvest on the reasonable opportunity to harvest golden king crab for subsistence.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

MISCELLANEOUS SHELLFISH (1 PROPOSAL)

PROPOSAL 43 – 5 AAC 38.217. Registration Area E Octopus Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow a directed octopus fishery in Prince William Sound (PWS) using longlined lair style pots.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Registration Area E Octopus Management Plan* specifies that octopus may only be taken as bycatch in pot, trawl, and longline gear fisheries. The management plan also sets a guideline harvest range (GHR) of 0 to 35,000 pounds and limits bycatch retention to 20 percent, by weight, of the directed harvest on board a vessel, except that for the PWS shrimp fishery 35 percent by weight may be retained (5 AAC 38.217).

There is a positive customary and traditional use (C&T) finding for miscellaneous shellfish in the PWS area. The board has determined that 15,000 - 25,000 pounds of usable shellfish other than shrimp and crabs are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 02.208 (c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? A new directed octopus commissioners permit fishery would be created in PWS utilizing a new gear type, lair pots. Octopus harvest would increase from an average of 155 pounds annually from 2021 to 2023 by an unknown amount up to 35,000 pounds annually.

BACKGROUND: The PWS *Registration Area E Octopus Management Plan*, which permits the retention of octopus commercially caught as bycatch to other directed fisheries, was adopted by the board in March 2012. The *Registration Area J Octopus Management Plan* for Kodiak waters includes a provision for a directed octopus commissioners permit fishery and was also adopted at the March 2012 meeting.

In PWS octopus are harvested incidentally in the Pacific cod pot fishery, to a lesser degree in the shrimp trawl fishery, and more recently in the shrimp and Tanner crab pot fisheries. Octopus harvests first exceeded 1,000 pounds in 1992 and attained the highest harvest of 5,798 pounds in 1994. Octopus harvest from 1992 to 1998 averaged approximately 3,400 pounds, with no reported harvest from 1999 to 2001, 2006 to 2009, 2011, and 2019 to 2020. During the most recent 3-year period octopus harvest was confidential in 2021 and 2022 and was 155 pounds in 2023.

Lair pots, sometimes known as habitat pots, are portable structures designed to retain octopus alive in the water with no other bycatch. Lair pots provide free movement into and out of the pot and rely on octopus preference for dark habitat to retain their catch. Lair pots are not currently defined as a legal gear type.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department has no stock assessment for octopus in PWS and has no conservation concerns associated with a directed octopus fishery that operates within the GHR established in the management plan.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – GROUP 3: COPPER RIVER SALMON (27 PROPOSALS)

SUBSISTENCE (7 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 44 – 5 AAC 01.620. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

PROPOSED BY: Shawn Gilman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow subsistence fishermen to have more than the legal limit of gillnet gear onboard a vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? A salmon fishing vessel may only have one legal limit of salmon fishing gear on board. Legal subsistence salmon gear lengths in the Copper River/Bering River and Prince William Sound fishing areas are seines or gillnets no longer than 50 fathoms in length, with the gear type within a fishing district tied to the legal commercial gear type for the fishing district (5 AAC 01.620 (a)(3)). Legal subsistence salmon gear lengths in the Tatitlek and Chenega fishing areas are gillnets no longer than 150 fathoms in length or seines no longer than 50 fathoms (5AAC 01.648 (a)(2) and (b)(2)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSALS WERE ADOPTED? This may increase subsistence salmon harvest. Vessels with spare subsistence gillnet gear could substitute gear while fishing. This may be to replace damaged gear, as the proposal implies, but this spare gear could also be of different specifications. For example, spare net(s) could utilize different mesh sizes or be hung with more/less webbing to effectively target different salmon species. Participants in the subsistence fishery could deploy multiple nets during a fishing period without taking nets on and off the boat. Time spent repairing or replacing gear would be saved without the requirement to only have the legal amount of gear aboard the vessel, potentially allowing for more fishing time. Having additional gear on board could also increase the likelihood of illegal fishing and result in additional harvest.

BACKGROUND: Current management provides subsistence openings concurrent with the commercial salmon fishing periods starting on or about May 15. Subsistence openings also occur on Saturdays, providing opportunity for subsistence fishing while the commercial fishery is closed. During extended commercial fishery closures, additional subsistence opportunities are provided through the department's EO authority. Commercial harvesters who wish to obtain salmon for home use may fish on Saturdays, retain salmon from their commercial catch, or forgo commercial fishing to participate in the subsistence fisheries concurrent with commercial fishery.

When commercial operators choose to participate in the subsistence fishery, they must remove the 150-fathom commercial net and replace it with a 50-fathom subsistence net. This is burdensome because it generally requires returning to port or exchanging nets on a tender, which is time-consuming. However, leaving the commercial 150-fathom net on board or on the net reel increases the likelihood of illegally fishing gear longer than 50 fathoms in the subsistence fishery. Enforcement of net length in the subsistence fishery is difficult because of the dispersal of vessels over the large and difficult-to-access area of the fishery.

The board has previously addressed the issue of how commercial vessels change gear between subsistence and commercial net. For example, proposals have been submitted to mark and deploy only the first 50 fathoms of a commercial 150-fathom net or allow a 50-fathom subsistence net to

be on board at the same time. These proposals all addressed the challenges of having to change gear, and for these proposals, the board elected to not change the requirement of allowing only one legal complement of gear onboard on the premise that it increased the likelihood of illegally fishing gear longer than 50 fathoms.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it increases the potential to illegally deploy additional gear and enforcement would be challenging due to the size of the fishing area.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is this stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. Under 5 AAC 01.616, the board found that salmon stocks are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence in: (2) the Southwestern District described in 5 AAC 24.200(i) and the waters along the northwestern shore of Green Island from the westernmost tip of the island to the northernmost tip of the island; (3) the waters north of a line from Porcupine Point to Granite Point and south of a line from Point Lowe to Tongue Point; (4) the Copper River District described in 5 AAC 24.200(a); and (6) the Coghill, Northwestern, Eshamy, Unakwik, Southeastern, and Bering River Districts and those portions of the Northern, Montague, and Eastern Districts not included in (2) and (3) of this subsection, excluding those portions within the Valdez Nonsubsistence Area as described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(5).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? The Amount Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) in the Copper River District is defined in 5 AAC 01.616(b)(2) as follows: 1) 3,000-5,000 salmon in years when there is a harvestable surplus allowing for a commercial fishery, and 2) 19,000–32,000 salmon during years when there is no commercial fishery. The ANS for the Chenega subsistence fishing permit area is 2,100–3,500 salmon, the ANS for the Tatitlek subsistence fishing permit is 1,800–3,000, and the ANS covering the Eshamy, Northwestern, and Coghill district subsistence fisheries is 115–200 salmon.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 45 – 5AAC 01.625. Waters closed to subsistence fishing.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow salmon to be taken for subsistence in the inside closure area described in 5 AAC 24.350(1)(B) unless all other Copper River king salmon fisheries have been restricted first.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Copper River District/Bering River District Salmon Subsistence Permit fishing areas encompass waters of these two commercial fishing districts and subsistence fishing time and area is concurrent with individual commercial fishing periods as described below.

During statistical weeks 20 and 21 (the first two weeks of the season), the department may not open more than one 12-hour fishing period within the inside closure area of the Copper River District described in 5 AAC 24.350(1)(B) (Figure 45-1).

Salmon may be taken for subsistence in the districts described in 5 AAC 01.605(b) only from May 15 through October 31 during fishing periods as follows: 1) from May 15 until two days before the commercial opening of that salmon district, seven days per week; or 2) during the commercial salmon season, only during open commercial salmon fishing periods in that district; and Saturdays from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; 3) from two days following the closure of the commercial salmon fishing season in that district through October 31, seven days a week (5 AAC 01.610(g)(4)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase sockeye and king salmon subsistence harvest by an unknown amount. Having additional inside waters available to the subsistence fishery will allow for an expansion of directed king salmon fishing effort in shallow and channelized waters, increasing harvest efficiency in the fishery. The proposal would open areas for subsistence fishing that, at the same time, are closed to commercial fishing. This could complicate enforcement of the prohibition on selling subsistence-caught salmon. Commercial fishermen might exploit this by fishing in areas closed to commercial fishing under the guise of subsistence fishing and then selling their catch. When commercial fishing is open but inside waters are excluded, those inside waters would remain open to subsistence fishing, potentially facilitating the movement of boats and fish between fisheries. During the Saturday subsistence-only fishery, commercial permit holders eligible for subsistence fishing could operate in waters previously closed to commercial fishing and may hold their catch until the next commercial fishing period. Commercially caught salmon that would have otherwise been kept to meet subsistence needs might be sold instead.

BACKGROUND: The inside waters closure area was explicitly created as a tool to conserve Copper River king salmon. The department developed this management strategy based on catch data showing that most of the king salmon are harvested in the shallow inside waters area. The department has implemented regular inside-waters closures as a tool to reduce king salmon harvest in Copper River District. The board provided additional guidance with the adoption of the *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* that limits the number of commercial openings inside of the barrier islands (inside closures) to no more than one 12-hour fishing period during statistical weeks 20 and 21 to increase the probability of achieving the king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG). To conserve Copper River king salmon the department has used

discretionary management authority to implement many more inside closures than required by regulation during each of the last 16 seasons (Table 45-1).

Current management practice has been to open the commercial salmon season on or about May 15. Subsistence opening dates do not generally allow subsistence harvesters the opportunity to harvest salmon outside of the commercial fishing season. During extended closures of the commercial fishery, additional subsistence opportunity has been provided through the department's EO authority. Commercial harvesters who wish to obtain salmon for home use may subsistence fish on Saturdays, retain salmon from their commercial catch, or forgo commercial fishing to participate in the subsistence fishery. The open area in the Saturday subsistence fishery is defined by the area in the most recent commercial fishing period. The board established an inside waters area open to subsistence fishing in the Egg Island area of the Copper River District to provide for a safe small-boat subsistence fishery near Cordova. This represents about a third of the inside waters of the district. Expanding subsistence fishery access to the inside closure area will result in more subsistence king salmon harvest. Copper River king salmon abundance has remained low over the last ten years (2014–2023; Table 45-2), and these fish are vulnerable to harvest during mid-May to early June in the Copper River District especially in the inside waters closure area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department intentionally links subsistence and commercial fishing period time and area to eliminate potential violations (specifically, selling subsistence-caught fish in the commercial fishery). The high price of Copper River king salmon (e.g. $360 for a 20-lb fish at $18 per pound) creates a financial incentive to sell subsistence-caught fish.

The amount necessary for subsistence (ANS) has been achieved in 7 out of the last 10 years and is specific to subsistence harvest of all salmon species combined (Table 45-3). All 3 of the years where the ANS was not achieved had above-average king and sockeye salmon commercial and home pack harvest (Table 45-4).

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is this stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? The board has determined under 5 AAC 01.616(a)(4) that salmon in the Copper River District, as described in 5 AAC 24.200(a), are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence.

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? The board has established that a range of 3,000–5,000 salmon is reasonably necessary for subsistence purposes in a year when there is a harvestable surplus that allows for a commercial fishery, and 19,000–32,000 in a year when there is no commercial fishery (5 AAC 01.616(b)(2)).

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

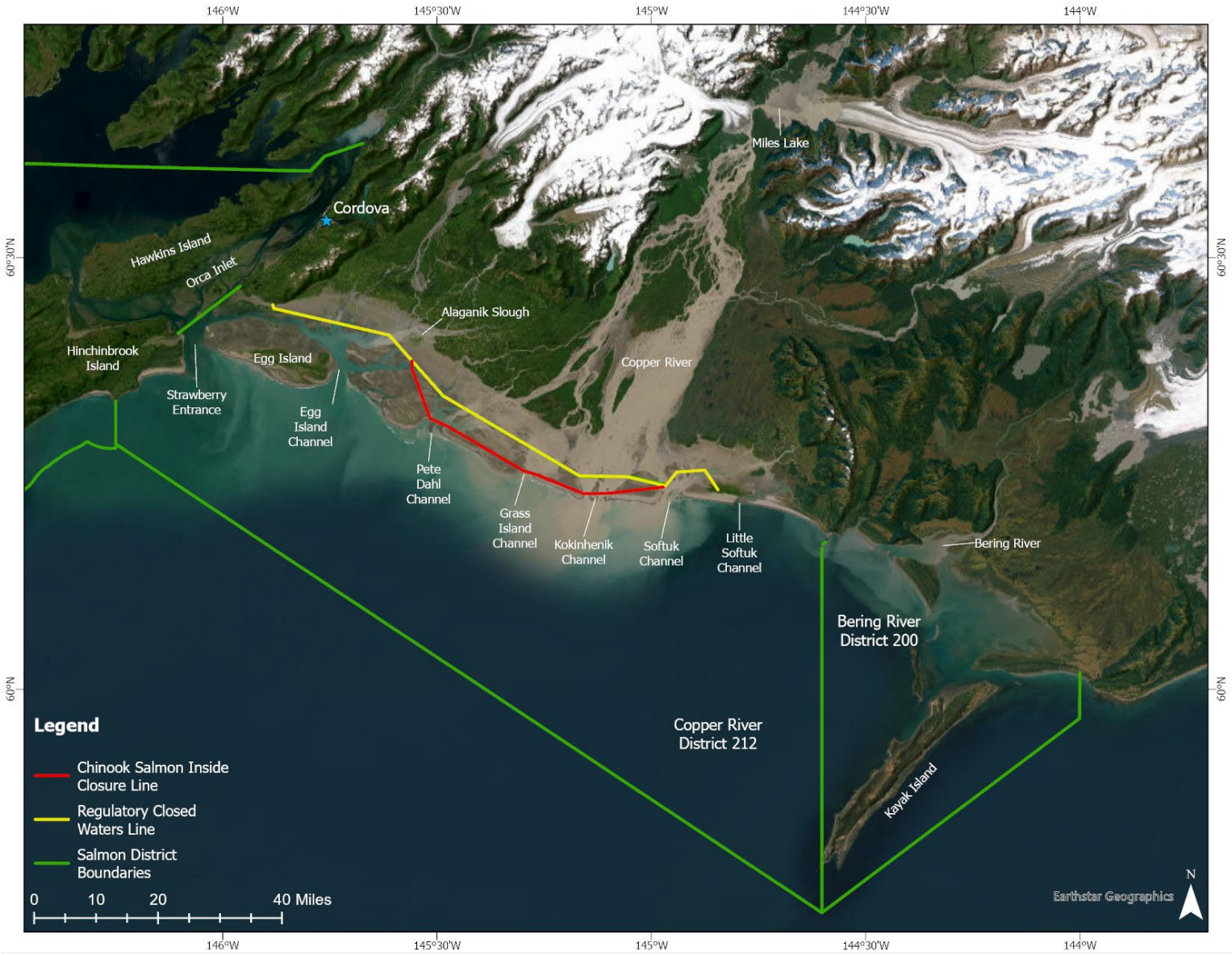

Figure 45-1.–Copper River and Bering River districts showing regulatory closed waters, including king salmon inside closure area.

Table 45-1.–King salmon regulatory action history for the Copper River District commercial and Upper Copper River king salmon fisheries, 2009 – 2024.

Year	Escapement[a]	Date	Copper River District[b]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2009	27,787	21-May	Inside area closed 6 out of 13 periods		No action	
		8-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		16-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 from any tributary or Copper River mainstem.
		29-Jun				Close the Gulkana River drainage.
		27-Jul				Prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Klutina River
2010	**16,764**	20-May	Inside area closed 5 out of 12 periods		No action	
		21-Jun		Prohibit retention		Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 from any tributary or Copper River mainstem.
2011	27,994	16-May	Inside area closed 5 out of 14 periods		No action	
		25-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 allowed from any tributary or Copper River mainstem and prohibited retention in Copper River drainage upstream of Klutina River
		27-Jun		Prohibit retention		
2012	27,835	17-May	Inside area closed 10 out of 13 periods		No action	
		18-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		30-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 1 and prohibit retention and the use of bait and treble hooks in Gulkana River
		28-Jul				Prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Klutina River and Upper Copper River drainage downstream of Klutina River
2013	29,012	16-May	Inside area closed 4 out of 9 periods		No action	
		15-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 1 and prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Gulkana River
		24-Jun		Prohibit retention		
2014	**20,709**	15-May	Inside area closed 11 out of 13 periods			
		14-Jun				Reduced annual limit from 4 to 1
		16-Jun		Prohibit retention		

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Table 45-1.–Page 2 of 3

Year	Escapement[a]	Date	Copper River district[b]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2015	26,764	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed 10 out of 15 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2016	**12,485**	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed 12 out of 14 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
		18-Jun				Prohibit retention and the use of bait and treble hooks in Copper River drainage upstream of the Klutina River
		20-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		25-Jun				Closed Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon
2017	33,655	15-May	Expanded Inside area and closed 9 out of 13 periods			
		1-Jan		.	reduced limit to 2 fish and fish wheels required to be closely attended	Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
		1-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		4-Jun			Rescinded all restrictions	
		5-Jun				Open Upper Copper River drainage sport fishing for king salmon with 2-fish annual bag limit
		19-Jun		Allow retention		
2018	42,242	15-May	Inside area closed for 3 out of 3 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2019	35,145	15-May	Inside area closed for 6 out of 13 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2020	**21,587**	15-May	Expanded Inside area and closed 4 out of 5 periods		No action	
		20-Jun		.		Annual limit reduced from 4 to 1 fish.
		22-Jun		Prohibit retention		

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Table 45-1.–Page 3 of 3

Year	Escapement[a]	Date	Copper River district[b]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2021	**18,431**	17-May	Expanded inside area and closed for 9 out of 9 periods			
		21-Jun		Prohibit retention		Upper Copper River drainage king salmon annual limit reduced from 4 to 1 fish.
		26-Jun				Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
		28-Jun			Prohibit retention and fish wheels required to be closely attended	
		1-Aug			Allow retention	
2022	32,005	20-Jun	Expanded inside area and closed for 9 out of 12 periods		No action	
		20-Jun		Prohibit retention		Close Upper Copper River drainage to retention of king salmon.
		27-Jun		Allowed retention		Allowed retention, but reduced annual limit from 4 to 2 fish
2023	40,254	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed for 8 out of 12 periods	No action	No action	
		20-Jul				Increase possession limit from 1 to 2 fish
2024	NA	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed for season	No action	No action	
		24-Jun		Prohibit retention	No Action	Close Upper Copper River drainage to retention of king salmon.
		29-Jun			Prohibit retention	Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon
		2-Aug			Allow retention	

[a] Numbers in **bold** are below the escapement goal.

[b] Reflects number of periods excluding the portion of the Copper River District in and around the barrier islands through the end of the king salmon run (approximately June 30).

Table 45-2.–Copper River king salmon inriver abundance, total Upper Copper River (UCR) harvest, and estimated spawning escapement, 2014–2023.

Run Year	Inriver Abundance	Total UCR Harvest [a]	Estimated Spawning Escapement [b]	Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG)	Escapement Goal Performance
2014	24,158	3,449	20,709	24,000 or greater	Below
2015	32,306	5,542	26,764	24,000 or greater	Above
2016	16,009	3,524	12,485	24,000 or greater	Below
2017	40,725	7,070	33,655	24,000 or greater	Above
2018	52,524	10,322	42,242	24,000 or greater	Above
2019	43,714	8,569	35,145	24,000 or greater	Above
2020	26,293	4,706	21,587	24,000 or greater	Below
2021	21,656	3,225	18,431	24,000 or greater	Below
2022	38,480	6,475	32,005	21,000–31,000	Above
2023	49,308	9,054	40,254	21,000–31,000	Above

[a] The total upper Copper River (UCR) harvest estimate includes the 1) State Batzulnetas subsistence fishery, 2) State Glennallen Subdistrict Subsistence fishery, 3) Federal Glennallen Subdistrict Subsistence fishery, 4) State Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use Fishery, 5) Federal Chitina Subdistrict Subsistence Fishery, and 6) the State Sport Fishery.

[b] Upriver king salmon spawning escapement is estimated using the inriver abundance estimate and subtracting subsistence, personal use, and sport king salmon harvests.

Table 45-3.–Historical subsistence salmon harvest, permit returns, Copper River District, 2004–2023.

Year	Permits		Estimated Salmon Harvest					
	Issued	Returned	King	Sockeye	Coho	Chum	Pink	Total
2004	511	482	1,106	1,822	46	0	0	2,974
2005	237	224	260	830	15	0	0	1,105
2006	421	399	779	4,355	1	0	0	5,135
2007	469	440	1,145	6,148	15	0	0	7,308
2008	506	480	470	3,969	53	0	20	4,512
2009	323	293	212	1,764	22	1	0	1,999
2010	325	314	276	1,980	27	22	0	2,305
2011	273	263	212	1,783	34	2	0	2,031
2012	378	357	237	4,270	0	18	0	4,525
2013	531	492	854	5,639	1	2	17	6,513
2014	288	269	153	1,675	0	5	2	1,835
2015	241	231	167	1,403	10	0	0	1,580
2016	195	189	73	1,075	2	0	10	1,160
2017	450	416	778	2,448	43	3	2	3,274
2018	684	630	1,356	5,189	195	5	6	6,751
2019	573	555	808	6,163	330	19	0	7,320
2020	ND	ND	657	7,091	326	1	0	8,075
2021	ND	ND	624	5,338	233	5	82	6,282
2022	842	650	887	5,828	391	0	1	7,107
2023	587	514	948	6,326	431	0	19	7,724
5-year average (2019–2023)	667	573	785	6,149	342	5	20	7,302
10-year average (2014–2023)	483	432	645	4,254	196	4	12	5,111

Note: grey highlighting indicates years where harvest was below the ANS (3,000–5,000 salmon).

Table 45-4.–Copper River District harvest by year, species, and harvest type.

King salmon	Commercial	Home Pack	Subsistence
2014	10,207	768	153
2015	22,506	1,145	167
2016	12,348	727	73
2017	13,834	744	778
2018	7,618	85	1,356
2019	19,148	742	808
2020	5,880	225	657
2021	7,512	278	624
2022	12,262	534	887
2023	10,682	587	948
10-year average	12,200	584	645
Sockeye salmon			
2014	2,050,007	12,072	1,675
2015	1,750,762	10,590	1,403
2016	1,175,100	9,598	1,075
2017	586,079	8,289	2,448
2018	46,524	1,545	5,189
2019	1,283,736	8,016	6,163
2020	102,269	1,455	7,091
2021	404,638	3,625	5,338
2022	601,009	4,172	5,828
2023	862,002	6,162	6,326
10-year average	886,213	6,552	4,254

PROPOSAL 46 – 5 AAC 01.630. Subsistence fishing permits and 5 AAC 01.6XX. New section.

PROPOSED BY: Copper River/PWS Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require Copper River District subsistence fishery harvest reporting within seven days of harvest.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Subsistence permit holders in the Copper River District must record their harvest before concealing the fish from plain view or transporting it from the fishing site. Permit reporting, online, by phone, mail, or in-person, must be finalized within 30 days after the season closes on October 31.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? This would require Copper River District subsistence fishery harvest reporting within 7 days of harvest rather than within 30 days after the season closes on October 31. Inseason harvest reporting would be available to inform inseason management.

BACKGROUND: In the Copper River District subsistence fishery permit holders must report online, by phone, by mail, or in-person by November 30. Online harvest reporting has been available in this fishery since 2020. The department uses past harvest and effort to evaluate inseason king, sockeye, and coho salmon harvest potential.

Historically, the commercial salmon fishing season starts on or about May 15. Regulations limit fishing opportunities for subsistence users primarily to Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Subsistence fishing is generally only allowed in the area currently open to commercial fishing. Commercial fishermen who want fish for personal use may choose to retain salmon from their commercial harvest (home pack, Table 46-1) or forgo commercial harvesting to participate in the subsistence fishery.

Subsistence harvest reporting under the current system has been effective. Over the last 10 years (2014–2023), an average of 483 permits were issued and an average of 432 (89%) permit holders reported subsistence fishing in the Copper River District. The recent 10-year average (2014–2023) for subsistence salmon harvest in the Copper River district is 5,111 salmon, within the lower range of the ANS for when commercial fishing is allowed (Table 46-2).

The department has limited biological concern with sockeye and king salmon goals being consistently met. The lower bound of the Copper River drainage sockeye salmon escapement goal has been met or exceeded in all of the past 10 years (2014–2023; Table 46-3). The king salmon escapement goal has been met in six of the last 10 years (2014–2023; Table 46–4). Inseason reporting of subsistence harvest would have little use for management.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Inseason reporting would be an additional burden on users and department, and compliance with the seven-day reporting requirement may be challenging to enforce.

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. Approval of this proposal is expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department through implementation and administration of an inseason harvest reporting system.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is this stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? The board has determined under 5 AAC 01.616(a)(4) that salmon in the Copper River District, as described in 5 AAC 24.200(a), are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence.

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? The board has established that a range of 3,000–5,000 salmon is reasonably necessary for subsistence purposes in a year when there is a harvestable surplus that allows for a commercial fishery, and 19,000–32,000 in a year when there is no commercial fishery (5 AAC 01.616(b)(2)).

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 46-1.–Copper River Commercial District harvest by year, species, and harvest type.

King salmon	Commercial	Home Pack	Subsistence
2014	10,207	768	153
2015	22,506	1,145	167
2016	12,348	727	73
2017	13,834	744	778
2018	7,618	85	1,356
2019	19,148	742	808
2020	5,880	225	657
2021	7,512	278	624
2022	12,262	534	887
2023	10,682	587	948
10-year average	12,200	584	645
Sockeye salmon			
2014	2,050,007	12,072	1,675
2015	1,750,762	10,590	1,403
2016	1,175,100	9,598	1,075
2017	586,079	8,289	2,448
2018	46,524	1,545	5,189
2019	1,283,736	8,016	6,163
2020	102,269	1,455	7,091
2021	404,638	3,625	5,338
2022	601,009	4,172	5,828
2023	862,002	6,162	6,326
10-year average	886,213	6,552	4,254

Table 46-2.–Historical subsistence salmon harvest, permit returns, Copper River District, 2004–2023.

	Permits		Estimated Salmon Harvest					
Year	Issued	Returned	King	Sockeye	Coho	Chum	Pink	Total
2004	511	482	1,106	1,822	46	0	0	2,974
2005	237	224	260	830	15	0	0	1,105
2006	421	399	779	4,355	1	0	0	5,135
2007	469	440	1,145	6,148	15	0	0	7,308
2008	506	480	470	3,969	53	0	20	4,512
2009	323	293	212	1,764	22	1	0	1,999
2010	325	314	276	1,980	27	22	0	2,305
2011	273	263	212	1,783	34	2	0	2,031
2012	378	357	237	4,270	0	18	0	4,525
2013	531	492	854	5,639	1	2	17	6,513
2014	288	269	153	1,675	0	5	2	1,835
2015	241	231	167	1,403	10	0	0	1,580
2016	195	189	73	1,075	2	0	10	1,160
2017	450	416	778	2,448	43	3	2	3,274
2018	684	630	1,356	5,189	195	5	6	6,751
2019	573	555	808	6,163	330	19	0	7,320
2020	ND	ND	657	7,091	326	1	0	8,075
2021	ND	ND	624	5,338	233	5	82	6,282
2022	842	650	887	5,828	391	0	1	7,107
2023	587	514	948	6,326	431	0	19	7,724
5-year average (2019–2023)	667	573	785	6,149	342	5	20	7,302
10-year average (2014–2023)	483	432	645	4,254	196	4	12	5,111

Note: grey highlighting indicates years where harvest was below the ANS (3,000–5,000 salmon).

Table 46-3.–Copper River sockeye salmon spawning escapement, 2014–2023.

Year	Upriver Spawning Escapement [a]	Upriver Spawning Escapement Goal	Delta Spawning Escapement [b]	Delta spawning escapement goal
2014	864,784	300,000–500,000	128,410	55,000–130,000
2015	929,931	300,000–500,000	133,330	55,000–130,000
2016	513,300	300,000–-500,000	103,100	55,000–130,000
2017	465,190	300,000–500,000	113,000	55,000–130,000
2018	478,679	300,000–500,000	116,940	55,000–130,000
2019	718,700	360,000–750,000	123,650	55,000–130,000
2020	362,032	360,000–750,000	111,240	55,000–130,000
2021	506,816	360,000–750,000	174,150	55,000–130,000
2022	517,652	360,000–750,000	110,150	55,000–130,000
2023	690,349	360,000–750,000	131,550	55,000–130,000
10-year average	604,743		124,552	

[a] Since 1999, sockeye salmon spawning escapement has been based on the total number of fish past the Miles Lake sonar minus the king salmon inriver midpoint abundance estimate; and upriver subsistence, personal use, and sport harvest; and hatchery broodstock and onsite hatchery surplus requirements.

[b] Delta spawning escapement estimated by doubling the peak aerial survey index.

Table 46-4.–Copper River king salmon inriver abundance, total upper Copper River (UCR) harvest, and estimated spawning escapement, 2014–2023.

Run Year	Inriver Abundance	Standard Error	Total UCR Harvest [a]	Estimated Spawning Escapement [b]	Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG)	Escapement Goal Performance
2014	24,158	2,100	3,449	20,709	24,000 or greater	Below
2015	32,306	3,977	5,542	26,764	24,000 or greater	Above
2016	16,009	1,193	3,524	12,485	24,000 or greater	Below
2017	40,725	4,187	7,070	33,655	24,000 or greater	Above
2018	52,524	3,935	10,322	42,242	24,000 or greater	Above
2019	43,714	3,143	8,569	35,145	24,000 or greater	Above
2020	26,293	2,863	4,706	21,587	24,000 or greater	Below
2021	21,656	1,919	3,225	18,431	24,000 or greater	Below
2022	38,480	2,960	6,475	32,005	21,000–31,000	Above
2023	49,308	5,540	9,054	40,254	21,000–31,000	Above

[a] The total upper Copper River (UCR) harvest estimate includes the 1) State Batzulnetas subsistence fishery, 2) State Glennallen Subdistrict Subsistence fishery, 3) Federal Glennallen Subdistrict Subsistence fishery, 4) State Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use Fishery, 5) Federal Chitina Subdistrict Subsistence Fishery, and 6) the State Sport Fishery.

[b] Upriver king salmon spawning escapement is estimated using the inriver abundance estimate and subtracting subsistence, personal use, and sport king salmon harvests.

PROPOSAL 47 – 5 AAC 01.630. Subsistence fishing permits. and 5 AAC 77.5XX. Personal use fishing permits.

PROPOSED BY: Copper River/PWS Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require inseason harvest reporting by Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence and Chitina Subdistrict personal use fisheries permit holders within 5 days of their fishing activity.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Permit holders for the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery and Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery must record their harvest daily on their permits and report their recorded information online to the department within 15 (personal use) or 30 days (subsistence) after the season closes on September 30.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? The department would have to modify its current reporting systems to account for more frequent reporting and it would require the department to increase staffing to compile effort and harvest data. Additional enforcement effort would be needed to ensure compliance. There would be no change in management of the fisheries based on inseason reports.

BACKGROUND: Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) subsistence fishery permit holders must report their harvest online by October 31 and Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use fishery permits must report online by October 15. Permit holders must report whether they fished during the season or not, or if they caught no salmon. The seasons for both fisheries close on September 30 each year. In 2020, the department transitioned the GSD and CSD fisheries to electronically issued permits and required mandatory online reporting for the CSD fishery. This transition provided significant cost savings, fewer errors in permit data, increased data quality of harvest estimates, and increased compliance through the ability to blacklist permit holders who fail to report on their CSD permit. In 2022, the department made the same transition to mandatory online reporting for the GSD fishery with the same positive results (Table 47-1).

For the CSD, an estimate of harvest rates per week and inseason sonar counts are used to determine weekly fishing schedules. A recent five-year average of harvest and effort data is used to estimate an hourly harvest rate for a given week. This hourly harvest rate is then applied inseason to the actual sonar passage per week to determine how many hours the fishery will be open per week. In the GSD historical harvest and effort patterns are used inseason to assess harvestable surplus relative to escapement goal needs. Inseason harvest data are not needed for these abundance-based management approaches in the CSD or GSD, which have resulted in sustainable harvests within the CSD personal use and GSD subsistence fisheries (Table 47-2).

Over the past 10 years (2014–2023), the department has issued, on average, approximately 8,700 CSD personal use and 1,600 GSD subsistence permits annually. Salmon in excess of the inriver goal are considered surplus and are available to harvest in the personal use fishery and other upriver fisheries under the current abundance-based management approach. Over the past 20 years, the Copper River sockeye salmon sustainable escapement goal has been achieved annually, except for 2012–2015, when the upper bound of the goal was exceeded (Table 47-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Inseason reporting would be an additional burden on users and department, and compliance with the 5-day reporting requirement may be challenging to enforce. The department already has the authority

under 5 AAC 01.015 and 5 AAC 77.015 to require more frequent reporting but has not because it is not needed for effective and sustainable inseason management.

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. Approval of this proposal will result in an additional direct cost for the department due to the implementation and administration of an inseason harvest reporting system.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes, the board made a positive customary and traditional use finding for the salmon stocks in the Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper District (5 AAC 01.616 (a)(1)).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has found the following amounts of salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the following locations:

a. Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper River District:

   i. in that portion from the southern boundary of the subdistrict at the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Road Bridge to the mouth of the Tonsina River: 25,500–39,000 salmon;

   ii. in that portion from the mouth of the Tonsina River upstream to the mouth of the Gakona River: 23,500–31,000 salmon;

   iii. in that portion from the mouth of the Gakona River upstream to the mouth of the Slana River, and the waters of the Copper River as described in 5 AAC 01.647(i)(3): 12,000–12,500 salmon.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 47-1.–Annual number of Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery and Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery permits issued and reporting compliance, 2004–2023.

	Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery		Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery	
Year	# permits issued	% reported	# permits issued	% reported
2004	8,156	84.0%	956	89.5%
2005	8,230	84.3%	961	89.5%
2006	8,497	79.6%	984	89.2%
2007	8,377	85.8%	1,174	88.3%
2008	8,041	85.3%	1,186	88.3%
2009	7,958	86.8%	1,090	88.6%
2010	9,970	77.8%	1,321	87.6%
2011	9,217	82.1%	1,306	88.4%
2012	10,016	80.2%	1,527	85.9%
2013	10,592	80.1%	1,339	86.7%
2014	11,717	79.6%	1,656	83.3%
2015	12,635	83.2%	1,631	83.6%
2016	11,394	81.6%	1,769	81.6%
2017	9,490	80.8%	1,632	80.9%
2018	4,982	80.8%	1,659	81.7%
2019	8,071	82.3%	1,713	80.7%
2020	6,810	89.1%	1,665	82.0%
2021	7,222	92.5%	1,518	93.3%
2022	7,100	93.4%	1,228	93.4%
2023	7,559	94.4%	1,315	95.1%
10-yr average (2014–2023)	8,698	85.8%	1,579	85.6%
Average since mandatory online reporting began	7,173	92.4%	1,272	94.3%

Note: Mandatory online reporting began in 2020 for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery and in 2022 for the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery.

Table 47-2.–Estimated state salmon harvests in the Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) subsistence and Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use fisheries, Miles Lake sonar passage, the inriver goal, surplus salmon, and estimated sockeye salmon spawning escapement for the Copper River, 2004–2023.

Year	Miles Lake sonar passage	Inriver Goal	Surplus salmon	GSD subsistence estimated total salmon harvest	CSD personal use estimated total salmon harvest	Estimated sockeye salmon spawning escapement	Estimated king salmon spawning escapement
2004	669,514	431,669	237,845	59,497	113,176	433,945	30,473
2005	855,125	468,859	386,266	66,615	124,403	515,599	21,556
2006	959,706	611,218	348,488	60,774	129,103	579,552	58,425
2007	919,601	549,096	370,505	69,284	130,222	612,103	34,562
2008	718,344	614,605	103,739	46,106	86,476	480,597	32,453
2009	709,748	592,000	117,748	49,643	92,228	469,090	27,749
2010	923,811	668,000	255,811	73,260	141,565	502,992	16,746
2011	914,231	622,000	292,231	62,477	131,265	607,657	27,936
2012	1,294,400	684,000	610,400	78,851	129,362	953,245	27,846
2013	1,267,060	728,000	539,060	76,044	182,904	860,929	29,013
2014	1,218,418	748,000	470,418	77,131	159,392	864,988	20,709
2015	1,346,100	759,000	587,100	84,105	226,832	930,061	26,764
2016	801,593	712,000	89,593	64,617	151,480	513,563	12,485
2017	723,426	690,000	33,426	42,862	136,043	465,518	33,655
2018	701,577	644,000	57,577	44,073	80,135	478,701	42,202
2019	1,039,654	618,000	421,654	63,920	175,487	721,033	35,145
2020	530,313	661,000	0	36,903	79,818	362,445	21,587
2021	751,262	605,000	146,262	44,509	145,006	511,274	18,431
2022	785,509	656,000	129,509	50,306	158,238	520,120	32,006
2023	991,740	627,000	364,740	52,187	173,134	694,007	40,102
Average (2019-2023)	819,696	633,400	212,433	49,565	146,337	562,014	29,454
Average (2014-2023)	888,959	672,000	230,028	56,061	148,557	600,963	28,309

Note: Surplus salmon are salmon in excess to the inriver goal. Federal harvests from Glennallen and Chitina Subdistricts are not presented but are factored in for spawning escapements. Total salmon harvests include sockeye, king, and coho salmon, and steelhead trout. From 2004–2010, the Copper River sockeye salmon escapement goal was 300,000–500,000 sockeye salmon and from 2011–present, the escapement goal has been 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon. From 2003–2021, the Copper River king salmon escapement goal was 24,000 or more king salmon and from 2022–present, the escapement goal has been 21,000–31,000 king salmon.

PROPOSAL 48 – 5 AAC 01.620. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

PROPOSED BY: Marlene Bertie Irneraucin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow guided fishing from a boat in the Copper River Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence salmon fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Subsistence fishing guide services are prohibited in the Glennallen Subdistrict. An individual, business, or organization is not allowed to receive compensation for assisting a subsistence fisherman to take fish during any part of a fishing trip. Assistance includes accompanying and physically directing a subsistence fisher to take their salmon from a guided boat. Compensation includes direct wages, indirect employment benefits, fees, payments, dues, or other enumeration to an individual, club, or organization that provides services. Compensation does not include reimbursement for the actual daily expenses for fuel, food, or bait.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would allow subsistence permit holders to access the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence (GSD) fishery and dipnet from a guided boat. It would provide greater access to the fishery for those who do not have access to a nonguided boat that can operate on the Copper River, or do, but do not have the skills to operate it on the Copper River. This may increase the number of participants and harvest of salmon in the GSD and increase access for those with physical limitations.

BACKGROUND: The GSD extends from the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Bridge upstream to the mouth of the Slana River. The GSD is broken down into three subareas with corresponding amounts necessary for subsistence (ANS): from the Chitina-McCarthy Bridge to the Tonsina River (BT), the Tonsina River to the Gakona River (TG), and from the Gakona River to the Slana River (GS). Permits holders must report their harvest by location and the department assesses harvest by these subareas.

In the GSD, the annual limits per household are 30 salmon for a household of one, 60 salmon for a household of two and 10 salmon for each additional household member over two. If using a fish wheel there are no species-specific limits. If fishing with a dipnet the household is limited to a maximum of 5 king salmon per year. Upon request a household of one may request additional salmon up to a total of 250 salmon and a household of two or more may request up to a maximum of 500 salmon.

In the GSD, households may attain a permit to fish with a fish wheel or with a dip net, but not both. Harvest by dip net accounted for 59% of the sockeye salmon and 49% of the king salmon harvested from the GSD from 2019–2023 (Table 48-1). Dip nets may be fished from shore or from a boat in the fishery. Among the three harvest methods (fish wheel, dip net from shore and dip net from a boat) fish wheels are the most effective with an average of 67 sockeye salmon and 4.7 king salmon harvested per permit. Fishing with a dip net from shore is the second most effective method for sockeye salmon, yielding an average of 41 fish per permit and 1.1 king salmon. Dipnetting from a boat is the least effective method for sockeye salmon yielding an average of 27 fish per permit but is the second most effective method for king salmon with an average harvest of 2.0 fish per permit.

Beginning in 2019, the department has required subsistence dipnetters to report whether they fished from shore or from a boat (Tables 48-2 and 48-3). At the 2021 board meeting, the board adopted regulations that prohibited permit holders from hiring guide services to fish from the

guide's boat. However, the use of hired transporters to drop permit holders at shore fishing sites has remained legal. Guided boat services in the GSD occurred primarily within 2 miles of the Chitina-McCarthy bridge. Transporters were less common in the GSD prior to 2019, but their number increased during the last five years, primarily in the TG subarea, specifically downstream of the Tazlina and Klutina Rivers.

The prohibition of guided dipnetting from a boat in the GSD appears to have altered participation rates and harvest of those dipnetting in certain subareas. Over the last five years (2019–2023), there has been a small drop in average permits fished from a boat in the BT subarea when comparing the three years when fishing from guided boats was allowed and two years since those guided boat services were prohibited (Tables 48-2 and 48-3). A similar comparison for dip net permits fished from shore indicate a slight increase in dipnetting from shore in the BT subarea. In the TG subarea, the number of dip net permits fished from shore has increased from a low of 17 in 2019 to a high of 93 in 2023. Dip net harvest from shore in the TG subarea in 2023 accounted for 6% of all sockeye salmon dip net harvest and 3% of all sockeye salmon harvest in the GSD subsistence fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. There are no conservation issues presented by this proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes, the board made a positive customary and traditional use finding for the salmon stocks in the Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper District (5 AAC 01.616 (a)(1)).

Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has found the following amounts of salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the following locations:

a. Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper River District:
   i. in that portion from the southern boundary of the subdistrict at the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Road Bridge to the mouth of the Tonsina River: 25,500–39,000 salmon;
   ii. in that portion from the mouth of the Tonsina River upstream to the mouth of the Gakona River: 23,500–31,000 salmon;
   iii. in that portion from the mouth of the Gakona River upstream to the mouth of the Slana River, and the waters of the Copper River as described in 5 AAC 01.647(i)(3): 12,000–12,500 salmon.

Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 48-1.–The number of permits fished by gear type and method, reported harvest of sockeye and king salmon, and the percent of reported harvest and average harvest per permit, by gear type and method in the Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) subsistence salmon fishery, 2019–2023.

	Number permits fished by gear type/method[a]			Reported salmon harvest		% sockeye harvest by gear type/method			% king harvest by gear type/method			Average sockeye salmon harvest per permit gear type/method			Average king salmon harvest per permit gear type/method		
Year	DN boat	DN shore	FW	Sockeye	King	DN boat	DN shore	FW	DN boat	DN shore	FW	DN boat	DN shore	FW	DN boat	DN shore	FW
2019	560	178	287	50,001	3,077	30%	29%	41%	37%	13%	50%	27	44	71	2.1	1.2	5.3
2020	432	248	251	32,449	2,091	29%	27%	44%	35%	11%	54%	21	37	57	1.7	1.3	3.9
2021	519	253	240	39,768	1,523	31%	30%	39%	51%	12%	36%	24	39	65	1.5	0.7	4.0
2022	344	291	233	41,396	2,738	29%	31%	39%	31%	12%	57%	35	44	70	2.5	1.1	5.1
2023	351	392	258	44,936	3,082	22%	37%	41%	27%	16%	57%	28	43	71	2.4	1.3	5.1
Average 2019–23	441	272	254	41,710	2,502	28%	31%	41%	36%	13%	50%	27	41	67	2.0	1.1	4.7

Note: DN denotes dipnet, FW denotes fish wheel. Data on dipnetting from boat or shore has only been collected since 2019 for the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery.

[a] Includes all permits, whether fished independently or from a guided boat.

Table 48-2.–State subsistence dip net permits fished and reported sockeye and king salmon harvest from boats by subarea in the Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) subsistence fishery, 2019–2023.[a]

	Permits fished from boat			Sockeye salmon harvest			King salmon harvest		
Year	Bridge to Tonsina	Tonsina to Gakona	Gakona to Slana	Bridge to Tonsina	Tonsina to Gakona	Gakona to Slana	Bridge to Tonsina	Tonsina to Gakona	Gakona to Slana
2019	556	4	0	15,057	104	0	1,142	6	0
2020	407	27	1	8,942	318	3	707	26	0
2021	517	22	0	12,419	311	0	780	14	0
2022	334	10	0	11,927	254	0	841	6	0
2023	338	13	0	9,484	238	0	811	19	0
Average 2019–2021	493	18	0	12,139	244	1	876	15	0
Average 2022─2023	336	12	0	10,706	246	0	826	13	0

Note: Guiding from boats was allowed during years shaded in gray (2019–2021). Commercial transporter drop offs are legal in all years.

[a] Includes all permits, whether fished independently or from a guided boat.

Table 48-3.–State subsistence dip net permits fished and reported sockeye and king salmon harvest from shore by subarea in the Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) subsistence fishery, 2019–2023.[a]

	Permits fished from shore			Sockeye salmon harvest			King salmon harvest		
Year	Bridge to Tonsina	Tonsina to Gakona	Gakona to Slana	Bridge to Tonsina	Tonsina to Gakona	Gakona to Slana	Bridge to Tonsina	Tonsina to Gakona	Gakona to Slana
2019	160	17	1	7,583	284	0	156	7	0
2020	217	32	1	8,340	439	0	232	5	0
2021	252	71	0	9,908	1,081	0	168	6	0
2022	225	65	3	11,599	1,276	26	308	12	3
2023	297	93	4	15,190	1,594	1	454	39	0
Average 2019–2021	210	40	1	8,610	601	0	185	6	0
Average 2022–2023	261	79	4	13,395	1,435	14	381	26	2

Note: Guiding from boats was allowed during years shaded in gray (2019-2021). Commercial transporters were legal in all years.

[a] Includes all permits, whether fished independently or from a guided boat.

PROPOSAL 49 – 5 AAC 01.620. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Intertribal Resources Commission.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit commercial operators from transporting state subsistence permit holders engaged in subsistence fishing activities.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no regulations that prohibit a person from providing outfitting and transportation services to Alaska residents participating in the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would reduce participation by Glennallen Subdistrict fishers who rely on transporters to provide access to Copper River fisheries resources and fish on their own. Due to the lack of public lands, most permit holders would be limited to dipnetting within the 1-mile section of shore immediately above the Chitina-McCarthy Bridge. It would likely reduce participation and harvest by an unknown amount. Small businesses that offer transport services will be unable to operate in this area.

BACKGROUND: The Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) extends from the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Bridge upstream to the mouth of the Slana River. The GSD is broken down into three subareas with corresponding amounts necessary for subsistence (ANS): from the Chitina-McCarthy Bridge to the Tonsina River (BT), the Tonsina River to the Gakona River (TG), and from the Gakona River to the Slana River (GS). Permits holders must report their harvest by location and the department tracks harvest in the fishery within each subarea.

In the GSD, the annual limits per household are 30 salmon for a household of one, 60 salmon for a household of two and 10 salmon for each additional household member over two. If using a fish wheel there are no species-specific limits. If fishing with a dipnet the household is limited to a maximum of 5 king salmon per year. Upon request a household of one may request additional salmon up to a total of 250 salmon and a household of two or more may request up to a maximum of 500 salmon.

In the GSD, households may attain a permit to fish with a fish wheel or with a dip net, but not both. Harvest by dip net accounted for 59% of the sockeye salmon and 49% of the king salmon harvested from the GSD from 2019–2023 (Table 48-1). Dip nets may be fished from shore or from a boat in the fishery. Comparing harvest methods fish wheels are the most effective with an average of 67 sockeye salmon and 4.7 king salmon harvested per permit. Fishing with a dip net from shore is the second with 41 sockeye salmon per permit and 1.1 king salmon. Dipnetting from a boat is the least effective method for sockeye salmon yielding an average of 27 fish per permit but is the second most effective method for king salmon with an average harvest of 2.0 fish per permit.

Beginning in 2019, the department has required subsistence dipnetters to report whether they fished from shore or from a boat (Tables 48-2 and 48-3). Prior to 2022, permit holders could hire guide services to fish from the guide's boat or be transported to a shore site. Beginning in 2022, guided fishing has not been allowed; however, hired transporters have remained legal. Guided boat services in the GSD occurred primarily within 2 miles of the Chitina-McCarthy bridge. Drop off transporter charters were uncommon in the GSD prior to 2019, but have steadily increased over the last five years, primarily in the TG subarea and specifically downstream of the Tazlina and Klutina Rivers.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. There are no conservation issues presented by this proposal. The proposal would decrease harvest of sockeye and king salmon, decrease access to the fishery for some subsistence fishers, and increase congestion within the very few areas with legal access available along the entire length of the GSD subsistence fishery.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery if they need to purchase a boat or other means to access the GSD. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes, the board made a positive customary and traditional use finding for the salmon stocks in the Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper District (5 AAC 01.616 (a)(1)).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has found the following amounts of salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the following locations:

a. Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper River District:

i. in that portion from the southern boundary of the subdistrict at the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Road Bridge to the mouth of the Tonsina River: 25,500–39,000 salmon;

ii. in that portion from the mouth of the Tonsina River upstream to the mouth of the Gakona River: 23,500–31,000 salmon;

iii. in that portion from the mouth of the Gakona River upstream to the mouth of the Slana River, and the waters of the Copper River as described in 5 AAC 01.647(i)(3): 12,000–12,500 salmon.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 50 – 5 AAC 01.620. Lawful gear and gear specifications. and 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kirk Wilson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit the use of any electronics that may aid in locating fish, depth, or paths of travel, such as fish finders, depth finders, and chartplotters, while fishing from a boat in the Glennallen and Chitina Subdistricts.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no regulations regarding the use of electronic fish finders, depth finders, or chartplotters.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? It would prevent boat operators from determining depth electronically in the Copper River, and may increase the chance of boat groundings, as well as reduce boating safety.

BACKGROUND: Electronic fish finders in the Glennallen and Chitina Subdistricts are used for navigation and avoiding shifting silt bars in the Copper River. Boats have been used by subsistence and personal use dipnetters since at least 1984.

Dipnetting from boats has become more popular in the CSD over the past 20 years (Table 50-1). Harvest by boat versus shore has been tracked for more than 20 years in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use fishery (Table 50-1) and in the Glennallen Subdistrict (GSD) subsistence fishery since 2019 (Table 50-2). Approximately 38% of sockeye salmon and 43% of king salmon have been taken by boat in the CSD personal use fishery over the past 5 years (2019–2023), and the average harvest per permit fished from boat is 28 sockeye and 0.4 king salmon while from shore is 22 sockeye and 0.3 king salmon (Table 50-1). While the number of households reporting harvest from boats has risen, total harvest from boats and shore combined is still within historical levels.

While dipnetting in the GSD subsistence fishery has become more popular over the past 20 years (Table 50-2), participation by boat in the subsistence fishery has decreased since tracking (i.e., boat or shore) began in 2019 (Table 48-1). Approximately 28% of sockeye salmon and 36% of king salmon have been taken dipnetting from boat over the past 5 years (2019–2023; Table 48-1). Dipnetters fishing from boat in the GSD subsistence fishery from 2019–2023 harvested an average of 27 sockeye and 2 king salmon per permit, dipnetting from shore averaged 44 sockeye and 1.1 king salmon harvested per permit, and fishwheels averaged 67 sockeye and 4.7 king salmon harvested per permit. While gear type has changed over time, the overall harvest in the fishery has remain sustainable and within historic levels.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** the prohibition of navigational devices on the Copper River. There is no evidence that permit holders using this technology experience higher harvest rates, and prohibiting these devices could affect boating safety.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes, the board made a positive customary and traditional use finding for the salmon stocks in the Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper District (5 AAC 01.616 (a)(1)).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has found the following amounts of salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the following locations:

a. Glennallen Subdistrict of the Upper Copper River District:

   i. in that portion from the southern boundary of the subdistrict at the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Road Bridge to the mouth of the Tonsina River: 25,500–39,000 salmon;

   ii. in that portion from the mouth of the Tonsina River upstream to the mouth of the Gakona River: 23,500–31,000 salmon;

   iii. in that portion from the mouth of the Gakona River upstream to the mouth of the Slana River, and the waters of the Copper River as described in 5 AAC 01.647(i)(3): 12,000–12,500 salmon.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 50-1.–The number of permits fished by boat or shore, reported harvest of sockeye and king salmon and the percent taken by boat, and average permit harvest by boat or shore in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishery, with the inriver abundance and drainagewide spawning escapements of sockeye and king salmon in the Copper River, 2004–2023.

	Number of permits fished		Reported salmon harvest		% harvest taken from boat		Average sockeye salmon harvest per permit		Average king salmon harvest per permit		Sockeye salmon		King salmon	
Year	Boat	Shore	Sockeye	King	Sockeye	King	Boat	Shore	Boat	Shore	Inriver abundance	Spawning escapement	Inriver abundance	Spawning escapement
2004	876	3,394	93,182	2,108	20%	25%	21	18	0.6	0.4	628,950	433,945	40,564	30,473
2005	771	3,823	106,868	1,775	16%	22%	22	19	0.5	0.3	824,792	515,599	30,333	21,556
2006	900	3,845	102,443	2,071	18%	24%	21	19	0.6	0.3	891,917	579,552	67,789	58,425
2007	1,149	4,234	112,861	2,389	23%	29%	22	19	0.6	0.4	873,252	612,103	46,349	34,562
2008	955	3,665	70,885	1,700	24%	28%	18	13	0.5	0.3	677,001	480,597	41,343	32,453
2009	749	3,823	81,432	199	17%	32%	19	16	0.1	0.0	677,348	469,090	32,400	27,749
2010	957	4,943	116,790	587	18%	24%	22	18	0.1	0.1	901,488	502,992	22,323	16,746
2011	958	4,683	114,164	924	19%	20%	23	19	0.2	0.1	880,342	607,657	33,889	27,936
2012	989	4,733	109,807	496	20%	36%	23	18	0.2	0.1	1,262,948	953,245	31,452	27,846
2013	889	5,529	151,658	620	16%	20%	28	22	0.1	0.1	1,234,479	860,929	32,581	29,013
2014	1,041	5,918	137,179	652	18%	25%	24	18	0.2	0.1	1,194,260	864,988	24,158	20,709
2015	1,250	6,522	194,970	1,363	21%	26%	32	23	0.3	0.2	1,313,794	930,061	32,306	26,764
2016	1,338	4,873	126,545	563	27%	29%	26	19	0.1	0.1	785,584	513,563	16,009	12,485
2017	1,412	4,675	113,202	1,709	29%	28%	23	17	0.3	0.3	682,701	465,518	40,725	33,655
2018	656	2,288	65,044	1,069	27%	26%	27	20	0.4	0.3	649,053	478,701	52,524	42,202
2019	1,642	3,832	147,256	2,251	33%	39%	30	25	0.5	0.3	995,940	721,033	43,714	35,145
2020	1,460	3,046	70,755	678	39%	37%	19	14	0.2	0.1	504,020	362,445	26,293	21,587
2021	1,767	3,688	132,262	794	40%	47%	30	22	0.2	0.1	729,606	511,274	21,656	18,431
2022	1,883	3,676	148,326	2,128	39%	44%	31	24	0.5	0.3	747,029	520,120	38,480	32,006
2023	2,045	3,998	161,313	3,346	37%	45%	29	25	0.7	0.5	942,432	694,007	49,308	40,102
5-yr Avg. 2019–2023	1,759	3,648	131,982	1,839	38%	43%	28	22	0.4	0.3	783,805	562,014	35,890	29,454
10-yr Avg. 2014–2023	1,449	4,252	129,685	1,455	31%	35%	27	21	0.3	0.2	854,442	600,963	34,517	28,309

Note: The inriver abundance estimate for sockeye salmon is the Miles Lake sonar count minus the king salmon inriver abundance estimate. The inriver abundance estimate for king salmon is from a mark-recapture project occurring upstream of Miles Lake sonar but downstream of any upriver harvest. The spawning escapement goal for sockeye salmon was 300,000–500,000 fish from 2004–2010, and from 2011–present is 360,000–750,000 fish. The spawning escapement goal for king salmon was 24,000 or more fish from 2004–2021, and from 2022–present is 21,000–31,000 fish.

Table 50-2.–The number of dipnet and fish wheel permits fished, reported salmon harvest, and percent of harvest taken by dipnet and fish wheel in the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery, with the inriver abundance and drainagewide spawning escapements of sockeye and king salmon in the Copper River, 2004–2023.

	Number of permits fished		Reported salmon harvest		Harvest by dipnet		Sockeye salmon		King salmon	
Year	Dipnet	Fishwheel	Sockeye	King	Sockeye	King	Inriver abundance	Spawning escapement	Inriver abundance	Spawning escapement
2004	188	544	52,130	3,166	9%	9%	628,950	433,945	40,564	30,473
2005	220	510	60,966	2,080	10%	13%	824,792	515,599	30,333	21,556
2006	213	541	52,759	2,444	12%	11%	891,917	579,552	67,789	58,425
2007	291	589	61,477	3,106	13%	14%	873,252	612,103	46,349	34,562
2008	325	533	40,204	2,238	16%	20%	677,001	480,597	41,343	32,453
2009	277	503	43,738	2330	14%	15%	677,348	469,090	32,400	27,749
2010	384	569	65,743	1958	17%	31%	901,488	502,992	22,323	16,746
2011	401	564	54,043	2199	24%	31%	880,342	607,657	33,889	27,936
2012	507	540	68,129	1923	26%	27%	1,262,948	953,245	31,452	27,846
2013	543	431	67,125	1963	34%	40%	1,234,479	860,929	32,581	29,013
2014	690	409	66,763	1203	37%	46%	1,194,260	864,988	24,158	20,709
2015	738	405	73,251	1,979	41%	56%	1,313,794	930,061	32,306	26,764
2016	789	348	54,228	1763	42%	47%	785,584	513,563	16,009	12,485
2017	770	274	34,994	2,446	47%	69%	682,701	465,518	40,725	33,655
2018	748	270	33,990	3,990	43%	31%	649,053	478,701	52,524	42,202
2019	871	287	50,001	3,077	60%	52%	995,940	721,033	43,714	35,145
2020	743	251	32,449	2,091	56%	46%	504,020	362,445	26,293	21,587
2021	854	240	39,768	1,523	61%	64%	729,606	511,274	21,656	18,431
2022	625	233	41,396	2,738	61%	43%	747,029	520,120	38,480	32,006
2023	723	258	44,936	3,082	59%	43%	942,432	694,007	49,308	40,102
5-yr Avg. 2019–2023	763	254	41,710	2,502	59%	50%	783,805	562,014	35,890	29,454
10-yr Avg. 2014–2023	755	298	47,178	2,389	51%	50%	854,442	600,963	34,517	28,309

Note: The inriver abundance estimate for sockeye salmon is the Miles Lake sonar count minus the king salmon inriver abundance estimate. The inriver abundance estimate for king salmon is from a mark-recapture project occurring upstream of Miles Lake sonar but downstream of any upriver harvest. The spawning escapement goal for sockeye salmon was 300,000–500,000 fish from 2004–2010, and from 2011–present is 360,000–750,000 fish. The spawning escapement goal for king salmon was 24,000 or more fish from 2004–2021, and from 2022–present is 21,000–31,000 fish.

SALMON MANAGEMENT PLANS (5 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSALS 51, 52, and 53 – 5 AAC 24.360. Copper River District Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, AITRC Fish and Wildlife Committee, and Copper Basin Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? These proposals would prohibit commercial salmon fishing in the Copper River District after two fishing periods until a certain number of salmon have been counted at the Miles Lake sonar (Figure 51-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial salmon fishing season in the Copper River District is open and closed by emergency order (5 AAC 24.310(a)). As outlined in 5 AAC 24.360, *Copper River District Salmon Management Plan*, the Copper River District commercial salmon fishery is managed to assure a sustainable escapement goal of 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon and meet an inriver goal of salmon passing the Miles Lake sonar. In 5 AAC 24.361, *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan,* the department is directed to manage the Copper River commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence fisheries to achieve a sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 21,000–31,000 king salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Mandatory early season closures could decrease the Copper River salmon commercial harvest and may result in uneven distribution of harvest and escapement throughout the run. This may increase inriver salmon abundance and early season fish available to upriver user groups and may increase the probability of king and sockeye escapement goals being achieved or exceeded. The effect on commercial fishery opening dates could range from not changing at all to having extended fishery closures. Lack of commercial harvest performance data will impair early-season assessment of run strength, especially when sonar deployment is delayed.

BACKGROUND: The department manages commercial salmon fisheries to achieve escapement from all segments of the run by evenly spacing harvest opportunity throughout the run. The standard commercial fishing schedule for the Copper River is two evenly spaced weekly fishing periods, beginning in mid-May. This allows for proportional representation of each segment of the run in the escapement. This is a standard department management approach throughout the state and is a regulatory requirement in some areas, e.g., Bristol Bay commercial gillnet fisheries regulation (5 AAC 06.355 (d)(1)). These proposals could disrupt the pattern of evenly spaced harvest during the peak of run entry, leading to disproportional representation of the early timed segments of the run in the escapement (Figure 51-2). This can potentially increase harvest rate on later-returning segments of the run.

Copper River management has a long history of successfully meeting sockeye salmon escapement goals and the SEG has consistently been met or exceeded in recent years (Table 51-1). The Copper River District opens to commercial fishing on the first Monday or Thursday after May 15 each year. During this early part of the season, there are limited fishery indicators available for management. In some years, the deployment of sonar may be delayed due to shore ice and river flows, sometimes until as late as May 22 (Table 51-2). When sonar deployment is delayed, early season management relies primarily on fishery performance indicators and environmental conditions. The time it takes for salmon to migrate approximately 30 miles from the sonar site to the fishing district varies between three and 10 days, depending on water levels and temperatures

in the Copper River. In previous years, significant numbers of salmon (over 200,000, as observed in 2013) have been found holding in the river between the district and the sonar site, due to this distance and travel time (Figure 51-1). Implementing mandatory early season closures of the commercial fishery would limit important management tools for assessing run strength and introduce uncertainty in evaluating inriver salmon abundance below the sonar. If the proposed commercial fishery closure trigger dates had been in place over the past decade (2014-2023), these mandatory closures could have resulted in the unnecessary loss of hundreds of thousands of salmon in potential harvest (Table 51-1).

The department manages the Copper River fisheries to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of salmon and restricts commercial and inriver sport and personal use fisheries as needed to achieve the king salmon SEG. Recent below-average king salmon harvests are a result of fishery restrictions in the subsistence, commercial, personal use, and sport fisheries in response to weak king salmon runs. The burden of conservation has been shared by all user groups and average king salmon harvests for all groups have declined during this period of reduced productivity. Department management restrictions in commercial, personal use, and sport fisheries resulted in spawning escapement achieving the king salmon SEG in six of the most recent 10 years, excluding 2024 (Table 51-3, Figure 51-3), only missing the goal in years of exceptionally low abundance.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: . The department is **NEUTRAL** on these allocative proposals.

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.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is this stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? The board has determined under 5 AAC 01.616(a)(4) that salmon in the Copper River District, as described in 5 AAC 24.200(a), are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence.

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? The board has established that a range of 3,000–5,000 salmon is reasonably necessary for subsistence purposes in a year when there is a harvestable surplus that allows for a commercial fishery, and 19,000–32,000 in a year when there is no commercial fishery (5 AAC 01.616(b)(2)).

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

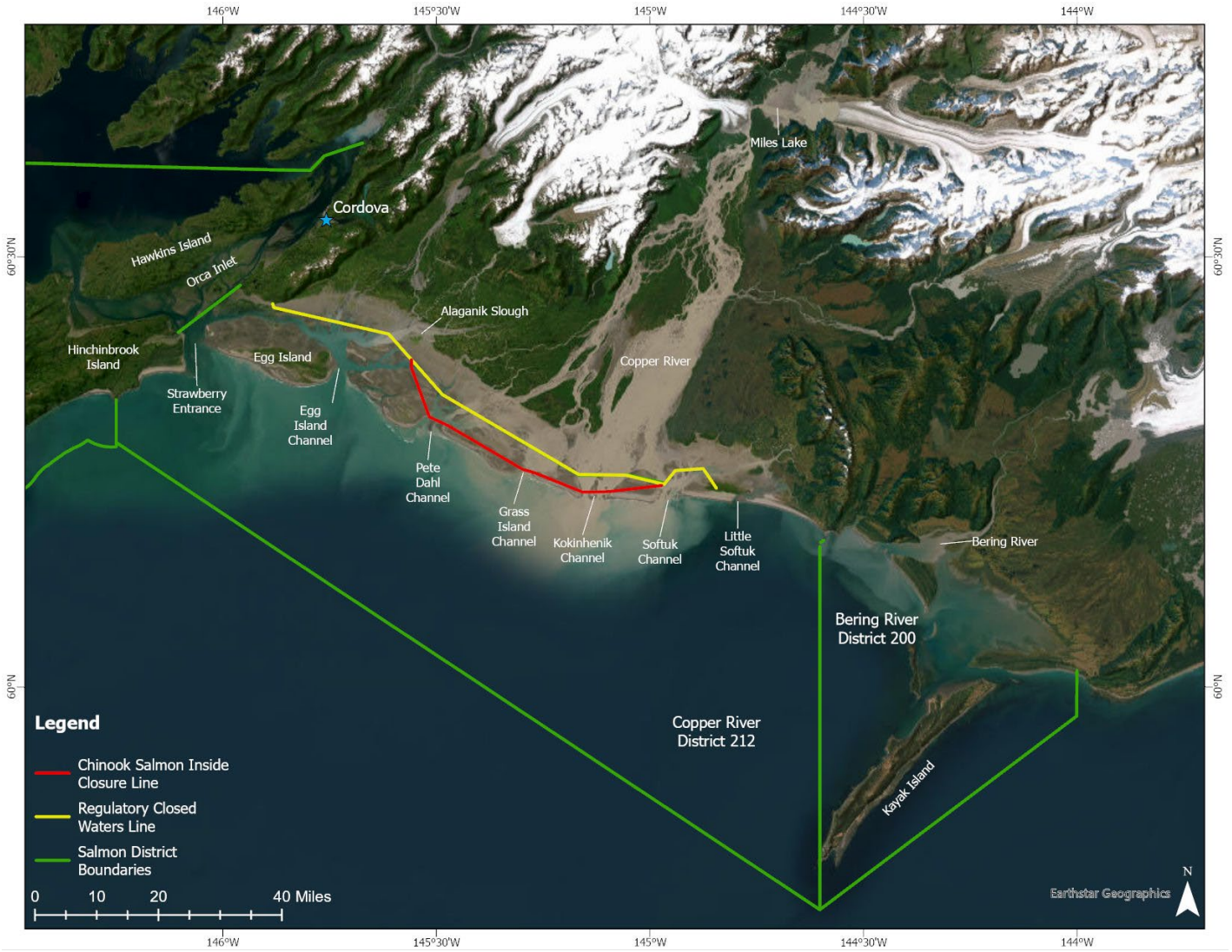

Figure 51-1.–Copper River and Bering River districts showing regulatory closed waters, including king salmon inside closure area.

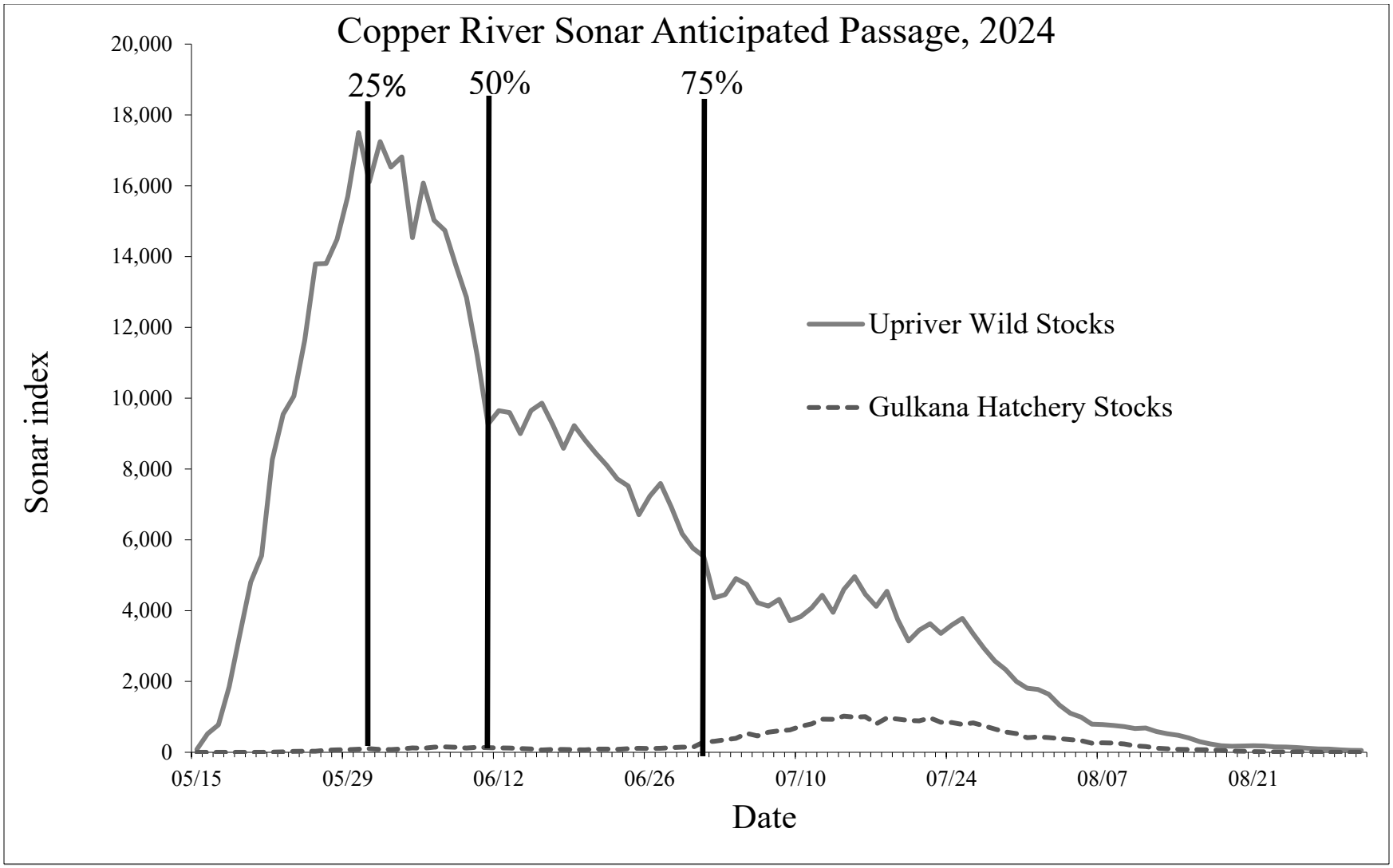

Figure 51-2.–Mile Lake sonar anticipated run timing curves with passage percent complete, 2024.

Table 51-1.–Copper River sockeye salmon spawning escapement, 2014–2023.

Year	Upriver Spawning Escapement [a]	Upriver Spawning Escapement Goal	Delta Spawning Escapement [b]	Delta spawning escapement goal
2014	864,784	300,000-500,000	128,410	55,000–130,000
2015	929,931	300,000-500,000	133,330	55,000–130,000
2016	513,300	300,000-500,000	103,100	55,000–130,000
2017	465,190	300,000-500,000	113,000	55,000–130,000
2018	478,679	300,000-500,000	116,940	55,000–130,000
2019	718,700	360,000-750,000	123,650	55,000–130,000
2020	362,032	360,000-750,000	111,240	55,000–130,000
2021	506,816	360,000-750,000	174,150	55,000–130,000
2022	517,652	360,000-750,000	110,150	55,000–130,000
2023	690,349	360,000-750,000	131,550	55,000–130,000
10-year Average	604,743		124,552	

[a] Since 1999, sockeye salmon spawning escapement has been based on the total number of fish past the Miles Lake sonar minus the king salmon inriver midpoint abundance estimate; and upriver subsistence, personal use, and sport harvest; and hatchery broodstock and onsite hatchery surplus requirements.

[b] Delta spawning escapement estimated by doubling the peak aerial survey index.

Table 51-2.–Copper River District second fishing period, and Miles Lake sonar start date, first fish count date, proposal trigger dates, and foregone harvest in the commercial fishery, 2014–2023.

Year	Second Commercial Fishing Period	Miles Lake Sonar Start Date	Miles Lake Sonar First Fish Count	Proposal 51 Trigger Date[a]	Proposal 52 Trigger Date[b]	Proposal 53 Trigger Date[c]	Potential Foregone Sockeye Salmon Harvest	Potential Foregone King Salmon Harvest
2014	5/19	5/7	5/12	5/16	5/16	5/16	0	0
2015	5/18	5/8	5/12	5/16	5/16	5/16	0	0
2016	5/19	5/8	5/8	5/16	5/16	5/16	0	0
2017	5/22	5/11	5/16	5/18	5/18	5/18	0	0
2018	5/21	5/13	5/18	6/23	6/4	7/4	21,087	3,077
2019	5/20	5/8	5/11	5/15	5/15	5/15	0	0
2020	5/18	5/19	5/19	6/15	6/1	N/A	34,736 – 96,480	1,469 – 2,562
2021	5/20	5/16	5/16	6/6	6/3	6/11	33,602 – 72,837	2,132 – 2,739
2022	5/19	5/17	5/18	6/4	6/1	6/9	70,076 – 219,953	2,036 – 4,117
2023	5/18	5/22	5/25	6/17	6/1	6/25	233,706 –477,472	3,520 – 7,240
2024	5/20	5/16	5/20	6/9	6/3	6/11	159,402 – 233,230[d]	3,661 – 4,126 [d]

a 70% of cumulative sonar passage objective was met.

b Daily sonar passage objective was met or fishery was closed for two weeks.

c Cumulative sonar passage objective was met.

d Preliminary inseason harvest estimates.

Table 51-3.–Copper River king salmon inriver abundance, total upper Copper River (UCR) harvest, and estimated spawning escapement, 2014–2023.

Run Year	Inriver Abundance	SE	Total UCR Harvest [a]	Estimated Spawning Escapement [b]	Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG)	Escapement Goal Performance
2014	24,158	2,100	3,449	20,709	24,000 or greater	Below
2015	32,306	3,977	5,542	26,764	24,000 or greater	Above
2016	16,009	1,193	3,524	12,485	24,000 or greater	Below
2017	40,725	4,187	7,070	33,655	24,000 or greater	Above
2018	52,524	3,935	10,322	42,242	24,000 or greater	Above
2019	43,714	3,143	8,569	35,145	24,000 or greater	Above
2020	26,293	2,863	4,706	21,587	24,000 or greater	Below
2021	21,656	1,919	3,225	18,431	24,000 or greater	Below
2022	38,480	2,960	6,475	32,005	21,000–31,000	Above
2023	49,308	5,540	9,054	40,254	21,000–31,000	Above

[a] The total Upper Copper River (UCR) harvest estimate includes the 1) State Batzulnetas subsistence fishery, 2) State Glennallen Subdistrict Subsistence fishery, 3) Federal Glennallen Subdistrict Subsistence fishery, 4) State Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use Fishery, 5) Federal Chitina Subdistrict Subsistence Fishery, and 6) the State Sport Fishery.

[b] Upriver king salmon spawning escapement is estimated using the inriver abundance estimate and subtracting subsistence, personal use, and sport king salmon harvests.

PROPOSAL 54 – 5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth B. Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow for a maximum of three 12-hour fishing periods where the inside closure area (Figure 54-1) of the Copper River District is closed during statistical week 20 and 21. This would increase the number of periods with the inside waters open to commercial fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? During statistical weeks 20 and 21 (the first two weeks of the season), the department may not open more than one 12-hour fishing period within the inside closure area of the Copper River District described in AAC 24.350(1)(B) (Figure 54-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the harvest of king and sockeye salmon by an unknown amount, making it more difficult to achieve the Copper River king salmon escapement goal.

BACKGROUND: The *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* limits the number of commercial openings inside of the barrier islands (inside closures) to no more than one 12-hour fishing period during statistical weeks 20 and 21 to increase the probability of achieving the king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG). The department has implemented regular inside-water closures as a tool to reduce king salmon harvest in the Copper River District. This strategy was developed by the department based on catch data showing that most of the king salmon are harvested in the shallow inside areas. To conserve Copper River king salmon the department has consistently implemented more inside closures than required by regulation during the last 16 seasons (Table 54-1).

Over the past 21 years, Copper River king salmon runs have declined, and the department has responded by implementing commercial fishing restrictions to reduce harvest proportionally. Inside closures have ranged from minimal in years with high king salmon abundance to expanded use through the first month of the fishery in years of low king salmon abundance. During this period of reduced productivity (2008–2023), king salmon spawning escapement ranged from 12,500–42,200, with an average escapement of 27,900 (Figure 54-2). The average harvests of all user groups have also declined during the period of reduced run size. Despite low run sizes, department management restrictions in commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence fisheries resulted in spawning escapement, achieving the lower bound SEG of 24,000 king salmon in six of the last 10 years, excluding 2024 (Figure 54-2).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** the mandatory opening of the inside waters of the Copper River District. Inside-waters closures have been a longstanding management tool to conserve Copper River king salmon. Limiting the number of inside-water closures may result in unsustainable levels of king salmon harvest.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

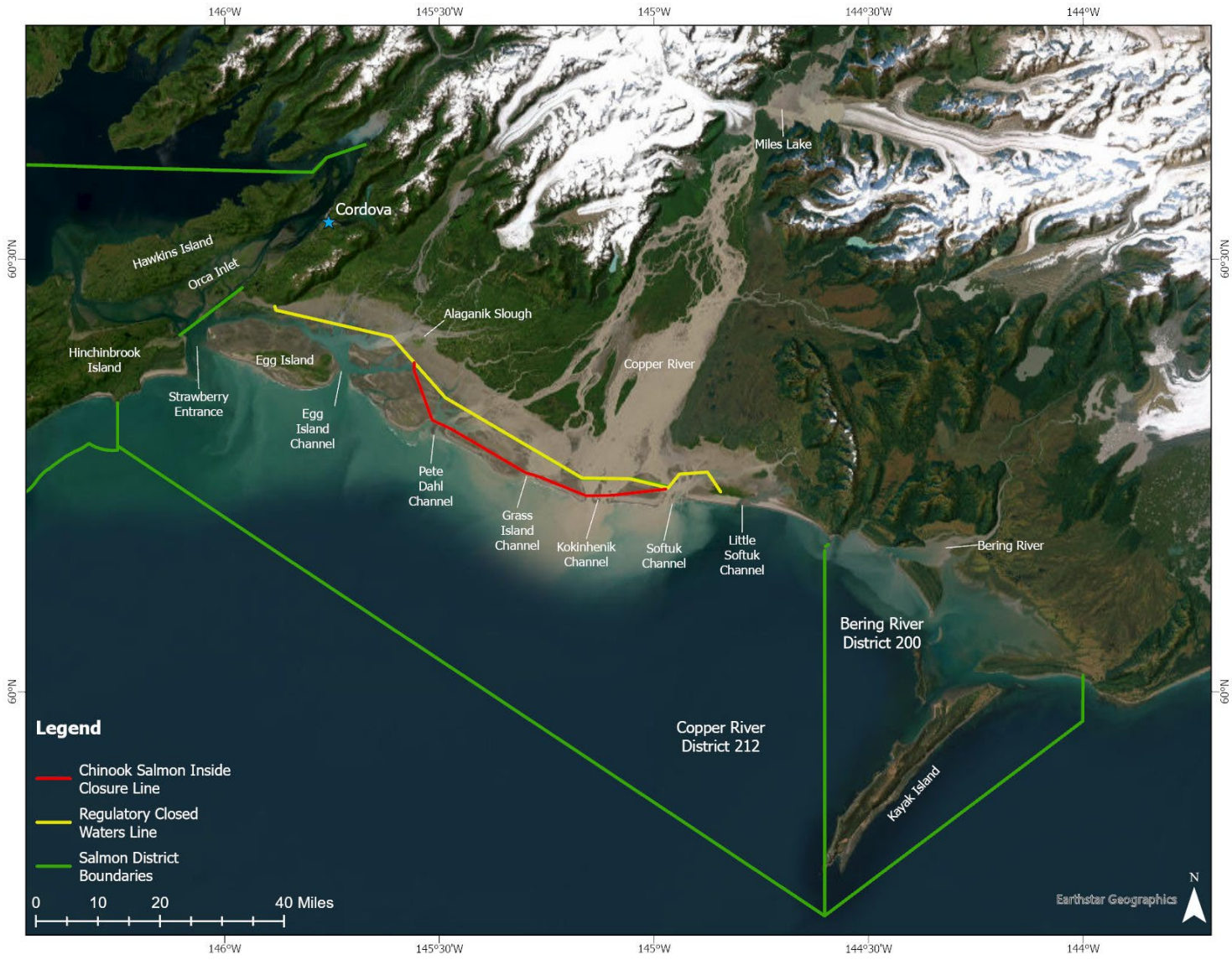

Figure 54-1.–Map of Copper River and Bering River districts showing inside closure area.

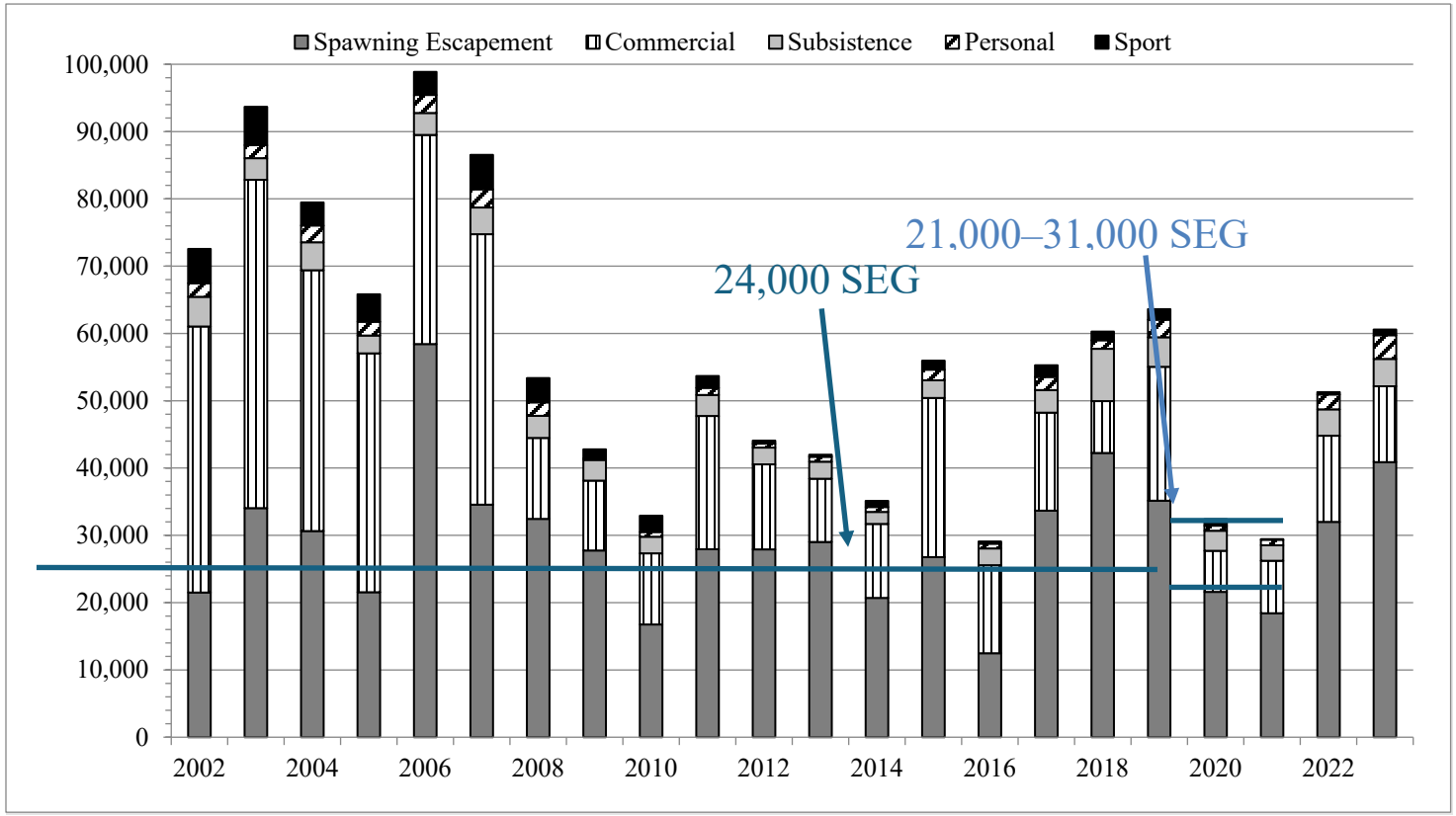

Figure 54-2.–Copper River king salmon escapement and harvest by user group, 2002–2023.

Table 54-1.–King salmon regulatory action history for the Copper River district commercial and Upper Copper River king salmon fisheries, 2009–2024.

Year	Escapement[a]	Date	Copper River District[b]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2009	27,787	21-May	Inside area closed 6 out of 13 periods		No action	
		8-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		16-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 from any tributary or Copper River mainstem.
		29-Jun				Close the Gulkana River drainage.
		27-Jul				Prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Klutina River
2010	**16,764**	20-May	Inside area closed 5 out of 12 periods		No action	
		21-Jun		Prohibit retention		Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 from any tributary or Copper River mainstem.
2011	27,994	16-May	Inside area closed 5 out of 14 periods		No action	
		25-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 allowed from any tributary or Copper River mainstem and prohibited retention in Copper River drainage upstream of Klutina River
		27-Jun		Prohibit retention		
2012	27,835	17-May	Inside area closed 10 out of 13 periods		No action	
		18-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		30-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 1 and prohibit retention and the use of bait and treble hooks in Gulkana River
		28-Jul				Prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Klutina River and Upper Copper River drainage downstream of Klutina River
2013	29,012	16-May	Inside area closed 4 out of 9 periods		No action	
		15-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 1 and prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Gulkana River
		24-Jun		Prohibit retention		
2014	**20,709**	15-May	Inside area closed 11 out of 13 periods			
		14-Jun				Reduced annual limit from 4 to 1
		16-Jun		Prohibit retention		

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Table 54-1.–Page 2 of 3

Year	Escapement[a]	Date	Copper River district[b]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2015	26,764	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed 10 out of 15 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2016	**12,485**	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed 12 out of 14 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
		18-Jun				Prohibit retention and the use of bait and treble hooks in Copper River drainage upstream of the Klutina River
		20-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		25-Jun				Closed Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon
2017	33,655	15-May	Expanded Inside area and closed 9 out of 13 periods			
		1-Jan		.	reduced limit to 2 fish and fish wheels required to be closely attended	Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
		1-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		4-Jun			Rescinded all restrictions	
		5-Jun				Open Upper Copper River drainage sport fishing for king salmon with 2-fish annual bag limit
		19-Jun		Allow retention		
2018	42,242	15-May	Inside area closed for 3 out of 3 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2019	35,145	15-May	Inside area closed for 6 out of 13 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2020	**21,587**	15-May	Expanded Inside area and closed 4 out of 5 periods		No action	
		20-Jun		.		Annual limit reduced from 4 to 1 fish.
		22-Jun		Prohibit retention		

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Year	Escapement[a]	Date	Copper River district[b]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2021	**18,431**	17-May	Expanded inside area and closed for 9 out of 9 periods			
		21-Jun		Prohibit retention		Upper Copper River drainage king salmon annual limit reduced from 4 to 1 fish.
		26-Jun				Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
		28-Jun			Prohibit retention and fish wheels required to be closely attended	
		1-Aug			Allow retention	
2022	32,005	20-Jun	Expanded inside area and closed for 9 out of 12 periods		No action	
		20-Jun		Prohibit retention		Close Upper Copper River drainage to retention of king salmon.
		27-Jun		Allowed retention		Allowed retention, but reduced annual limit from 4 to 2 fish
2023	40,254	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed for 8 out of 12 periods	No action	No action	
		20-Jul				Increase possession limit from 1 to 2 fish
2024	NA	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed for season	No action	No action	
		24-Jun		Prohibit retention	No Action	Close Upper Copper River drainage to retention of king salmon.
		29-Jun			Prohibit retention	Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon
		2-Aug			Allow retention	

[a] Numbers in **bold** are below the escapement goal.

[b] Reflects number of periods excluding the portion of the Copper River District in and around the barrier islands through the end of the king salmon run (approximately June 30).

PROPOSAL 55 – 5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Shawn Gilman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require the department to restrict guided fishing for at least a week in the Upper Copper River drainage with at least one of the management measures outlined in the *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 24.361) when the commercial fishery is prohibited from fishing within the Copper River District king salmon inside closure area for more than two consecutive periods outside those required by the *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no regulations linking restrictions in the Copper River District commercial gill net fishery to sport fish guiding in the Upper Copper River drainage. There are also no regulations that define guided fishing in a personal use fishery.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? It is unclear from the proponent if this would apply to commercial guide services in the sport fishery, personal use fishery or both. This would reduce guided fishing opportunity and overall sport fishing access to Upper Copper River sport fisheries without regard to upriver abundance and would hinder the department in managing the king salmon run within the established escapement goal. This would also require establishing regulations defining guided fishing in a personal use fishery.

BACKGROUND: The department manages the commercial fishery under 5 AAC 24.360. *Copper River District Salmon Management Plan,* to ensure adequate salmon escapement reaches the spawning grounds, and to provide for subsistence, personal use, and sport fisheries needs. In the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery, there is no restriction to the number of king salmon that can be taken by fish wheel (the entire limit could be king salmon), a permit holder using a dip net has a limit of five king salmon. The Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery has a limit of one king salmon within the permit limit. The Upper Copper River sport fishery has a bag limit of one king salmon and an annual limit of four king salmon. King salmon are present in the Copper River District from mid-May through July with most of the run passing through the fishery prior to mid-June. In 2024, for example, 68% of all king salmon commercial harvest occurred prior to June 1. Commercial fishery restrictions for king salmon may be implemented to meet the objectives directed by 5 AAC 24.361. *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* and are based on abundance estimates drawn from inseason harvest projection models.

The department manages the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon dip net fishery (CSD) to provide opportunity for households to harvest salmon while ensuring spawning escapement goals are achieved. The department manages the upriver sport fisheries to provide a diversity of opportunity while ensuring spawning escapement goals are achieved. Restrictions to the Upper Copper River sport fishery and CSD are guided by 5 AAC 24.361. *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* and 5 AAC 77.591. *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* and may be implemented to achieve the escapement goal and are based on abundance estimates drawn from commercial fishery harvest trends, inseason inriver assessment of mark-recapture data, sampling data in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery, anecdotal harvest reports from personal use, subsistence, and sport fisheries, and the king salmon counting tower on the Gulkana River.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** to the allocative aspects of this proposal. However, the department **OPPOSES** unnecessarily reducing opportunity in the Upper Copper River sport and personal use fisheries based on commercial fishery restrictions implemented several weeks prior to the fish entering upriver fisheries because of management concerns at that time in the run. The department restricts upriver sport and personal use fisheries as needed under general EO authority to ensure escapement goals are achieved.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal would result in a direct revenue loss for fishing guide businesses participating in these fisheries. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 55-1.–King salmon regulatory action history for the Copper River District commercial and Upper Copper River king salmon fisheries, 2009–2024.

Year	Escapement[a,b]	Date	Copper River district[c]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2009	27,749	21-May	Inside area closed 6 out of 13 periods		No action	
		8-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		16-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 from any tributary or Copper River mainstem.
		29-Jun				Close the Gulkana River drainage.
		27-Jul				Prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Klutina River
2010	**16,746**	20-May	Inside area closed 5 out of 12 periods		No action	
		21-Jun		Prohibit retention		Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 from any tributary or Copper River mainstem.
2011	27,936	16-May	Inside area closed 5 out of 14 periods		No action	
		25-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 2, only 1 of the 2 allowed from any tributary or Copper River mainstem and prohibited retention in Copper River drainage upstream of Klutina River
		27-Jun		Prohibit retention		
2012	27,846	17-May	Inside area closed 10 out of 13 periods		No action	
		18-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		30-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 1 and prohibit retention and the use of bait and treble hooks in Gulkana River
		28-Jul				Prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Klutina River and Upper Copper River drainage downstream of Klutina River
2013	29,013	16-May	Inside area closed 4 out of 9 periods		No action	
		15-Jun				Reduce annual limit from 4 to 1 and prohibit retention and use of bait and treble hooks in Gulkana River
		24-Jun		Prohibit retention		
2014	**20,709**	15-May	Inside area closed 11 out of 13 periods			
		14-Jun				Reduced annual limit from 4 to 1
		16-Jun		Prohibit retention		

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Year	Escapement[a,b]	Date	Copper River district[c]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2015	26,764	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed 10 out of 15 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2016	**12,485**	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed 12 out of 14 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
		18-Jun				Prohibit retention and the use of bait and treble hooks in Copper River drainage upstream of the Klutina River
		20-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		25-Jun				Closed Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon
2017	33,655	15-May	Expanded Inside area and closed 9 out of 13 periods			
		1-Jan		.	reduced limit to 2 fish and fish wheels required to be closely attended	Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
		1-Jun		Prohibit retention		
		4-Jun			Rescinded all restrictions	
		5-Jun				Open Upper Copper River drainage sport fishing for king salmon with 2-fish annual bag limit
		19-Jun		Allow retention		
2018	42,202	15-May	Inside area closed for 3 out of 3 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2019	35,145	15-May	Inside area closed for 6 out of 13 periods	No action	No action	No management actions taken
2020	**21,587**	15-May	Expanded Inside area and closed 4 out of 5 periods		No action	
		20-Jun		.		Annual limit reduced from 4 to 1 fish.
		22-Jun		Prohibit retention		

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Year	Escapement[a,b]	Date	Copper River district[c]	Chitina Subdistrict	Glennallen Subdistrict	Upper Copper River sport fishery
2021	**18,431**	17-May	Expanded inside area and closed for 9 out of 9 periods			
		21-Jun		Prohibit retention		Upper Copper River drainage king salmon annual limit reduced from 4 to 1 fish.
		26-Jun				Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
		28-Jun			Prohibit retention and fish wheels required to be closely attended	
		1-Aug			Allow retention	
2022	32,006	20-Jun	Expanded inside area and closed for 9 out of 12 periods		No action	
		20-Jun		Prohibit retention		Close Upper Copper River drainage to retention of king salmon.
		27-Jun		Allowed retention		Allowed retention, but reduced annual limit from 4 to 2 fish
2023	40,102	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed for 8 out of 12 periods	No action	No action	
		20-Jul				Increase possession limit from 1 to 2 fish
2024	ND	15-May	Expanded inside area and closed for season	No action	No action	
		24-Jun		Prohibit retention	No Action	Close Upper Copper River drainage to retention of king salmon.
		29-Jun			Prohibit retention	Close Upper Copper River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon
		2-Aug			Allow retention	

[a] Numbers in **bold** are below the escapement goal.

[b] 2024 escapement data are preliminary.

[c] Reflects number of periods excluding the portion of the Copper River District in and around the barrier islands through the end of the king salmon run (approximately June 30).

PERSONAL USE (14 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 58 – 5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Provide emergency order authority for the commissioner to increase the king salmon annual limit in the Copper River Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use dip net salmon fishery when escapement is projected to exceed the upper bound of the spawning escapement goal.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under 16.05.060(b), the commissioner or authorized designee does not have the authority to summarily increase annual salmon limits in personal use fisheries, nor is it stipulated within the *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 24.361).

In the CSD, the total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is 25 salmon for the head of household and an additional 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household.

In the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery the annual permit limit for a household with 1 person is up to 200 total salmon with no more than 5 king salmon if taken by dip net, and for a household of 2 or more persons the limit is up to 500 total salmon with no more than 5 king salmon if taken by dip net.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? In years when the escapement of inriver Copper River king salmon is projected to exceed the upper bound of the escapement goal, harvests in the Chitina Subdistrict could be increased. This may reduce the probability of exceeding the Copper River king salmon SEG.

BACKGROUND: The current SEG for Copper River king salmon of 21,000–31,000 spawners was established in 2022. using a state-space model that simultaneously reconstructs runs and fits a Ricker spawner-recruit model to estimate total return, escapement, and recruitment of Copper River king salmon. The model uses harvest, age composition, and relative and absolute measures of inriver run abundance to estimate parameters that describe the production relationship for this stock. The model accommodates missing data, measurement error in the data, absolute and relative abundance indices, and changes in age at maturity. Using data through 2023, results indicate escapements between 21,000 and 31,000 will produce sustained yields and are more likely to produce maximum sustained yield.

In years when the escapement of inriver Copper River king salmon is projected to exceed the upper bound of the escapement goal (under the new SEG this has occurred once, in 2023), the department is currently limited to using the sport fishery to harvest this surplus. The sport fishery has limited fishing power and is concentrated on only three of the six major spawning tributaries. The Chitina Subdistrict has far greater harvest potential. Based on historical effort, harvest and corresponding king salmon run sizes, it is estimated that the personal use fishery could theoretically reduce escapements above the upper bound of the escapement goal (i.e. 31,000) by up to approximately 11,000 fish across Copper River stocks (Table 58-1). However, liberalizations would not occur until after the inriver run size can be projected with confidence near mid to late June.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted this proposal and **SUPPORTS** it. Authority to liberalize fisheries inseason is an important tool for achieving escapement goals.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost for the department.

Table 58-1.–Maximum potential increase in king salmon harvest in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net salmon fishery with increases of 1-3 fish per permit.

		Increase in household limit					
Effective date	Percent remaining harvest	Base	Plus 1	Plus 2	Plus 3	Total potential increase	Comment
7-Jun	100%	3,700[a]	3,700	3,700	3,700	11,100	Start of season
25-Jun	59%	2,183	2,183	2,183	2,183	6,549	Earliest date fishery liberalized
1-Jul	48%	1,776	1,776	1,776	1,776	5,328	
15-Jul	22%	814	814	814	814	2,442	Last effective date to liberalize

[a] 2023 harvest with no restrictions and a spawning escapement of 40,000 king salmon (29% above the 31,000 king salmon upper SEG bound).

PROPOSAL 59 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Provide emergency order authority for the commissioner to increase the sockeye salmon annual limit in the Copper River Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use dip net salmon fishery when sockeye escapement is projected to exceed the upper bound of the spawning escapement goal.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the CSD personal use dip net salmon fishery the total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is 25 salmon for the head of household and an additional 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household.

In the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery, the annual permit limit for a household with one person is up to 200 total salmon with no more than 5 king salmon if taken by dip net, and for a household of two or more persons the limit is up to 500 total salmon with no more than 5 king salmon if taken by dip net.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? In years when the escapement of inriver Copper River sockeye salmon is projected to exceed the upper bound of the escapement goal, harvests in the Chitina Subdistrict would increase. This may reduce the probability of exceeding the Copper River sockeye salmon SEG.

BACKGROUND: The current SEGs for the Upper Copper River (UCR; 360,000–750,000; Fair et al. 2011) and Copper River Delta (CRD; 55,000–130,000; Bue et al. 2002) stocks were established using the percentile approach and percentile ranges. During the 2023 escapement goal review, the data sets were updated through 2023, and a Bayesian Ricker stock-recruitment model was used to estimate S_{MSY} and evaluate the current goal. Copper River sockeye salmon spawning escapements were combined (UCR and CRD) due to the inability to allocate the commercial harvests to stock or area of origin. The updated time series of escapements in this analysis includes the two brood years that failed to replace themselves in 2012 and 2015. The results show that good yields are being realized from escapements within the current SEG range.

In years when the escapement of Upper Copper River sockeye salmon is projected to exceed the upper bound of the escapement goal, the department is currently limited to using the sport fishery to harvest this surplus. The sport fishery has very limited fishing power and is concentrated on two of the main spawning tributaries. The Chitina Subdistrict has far greater harvest potential. Based on historical effort, harvest and corresponding sockeye salmon run sizes, it is estimated that the personal use fishery could reduce escapements considerably across all Copper River stocks (Table 59-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted this proposal and **SUPPORTS** it. Authority to liberalize fisheries inseason is an important tool for achieving escapement goals.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 59-1.–Maximum potential increase in sockeye salmon harvest in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net salmon fishery with increases of 10-30 fish per permit.

Effective date	Remaining permits		Increase in household limit				Total potential increase	Comment
	Percent	Number	Base	Plus 10	Plus 20	Plus 30		
7-Jun	100%	6,500[a]	195,000[b]	40,950	40,950	40,950	122,850	Start of season
20-Jun	75%	4,875	146,250	30,713	30,713	30,713	92,138	Earliest date fishery liberalized
1-Jul	46%	2,990	89,700	18,837	18,837	18,837	56,511	
15-Jul	21%	1,365	40,950	8,600	8,600	8,600	25,799	Last effective date to liberalize

[a] Average number of permits fished under current annual limit regulations and for the years 2015, 2019, and 2023 (all years with over 900,000 sockeye salmon counted past the Miles Lake sonar.

[b] Average potential total harvest with 6,500 permits fished and average (2015, 2019, and 2023) harvest per permit of 30 sockeye salmon per permit fished.

PROPOSAL 60 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Shirley Smelcer.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reduce the total annual limit in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon dip net fishery. The limit for head of household would be reduced from 25 to 20 fish, and the limit for each additional household member would be reduced from 10 to 5 fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is 25 salmon for the head of household and an additional 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? Households would harvest fewer fish, and total annual salmon harvest in the Chitina personal use fishery would decrease. Some households may shift to the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: Within the inriver goal allocation, there are 100,000–150,000 salmon apportioned for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishery that was established in 2000. The inriver goal, which is determined preseason, has averaged 633,400 salmon since 2019, and salmon returning inriver above this goal is surplus that may be available to harvest in the personal use fishery and other upriver fisheries under the current abundance-based management approach. In 2015, the current annual permit limit was established at 25 salmon for the head of household and 10 salmon for each additional household member, of which no more than one may be a king salmon. Prior to 2015, the total annual limit was 15 salmon for an individual and 30 for a household of two or more, of which no more than one could be a king salmon (established in 1997), with supplemental permits for 10 additional sockeye salmon available during weekly periods when a surplus of 50,000 or more salmon were present in the subdistrict (established in 1998).

The average annual salmon harvest taken in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery under the current permit harvest limits (2015–2023) has been 144,203 sockeye salmon with an average of 26 sockeye salmon harvested per permit fished (Table 60-1). Average harvest for the 10 years prior to the current permitted salmon limits (2005–2014) was 127,135 sockeye salmon, with an average of 22 sockeye salmon harvested per permit fished. Average participation in the personal use fishery under the current limits (2015–2023) has been similar to that of the prior 10 years (2005–2014) when the lower limits were in place.

The annual harvest in the Chitina Subdistrict has only exceeded the maximum harvest level (150,000 salmon) during years when the inriver goal was exceeded (Table 60-1). Salmon in excess of the inriver goal are considered surplus and are available to harvest in the personal use fishery under the current abundance-based management approach. Over the past 20 years, the Copper River sockeye salmon sustainable escapement goal (360,000–750,00) has been achieved or exceeded.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does not have conservation concerns that require reducing harvest. The personal use fishery is managed inseason and harvest is controlled by reductions in fishing time determined weekly based on number of fish passing the Miles Lake sonar.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 60-1.–Number of permits issued and fished and estimated total sockeye salmon harvests for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery; the inriver goal, Miles Lake sonar passage, amount of salmon surplus of the inriver goal, and the estimated sockeye salmon spawning escapement for the Copper River, 2005–2023.

Year	Number of permits issued	Number of permits fished	Personal use fishery total sockeye salmon harvest	Average number of sockeye salmon harvested per permit	Inriver Goal	Miles Lake sonar salmon passage	Surplus salmon	Estimated sockeye salmon spawning escapement
2005	8,230	5,330	120,013	23	468,859	855,125	386,266	443,340
2006	8,497	5,291	123,261	23	611,218	959,706	348,488	516,555
2007	8,377	5,549	125,126	23	549,096	919,601	370,505	578,720
2008	8,041	4,803	81,359	17	614,605	718,344	103,739	611,648
2009	7,958	4,830	90,035	19	592,000	709,748	117,748	481,167
2010	9,970	6,075	138,487	23	668,000	923,811	255,811	468,819
2011	9,217	5,710	128,052	22	622,000	914,231	292,231	502,445
2012	10,016	5,781	127,143	22	684,000	1,294,400	610,400	607,140
2013	10,592	6,768	180,663	27	728,000	1,267,060	539,060	954,010
2014	11,717	7,116	157,215	22	748,000	1,218,418	470,418	860,253
2015	12,635	7,829	223,080	28	759,000	1,346,100	587,100	864,958
2016	11,394	6,219	148,982	24	712,000	801,593	89,593	930,061
2017	9,490	6,161	132,694	22	690,000	723,426	33,426	465,539
2018	4,982	3,044	77,051	25	644,000	701,577	57,577	460,295
2019	8,071	5,467	171,203	31	618,000	1,039,654	421,654	478,701
2020	6,810	4,466	78,022	17	661,000	530,313	0	721,033
2021	7,222	5,565	143301	26	605,000	751,262	146,262	362,445
2022	7,100	5,527	154,996	28	656,000	785,509	129,509	511,274
2023	7,559	6,008	168,501	28	627,000	991,740	364,740	521,313
Average 2005–2014	9,262	5,725	127,135	22	628,578	978,044	349,467	644,572
Average 2015–2023	8,363	5,587	144,203	26	663,556	852,353	203,313	577,630

Note: Shaded data indicate when current annual permit limits were in effect. From 2005–2010, the escapement goal was 300,000–500,000 sockeye salmon; from 2011–present the escapement goal has been 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon.

PROPOSAL 61 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kalistrat Kuzmin.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reduce the total annual limit in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon dip net fishery and reestablish supplemental periods for the harvest of additional sockeye salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is 25 salmon for the head of household and an additional 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? It may require households to make additional trips to Chitina to harvest additional fish during supplemental periods, it would complicate fishery management, and it will require the department to develop electronic options for issuing supplemental permits. This change would likely decrease overall sockeye salmon harvest in the personal use fishery by an average of about 17,000 fish annually. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: In 1984, the board created a personal use salmon fishery in the Copper River drainage and, in 1987, established the *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.590). Prior to 1997, maximum allowable harvest for the Chitina personal use fishery was 60,000 salmon (all species combined), with 25% of fish in excess of this inriver goal allocated to the personal use fishery. During 1997–1999, maximum allowable harvest increased to 100,000 salmon, excluding fish in excess of the inriver goal and any salmon harvested after August 31. In 2000, the Chitina personal use fishery was reclassified as a subsistence fishery, and the amount reasonably necessary to meet subsistence needs was 100,000–150,000 salmon, excluding fish in excess of the inriver goal and any salmon harvested after August 31. In 2003, the board reversed its 1999 decision and reclassified the Chitina Subdistrict as a personal use fishery but maintained the harvest level and bag limits (15 salmon for a household of one, 30 for a household of two or more, only one king salmon per household). Provisions for supplemental periods for 10 additional sockeye salmon were adopted for the 1998 fishing season. In 2014, the board removed the supplemental periods when it established annual limits based on household size, which are 25 salmon for the head of household and 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household.

Average harvest for the 10 years prior to the current regulations (2005–2014) was 127,135 sockeye salmon, and an average of 22 salmon harvested per permit fished (Table 61-1). Average harvest for the current years (2015–2023) under the new annual limits increased to 144,203 sockeye salmon and an average of 26 salmon harvested per permit fished.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does not have conservation concerns that require reducing harvest. The personal use fishery is managed inseason and harvest is controlled by reductions in fishing time determined weekly based on the number of fish passing the Miles Lake sonar.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may require households to expend an undetermined amount in travel and lodging to participate in supplemental periods to harvest additional fish. Approval of this proposal will also result in an additional direct cost for the department to reinstitute the supplement permit.

Table 61-1.–Number of permits issued and fished, and estimated salmon harvests, for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery in the Copper River, 2005–2023.

Year	Supplemental periods	Permits		Estimated Salmon Harvest				Average harvest per permit fished
		Issued	Fished	King	Sockeye	Coho	Total[a]	
2005	2	8,230	5,330	2,043	120,013	1,869	124,403	23
2006	1	8,497	5,291	2,663	123,261	2,715	129,103	24
2007	4	8,377	5,549	2,694	125,126	1,742	130,222	23
2008	2	8,041	4,803	1,999	81,359	2,711	86,476	18
2009	0	7,958	4,830	214	90,035	1,712	92,228	19
2010	2	9,970	6,075	700	138,487	2,013	141,565	23
2011	4	9,217	5,710	1,067	128,052	1,702	131,265	23
2012	7	10,016	5,781	567	127,143	1,385	129,362	22
2013	6	10,592	6,768	744	180,663	797	182,904	27
2014	6	11,717	7,116	719	157,215	1,129	159,392	22
2015	NA	12,635	7,829	1,570	223,080	841	226,832	29
2016	NA	11,394	6,219	711	148,982	1,182	151,480	24
2017	NA	9,490	6,161	1,961	132,694	715	136,043	22
2018	NA	4,982	3,044	1,273	77,051	1,436	80,135	26
2019	NA	8,071	5,467	2,611	171,203	1,064	175,487	32
2020	NA	6,810	4,466	751	78,022	815	79,818	18
2021	NA	7,222	5,565	832	143301	439	145006	26
2022	NA	7,100	5,527	2,214	154,996	564	158,238	29
2023	NA	7,559	6,008	3,515	168,501	776	173,134	29
Average 2005–2014		9,262	5,725	1,341	127,135	1,778	130,692	22
Average 2015–2023		8,363	5,587	1,715	144,203	870	147,353	26

[a] Total harvest includes steelhead and other species.

Note: Shaded data are for years with current annual limits (2015–2023) and unshaded data are years with the lower annual limits plus supplemental periods (2005–2014).

PROPOSAL 62 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth B. Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reduce the maximum harvest level in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon dip net fishery to 50,000 salmon when the Copper River District commercial fishery is closed for 13 or more consecutive days.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Copper River District Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 24.360) directs the department to manage the Copper River District commercial salmon fishery to achieve the established inriver goal. The inriver goal is estimated annually and includes the allocation of salmon for the Upper Copper River that includes 360,000 sockeye salmon and 17,500 other salmon for spawning escapement, 61,000–82,500 salmon for subsistence, 100,000–150,000 salmon for personal use, 15,000 for the sport fishery, and an annually determined number of sockeye salmon for hatchery brood and hatchery surplus. The *Copper River Subsistence Salmon Fisheries Management Plan* (5 AAC 01.647) further directs the department to manage the Copper River commercial salmon fishery to ensure that an adequate escapement reaches the spawning grounds, to provide for hatchery broodstock and for subsistence, personal use, and sport fisheries. *The Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.591) sets the maximum harvest level for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishery at 100,000–150,000 salmon, not including any salmon in excess of the inriver goal or salmon taken after August 31. The department has emergency order authority to modify openings in the personal use fishery or to close the fishery entirely to meet spawning escapement.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? This would restrict fishing opportunity for personal use fishery participants, reduce overall personal use harvest, and limit the department's ability to harvest surplus fish. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement. The department could exceed the sockeye salmon escapement goal, particularly in years when the Copper River District commercial fishery must be restricted due to poor king salmon runs.

BACKGROUND: Management of the personal use fishery is guided by the *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.591) and operates on an abundance-based design. A preseason schedule of weekly fishing time is developed each spring based on projected weekly passage of salmon at Miles Lake. If actual passage is below expected passage, fishing time is reduced. If actual passage is above expected passage, fishing time may be increased. If it is determined that the management plan guidelines are insufficient to ensure achievement of either the sockeye salmon or king salmon escapement goals, the department can exercise its emergency order authority under AS 16.05.055 to further restrict fishing time in the personal use fishery, close the fishery to retention of king salmon as directed under 5 AAC 24.361, or close the fishery entirely. Abundance-based management of the personal use fishery effectively controls harvest to ensure the sustainable escapement goals are attained. Sockeye salmon escapement has always exceeded the lower bound of the goal since 2004 (Table 62–1).

At its 1996 meeting, the board adopted a maximum harvest level of 100,000 salmon, not including any salmon in excess of the inriver goal or salmon taken after August 31, for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery. Prior to then, the maximum allowable harvest for the Chitina personal use

fishery was 60,000 salmon (all species combined) with 25% of fish in excess of the inriver goal allocated to the personal use fishery. The board amended the 100,000 salmon maximum harvest language in 1998 by adding "If the Copper River District commercial salmon fishery is closed for 13 or more consecutive days, the maximum harvest level in the Chitina Subdistrict is reduced to 50,000 salmon". The maximum harvest level apportionment was increased in 2003 to 100,000–150,000 salmon, not including any salmon in excess of the inriver goal or salmon taken after August 31, when the fishery had been reinstated as personal use after a 3-year period as a subsistence fishery. The paired maximum harvest level reduction to the 13-day commercial closure language remained in place until the 2017 meeting, when it was repealed.

The paired maximum harvest level reduction to 50,000 salmon was only implemented once prior to its 2017 repeal. In 2008, the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery maximum harvest limit was reduced by 60% to 50,000 salmon from July 2 through the remainder of the season. As a result, fishing time in the personal use fishery was reduced by an additional eight days (188 hours) during weeks 7–13. During weeks 1–6, sonar passage was below the preseason sonar projections for those weeks and fishing time was based on a sonar apportionment of 122,825 salmon. That resulted in a harvest that was 48% below the previous 5-year average harvest during those weeks and 51% below the 10-year average. Following the July 2 reduction in maximum harvest level, a surge of salmon passing the sonar led to two supplemental openings and all weekly passage numbers exceeded the preseason sonar passage projections for those weeks. Final sonar passage in 2008 was 138,598 salmon above the inriver goal. For the past 20 years, sockeye salmon escapement goals have been achieved or exceeded and salmon in surplus of the inriver goal have been available to harvest in all but 1 year (Table 62–1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. However, the department **OPPOSES** unnecessarily reducing opportunity in the personal use dip net fishery based on commercial fishery openings. The current abundance-based management approach within the *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* compensates for fluctuations in inseason and annual run strength and the department has general emergency order authority to further restrict the personal use fishery as needed to ensure escapement goals are achieved.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 62-1.–Total sockeye salmon run size, Copper River District (CRD) commercial fishery harvest, Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use fishery harvest, and spawning escapement of sockeye salmon, with the inriver goal, Miles Lake sonar passage, and surplus salmon for the Copper River 2004–2023.

Year	Sockeye salmon total run size	CRD commercial sockeye salmon harvest	Inriver Goal	Miles Lake sonar salmon passage	Surplus salmon	CSD personal use sockeye salmon harvest	Sockeye salmon spawning escapement
2004	1,819,064	1,048,603	431,669	669,514	237,845	107,312	433,945
2005	2,276,785	1,333,574	468,859	855,125	386,266	120,013	515,599
2006	2,592,795	1,498,423	611,218	959,706	348,488	123,261	579,552
2007	2,961,792	1,904,038	549,096	919,601	370,505	125,126	612,103
2008	1,141,249	323,096	614,605	718,344	103,739	81,359	480,597
2009	1,721,676	902,941	592,000	709,748	117,748	90,035	469,090
2010	1,715,742	643,086	668,000	923,811	255,811	138,487	502,992
2011	3,097,537	2,061,525	622,000	914,231	292,231	128,052	607,657
2012	3,276,472	1,874,726	684,000	1,294,400	610,400	127,143	953,245
2013	3,009,733	1,617,717	728,000	1,267,060	539,060	180,663	860,929
2014	3,386,860	2,062,265	748,000	1,218,418	470,418	157,215	864,988
2015	3,209,312	1,761,443	759,000	1,346,100	587,100	223,080	930,061
2016	2,075,016	1,184,901	712,000	801,593	89,593	148,982	513,563
2017	1,531,335	731,932	690,000	723,426	33,426	132,694	465,518
2018	817,121	45,917	644,000	701,577	57,577	77,051	478,701
2019	2,393,092	1,265,956	618,000	1,039,654	421,654	171,203	721,033
2020	726,495	103,731	661,000	530,313	0	78,022	362,445
2021	1,312,371	401,378	605,000	751,262	146,262	143,301	511,274
2022	1,461,393	596,486	656,000	785,509	129,509	154,996	520,120
2023	1,941,415	861,107	627,000	991,740	364,740	168,501	694,007
5-yr Avg. 2019–2023	1,566,953	645,732	633,400	819,696	212,433	143,205	562,014
10-yr Avg. 2014–2023	1,885,441	901,512	672,000	888,959	230,028	145,505	600,963

Note: CRD commercial harvest includes home pack, donated, and educational harvests. CRD commercial harvest also includes out-of-area, western PWS, and Copper River Delta salmon stocks. Surplus salmon are salmon in excess to the inriver goal. From 2004–2010, the Copper River sockeye salmon escapement goal was 300,000–500,000 salmon; from 2011–present, the escapement goal has been 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon.

PROPOSAL 63 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: AITRC Fish and Wildlife Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would change the opening of the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery to June 21 or 2 weeks after a daily management objective of fish passage is achieved at Miles Lake sonar.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The department may open, by emergency order, the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery no earlier than June 7 and no later than June 15.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would delay the opening of the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery by a minimum of 7–14 days. King and sockeye salmon harvest in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery would likely decrease, and fishing opportunity would be reduced for dipnetters. Based on data from the previous 10 years (2014-2023), the opening date of the personal use fishery would only change by a few days. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: The *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* was established in 1987. Under the initial plan, the Chitina personal use fishery could open from June 1–11. Beginning in 2012, the dates the fishery could open was changed to June 7–15. The opening date within the range depends on daily sonar passage objectives and an assumed travel time of two weeks. Management of the personal use fishery is based on the abundance of salmon enumerated at the Miles Lake sonar site. A preseason schedule of weekly fishing time is developed each spring based on projected weekly passage of salmon at Miles Lake. If actual passage is below expected passage, fishing time is reduced. If actual passage is above expected passage, fishing time may be increased.

The Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery is a mixed-stock fishery. Abundance-based management of the fishery is designed to distribute harvest throughout the season. Over the last 10 years (2014–2023), the average opening date for the personal use fishery has been June 8 (Table 63-1). If the opening date for the fishery, over that same time period, was set at two weeks after the daily sonar management passage was first met, the average opening date would have also been June 8 (Table 63-1). Over the past 5 years (2019–2023), the personal use fishery has harvested approximately 9% of the total annual sockeye salmon run and 4% of the total annual king salmon run (Tables 63-2 and 63-3).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. It is unnecessary for conservation because the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery harvest accounts for only a small portion of the sockeye and king salmon runs, and management of the fishery is abundance-based and designed to distribute harvest opportunity and escapement over the duration of the run.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 63-1.–Date when the first daily count objective was achieved at Miles Lake sonar, the 2-week lag time from that date, the proposed opening day, and the actual opening day of the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishery, 2014–2023.

Year	Earliest date daily objective achieved	Date 2 weeks after objective first achieved	Proposed opening date	Actual opening date
2014	16-May	30-May	21-Jun	7-Jun
2015	16-May	30-May	21-Jun	7-Jun
2016	15-May	29-May	21-Jun	7-Jun
2017	18-May	1-Jun	21-Jun	7-Jun
2018	14-Jun	28-Jun	28-Jun	10-Jun
2019	15-May	29-May	21-Jun	7-Jun
2020	4-Jun	18-Jun	21-Jun	7-Jun
2021	3-Jun	17-Jun	21-Jun	10-Jun
2022	1-Jun	15-Jun	21-Jun	12-Jun
2023	2-Jun	16-Jun	21-Jun	15-Jun
5-yr Average 2019–2023	29-May	12-Jun	21-Jun	10-Jun
10-yr Average 2014–2023	25-May	8-Jun	21-Jun	8-Jun

Table 63-2.–Summary of sockeye salmon harvests, total run size, and upriver escapement in the Copper River, 2004–2023.

Year	CRD commercial harvest[a]	CRD subsistence harvest[b]	Sport harvest[c]	Glennallen Subdistrict harvest[d]	Chitina Subdistrict harvest[d]	Total harvest	Upriver return estimate[e]	Estimated total run size	Spawning escapement[f]
2004	1,048,603	1,822	7,383	73,214	108,527	1,239,549	628,950	1,819,064	433,945
2005	1,333,574	939	8,803	86,140	122,463	1,551,919	824,792	2,276,785	515,599
2006	1,498,423	4,505	14,455	76,056	124,810	1,718,249	891,917	2,592,795	579,552
2007	1,904,038	6,184	24,713	83,338	126,154	2,144,427	873,252	2,961,792	612,103
2008	323,096	4,001	12,682	57,632	82,318	479,729	677,001	1,141,249	480,597
2009	902,941	1,810	14,374	60,517	90,917	1,070,559	677,348	1,721,676	469,090
2010	643,086	2,016	16,085	84,856	140,811	886,854	901,488	1,715,742	502,992
2011	2,061,525	1,818	8,565	75,375	129,985	2,277,268	880,342	3,097,537	607,657
2012	1,874,726	4,334	24,168	92,792	128,058	2,124,078	1,262,948	3,276,472	953,245
2013	1,617,717	5,741	26,997	90,788	182,915	1,924,158	1,234,479	3,009,733	860,929
2014	2,062,265	1,751	18,179	98,535	158,879	2,339,609	1,194,260	3,386,860	864,988
2015	1,761,443	1,555	9,619	108,696	225,425	2,106,738	1,313,794	3,209,312	930,061
2016	1,184,901	1,185	7,801	81,839	150,303	1,426,029	785,584	2,075,016	513,563
2017	731,932	2,602	9,768	56,110	134,294	934,706	682,701	1,531,335	465,518
2018	45,917	5,189	2,965	56,093	80,542	190,706	649,053	817,121	478,701
2019	1,265,956	6,233	9,379	76,387	175,413	1,533,368	995,940	2,393,092	721,033
2020	103,731	7,091	3,896	45,811	81,428	241,957	504,020	726,495	362,445
2021	401,378	5,338	6,907	57,485	148,716	619,824	729,606	1,312,371	511,274
2022	596,486	5,828	5,871	60,517	157,944	826,645	747,029	1,461,393	520,120
2023	861,107	6,326	0	62,802	174,532	1,104,767	942,432	1,941,415	694,007
5-yr Average (2019–2023)	645,732	6,163	5,211	60,600	147,606	865,312	783,805	1,566,953	562,014
10-yr Average (2014– 2023)	901,512	4,310	7,439	70,427	148,748	1,132,435	854,442	1,885,441	600,963

Note: CRD = Copper River District

[a] includes commercial harvest plus homepack, donated and educational harvests.

[b] includes State and Federal subsistence harvests in the Copper River District.

[c] includes sport harvest in the Copper River Delta and the upper Copper River upstream of Haley Creek.

[d] these data are expanded to reflect unreported state harvest and include reported federal harvest (2002-2004) and expanded federal harvest beginning in 2005.

[e] the upriver return estimate is the Miles Lake sonar count minus the king salmon mark-recapture point estimate.

[f] from 2004–2010, the Copper River sockeye salmon escapement goal was 300,000–500,000 fish; from 2011–present, the escapement goal has been 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon.

Table 63-3.–Summary of king salmon harvests, total run size, and upriver escapement in the Copper River, 2004–2023.

Year	CRD commercial harvest[a]	CRD subsistence harvest[b]	Sport harvest[c]	Glennallen Subdistrict harvest[d]	Chitina Subdistrict harvest[d]	Total harvest	Upriver return estimate[e]	Estimated total run size	Spawning escapement
2004	38,889	1,106	3,435	3,982	2,502	49,914	40,564	80,559	30,473
2005	35,764	260	4,093	2,618	2,094	44,829	30,333	66,357	21,556
2006	31,309	779	3,425	3,229	2,681	41,423	67,789	99,877	58,425
2007	40,274	1,145	5,113	3,939	2,722	53,193	46,349	87,768	34,562
2008	12,067	470	3,616	3,218	2,022	21,393	41,343	53,880	32,453
2009	10,398	212	1,355	3,036	223	15,224	32,400	43,010	27,749
2010	10,582	276	2,416	2,425	718	16,417	22,323	33,181	16,746
2011	19,788	212	1,753	3,062	1,080	25,895	33,889	53,889	27,936
2012	12,623	237	535	2,510	572	16,477	31,452	44,312	27,846
2013	9,445	854	285	2,522	762	13,868	32,581	42,880	29,013
2014	11,011	153	931	1,785	733	14,613	24,158	35,322	20,709
2015	23,701	167	1,343	2,614	1,585	29,410	32,306	56,174	26,764
2016	13,161	73	327	2,471	726	16,758	16,009	29,243	12,485
2017	14,628	778	1,731	3,366	1,973	22,476	40,725	56,131	33,655
2018	7,303	1,356	1,280	7,668	1,374	18,981	52,524	61,183	42,202
2019	18,605	808	1,565	4,315	2,689	27,982	43,714	63,127	35,145
2020	6,119	657	967	2,892	847	11,482	26,293	33,069	21,587
2021	7,290	624	90	2,190	945	11,139	21,656	29,570	18,431
2022	13,343	887	342	3,820	2,313	20,706	38,480	52,710	32,006
2023	11,027	948	2,500	3,919	3,669	22,063	49,308	61,283	40,102
5-yr Average 2019–2023	11,277	785	1,093	3,427	2,093	18,674	35,890	47,952	29,454
10-yr Average 2014–2023	12,619	645	1,108	3,504	1,686	19,561	34,517	47,781	28,309

Note: CRD = Copper River District

[a] includes commercial harvest plus homepack, donated and educational harvests.

[b] includes State and Federal subsistence harvests in the Copper River District.

[c] includes sport harvest in the Copper River Delta and the upper Copper River upstream of Haley Creek.

[d] these data are expanded to reflect unreported state harvest and include reported federal harvest (2002-2004) and expanded federal harvest beginning in 2005.

[e] the upriver return estimate is from the mark-recapture project occurring upstream of Miles Lake sonar but downstream of any upriver harvest.

[f] from 2004–2021, the Copper River king salmon escapement goal was 24,000 or more fish; from 2022–present, the escapement goal has been 21,000–31,000 king salmon.

PROPOSAL 64 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This prohibits households from participating in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use salmon fishery if an Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) personal use salmon fishery permit has already been issued to that household during that year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Alaska residents may participate in multiple personal use fisheries in a given year. Permits may be required to participate in personal use fisheries. Only one CSD personal use salmon fishery permit may be issued to a household per calendar year. A household may not be issued both a Copper River subsistence salmon fishery permit and a CSD personal use salmon fishery permit in the same year. There are no restrictions limiting households who obtain a CSD personal use salmon fishery permit from obtaining other personal use fishery permits for fisheries outside of the Copper River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? Alaskans who obtain an UCI personal use salmon fishery permit would not be able to participate in the CSD personal use salmon fishery that year. This may lead to an unknown decrease in the personal use salmon fishery harvests and may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement. This proposal would not prevent households who first obtain a CSD personal use salmon permit from obtaining a UCI personal use fishing permit.

BACKGROUND: Personal use fisheries were created by the board in 1982. Personal use fisheries are for Alaska residents only and salmon may only be taken for personal use by a holder of a valid resident Alaska sport fishing license. Personal use salmon fishery permits may be issued for specific fisheries, such as the CSD, or permits may encompass multiple waters within greater geographic area, such as UCI. Annual permit limits are set separately to ensure sustainable harvests for the stocks of fish targeted in each fishery.

The CSD and UCI personal use fisheries require households to obtain a permit to participate. Only one permit may be issued per household for each fishery in a given year. Households that obtain the CSD personal use fishery permit are prohibited from obtaining subsistence salmon fishery permits in the same year for the Copper River because they target the same stocks of salmon. Households that obtain a CSD personal use salmon fishery permit are not prohibited from obtaining personal use salmon fishery permits that target non-Copper River salmon stocks elsewhere in the state. Adequate numbers of salmon are required to allow for personal use salmon fishing and are dictated by each fisheries' management plan.

Over the past 5 years (2019–2023), an average of 912 households have fished in both the Chitina Subdistrict and Upper Cook Inlet personal use salmon fisheries in the same year (Table 64-1). Over the past 10 years, only 3–5% of all households that participated in the CSD or UCI personal use fisheries, have fished both fisheries annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. There are no management or sustainability concerns with households fishing both a CSD and UCI personal use salmon fishing permit in the same year. It unnecessarily restricts Alaskans' ability to participate in personal use fisheries and potentially restricts harvest of available surplus production. Allowing households to participate in both the CSD and UCI personal use salmon fisheries provides

opportunity and flexibility to sustainably harvest salmon to meet their household food security needs.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 64-1.–Number of households holding and fishing Upper Cook Inlet permits only, the number of households holding and fishing Chitina Subdistrict permits only, and the number of households holding and fishing both Upper Cook Inlet and Chitina Subdistrict permits, 2013–2023.

	Upper Cook Inlet only		Chitina Subdistrict only		Both permits	
Year	Issued	Fished	Issued	Fished	Issued	Fished
2013	32,282	26,752	7,663	6,214	2,929	554
2014	32,426	27,028	8,154	5,549	3,563	1,567
2015	30,847	25,443	8,562	6,223	4,073	1,606
2016	27,321	22,456	7,499	5,015	3,895	1,204
2017	27,456	21,648	6,965	4,957	2,525	1,204
2018	23,476	18,309	3,736	2,551	1,246	493
2019	24,807	20,608	6,029	4,596	2,042	871
2020	26,722	21,653	4,577	3,496	2,233	970
2021	24,580	21,518	5,358	4,671	1,864	894
2022	26,659	22,989	5,357	4,566	1,743	961
2023	25,819	22,639	5,925	5,144	1,634	864
5-yr Average 2019–2023	25,717	21,881	5,449	4,495	1,903	912
10-yr Average 2013–2023	27,490	22,822	6,348	4,817	2,522	1,017

PROPOSAL 65 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Tene Nene'.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require a weekly permit be obtained to participate in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use fishery and require reporting be submitted within 7 days for each weekly permit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? CSD personal use fishery permits are valid through the season closing date of September 30. Permit holders must record their harvest daily on their permits and report those permits online to the department by October 15.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? Participants who make multiple trips to fish throughout the season would be required to obtain multiple permits. The department would have to modify its current permitting and reporting systems to account for more frequent reporting, and it would need to increase staffing to compile effort and harvest data. Additional enforcement effort would be needed to ensure compliance. This may reduce the number of trips a household makes to participate in the CSD fishery and increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: To participate in the CSD personal use salmon fishery a household must obtain a permit. The permit covers the entire fishing season and stipulates an annual salmon limit. Harvest must be recorded on the permit immediately before leaving the fishing site or concealing the fish from view. CSD harvest must be reported online no later than two weeks after the close of the season, and reports are required even if the permit was not fished or if it was fished but nothing was caught. In 2020, the department transitioned the CSD fishery to electronically issued permits and required mandatory online reporting. This transition provided significant cost savings, fewer errors in permit data, increased data quality of harvest estimates, and increased compliance through the ability to blacklist permit holders who fail to report harvest.

The department uses historic weekly harvest and effort data to determine weekly fishing times in the CSD based on actual sonar passage. No inseason harvest data is required for this abundance-based management approach because historical average weekly harvest and effort data provide insight to evaluate potential harvest with enough precision to ensure timely management decisions. Using this abundance-based management approach, coupled with the current reporting strategy, has resulted in sustainable harvests within the CSD personal use fishery (Table 65-1).

Over the past 10 years (2014–2023), the department has issued approximately 8,700 CSD personal use permits annually. Years when total salmon harvest is greater than 150,000 fish have always occurred during years when the inriver goal was exceeded (Table 65-1). Salmon in excess of the inriver goal are considered surplus and are available to harvest in the personal use fishery under the current abundance-based management approach. Over the past 20 years, the Copper River sockeye salmon sustainable escapement goal has been achieved annually, except for 2012–2015 when the upper bound of the goal was exceeded.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Inseason reporting would be an additional burden on users and the department, and compliance with weekly permit and the 7-day reporting requirement may be challenging to enforce. The department already

has the authority under 5 AAC 77.015 to require more frequent reporting but has not because it would not be used nor needed for inseason management.

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. Approval of this proposal would result in an additional direct cost for the department through implementation and administration of an inseason permitting, harvest tracking, and harvest reporting system.

Table 65-1.–The number of permits issued and reported and the estimated total salmon harvests in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery, along with Miles Lake sonar passage, the inriver goal, amount of salmon surplus in excess of the inriver goal, and the estimated sockeye salmon spawning escapement for the Copper River, 2004–2023.

Year	# permits issued	% permits reporting	Total salmon harvest	Miles Lake sonar passage	Inriver goal	Surplus salmon	Sockeye salmon spawning escapement
2004	8,156	84.0%	113,176	669,514	431,669	237,845	433,945
2005	8,230	84.3%	124,403	855,125	468,859	386,266	515,599
2006	8,497	79.6%	129,103	959,706	611,218	348,488	579,552
2007	8,377	85.8%	130,222	919,601	549,096	370,505	612,103
2008	8,041	85.3%	86,476	718,344	614,605	103,739	480,597
2009	7,958	86.8%	92,228	709,748	592,000	117,748	469,090
2010	9,970	77.8%	141,565	923,811	668,000	255,811	502,992
2011	9,217	82.1%	131,265	914,231	622,000	292,231	607,657
2012	10,016	80.2%	129,362	1,294,400	684,000	610,400	953,245
2013	10,592	80.1%	182,904	1,267,060	728,000	539,060	860,929
2014	11,717	79.6%	159,392	1,218,418	748,000	470,418	864,988
2015	12,635	83.2%	226,832	1,346,100	759,000	587,100	930,061
2016	11,394	81.6%	151,480	801,593	712,000	89,593	513,563
2017	9,490	80.8%	136,043	723,426	690,000	33,426	465,518
2018	4,982	80.8%	80,135	701,577	644,000	57,577	478,701
2019	8,071	82.3%	175,487	1,039,654	618,000	421,654	721,033
2020	6,810	89.1%	79,818	530,313	661,000	0	362,445
2021	7,222	92.5%	145,006	751,262	605,000	146,262	511,274
2022	7,100	93.4%	158,238	785,509	656,000	129,509	520,120
2023	7,559	94.4%	173,134	991,740	627,000	364,740	694,007
5-yr Average 2019–2023	7,352	90.3%	146,337	819,696	633,400	212,433	562,014
10-yr Average 2014–2023	8,698	85.8%	148,557	888,959	672,000	230,028	600,963

Note: From 2004–2010, the escapement goal was 300,000–500,000 sockeye salmon; from 2011–present the escapement goal has been 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon.

PROPOSAL 66 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require the department, in consultation with the Hatchery Operator, to restrict time and area in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use dip net salmon fishery to achieve the Gulkana Hatchery broodstock goal.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Copper River District Salmon Management Plan* 5 (AAC 24.360.) has provisions for Gulkana Hatchery brood and hatchery surplus within the Copper River inriver goal for salmon. There are no regulations directing the department to manage any other Copper River fisheries for hatchery fish passage.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would reduce fishing time for permit holders in the CSD during mid-July through August 31 and reduce opportunity to harvest wild sockeye and king salmon without any guarantee the actions would be effective in providing additional hatchery sockeye salmon broodstock. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: The Gulkana Hatchery was established by the department in 1973 with facilities on the East Fork Gulkana River between Paxson and Summit Lakes. This location is about 173 miles from the CSD (Figure 66-1). The "Gulkana I" facility propagates a late-run sockeye salmon stock. It has a maximum limit of 35 million green eggs and maximum release limit of 22.0 million fry. The "Gulkana II" facility propagates an early Gulkana River run of sockeye salmon and has a maximum limit of 1.75 million green eggs and a fry release of 1.3 million fish. Fry from the Gulkana I facility are released directly from the site for rearing in Paxson Lake, aerially dropped into Crosswind Lake, and trucked to Summit Lake. In years when too few adults return to the Gulkana I site to meet egg take goals, egg takes may also be conducted below Crosswind Lake. Fry from the Gulkana II site are released directly from the site for rearing in Paxson Lake. The Gulkana Hatchery Basic Management Plan (finalized in 2000) states that the hatchery is expected to produce a long-term average of 300,000 returning adults, equating to 15% of the average Copper River sockeye salmon total run from 1977 through 1999.

Gulkana II sockeye salmon are present in the commercial fishery during late May through early June and in the CSD personal use fishery during June. These fish are present at the hatchery site in late July and early August. The number of returning Gulkana II salmon in the total run is generally less than 15,000 fish. Gulkana I sockeye salmon are present in the commercial fishery from late June through July and in the CSD from late July through August. These fish are present at the hatchery site from late August through mid-October. Based on radiotelemetry studies in 2003–2005 and 2024, travel time between the CSD and the Gulkana River takes 4–6 weeks for wild and hatchery sockeye salmon. It can take an additional 2–4 weeks for these fish to reach the hatchery egg-take sites just below Crosswind Lake and the Gulkana I site. Since 2014, the combined egg takes at the Gulkana I facility and Crosswind Lake release site have fallen short of the minimum hatchery egg take goal (Table 66-1).

Of the hatchery fish harvested in Copper River common property fisheries from 2014–2023, an average of 80% were taken in the commercial drift gillnet fishery, 13% in the CSD, 6% in the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery, and 0.1% in the upper Copper River sport fisheries

(Table 66-1). Annual hatchery contributions to the CSD have ranged from 5,829–28,947 sockeye salmon since 2014. The personal use fishery harvests approximately, on average, 18% of the fish passing Miles Lake sonar. Based on that known harvest rate coupled with the annual hatchery contribution in the personal use fishery, an estimated 8,633–164,029 hatchery sockeye salmon went unharvested annually in the CSD (Table 66-1).

Broodstock shortfalls at the Gulkana I site are most likely related to decreased hatchery salmon survivals. Beginning with the 2010 brood year, there was a dramatic decrease in hatchery fry to adult survivals, with survival rates ranging from 2.1–2.6% prior to 2010 to 0.2–1.3% during 2010–2017 (Table 66-1). Survival data cannot yet be calculated for 2019 onward since fish are still returning from those brood years. These lower survivals would have directly affected hatchery runs beginning with the 2014 run year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Managing exclusively for Gulkana Hatchery sockeye salmon broodstock is impractical in a mixed stock fishery prosecuted on salmon 4 to 6 weeks prior to them reaching the hatchery spawning locations. Restricting time and area in this fishery would be an undue loss of opportunity for households participating in the CSD personal use fishery.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

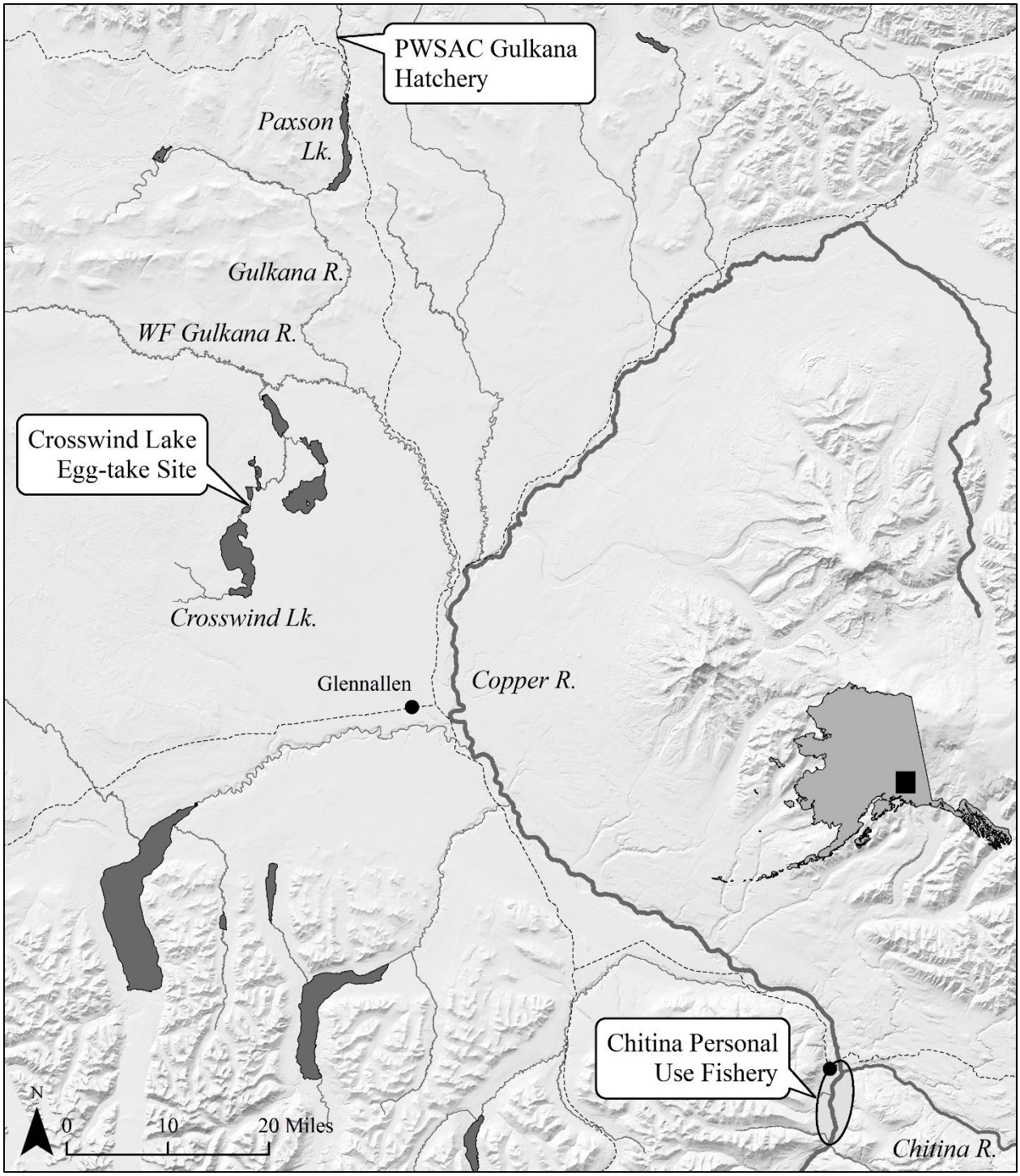

Figure 66-1.–Map depicting the locations of the Chitina Personal Use Fishery area, Crosswind Lake egg-take site, and Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) Gulkana hatchery within the Copper River Drainage.

Table 66-1.–Gulkana Hatchery sockeye salmon contributions to the Copper River commercial, Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net, and Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fisheries, estimated escapement, green eggs taken and resulting fry-adult survivals 2005–2023.

Run year	Commercial fishery contribution[a]	Personal use fishery contribution[a]	Subsistence fishery contribution[a]	Personal use unharvested[b]	Hatchery brood/excess	Eggs collected[c]	Fry released	Total adult return from run year[d]	Fry-adult survival
2005	95,897	8,349	19,682	47,314	92,455	36,483,882	20,222,456	396,256	2.0%
2006	163,691	16,302	10,558	92,377	97,202	36,206,090	22,000,000	563,032	2.6%
2007	94,302	6,204	3,452	35,157	28,648	30,450,000	21,980,000	485,836	2.2%
2008	21,545	12,685	6,490	71,883	45,022	33,650,000	22,000,000	468,459	2.1%
2009	59,948	19,648	9,707	111,338	43,409	33,090,000	22,010,000	469,332	2.1%
2010	210,362	46,009	22,171	260,719	157,980	31,850,000	21,980,000	286,336	1.3%
2011	487,916	23,576	9,537	133,595	59,589	36,450,000	22,860,000	228,994	1.0%
2012	330,402	ND	ND	ND	65,348	34,850,000	18,560,000	96,130	0.5%
2013	377,833	26,705	16,085	151,330	72,369	35,450,000	22,000,000	39,292	0.2%
2014	300,962	28,946	15,972	164,029	53,737	29,650,000	21,987,000	86,115	0.4%
2015	137,414	27,637	13,925	125,904	40,123	26,650,000	16,004,000	48,256	0.3%
2016	157,059	12,057	6,099	54,928	32,341	25,924,000	15,690,000	74,224	0.5%
2017	32,292	8,163	4,560	37,188	16,934	19,110,000	10,214,863	23,964	0.2%
2018	6,175	18,189	8,405	82,859	30,306	28,004,700	14,467,129	ND	ND
2019	39,882	6,984	493	31,818	15,552	20,089,400	14,874,540	ND	ND
2020	9,810	1,895	7,260	8,633	10,786	15,742,800	12,227,064	ND	ND
2021	47,165	15,900	943	72,434	7,003	12,400,900	9,691,563	ND	ND
2022	16,433	2,814	1,149	26,552	4,437	6,624,200	3,764,325	ND	ND
2023	42,108	14,151	6,624	58,528	10,880	13,935,400	9,758,392	ND	ND
Average	204,655	19,935	12,210	112,964	73,558	34,275,552	21,512,495		
Average	83,021	13,674	6,534	66,287	22,210	19,813,140	12,867,888		

[a] Commercial and subsistence/personal use fishery contributions were calculated from strontium marks.

[b] Annual hatchery contribution divided by 0.18 which is the average proportion of sonar passage harvest by the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net salmon fishery.

[c] Years when total eggs collected is below the minimum 30 MM green egg goal are shaded gray.

[d] Total number of hatchery fish within a run are split into age-4 and age-5 components based on age analysis of hatchery salmon otoliths in the commercial fishery. Total adult returns represent the total of the 4-year-old and 5-year-old salmon returning from a specific run year (brood year).

PROPOSAL 67 – 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit removing king salmon from the water prior to release in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use dip net salmon fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no personal use regulations that require a king salmon be kept in the water if it is to be released.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would require dipnetters to identify the species of fish in their net and remove king salmon while the fish remained submerged in the glacial waters of the Copper River. This would result in more dipnetters unintentionally violating a regulation that prohibits removal because of situations where the fish is partially entangled and a dipnetter in the boat or shore is too far removed from the water to safely release the fish. Many shore-based sites would be eliminated because they are too high above the water line.

BACKGROUND: Dip net gear has been considered a viable capture method in fisheries where the release of nontarget species is preferred or required and has recently been added to several commercial and subsistence fisheries for this specific reason.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. In other dip net fisheries where the release of king salmon is required, fishers may remove king salmon from the water prior to release. Because of the nature of fishing on the Copper River, it is unclear if leaving king salmon in the water prior to release would actually decrease king salmon mortality. Depending on how a fish is entangled, it may be impossible to release while keeping it in the water from the boat or a shore-based fishing site. Enforcement of the in-water release of king salmon would also be very difficult.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 68 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Faye Ewan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit using a dip net from a boat to harvest salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Salmon may be taken in the CSD by dip nets. There are no restrictions specific to dipnetting from a boat in any personal use fishery statewide.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? This would reduce personal use fishing opportunity, potentially reduce harvest, and increase crowding at limited shore-based sites resulting from boat dipnetters shifting to the shore. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: Boats have been used by personal use dipnetters since at least 1984. An average of 1,759 households fished from boats from 2019–2023 in the CSD compared to 3,648 that fished from shore (Table 68-1). During this same period, permit holders in the CSD harvested an average of 38% of the reported sockeye salmon and 43% of the reported king salmon from boats (Tables 68-1 and 68-2). Average harvest per permit fished over the past 5 years (2019–2023) has been about 28 sockeye salmon and 0.4 king salmon for households fishing from a boat and 22 sockeye salmon and 0.3 king salmon for households fishing from shore. In the CSD, the river is swift and surging, lined with rocks and cliffs, and the number of productive locations to fish from shore are limited. While participation and harvest in the CSD from households fishing from boats has increased, overall fishery harvests have remained sustainable.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because there are no management or biological concerns with using dip net gear from a boat, and it would increase conflict between users due to increased competition at shore-based sites. Many fishers may be physically limited and incapable of sweeping while wading or scaling steep terrain to access productive fishing sites.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 68-1.–The number of permits fished and the reported harvest of sockeye salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon dip net fishery, total Miles Lake sonar passage, and spawning escapement of sockeye salmon in the Copper River, 2004–2023.

	Number of permits fished				Sockeye salmon reported harvest							
Year	Boat	Shore	Unknown[a]	Total[b]	Boat	Shore	Unknown[a]	Total	Miles Lake sonar passage	Inriver Goal	Surplus salmon	Sockeye spawning escapement[c]
2004	876	3,394	841	4,955	18,387	59,969	14,826	93,182	669,514	431,669	237,845	433,945
2005	771	3,823	888	5,330	17,187	73,011	16,670	106,868	855,125	468,859	386,266	515,599
2006	900	3,845	711	5,291	18,801	71,219	12,423	102,443	959,706	611,218	348,488	579,552
2007	1,149	4,234	317	5,549	25,686	82,239	4,936	112,861	919,601	549,096	370,505	612,103
2008	955	3,665	366	4,803	17,187	49,178	4,520	70,885	718,344	614,605	103,739	480,597
2009	749	3,823	455	4,830	13,988	61,989	5,455	81,432	709,748	592,000	117,748	469,090
2010	957	4,943	465	6,075	21,025	89,180	6,585	116,790	923,811	668,000	255,811	502,992
2011	958	4,683	228	5,710	22,197	88,774	3,193	114,164	914,231	622,000	292,231	607,657
2012	989	4,733	214	5,781	22,253	84,593	2,961	109,807	1,294,400	684,000	610,400	953,245
2013	889	5,529	293	6,768	24,538	122,253	4,867	151,658	1,267,060	728,000	539,060	860,929
2014	1,041	5,918	312	7,116	25,280	107,921	3,978	137,179	1,218,418	748,000	470,418	864,988
2015	1,250	6,522	206	7,829	40,306	150,798	3,866	194,970	1,346,100	759,000	587,100	930,061
2016	1,338	4,873	143	6,219	34,166	90,190	2,189	126,545	801,593	712,000	89,593	513,563
2017	1,412	4,675	126	6,161	33,033	78,137	2,032	113,202	723,426	690,000	33,426	465,518
2018	656	2,288	115	3,044	17,398	45,068	2,578	65,044	701,577	644,000	57,577	478,701
2019	1,642	3,832	78	5,467	49,091	96,555	1,610	147,256	1,039,654	618,000	421,654	721,033
2020	1,460	3,046	0	4,466	27,403	43,352	0	70,755	530,313	661,000	0	362,445
2021	1,767	3,688	0	5,565	52,962	79,300	0	132,262	751,262	605,000	146,262	511,274
2022	1,883	3,676	0	5,527	58,385	89,941	0	148,326	785,509	656,000	129,509	520,120
2023	2,045	3,998	0	6,008	60,465	100,848	0	161,313	991,740	627,000	364,740	694,007
5-yr Average 2019–2023	1,759	3,648	16	5,407	49,661	81,999	322	131,982	819,696	633,400	212,433	562,014
10-yr Average 2014–2023	1,449	4,252	98	5,740	39,849	88,211	1,625	129,685	888,959	672,000	230,028	600,963

[a] With the implementation of mandatory online reporting, individuals must assign boat or shore for every harvest report since 2020.

[b] Total is less than sum of permits because some households fish from both shore and a boat.

[c] From 2004–2010 the escapement goal was 300,000–500,000 sockeye salmon; from 2011–present the escapement goal has been 360,000–750,000 sockeye salmon.

Table 68-2.–The number of permits fished and reported harvest of king salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon dip net fishery, and the inriver abundance estimates and spawning escapement of king salmon in the Copper River, 2004–2023.

	Number of permits fished				King salmon reported harvest					
Year	Boat	Shore	Unknown[a]	Total[b]	Boat	Shore	Unknown[a]	Total	Inriver abundance estimate[c]	Spawning escapement[d]
2004	876	3,394	841	4,955	528	1,223	357	2,108	40,564	30,473
2005	771	3,823	888	5,330	382	1,120	273	1,775	30,333	21,556
2006	900	3,845	711	5,291	496	1,326	249	2,071	67,789	58,425
2007	1,149	4,234	317	5,549	687	1,593	109	2,389	46,349	34,562
2008	955	3,665	366	4,803	480	1,096	124	1,700	41,343	32,453
2009	749	3,823	455	4,830	64	118	17	199	32,400	27,749
2010	957	4,943	465	6,075	141	370	76	587	22,323	16,746
2011	958	4,683	228	5,710	189	700	35	924	33,889	27,936
2012	989	4,733	214	5,781	181	299	16	496	31,452	27,846
2013	889	5,529	293	6,768	127	462	31	620	32,581	29,013
2014	1,041	5,918	312	7,116	162	462	28	652	24,158	20,709
2015	1,250	6,522	206	7,829	350	983	30	1,363	32,306	26,764
2016	1,338	4,873	143	6,219	164	383	16	563	16,009	12,485
2017	1,412	4,675	126	6,161	484	1,184	41	1,709	40,725	33,655
2018	656	2,288	115	3,044	273	746	50	1,069	52,524	42,202
2019	1,642	3,832	78	5,467	885	1,339	27	2,251	43,714	35,145
2020	1,460	3,046	0	4,466	251	427	0	678	26,293	21,587
2021	1,767	3,688	0	5,565	373	421	0	794	21,656	18,431
2022	1,883	3,676	0	5,272	946	1,182	0	2,128	38,480	32,006
2023	2,045	3,648	0	6,008	1,503	1,843	0	3,346	49,308	40,102
5-yr Avg. 2019–2023	1,759	3,648	16	5,407	792	1,042	5	1,839	35,890	29,454
10-yr Avg. 2014–2023	1,449	4,252	98	5,740	539	897	19	1,455	34,517	28,309

[a] With the implementation of mandatory online reporting, individuals must assign boat or shore for every harvest report since 2020.

[b] Total is less than sum of permits because some households fish from both shore and a boat.

[c] Inriver abundance is estimated by a mark-recapture project conducted by Native Village of Eyak, upstream of the Miles Lake sonar and downstream of any inriver harvest.

[d] From 2004–2021, the escapement goal was 24,000 or more king salmon; from 2022–present the escapement goal has been 21,000–31,000 king salmon.

PROPOSAL 69 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Shawn Gilman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish time and area restrictions for households dipnetting from a boat in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Salmon may be taken in the CSD by dip nets. There are no restrictions specific to dipnetting from a boat in any personal use fishery statewide.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? This would reduce personal use fishing opportunity, potentially reduce harvest, increase crowding at limited locations by restricting area within the subdistrict, and complicate management by establishing separate regulations based on fishing methods and complicate enforcement. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: Boats have been used by personal use dipnetters since at least 1984. An average of 1,759 households fished from boats from 2019–2023 in the CSD compared to 3,648 that fished from shore (Table 68–1). During this same period, permit holders in the CSD harvested an average of 38% of the reported sockeye salmon and 43% of the reported king salmon from boats (Tables 68-1 and 68-2). Average harvest per permit fished over the past 5 years (2019–2023) has been about 28 sockeye salmon and 0.4 king salmon for households fishing from a boat and 22 sockeye salmon and 0.3 king salmon for households fishing from shore. In the CSD the river is swift and surging, lined with rocks and cliffs, and the number of productive locations to fish from shore are limited. While participation and harvest in the CSD from households fishing from boats has been increasing, overall fishery harvests have remained sustainable.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it could increase conflict between users, it will complicate enforcement, and it may not reduce harvests. It is unclear what proposed actions are to be taken or when they will be enacted.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

PROPOSAL 70 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Chitina Dipnetters Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the size of the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) by extending the lower boundary approximately 0.5 miles downstream.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under 5 AAC 77.591(h), the CSD consists of all waters of the mainstem Copper River from the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Road Bridge downstream to an east-west line crossing the Copper River as designated by department regulatory markers located approximately 200 yards upstream of Haley Creek.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS IF THE PROPOSAL IS ADOPTED? This would provide additional fishing area and potentially reduce boat densities for Chitina personal use permit holders accessing the fishery by boat. This change in the CSD boundary would diverge from federal subsistence regulatory boundaries.

BACKGROUND: The current lower boundary of the CSD, approximately 200 yards upstream of Haley Creek, was established in 1986 (Figure 70-1). There has been no documented state-managed subsistence or personal use fishing in the mainstem Copper River downstream of the CSD since 1961.

Participation in the CSD has averaged 5,407 permits fished from 2019–2023 (Table 70-1). The number of households reporting fishing from shore consistently remains higher than those reporting fishing from boats. However, the number of permits being fished from boats has increased by 25% since 2019, most of which is attributed to the growth in the guide services that fish from a boat. While the number of households reporting harvest from boats has risen, total harvest from boats and shore combined is still within historical levels.

The current CSD lower boundary marker on the western shoreline can be reached by the Copper River Highway by ATV and provides a clear perpendicular view across the river to the regulatory boundary marker on the eastern shore. The line of sight to the proposed eastern boundary (marker) would be increased but would still be visible from the western marker. Nearly all boat dipnetting occurs in a short reach along river shoreline ~0.12 miles in length immediately upstream of the eastern marker. This reach provides the only waters within the CSD where the bottom substrate is free of snags, deep water, and challenging eddies, which allows one to more effectively and safely fish from a boat. Based on ADF&G test fishing with dipnets downstream of this marker, the efficiency of dipnetting from a boat drops because the river widens and shallows with mid-channel gravel bars present during low to mid water levels.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. It is unlikely that this will reduce congestion in this area, because boats will likely just continue the drift to the end of the new boundary. Increased harvest associated with the expansion will be minimal because households are already capped by their permit limits and the additional fishing area is not more productive than areas currently open. In addition, the gravel bar just downstream of the current boundary on the east bank can be a boating hazard during low to moderate water levels. Enforcement may be more difficult due to the greater sight line distance between markers; however, both eastern markers require a boat to engage fishers. The proposed boundary would result in differing downstream boundaries between the state and federal fisheries.

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. Approval of this proposal will result in an additional direct cost for the department to enlarge and relocate the east bank regulatory marker for this fishery.

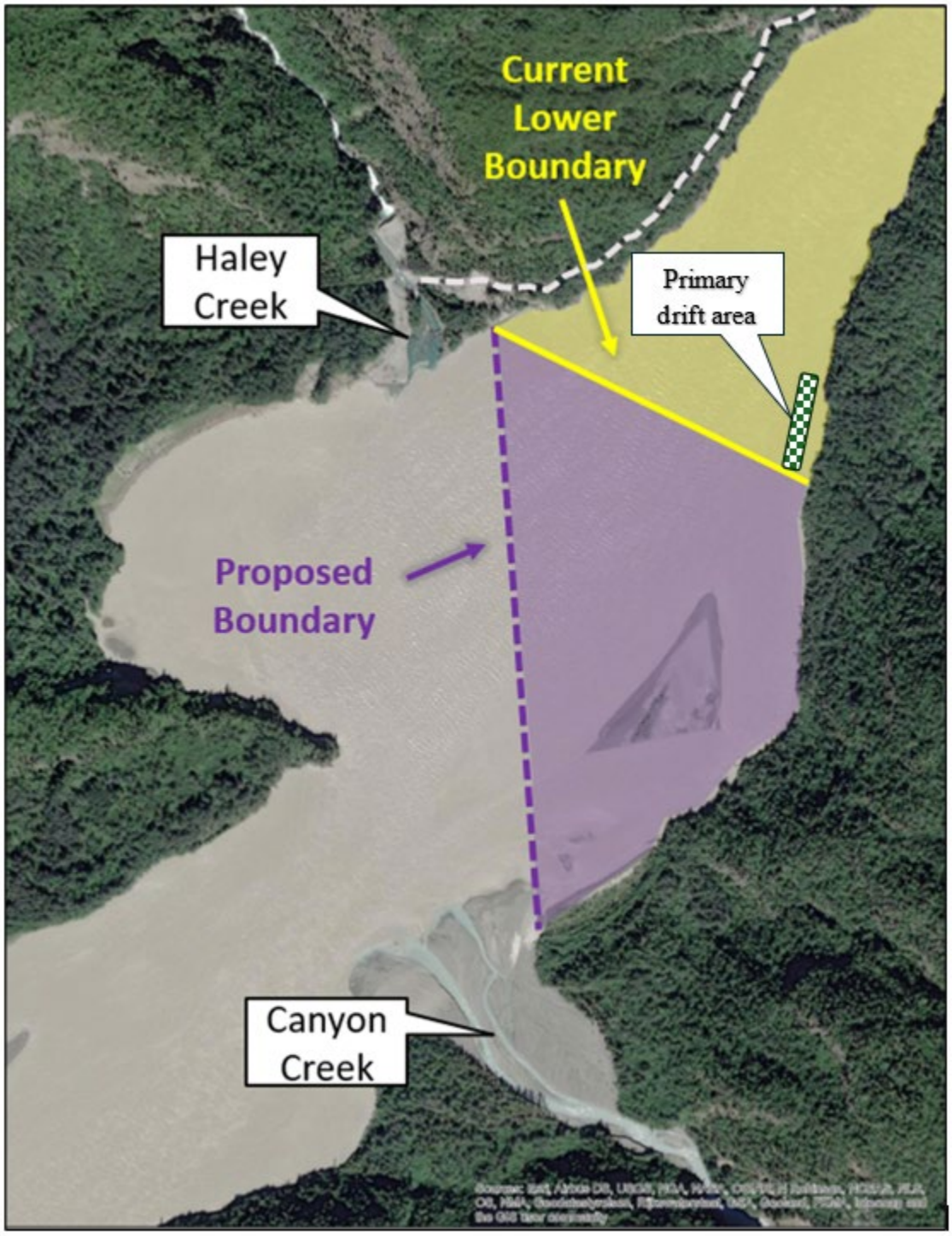

Figure 70-1–Current lower boundary and the proposed lower boundary in the Chitina Subdistrict, Copper River.

Table 70-1.–Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery reported participation and harvest by boat and shore, 2004–2023.

Year	Number of permits fished			Reported salmon harvest				% of harvest		Average salmon harvest per permit fished			
				Sockeye		King				Sockeye		King	
	Boat	Shore	Total[a]	Boat	Shore	Boat	Shore	Sockeye	King	Boat	Shore	Boat	Shore
2004	876	3,394	4,955	18,387	59,969	528	1,223	23%	30%	21	18	0.6	0.4
2005	771	3,823	5,330	17,187	73,011	382	1,120	19%	25%	22	19	0.5	0.3
2006	900	3,845	5,291	18,801	71,219	496	1,326	21%	27%	21	19	0.6	0.3
2007	1,149	4,234	5,549	25,686	82,239	687	1,593	24%	30%	22	19	0.6	0.4
2008	955	3,665	4,803	17,187	49,178	480	1,096	26%	30%	18	13	0.5	0.3
2009	749	3,823	4,830	13,988	61,989	64	118	18%	35%	19	16	0.1	0.0
2010	957	4,943	6,075	21,025	89,180	141	370	19%	28%	22	18	0.1	0.1
2011	958	4,683	5,710	22,197	88,774	189	700	20%	21%	23	19	0.2	0.1
2012	989	4,733	5,781	22,253	84,593	181	299	21%	38%	23	18	0.2	0.1
2013	889	5,529	6,768	24,538	122,253	127	462	17%	22%	28	22	0.1	0.1
2014	1,041	5,918	7,116	25,280	107,921	162	462	19%	26%	24	18	0.2	0.1
2015	1,250	6,522	7,829	40,306	150,798	350	983	21%	26%	32	23	0.3	0.2
2016	1,338	4,873	6,219	34,166	90,190	164	383	27%	30%	26	19	0.1	0.1
2017	1,412	4,675	6,161	33,033	78,137	484	1,184	30%	29%	23	17	0.3	0.3
2018	656	2,288	3,044	17,398	45,068	273	746	28%	27%	27	20	0.4	0.3
2019	1,642	3,832	5,467	49,091	96,555	885	1,339	34%	40%	30	25	0.5	0.3
2020	1,460	3,046	4,466	27,403	43,352	251	427	39%	37%	19	14	0.2	0.1
2021	1,806	3,796	5,565	54,289	82,188	373	421	40%	47%	30	22	0.2	0.1
2022	1,884	3,677	5,527	57,775	88,573	946	1,182	39%	44%	31	24	0.5	0.3
2023	2,054	3,998	6,008	60,465	100,848	1,503	1,843	37%	45%	29	25	0.7	0.5
5-yr Avg. 2019-2023	1,769	3,670	5,407	49,805	82,303	792	1,042	38%	43%	28	22	0.4	0.3
5-yr Avg. 2014-2023	1,454	4,263	5,740	39,921	88,363	539	897	31%	35%	27	21	0.3	0.2

[a] Totals may not equal the sum of boat and shore because some household permits fish from both boat and shore within a year, and from 2004–2019, individuals were allowed to submit permit reports without boat or shore designation and those permits are included in the total.

PROPOSAL 71 – 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Tene Nene'.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit guided fishing from a boat in the Copper River Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) personal use dip net salmon fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no regulations prohibiting a person from outfitting, transporting, or providing guide services to Alaska residents participating in personal use fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would reduce access in the CSD personal use salmon dip net fishery for Alaska residents who rely on guides to provide access to fishery resources. It may also reduce participation and harvest by an unknown amount. This may increase the number of salmon passing through the Chitina Subdistrict and provide additional fish for the upriver fisheries (subsistence and sport) and spawning escapement.

BACKGROUND: Management of the CSD personal use fishery is guided by the *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 77.591). The fishery opens between June 7 and 15 and remains open through September 30. Weekly fishing period hours during June through August are based on salmon abundance as measured by the Miles Lake sonar. The fishery is open 24/7 during September. Within the inriver goal river goal allocation, there is 100,000–150,000 salmon for the PU fishery category. This PU category does not account for any surplus salmon above the inriver goal that are available to all fisheries or for salmon taken after August 31.

The practice of dipnetting from a boat has occurred since before the inception of the personal use fishery in 1984 when the CSD fishery was considered a subsistence fishery. Although not specifically monitored by the department, guided dipnetting from a boat has occurred intermittently in this fishery since before 2000. Currently there are three dip net guide services (not transporters) each operating one to two boats. There may also be some intermittent operators that offer dip net guide services during the fishing season.

Total harvest in the CSD has never exceeded management parameters and has averaged 2,093 king salmon and 147,606 sockeye salmon over the last 5 years (2019-2023) and 1,686 king salmon and 148,748 sockeye salmon over the last 10 years (2014-2023; Table 71-1). Reported harvest from boats accounted for 38% of all sockeye salmon harvested over the last 5 years and 43% of all king salmon harvested (Table 71-2). This is a slight increase over the last 10-year averages.

Beginning with the 2024 season, dip net permit holders are required to identify if they used a commercial service (transporter or guided dipnetting from a boat). These data were not available in time for inclusion in staff comments and will be presented through a record comment during the meeting. During 2024 there were three businesses offering guide services.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not have biological concerns that require reducing harvest. Total harvest in the CSD has never exceeded management parameters and harvest by guided dip netters accounts for only a small percentage of overall harvest. Guide services provide a valuable option for Alaskans wanting to access and harvest fish, including those with physical limitations.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 71-1.–Number of state permits issued and total (state plus federal) expanded salmon harvests for the Copper River Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net salmon fishery, 2005–2023.

	Permits			Harvest[a]				Maximum	Sockeye
Year	State issued	Total state fished	Percent total fished	King salmon	Sockeye salmon	Coho salmon	Total harvest[b]	allowed harvest[c]	spawning escapement
2005	8,230	5,330	64.5%	2,094	122,463	1,869	126,904	486,266	515,599
2006	8,497	5,291	62.1%	2,681	124,810	2,735	130,690	498,488	579,552
2007	8,377	5,549	66.3%	2,722	126,154	1,783	131,319	520,505	612,103
2008	8,041	4,803	59.6%	2,022	82,318	2,811	87,558	253,739	480,597
2009	7,958	4,830	60.7%	223	90,917	1,723	93,130	267,748	469,090
2010	9,970	6,075	60.8%	718	140,811	2,043	143,937	405,811	502,992
2011	9,217	5,710	61.8%	1,080	129,985	1,712	133,221	442,231	607,657
2012	10,016	5,781	57.5%	572	128,058	1,393	130,298	760,400	953,245
2013	10,592	6,768	63.7%	762	182,915	805	185,194	689,060	860,929
2014	11,717	7,116	60.6%	733	158,879	1,198	161,149	620,418	864,988
2015	12,635	7,829	61.8%	1,585	225,425	855	229,213	737,100	930,061
2016	11,394	6,219	54.3%	726	150,303	1,193	152,831	239,593	513,563
2017	9,490	6,161	64.5%	1,973	134,294	723	137,663	183,426	465,518
2018	4,982	3,044	60.7%	1,374	80,542	1,470	83,761	207,577	478,701
2019	8,071	5,467	67.3%	2,689	175,413	1,084	179,795	571,654	721,033
2020	6,810	4,466	64.9%	847	81,428	838	83,343	N/A	362,445
2021[d]	7,222	5,565	76.4%	945	148,716	442	150,537	296,262	511,274
2022	7,100	5,527	77.0%	2,313	157,944	607	161,330	279,509	520,120
2023	7,559	6,008	78.8%	3,669	174,532	782	179,325	514,740	694,007
5-yr Average 2019–2023	7,352	5,407	73%	2,093	147,607	751	150,866	415,541	562,014
10-yr Average 2014–2023	8,698	5,740	67%	1,685	148,748	919	151,895	405,587	600,963

[a] Includes federal subsistence harvest (federal harvest accounts for less than 3% of the overall harvest in this Subdistrict).

[b] Includes reported harvest for other species.

[c] Maximum allowed harvest is 150,000 salmon plus any salmon in excess of the inriver goal for that year.

[d] Inriver run was less than inriver goal. Upriver fisheries were managed to exceed the Copper River sockeye salmon lower bound sustainable escapement goal.

Table 71-2.–Reported state harvest of king and sockeye salmon from boats and shore in the Copper River Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net salmon fishery, 2001–2023.

			Personal use harvest					
	Permits fished[a]		Sockeye salmon		King salmon		% from boats	
Year	Boat	Shore	Boat	Shore	Boat	Shore	Sockeye salmon	King salmon
2001	1,165	4,292	23,722	69,784	712	1,471	25%	33%
2002	786	2,703	13,488	40,844	411	907	25%	31%
2003	836	2,861	15,338	45,173	481	907	25%	35%
2004	876	3,394	18,387	59,969	528	1,223	23%	30%
2005	771	3,823	17,187	73,011	382	1,120	19%	25%
2006	900	3,845	18,801	71,219	496	1,326	21%	27%
2007	1,149	4,234	25,686	82,239	687	1,593	24%	30%
2008	955	3,665	17,187	49,178	480	1,096	26%	30%
2009	749	3,823	13,988	61,989	64	118	18%	35%
2010	957	4,943	21,025	89,180	141	370	19%	28%
2011	958	4,683	22,197	88,774	189	700	20%	21%
2012	989	4,733	22,253	84,593	181	299	21%	38%
2013	889	5,529	24,538	122,253	127	462	17%	22%
2014	1,041	5,918	25,280	107,921	162	462	19%	26%
2015	1,250	6,522	40,306	150,798	350	983	21%	26%
2016	1,338	4,873	34,166	90,190	164	383	27%	30%
2017	1,412	4,675	33,033	78,137	484	1,184	30%	29%
2018	656	2,288	17,398	45,068	273	746	28%	27%
2019	1,642	3,832	49,091	96,555	885	1,339	34%	40%
2020	1,460	3,046	27,403	43,352	251	427	39%	37%
2021	1,767	3,688	52,962	79,300	373	421	40%	47%
2022	1,883	3,676	58,385	89,941	946	1,182	39%	44%
2023	2,045	3,998	60,465	100,848	1,503	1,843	37%	45%
5-yr Avg. 2019–2023	1,759	3,648	49,661	81,999	792	1,042	38%	43%
10-yr Avg. 2014–2023	1,449	4,252	39,849	88,211	539	897	31%	35%

[a] Permits fished in this table may not match total permits fished in published reports as some permit holders report harvest from both shore and boat.

SPORT (1 PROPOSAL)

PROPOSAL 72 – 5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Intertribal Resources Commission, Fisheries Department.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require the department to close the Gulkana River salmon sport fisheries when water temperature exceeds 18°C at any time during a 24-hour period for 3 consecutive days or exceeds 20°C.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under 5 AAC 75.003. *Emergency order authority*, the commissioner may limit or close a sport fishery based on conservation concerns, which could include lethal temperature for fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers targeting sockeye and king salmon would be subject to highly unpredictable closures and openings based on variable water temperatures. The department would have to develop thermal limits used for management and a monitoring program. Salmon sport fishing opportunity would be closed when water temperatures have cooled but regulatory notices to anglers have not yet taken effect. Conversely, sport fishing opportunity would be allowed when water temperatures have warmed and regulatory notices have not yet taken effect.

BACKGROUND: Multiple peer-reviewed studies have identified temperature-induced physiological stress indicators in king and sockeye salmon at ambient temperatures as low as 18°C but do not relate increased mortality or decreased spawning success until temperatures exceed 19°C. (Bowerman, T. et al. 2018, Cooke, S. et al. 2006, Crossin, G. et al 2008, Hasler, C. et al. 2012, Von Biela, V. et al. 2020). Actual mortality in king and sockeye salmon exposed to higher water temperatures in the wild depends on the duration of the exposure, availability of cool water refugia, adaptation of the stocks to their natal systems, and other factors such as water velocity, predator abundance, and fishery impacts.

Temperature data from the Gulkana River king salmon counting tower show that migrating salmon encountered water temperatures of 18–19°C in most years since 2003 and temperatures between 19–22°C in about 27% of the last 22 years (Table 72-1). The department does not have temperature profile data for the migration route and spawning areas within the drainage. Generally, Gulkana River king salmon migration speeds are related to water temperature; slow until water temperatures reach about 16°C and remain high until water temperatures exceed about 19°C. The response to temperature is so consistent that temperatures in June alone can accurately predict final king salmon counts at the department counting tower station; evidence that Gulkana River king salmon appear adapted to this system. Tower temperature data also indicate fewer days with water temperatures equal to or exceeding 18°C than the station operated by United States Geological Survey located at Sourdough, indicating high water temperatures are not consistent throughout the river. The Gulkana River is characterized by an abundance of deep-water holding areas. The majority of fishing effort for salmon occurs between June 15 and July 19, when the king salmon sport fishery closes. Effort directed at sockeye salmon is low.

Using the proposer's criterion would lead to significant annual restrictions to sport anglers, as demonstrated in Table 72-2. There is no evidence that exposure to short-term (3 days) daily maximum water temperatures greater than 18°C increases mortality or decreases spawning effectiveness of king and sockeye salmon in the Gulkana River. Restrictions based on maximum daily temperature spikes would be overly restrictive with no conservation benefit. Using average daily temperatures would reduce the number of potential restrictive actions but would still have little or no conservation benefit in most years (Table 72-3).

Department guidelines for issuing emergency orders (EO) require at least one day to write an EO and posting at least 36-48 hours prior to the effective date to allow for public notice. If a temperature trigger occurs on day 1 and lasts through day 3, an EO could be issued on day 4 and go into effect on day 6 at the earliest. Since 2015, there were only three years with temperature events equal to or exceeding 18°C that lasted 7 days or more. Any EOs issued in the other years would have been rescinded within 24 hours of taking effect. Finally, the Gulkana River is a remote location and the ability to inform anglers of an EO would be difficult and could lead to anglers being cited for a violation they were unaware of.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. It is well known that salmon can experience physiological stress at elevated water temperatures and the department has authority to restrict fisheries during extreme temperature events. There is no evidence that the observed elevated temperature events in the Gulkana River have negatively impacted productivity nor elevated natural or hooking mortality. Anglers targeting salmon would be subject to highly unpredictable closures and openings based on varying water temperatures. Resulting inseason management notifications would be often unworkable and fishing opportunities could be reduced.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 72-1.–Maximum daily water temperatures at the Gulkana River king salmon counting tower exceeding 17ºC and the duration of warm water periods between June 1 and August 15, 2003 through 2024.

	Total days			Number of episodes of 7 days or more (duration of longest single event)		
Year	Days above 17º	Days at above 19º	Days above 22º	Above 17º	Above 19º	Above 22º
2003	17	5	0	1 (8 days)	0)	0
2004	44	29	14	3 (18 days)	2 (17 days)	1 (11 days)
2005	19	10	5	0	0	0
2006	18	0	0	0	0	0
2007	14	2	0	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0	0	0	0
2009	7	0	0	0	0	0
2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0	0	0	0
2012	1	0	0	0	0	0
2013	20	5	0	1 (12 days)	0	0
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015[a]	2	0	0	0	0	0
2016[a]	0	0	0	0	0	0
2017[a]	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018	2	0	0	0	0	0
2019	20	11	0	1 (15 days)	1 (9 days)	0
2020	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021	3	0	0	0	0	0
2022	5	0	0	0	0	0
2023	14	0	0	1 (14 days)	0	0
2024	2	0	0	0	0	0

[a] Data only available in June

Table 72-2.–Maximum daily water temperatures at the Sourdough boat launch USGS station exceeding 17ºC and the duration of warm water periods between June 1 and August 30, 2015 through 2024.

	Total days			Number of episodes of 3 days or more (longest single event)		
Year	Days above 17º	Days at above 19º	Days above 22º	Above 17º	Above 19º	Above 22º
2015[a]	4	0	0	1 (4-days)	0	0
2016	13	3	0	2 (10 days)	1 (3 days)	0
2017	20	1	0	4 (5 days)	0	0
2018	5	0	0	1 (4 days)	0	0
2019	38	19	4	1 (36 days)	1 (15 days)	1 (4 days)
2020	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021	13	2	0	2 (7 days)	0	0
2022	15	8	0	1 (15 days)	1 (8 days)	0
2023	24	13	0	1 (20 days)	1 (13 days)	0
2024	16	3	0	2 (10 days)	0	0

[a] Data only available in August.

Table 72-3.–Average daily water temperatures at the Sourdough boat launch USGS station exceeding 17ºC and the duration of warm water periods between June 1 and August 30, 2015 through 2024.

	Total days			Number of episodes of 3 days or more (longest single event)		
Year	Days above 17º	Days at above 19º	Days above 22º	Above 17º	Above 19º	Above 22º
2015[a]	0	0	0	0	0	0
2016	3	0	0	1 (3 days)	0	0
2017	1	0	0	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019	25	11	0	2 (17 days)	2 (6 days)	0
2020	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021	5	0	0	1 (4 days)	0	0
2022	12	2	0	1 (12 days)	0	0
2023	16	0	0	1 (16 days)	0	0
2024	4	0	0	1 (4 days)	0	0

[a] Data only available in August.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – GROUP 4: COMMERCIAL FISHING PERMITS, ALLOCATION PLAN AND HATCHERY OPERATIONS, AND HERRING (20 PROPOSALS)

ALLOCATION PLAN AND HATCHERY OPERATIONS (7 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 75 – 5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Enhancement Allocation Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Bowen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would change the allocation trigger from less than 45% to less than 50% and remove the Esther Subdistrict as a shortfall remedy for the purse seine fleet; instead, the Port Chalmers Subdistrict would be the only "piggy bank". It would also shift the exvessel values from the currently used five-year rolling average to the average of all years since the inception of the current plan (2006).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan,* the Port Chalmers Subdistrict is managed such that if the drift gillnet gear group 5-year average harvest value is 45 percent or less of the common property Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) enhanced salmon stocks, then in the year following the current calculations, the drift gillnet gear group shall have exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon from June 1 through July 30. Conversely, if the purse seine gear group 5-year average harvest value is 45 percent or less of the common property enhanced salmon stocks, then in the year following the current calculations, the purse seine gear group shall have exclusive access to the Esther Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon from June 1 through July 20.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the frequency with which the drift gillnet gear group will have access to Port Chalmers. If the proposal were adopted, the allocation percentage calculation would be less responsive to fluctuations in annual harvest values. Large and small runs, relative to the average, would tend to have less influence on the average when including more than all years. An average based on exvessel values extending back to 2006 would likely give the drift gillnet gear group access to Port Chalmers more often than a five-year rolling average. This calculation method would include multiple years of high purse seine annual harvest values and would decrease the influence of poor harvest years for extended periods. This could make the plan less responsive to shorter-term, gear group-specific revenue shortfalls. It would also remove the Esther Subdistrict as an allocative correction should the purse seine fleet experience a revenue shortfall, which under this proposal would be an average exvessel value of less than 50%.

BACKGROUND: At the 1996 board meeting, the "piggy bank" concept was introduced as a remedy for the drift gillnet or purse seine fleet, should one experience a significant allocation shortfall. Currently, the piggy bank for the drift gillnet fleet is exclusive access to the enhanced chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict of the Montague District. The piggy bank for the purse seine gear group provides exclusive access to the enhanced Wally Noerenberg Hatchery chum salmon run in the Esther Subdistrict.

The allocation calculation is based on the preceding five-year average ex-vessel value of PWSAC-only fish. The trigger point was modified to a two-tier allocation adjustment scheme. The first tier

is a 47 percent trigger established to allow the regional aquaculture association to make proportional adjustments to cost recovery in applicable years. A 45 percent trigger was established for the second tier to provide access to the "piggy banks" in applicable years.

The Port Chalmers Subdistrict opened to drift gillnet fishing for the first time in 2009 when the drift gillnet gear group fell below the 45% average harvest value trigger point over the previous five-year period. Since then, the group has had exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict nine times, the most recent year being 2023. The purse seine gear group has fallen below the 45% average harvest value trigger point once since the plan's inception, granting them exclusive access to the Esther Subdistrict in 2006. Overall, the "piggy banks" have not been triggered for 53% of the years (Table 75-1).

Proposals about the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* have been before the board since the plan became effective in 1991. A history and analysis of the allocation plan through the 1996 board meeting is available in board finding 97-02-FB. After 1997, the plan failed to achieve some of its allocation objectives, resulting in modifications to the plan at the 2003 board meeting and forming a Prince William Sound Management and Allocation Plan Workgroup. The workgroup formally met at least six times between 2004 and the 2005 board meeting. Board action at the 2005 meeting modified the plan to apply only to PWSAC-enhanced stocks, excluding Valdez Fisheries Development Association and wild stocks from PWS and the Copper River. This history and analysis of the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* is available in board finding 06-248-FB.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 75-1.–Five-year exvessel percentages of common property PWSAC-enhanced salmon harvest based on ex-vessel values for fishing seasons 2006-2024 (shading indicates a "piggy bank" was triggered.).

Year	Purse seine	Drift gillnet
2006	44.3%	55.7%
2007	45.4%	54.6%
2008	47.6%	52.4%
2009	57.1%	42.9%
2010	62.1%	37.9%
2011	59.0%	41.0%
2012	60.9%	39.1%
2013	57.6%	42.4%
2014	53.7%	46.3%
2015	55.4%	44.6%
2016	55.3%	44.7%
2017	53.0%	47.0%
2018	53.3%	46.7%
2019	56.9%	43.1%
2020	47.7%	52.3%
2021	50.5%	49.5%
2022	48.2%	51.8%
2023	55.6%	44.4%
2024	52.9%	47.1%

PROPOSAL 78 – 5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Virgil Umphenour.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reduce the current permitted capacity of pink and chum salmon eggs at each Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) and Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) hatchery by 25%.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Private nonprofit (PNP) hatchery egg-take levels are not set in regulation, rather they are specified on permits issued by the department. The board may, after the issuance of a permit by the commissioner, amend by regulation, the terms of the permit relating to the source and number of salmon eggs, the harvest of fish by hatchery operators, and the specific locations designated by the department for harvest. The board may not adopt any regulations or take any action regarding the issuance or denial of any permits required in AS 16.10.400–16.10.470 (AS 16.10.440).

Primary authority over issuance of hatchery permits and regulations of hatchery operations is vested in the commissioner and department. There are several interrelated statutory authorities relating to hatchery production levels (AS 16.10.400–16.10.430).

Each salmon enhancement region has a Comprehensive Salmon Enhancement Plan, approved by the commissioner, that outlines production goals by species, area, and time (AS 16.10.375; 5 AAC 40.340–370).

PNP hatcheries operate under four permitting documents issued by the department: *PNP hatchery permit*, *basic management plan* (BMP), *fish transport permits* (FTP), and *annual management plans* (AMP). Each of these documents are approved by the commissioner.

The *PNP hatchery permit* (AS 16.10.400–16.10.470) authorizes operation of the hatchery and specifies the species, egg source (stock), egg numbers, release location(s), release numbers, and other conditions. Hatchery permits must be in accordance with the area's Comprehensive Salmon Enhancement Plan. Hatchery permits remain in effect unless relinquished by the permit holder or revoked by the commissioner.

The *basic management plan* (BMP; 5 AAC 40.820) is an addendum to the PNP hatchery permit to include a facility development schedule and specifies the stocks for broodstock development, maximum number of eggs of each species that a facility can incubate, and the authorized release locations, among other conditions.

PNP hatchery permits and BMPs are available for public input through a public hearing that includes an oral and written comment period prior to a determination by the commissioner. The permit and BMP may be amended by the permit holder through a *permit alteration request* (PAR; 5 AAC 40.850). Requested changes are reviewed by the Regional Planning Team (RPT) that allows for public participation and are reviewed by department staff. PARs are sent to the commissioner for consideration of approval.

A *fish transport permit* (FTP; 5 AAC 41.001–41.060) is required for egg collection, transport, and release of live fish. An FTP authorizes specific activities described in the hatchery permit including broodstock source, gamete collection, and release site. FTPs are consistent with the previously approved guiding documents for the program, such as the PNP hatchery permit and are reviewed by the department fish pathologist, fish geneticist, area management biologists, regional

supervisors, and other department staff as delegated by the commissioner. Reviewers ensure activities described in the FTP are consistent with department policies and may suggest conditions for the FTP. Reviewers recommend approval or provide concerns, and final consideration of approval is made by the commissioner. FTPs are issued for a fixed period. When an FTP is renewed or amended, the FTP application goes through the same review process as the original FTP. Continual review of hatchery activities provides an ongoing assessment of all hatchery projects over time.

An *annual management plan* (AMP; 5 AAC 40.840) outlines operation for the current year and is written cooperatively between department regional and PNP hatchery staff in a process that is coordinated by the PNP Hatchery Program Coordinator. Typically, AMPs include the current year's egg-take goals, juvenile releases, remaining fish inventory, expected adult returns, harvest management plans, FTPs required or in place, production strategies, and evaluation plans. AMPs must be consistent with the PNP Hatchery Permit and BMP. Final consideration of the plan is made by the commissioner.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? In 2024, PNP salmon hatcheries in Prince William Sound are permitted to take up to 795 million pink salmon eggs and 165 million chum salmon eggs. The average annual exvessel value of pink salmon, which includes cost-recovery harvest is $43.4 million (Table 78–1). The average annual exvessel value of chum salmon, which includes cost-recovery harvest is $14.5 million (Table 78–2). Capping egg takes at 25% current capacity results in capacities of 596.25 million pink salmon eggs and 123.75 million chum salmon eggs. It is reasonable to assume the production cut would have a similar percentage cut on the annual average exvessel value, which equates to $10.8 million less commercial harvest revenue for pink salmon and $3.6 million for chum salmon. Imposing this cap will have a significant negative effect on the local economy, while not likely to result in any positive effects on wild salmon stocks. This would likely have a negative impact on the viability of salmon processing operations in PWS, jeopardizing their ability to purchase wild stock salmon harvests and participate in groundfish, shellfish, and herring buying.

BACKGROUND: Prince William Sound currently contains four hatcheries permitted to produce pink salmon: Armin F. Koernig Hatchery (AFK), Cannery Creek Hatchery (CCH), and Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH), operated by Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC); and Solomon Gulch Hatchery (SGH) operated by Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA). Prince William Sound currently contains two hatcheries permitted to produce chum salmon, AFK and WNH, operated by PWSAC.

In 1975, PWSAC built AFK, named initially Port San Juan Hatchery, which was issued hatchery permit #2. The AFK hatchery is currently permitted to take 190 million pink salmon eggs and 34 million chum salmon eggs.

In 1978, the ADF&G Fisheries Rehabilitation, Enhancement, and Development Division built CCH as a pink and chum salmon hatchery. In 1988, PWSAC was issued permit #26 to operate CCH under contract and in cooperation with the department (AS 16.10.480). CCH is currently permitted to take 187 million pink salmon eggs.

In 1981, VFDA built SGH and was issued hatchery permit #15. SGH is currently permitted to take 270 million pink salmon eggs. In addition, SGH is permitted to take two million coho salmon eggs that support Prince William Sound sport and subsistence fisheries. VFDA also provides 20 thousand coho salmon smolts to the Native village of Tatitlek for a subsistence harvest program.

The City of Valdez covers approximately 30% of the total operational costs to support the coho salmon program through an annual grant, and the cost recovery harvest of pink salmon pays for the rest.

In 1983, PWSAC built WNH, originally named Esther Hatchery, and issued hatchery permit #20. WNH is currently permitted to take 148 million pink salmon eggs and 131 million chum salmon eggs. In addition, WNH is permitted to take four million king and four million coho salmon eggs for remote release sites around Prince William Sound including Fleming Spit, Whittier, and Chenega, which all provide sport fishing opportunity. Operating costs for these programs are primarily generated by cost recovery harvest of pink and chum salmon.

The board's authority over hatchery production has previously been outlined by the Alaska Department of Law in an informal Attorney General Opinion (Nov. 6, 1997; 661-98-0127). The informal attorney general opinion notes the board "may exercise indirect authority over hatchery production by regulating the harvest of hatchery release fish in the common use fishery," by regulating "hatchery broodstock and cost recovery harvests," and by regulatory action "amending those portions of hatchery permits relating to the source and number of salmon eggs, hatchery harvests, and designation of special harvest areas." The opinion also noted that "Board action that effectively revokes or prevents the issuance of a hatchery permit is probably not authorized."

Excerpt from the Dept. of Law Memo on Authority of the Board of Fisheries Over Private Nonprofit Hatchery Production (1997) (page 12):

> Given (1) the detailed statutory scheme granting specific authority to the department over nearly every aspect of the permitting and operation of nonprofit hatcheries, (2) the more general statutory authority of the Board over the harvest of fishery resources, and (3) by contrast, the limitations imposed upon the specific statutory authority of the Board over hatchery permits by the amendment to AS 16.10.440(b) in 1979, we conclude the following. Though the Board may effectively amend hatchery permits by regulation in a manner that affects hatchery fish production, we do not believe the Board may either (1) adopt regulations that effectively veto or override a fundamental department policy decision regarding whether to authorize the operation of a particular hatchery or (2) adopt regulations preventing the department from exercising its authority to permit a hatchery operation. We believe that Board actions falling into either of these two categories would risk being viewed by a court as constructing an impermissible impediment to the department's role as the primary government agency responsible for the regulation of hatcheries. In particular, such actions would risk being deemed incompatible with the limitations imposed by the 1979 amendment to AS 16.05.440(b).
>
> A recent decision by the Alaska Supreme Court supports this view. In Peninsula Marketing Ass'n v. Rosier, 890 P.2d 567, 573 (Alaska 1995), the court held that in the absence of specific statutory authority for the commissioner to issue emergency orders concerning a question previously considered by the Board, the commissioner could not effectively veto a decision by the Board for which there was specific statutory authority. The court ruled that "[i]nferring a broad veto power would make superfluous the detailed provisions dividing power and authority within the Department" and effectively eviscerate the powers explicitly granted to the Board. *Id*. Similarly, to read the limited grant of authority to the Board over hatcheries set out in AS 16.10.440(b) to permit the Board to effectively veto fundamental policy decisions by the department for which there is specific

statutory authority would upset the balance of the statutory scheme chosen by the legislature.

Additional reasons support that conclusion. As previously noted, the Board "may not adopt any regulations or take any action regarding the *issuance* or *denial* of any permits required under AS 16.10.400-16.10.470." AS 16.10.440(b) (emphasis added). We believe that a Board regulation that so drastically amends a hatchery permit to render the hatchery's operation impracticable might be viewed by a court to be an impermissible action by the Board "regarding the issuance or denial . . . of a permit." *See* AS 16.10.440(b). In other words, a Board amendment that puts a hatchery out of operation might be construed as an effective revocation or denial of a hatchery permit, an action that is expressly prohibited by AS 16.10.440(b). Similarly, Board regulations prohibiting the establishment of a hatchery in a particular area are deemed by a court as an action by the Board regarding the issuance of a permit and, therefore, unlawful under AS 16.10.440(b). [1]

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Hatchery egg-take levels are established through an iterative process involving department staff and stakeholders. Hatchery operations are permitted with consideration of minimizing impact on wild salmon stocks. The commissioner can amend a permit if the hatchery is not in the public's best interest or to mitigate the adverse effects of the hatchery operation. If there is a compelling reason to amend the terms of a hatchery permit, the amendment should be based on analysis of data and there should be clear evidence the amendment will reduce adverse effects on wild stocks. This proposal did not provide evidence to support that current permitted pink and chum salmon egg-take levels adversely affect wild stocks, in or outside the Prince William Sound enhancement area.

If the board were to adopt this proposal, there would need to be a discussion of how to apportion the egg-take cap because egg-take capacity is set on each hatchery permit. A straight 25% cut to each species at each hatchery may have unintended effects on the production of other species of salmon and may affect harvest allocation, which are a primary concern of the boards of the PNP corporations.

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. Approval of this proposal will not result in an additional cost for the department.

[1] We realize that without additional clarification from the legislature the parameters of permissible Board regulations remain somewhat murky. However, we believe that the more significantly a particular Board regulation restricts the effective functioning of a hatchery in a way that is incompatible with a departmental decision to permit the hatchery's operation, the greater is the risk that the Board regulation may be invalidated by a reviewing court.

Table 78-1.–The estimated annual exvessel value of pink salmon, 2013–2022.

Prince William Sound Exvessel Hatchery Contribution					
Year	Number of Pink Salmon	Weight (lb)	Price	Value	Value of 25% Cut
2013	74,616,332	2.76	$0.42	$86,495,252	$21,623,813
2014	40,921,607	3.40	$0.33	$45,914,043	$11,478,511
2015	70,375,473	3.36	$0.23	$54,386,166	$13,596,541
2016	9,930,534	3.96	$0.46	$18,089,461	$4,522,365
2017	27,347,711	3.86	$0.41	$43,280,487	$10,820,122
2018	18,190,368	3.79	$0.50	$34,470,747	$8,617,687
2019	29,907,940	3.43	$0.35	$35,904,482	$8,976,120
2020	16,060,506	3.60	$0.44	$25,439,842	$6,359,960
2021	42,242,551	2.57	$0.43	$46,682,243	$11,670,561
2022	21,950,511	3.51	$0.56	$43,145,924	$10,786,481
Average	35,154,353	3.42	$0.41	$43,380,865	$10,845,216

Source: the number of fish from hatchery annual report data, which includes cost-recovery harvest. Weights from area Fisheries Management Reports and price from COAR data are available on the ADF&G website.

Table 78-2.–The estimated annual exvessel value of chum salmon, 2013–2022.

Prince William Sound Exvessel Hatchery Contribution					
Year	Number of Chum Salmon	Weight (lb)	Price	Value	Value of 25% Cut
2013	3,640,837	7.48	$0.61	$16,612,411	$4,153,103
2014	1,102,613	7.63	$0.63	$5,300,150	$1,325,038
2015	2,140,353	6.16	$0.61	$8,042,590	$2,010,648
2016	2,793,882	6.93	$0.63	$12,197,809	$3,049,452
2017	4,548,849	7.53	$0.74	$25,347,096	$6,336,774
2018	2,996,641	8.29	$0.94	$23,351,625	$5,837,906
2019	4,610,791	6.17	$0.55	$15,646,719	$3,911,680
2020	1,715,982	7.40	$0.49	$6,222,151	$1,555,538
2021	2,297,807	5.91	$0.87	$11,814,634	$2,953,659
2022	2,550,702	6.57	$1.24	$20,780,059	$5,195,015
Average	2,839,846	7.01	$0.73	$14,531,525	$3,632,881

Source: the number of fish from hatchery annual report data, which includes cost-recovery harvest. Weights from area Fisheries Management Reports, and price from COAR data, which are both available on the ADF&G website.

PROPOSAL 76 – 5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Enhancement Allocation Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Darin Gilman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would change the allocation trigger from less than 45% to less than 50% and remove the Esther Subdistrict as a shortfall remedy for the purse seine fleet; instead, the Port Chalmers Subdistrict would be the only "piggy bank."

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan,* the Port Chalmers Subdistrict is managed such that if the drift gillnet gear group five-year average harvest value is 45 percent or less of the common property enhanced salmon stocks, then in the year following the current calculations, the drift gillnet gear group shall have exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon from June 1 through July 30. Conversely, if the purse seine gear group five-year average harvest value is 45 percent or less of the common property enhanced salmon stocks, then in the year following the current calculations, the purse seine gear group shall have exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon from June 1 through July 20.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would remove the Esther Subdistrict as an allocative correction should the purse seine fleet experience a revenue shortfall, which under this proposal would be an average exvessel value of less than 50%. Furthermore, using an allocative corrective trigger of 50% would result in the allocation plan being more responsive to the drift gillnet and purse seine gear groups being out of parity. Relative to the current 45% allocation trigger, using a 50% allocation trigger would result in more Port Chalmers enhanced chum salmon value being incorporated into the allocation calculation for the gear group below parity. This would result in a higher likelihood of the allocation "piggy bank" harvest value influencing allocation percentages to bring the two gear groups back into parity. If both gear groups are near parity, this "piggy bank" fishery is likely to switch back and forth more frequently.

BACKGROUND: At the 1996 board meeting the "piggy bank" concept was introduced as a remedy to either the drift gillnet or purse seine fleet should they experience a significant allocation shortfall. Currently, the piggy bank for the drift gillnet fleet is exclusive access to the enhanced chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict of the Montague District. The piggy bank for the purse seine gear group provides exclusive access to the enhanced Wally Noerenberg Hatchery chum salmon run in the Esther Subdistrict.

The allocation calculation is based on the preceding five-year average ex-vessel value of PWSAC-only fish. The trigger point is currently a two-tier allocation adjustment scheme. The first tier is a 47 percent trigger established to allow the regional aquaculture association to make proportional adjustments to cost recovery in applicable years. For the second tier, a 45 percent trigger was established to provide access to the "piggy banks" in applicable years.

The Port Chalmers Subdistrict opened to drift gillnet fishing for the first time in 2009 when the drift gillnet gear group fell below the 45% average harvest value trigger point over the previous five-year period. Since then, the group has had exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict nine times, the most recent year being 2023. The purse seine gear group has fallen below the 45% average harvest value trigger point once since the plan's inception, granting them exclusive access to the Esther Subdistrict in 2006. Overall, the "piggy banks" have not been triggered for 53% of the years.

Proposals about the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* have been before the board since the plan became effective in 1991. A history and analysis of the allocation plan through the 1996 board meeting is available in board finding 97-02-FB. After 1997, the plan failed to achieve some of its allocation objectives, resulting in modifications to the plan at the 2003 board meeting and forming a Prince William Sound Management and Allocation Plan Workgroup. The workgroup formally met at least six times between 2004 and the 2005 board meeting. Board action at the 2005 meeting modified the plan to apply only to PWSAC-enhanced stocks, excluding Valdez Fisheries Development Association and wild stocks from PWS and the Copper River. This history and analysis of the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* is available in board finding 06-248-FB

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

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.

PROPOSAL 77 – 5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Allocation Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Michael Bowen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would include Valdez Fisheries Development Association's (VFDA) enhanced salmon harvest value in the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* (5 AAC 24.370).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation* Plan (5 AAC 24.370(j)), "enhanced salmon stocks" are limited to those salmon produced by Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The drift gillnet gear group would gain access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict, and the set gillnet gear group would rarely be limited to 36 hours per week in the Eshamy District. The purse seine gear group would lose access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict.

BACKGROUND: Enhanced pink salmon produced by VFDA would add an average value (2018–2022) of $19.92 million ($17.97 million for pink salmon, $391,200 for coho salmon) to the purse seine portion of the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan*. Including revenue generated from the harvest of VFDA salmon could cause a change in the overall allocation (five-year rolling average) for all gear groups, most notably increasing purse seine value (Table 77-1 and Table 77-2). The five-year average harvest (2019–2023) of VFDA pink salmon is 14.29 million fish, and PWSAC pink salmon is 12.31 million fish. VFDA pink salmon are harvested almost exclusively by the purse seine gear group. The harvest timing for VFDA pink salmon is from late June through early August and provides the primary early-season purse seine salmon fishing opportunity in PWS. The five-year average common property commercial harvest (2019–2023) of VFDA coho salmon is 13,500 fish. VFDA coho salmon are managed as a sport fishery but are incidentally harvested primarily by the purse seine gear group fishing in the Eastern District. During times of surplus, VFDA may recommend that the purse seine fleet "clean up" extra coho salmon in Port Valdez, which is the only time there is a directed fishery on VFDA coho salmon.

The allocation calculation is based on the preceding five-year average ex-vessel value of PWSAC-only fish. The trigger point was modified to a two-tier allocation adjustment scheme. The first tier is a 47 percent trigger established to allow the regional aquaculture association to make proportional adjustments to cost recovery in applicable years. A 45 percent trigger was established for the second tier to provide access to the "piggy banks" in applicable years.

The Port Chalmers Subdistrict opened to drift gillnet fishing for the first time in 2009 when the drift gillnet gear group fell below the 45% average harvest value trigger point over the previous five-year period. Since then, the group has had exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict nine times, the most recent year being 2023. The purse seine gear group has fallen below the 45% average harvest value trigger point once since the plan's inception, granting them exclusive access to the Esther Subdistrict in 2006. Overall, the "piggy banks" have not been triggered for 53% of the years.

Proposals about the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* have been before the board since the plan became effective in 1991. A history and analysis of the allocation plan through the 1996 board meeting is available in board finding 97-02-FB. After 1997,

the plan failed to achieve some of its allocation objectives, resulting in modifications to the plan at the 2003 board meeting and forming a Prince William Sound Management and Allocation Plan Workgroup. The workgroup formally met at least six times between 2004 and the 2005 board meeting. Board action at the 2005 meeting modified the plan to apply only to PWSAC-enhanced stocks, excluding VFDA and wild stocks from PWS and the Copper River. This history and analysis of the *Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan* is available in board finding 06-248-FB.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

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.

Table 77-1.–Values and percentages by gear type for PWSAC enhanced stocks, 2006–2022.

Year	Drift Gillnet		Purse Seine		Set Gillnet	
2006	$7,010,574	54.5%	$5,851,983	45.5%	$781,184	5.7%
2007	$8,365,677	33.8%	$16,394,816	66.2%	$1,287,859	4.9%
2008	$18,059,466	33.2%	$36,411,663	66.8%	$1,300,085	2.3%
2009	$15,553,269	61.5%	$9,722,045	38.5%	$1,578,785	5.9%
2010	$36,546,803	36.0%	$64,975,204	64.0%	$3,408,733	3.2%
2011	$25,236,219	65.2%	$13,464,746	34.8%	$2,867,582	6.9%
2012	$30,375,938	58.7%	$21,361,107	41.3%	$3,125,836	5.7%
2013	$25,052,932	31.2%	$55,194,763	68.8%	$2,405,648	2.9%
2014	$20,330,294	57.7%	$14,894,564	42.3%	$2,725,780	7.2%
2015	$13,178,750	35.6%	$23,825,054	64.4%	$1,930,673	5.0%
2016	$13,947,405	86.0%	$2,279,015	14.0%	$1,821,330	10.1%
2017	$18,746,118	43.6%	$24,231,312	56.4%	$1,657,029	3.7%
2018	$24,386,998	58.6%	$17,232,200	41.4%	$1,799,424	4.1%
2019	$17,589,144	44.3%	$22,101,479	55.7%	$2,217,133	5.3%
2020	$6,078,011	39.6%	$9,265,912	60.4%	$896,931	5.5%
2021	$13,292,185	32.5%	$27,566,130	67.5%	$893,088	2.1%
2022	$14,208,932	62.2%	$8,631,964	37.8%	$1,747,074	7.1%
Grand Total	$307,958,713	45.2%	$373,403,956	54.8%	$32,424,173	4.5%
5-yr rolling average (2018-2022)		47.1%		52.9%		4.5%

Source: the number of fish from hatchery annual report data, which includes cost-recovery harvest. Weights from area Fisheries Management Reports and price from COAR data are available on the ADF&G website.

Table 77-2.–Values and percentages by gear type for PWSAC and VFDA enhanced stocks, 2006–2022.

Year	Drift Gillnet		Purse Seine		Set Gillnet	
2006	$7,016,362	41.8%	$9,774,703	58.2%	$781,230	4.4%
2007	$8,369,927	22.6%	$28,671,689	77.4%	$1,288,350	3.4%
2008	$18,061,741	26.5%	$49,993,820	73.5%	$1,300,278	1.9%
2009	$15,560,084	61.5%	$9,742,664	38.5%	$1,578,807	5.9%
2010	$36,635,693	29.7%	$86,685,100	70.3%	$3,411,756	2.7%
2011	$25,240,526	46.4%	$29,143,723	53.6%	$2,867,876	5.0%
2012	$30,438,464	42.9%	$40,467,239	57.1%	$3,132,507	4.2%
2013	$25,153,004	23.8%	$80,553,028	76.2%	$2,413,363	2.2%
2014	$20,365,621	35.4%	$37,147,046	64.6%	$2,727,022	4.5%
2015	$13,193,346	22.0%	$46,833,330	78.0%	$1,931,730	3.1%
2016	$13,962,508	53.3%	$12,237,321	46.7%	$1,821,765	6.5%
2017	$18,910,036	29.6%	$45,072,433	70.4%	$1,659,519	2.5%
2018	$24,424,994	43.4%	$31,837,836	56.6%	$1,781,739	3.1%
2019	$17,661,076	33.8%	$34,601,238	66.2%	$2,219,715	4.1%
2020	$6,162,061	23.6%	$19,910,335	76.4%	$900,640	3.3%
2021	$13,301,671	20.6%	$51,170,748	79.4%	$893,088	3.2%
2022	$14,354,417	27.1%	$38,710,916	72.9%	$1,750,526	3.2%
Grand Total	$308,811,530	32.1%	$652,553,169	67.9%	$32,459,910	3.3%
5-yr rolling average (2018–2022)		30.1%		69.9%		2.9%

Source: the number of fish from hatchery annual report data, which includes cost-recovery harvest. Weights from area Fisheries Management Reports and price from COAR data are available on the ADF&G website.

PROPOSAL 79 – 5 AAC 24.367. Main Bay Salmon Hatchery Harvest Management Plan; 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area; and 5 AAC 01.610. Fishing Seasons.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close subsistence, sport and commercial common property fisheries in the Eshamy District within the Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) Alternating Gear Zone (AGZ), Special Harvest Area (SHA), and Terminal Harvest Area (THA) (Figure 79-1) until Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation cost recovery operations are completed for the year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial gillnet fishery in the Eshamy District is opened and closed by emergency order. Based on management recommendations from Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC), time and area in the commercial fishery are adjusted by emergency order to achieve broodstock or cost recovery goals.

During PWSAC cost recovery and broodstock operations, the subsistence gillnet fishery in the Eshamy District parallels the commercial fishery in time and area. The subsistence fishery is open districtwide on Saturdays from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The marine waters of PWS are open to sport fishing except within 300 feet of a fish ladder, and there is a fish ladder at the head of Main Bay. The broodstock barrier seine is located approximately 400 feet from the head of the bay. Snagging is legal in the marine waters of PWS. Waters within 60 feet and inside of PWSAC's broodstock barrier seine are closed to fishing by sport fishermen from a vessel. Under current regulations the department has the authority to restrict sport fisheries for broodstock collection but not for cost recovery operations.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would close subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries during PWSAC cost recovery operations in the Main Bay Subdistrict. This would allow cost recovery to be completed more efficiently and would most likely reduce common property fishing opportunity in Main Bay. While cost recovery is being conducted, this would reduce the potential open area for commercial, subsistence and sport fisheries. The Eshamy District commercial and subsistence fisheries would continue to be managed by emergency order through consultation with PWSAC, but clean-up fisheries targeting surplus hatchery sockeye salmon within the THA, SHA, and AGZ would be prohibited while PWSAC conducts cost recovery. The subsistence fishery would be restricted to Eshamy District waters outside of the THA during the Saturday fisheries. The sport fishery would be closed from the THA line inwards to the hatchery while PWSAC is conducting cost recovery. Once it was determined that PWSAC cost recovery was achieved the fisheries would be opened allowing all user groups to harvest remaining fish except those necessary for brood stock. This would likely consolidate the fisheries and increase conflict between user groups while these fisheries are being conducted.

BACKGROUND: Cost recovery is conducted by a contract purse seine vessel and fishing typically occurs in the AGZ adjacent to the hatchery barrier seine, and on occasion in the SHA. The sport fishery targeting MBH sockeye salmon mainly occurs in the AGZ with peak fishing effort on weekends. When the subsistence fishery is open districtwide on Saturdays, most fishing

effort is in the AGZ. Cost recovery fishing in the AGZ is challenging during weekends when vessels at the head of the bay leave little unobstructed area to make seine sets. Sport fishing hooks/lures get lodged in both cost recovery and barrier seines and create issues with safe handling and cause damage to seine gear. The hatchery barrier seine integrity has been compromised by entangled hooks/lures and resulted in excess sockeye salmon entering the brood holding area.

PWSAC operates a sockeye salmon hatchery in Main Bay in western PWS, about two hours by boat from Whittier and provides opportunity for subsistence, sport and commercial sockeye salmon fisheries in the waters of the Main Bay Hatchery AGZ, SHA, and THA (Figure 79-1). The 10-year average total run of PWSAC sockeye salmon at MBH is 904,500 (Table 79-1). MBH sockeye salmon are harvested primarily by the drift and set gillnet gear groups. The harvest timing for MBH salmon is from June 1 – August 1. During recent MBH sockeye salmon runs, the AGZ, SHA, and THA have been open to the sport fishery seven-days-per-week, open to concurrent commercial and subsistence fisheries, dependent on cost recovery fishery objectives (ranging from twice weekly openings to consecutive weeks of no fishing), and open to subsistence fishing on all Saturdays. Cost recovery fishing generally occurs between mid-June through mid-July to overlap with peak sockeye salmon run entry, and in recent years fishing has been completed from late-June to mid-July. The Main Bay Hatchery egg-take goal requires approximately 9,000 sockeye salmon for broodstock. The 10-year average (2014–2023) number of sockeye salmon passed through the barrier seine to be used for broodstock was 25,100 salmon (Table 79-1). These fish include excess males, excess females, inviable broodstock, holding mortality, and jacks not used for broodstock.

The Eshamy District commercial drift and set gillnet fishery is managed to provide commercial harvest opportunity and to ensure wild salmon escapement goals and MBH cost recovery and broodstock goals are achieved. Hatchery sockeye salmon harvest in the commercial fishery is influenced by fishing effort, run strength of these hatchery salmon, and the level of hatchery cost recovery and broodstock goals. In years with weak hatchery sockeye salmon runs or large cost recovery goals, time and area in the commercial fishery are restricted to achieve these hatchery goals. During commercial fishing periods, commercial fishery time and area restrictions to achieve hatchery cost recovery goals also apply to the subsistence fishery.

During 2014–2023, MBH sockeye salmon harvest averaged 770,000 fish in the commercial fishery, 2,900 fish in the subsistence fishery, 6,000 fish in the sport fishery, and 102,300 fish in the cost recovery fishery. Between 2014 and 2023, the total MBH sockeye salmon run has ranged between 608,000 and 1.55 million fish (Table 79-1).

In 2014, the board addressed a proposal to close sport fishing inside a line 100 feet seaward of Main Bay Hatchery broodstock seine. The proposal carried, as amended with substitute language, and established the current regulations that all waters inside a line 60 feet seaward of the broodstock seine be closed to sport fishing from a vessel.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department **OPPOSES** the loss of management flexibility to respond to run entry patterns and fish quality concerns that could arise if this proposal is adopted. If this proposal is adopted, the board may wish to evaluate whether reasonable opportunity for subsistence is still provided.

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.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.

2. Is this stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. The board found that salmon are customarily and traditionally taken in the Coghill, Northwestern, Eshamy, Unakwik, Southeastern, and Bering River Districts and those portions of the Northern, Montague, and Eastern Districts not included in (2) and (3) of this subsection, excluding those portions within the Valdez Nonsubsistence Area as described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(5) (5 AAC 06.616 (a)(6)).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? The board found that 115 - 200 salmon are reasonably necessary in the Prince William Sound general district (5 AAC 06.616 (b)(5)).

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

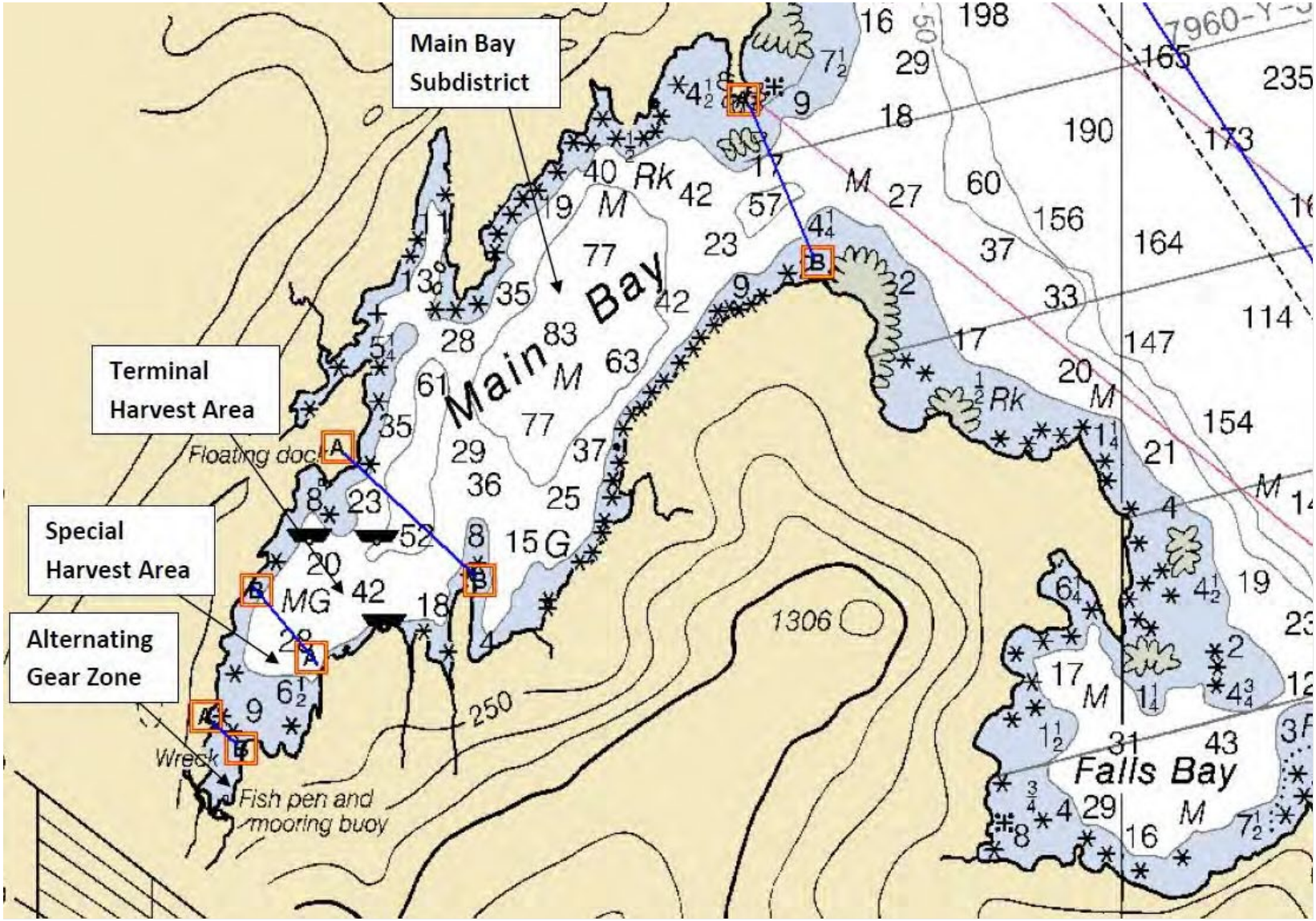

Figure 79-1.–Main Bay Subdistrict, Terminal Harvest Area, Special Harvest Area, Alternating Gear Zone (AGZ). The broodstock barrier seine is located approximately where the arrow defining the "Alternating Gear Zone" points.

Table 79-1.–Main Bay Hatchery sockeye salmon run summary, 2014–2023.

Year	Hatchery contributions[a]					Total hatchery contribution
	Commercial	Subsistence/ homepack	Sport	Broodstock/ escapement	Cost recovery	
2014	1,189,499	3,485	9,791	84,324	0	1,287,099
2015	1,331,675	2,332	4,046	31,255	180,516	1,549,824
2016	778,515	1,777	4,015	9,846	0	794,153
2017	552,059	3,404	4,291	48,535	0	608,289
2018	1,034,159	1,806	5426	11,640	0	1,053,031
2019	862,311	2,706	7,628	9,269	8,987	890,901
2020	494,934	3,011	9,155	9,735	232,337	749,172
2021	446,944	4,298	5,394	15,498	255,837	727,971
2022	473,706	2,664	6,402	10,794	118,420	611,986
2023	539,559	3,629	4,146	19,828	226,956	794,118
Average (2014–2023)	770,336	2,911	6,029	25,072	102,305	906,654

[a] Commercial harvest estimates are from otolith marks. Sport harvest is western PWS harvest from mail-in fishing surveys. Subsistence/homepack estimates are derived from commercial harvest proportions.

PROPOSAL 80 – 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close all sport fishing in Main Bay inside a line approximately 250 feet seaward of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine to all sport fishing (Figure 80-1). It would require the department to manage the Main Bay sport fishery based on a corporate escapement goal that the board would need to define in sport fishing regulations.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Main Bay, sport fishing is prohibited from a vessel that is within 60 feet of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine or a vessel inside the barrier seine. Currently, anglers may fish from shore within 60 feet of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine and inside the barrier seine. Sport fishing is prohibited within 300 feet of the fish ladder at the head of Main Bay (Figure 80-1). The bag and possession limit for salmon other than king salmon in the Prince William Sound Management Area (PWSMA) is six per day, 12 in possession, of which all may be sockeye salmon. The department has the authority to restrict the sport fishery by emergency order based on biological concerns, such as the risk of not achieving a broodstock goal.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide the department the authority to manage the sport fishery to achieve broodstock and cost recovery goals. Interference with hatchery broodstock and equipment (including cost recovery operations) by anglers would potentially be alleviated. The sport fishing area from shore would be reduced, and sport harvest of hatchery sockeye salmon may decrease by an unknown amount. All sport fishing opportunities are eliminated within 250 feet seaward of the barrier seine until the corporate goal is achieved. and harvest of sockeye salmon would be significantly reduced. Shore fishing opportunities would be reduced, and it would prohibit sport anglers from fishing in an area that would be available to commercial harvest if opened by emergency order (Figure 80-2). This would require the department to manage the sport fishery to the cost recovery goal in addition to the broodstock goal. Triggers to restrict or liberalize the sport fishery based on cost recovery goal would need to be defined.

BACKGROUND: Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) operates a sockeye salmon hatchery at the head of Main Bay. This hatchery, located in western Prince William Sound (PWS), is about two hours by boat from Whittier and provides sport, commercial, and subsistence sockeye salmon harvest opportunity in the waters of the Main Bay (Figure 80-1). The sockeye salmon that return are common property fish and are available for commercial, sport, subsistence and cost recovery harvest. The revenue generated from the cost recovery supports hatchery operations in PWS and the cost recovery goal is determined by PWSAC. The annual corporate budget varies each year and by species for PWSAC. Sockeye salmon used for cost recovery revenue goals at the Main Bay Hatchery averaged 102,300 sockeye salmon from 2014–2023 (Table 80-1).

The Main Bay Hatchery annual egg take goal requires approximately 5,550 female and 3,700 male sockeye salmon for broodstock to obtain 12.4 million green-eggs. The 10-year average (2014–2023) of sockeye salmon passed through the barrier seine was over 25,000 salmon (Table 80-1). This number includes excess males, excess females, inviable broodstock, holding mortality, and jacks not used for broodstock. These excess fish also include fish that are wounded in sport, commercial, and subsistence fisheries, as well as by natural causes such as seal predation and are

generally not sold. Per the department's sockeye salmon culture protocol, the hatchery must cull any broodstock with signs of external wounds to reduce risk of infectious hematopoietic necrosis virus (IHNV) transmission.

The 10-year (2014–2023) average harvest of sockeye salmon in the Main Bay fishery is greater than 770,000 fish per year in the commercial fishery and 3,000 fish in the subsistence fishery (Table 80-1). While the sport fishery is popular due to the high concentration of sockeye salmon, at the head of the bay, the estimates of sport catch, harvest, and effort specific to Main Bay are not available; therefore, western PWS reporting code from the Statewide Harvest Survey is used as a proxy for trends in sport harvest in Main Bay. The 10-year average annual sockeye salmon harvest for western PWS (2014–2023) is 5,960 fish with a peak sport fish harvest of 9,791 fish in 2014 and a low of 3,456 fish in 2023 (Table 80-1). Between 2014 and 2023, saltwater guide logbooks recorded an average of 2 trips per year to the statistical area that includes Main Bay (Statistical Area 486031) in which sockeye salmon were harvested. Chartered vessels accounted for approximately 50 sockeye salmon harvested per year. This indicates that there is minimal guided effort in this area and that private anglers are the primary harvester of sockeye salmon in the Main Bay sport fishery.

Sport fishing activity overlaps with PWSAC hatchery operations including cost recovery. Sport fishing from shore may occur inside the barrier seine, where broodstock sockeye salmon are collected. Sport fishing gear (hook) may become entangled in the barrier seine by anglers. This entanglement can impose challenges and potential hazards for PWSAC staff that are retrieving or resetting the barrier seine. Additionally, entangled hooks may cause the net to lift and allow fish to pass inside the barrier seine, where broodstock is collected.

In 2014, the board addressed a proposal to close sport fishing inside a line 100 feet seaward of Main Bay Hatchery broodstock seine. The proposal was adopted, as amended with substitute language, and established the current regulations that all waters inside a line 60 feet seaward of the broodstock seine be closed to sport fishing from a vessel.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. Cost recovery is defined in 5 AAC 40.990(6)(B) but it does not apply to sport fishing regulations and would need to be defined in sport fishing regulations.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Figure 80-1.–The approximate location of the proposed 250-foot line (Proposal 80), current/proposed 60-foot line (proposal 81), and the 300-foot closure around the Main Bay Hatchery raceway ladder.

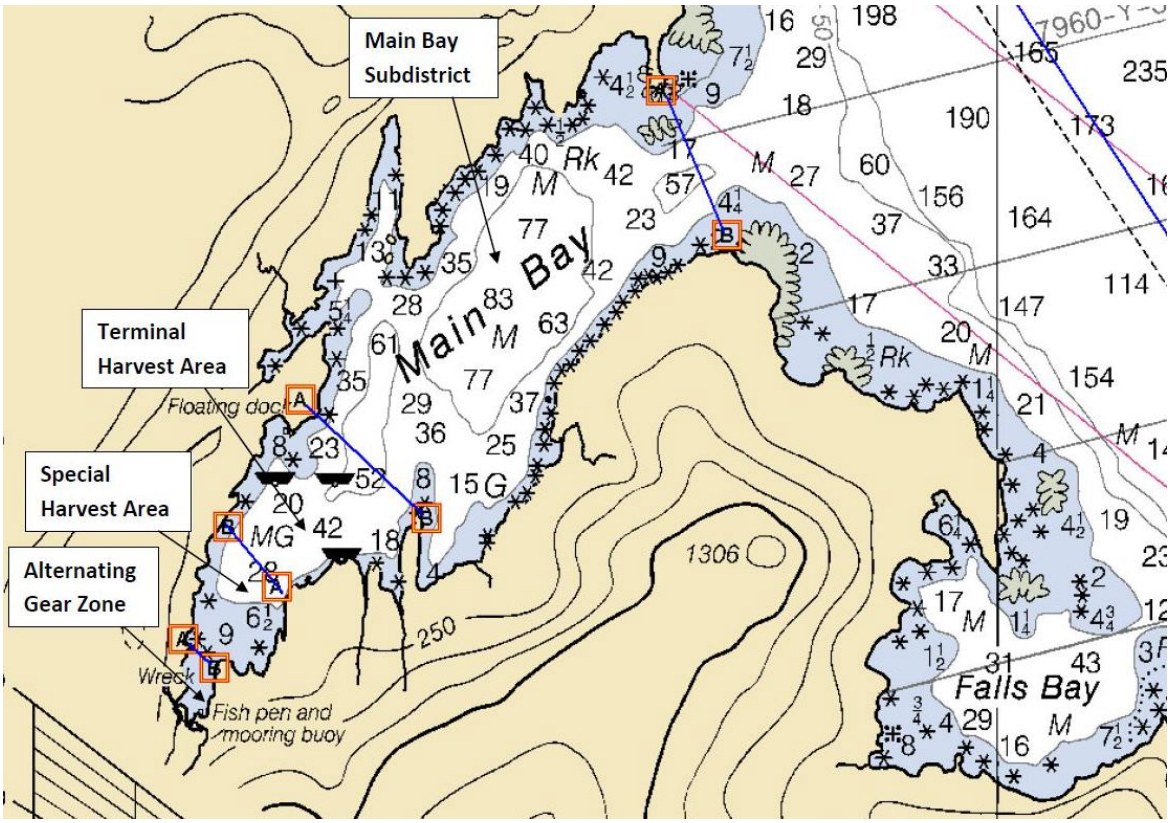

Figure 80-2.–Commercial Area, Main Bay Subdistrict, Terminal Harvest Area, Special Harvest Area, Alternating Gear Zone (AGZ).

Table 80-1.–Main Bay harvest for commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries and Main Bay Hatchery broodstock collection and cost recovery, Prince William Sound Management Area, 2014–2023.

	Harvest				Hatchery		
Year	Commercial	Sport	Subsistence/ Homepack	Total	Cost Recovery	Broodstock/ Escapement	Total Contribution
2014	1,189,499	9,791	3,485	1,202,775	0	84,324	1,287,099
2015	1,331,675	4,046	2,332	1,338,053	180,516	31,255	1,549,824
2016	778,515	4,015	1,777	784,307	0	9,846	794,153
2017	552,059	4,291	3,404	559,754	0	48,535	608,289
2018	1,034,159	5,426	1,806	1,041,391	0	11,640	1,053,031
2019	862,311	7,628	2,706	872,645	8,987	9,269	890,901
2020	494,934	9,155	3,011	507,100	232,337	9,735	749,172
2021	446,944	5,394	4,298	456,636	255,837	15,498	727,971
2022	474,706	6,402	2,664	483,772	118,420	10,794	612,986
2023	539,559	4,146	3,629	547,334	226,956	19,828	794,118
Average 2014–2023	770,436	6,029	2,911	779,377	102,305	25,072	906,754

PROPOSAL 81 – 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close all sport fishing inside a line of buoys located approximately 60 feet seaward of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine (Figure 80-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Main Bay, sport fishing is prohibited from a vessel that is within 60 feet of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine or a vessel inside the barrier seine. Anglers may fish from shore both within 60 feet of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine and inside the barrier seine. Sport fishing is prohibited within 300 feet of the fish ladder at the head of Main Bay.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Interference with hatchery broodstock and equipment by anglers would potentially be reduced. The sport fishing area from shore would be reduced, and the sport harvest of hatchery sockeye salmon may decrease by an unknown amount. (Figure 80-2). The current line would not change, just the opportunity to sport fish inside the line would be impacted.

BACKGROUND: Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) operates a sockeye salmon hatchery at the head of Main Bay. This hatchery, located in western Prince William Sound (PWS), is about two hours by boat from Whittier and provides sport, commercial, and subsistence sockeye salmon harvest opportunity in the waters of the Main Bay (Figure 80-1). The sockeye salmon that return are common property fish and are available for commercial, sport, subsistence and cost recovery harvest. The revenue generated from the cost recovery supports hatchery operations in PWS and the cost recovery goal is determined by PWSAC. The annual corporate budget varies each year and by species for PWSAC. Sockeye salmon used for cost recovery revenue goals at the Main Bay Hatchery averaged 102,300 sockeye salmon from 2014–2023 (Table 80-1).

The Main Bay Hatchery annual egg take goal requires approximately 5,550 female and 3,700 male sockeye salmon for broodstock to obtain 12.4 million green-eggs. The 10-year average (2014–2023) of sockeye salmon passed through the barrier seine was over 25,000 salmon (Table 80-1). This number includes excess males, excess females, inviable broodstock, holding mortality, and jacks not used for broodstock. These excess fish also include fish that are wounded in sport, commercial, and subsistence fisheries, as well as by natural causes such as seal predation and are generally not sold. Per the department's sockeye salmon culture protocol, the hatchery must cull any broodstock with signs of external wounds to reduce risk of infectious hematopoietic necrosis virus (IHNV) transmission.

The 10-year (2014–2023) average harvest of sockeye salmon in the Main Bay fishery is greater than 770,000 fish per year in the commercial fishery and 3,000 fish in the subsistence fishery (Table 80-1). While the sport fishery is popular due to the high concentration of sockeye salmon, at the head of the bay, the estimates of sport catch, harvest, and effort specific to Main Bay are not available; therefore, the western PWS reporting code from the Statewide Harvest Survey is used as a proxy for trends in sport harvest in Main Bay. The 10-year average annual sockeye salmon harvest for western PWS (2014–2023) is 6,029 fish with a peak sport fish harvest of 9,791 fish in 2014 and a low of 4,015 fish in 2016 (Table 80-1). Between 2014 and 2023, saltwater guide

logbooks recorded an average of 2 trips per year to the statistical area that includes Main Bay (Statistical Area 486031) in which sockeye salmon were harvested. Chartered vessels accounted for approximately 50 sockeye salmon harvested per year. This indicates that there is minimal guided effort in this area and that private anglers are the primary harvester of sockeye salmon in the Main Bay sport fishery.

Sport fishing activity overlaps with PWSAC hatchery operations including cost recovery. Sockeye salmon in the Main Bay sport fishery are predominantly taken by snagging. Sport fishing from shore may occur inside the barrier seine, where broodstock sockeye salmon are collected. Sport fishing gear (hook) may become entangled in the barrier seine by anglers. This entanglement can impose challenges and potential hazards for PWSAC staff that are retrieving or resetting the barrier seine. Additionally, entangled hooks may cause the net to lift and allow fish to pass inside the barrier seine, where broodstock is collected.

In 2014, the board addressed a proposal to close sport fishing inside a line 100 feet seaward of Main Bay Hatchery broodstock seine. The proposal was adopted with substitute language and established the current regulations that all waters inside a line 60 feet seaward of the broodstock seine be closed to sport fishing from a vessel.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

COMMERCIAL FISHING PERMITS (4 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSALS 73 and 74 – 5 AAC 24.333. Requirements and specifications for use of 250 fathoms of purse seine gear in Area E.

PROPOSED BY: James Burton and Kenneth B. Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow one person holding two Area E purse seine CFEC permits to "stack" those permits and operate a lead and purse seine with an aggregate length of up to 250 fathoms.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations allow two Area E purse seine permit CFEC permit holders to fish concurrently from the same vessel and increase their legal complement of purse seine gear from 225 to 250 fathoms. When two Area E purse seine CFEC permit holders fish from the same vessel and jointly operate purse seine gear, the vessel must display its ADF&G permanent license plate number followed by the letter "D" to identify the vessel as a dual permit vessel. CFEC permit cards for both permit holders are required on all fish tickets to function as a dual permit operation. There are 267 Area E salmon purse seine CFEC permits.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the number of active Prince William Sound (PWS) salmon seine permits and decrease the number of purse seine vessels fishing in PWS. More vessels would likely participate under a permit stacking regulation because it does not require another permit holder to be onboard, and those individuals already holding two permits would now be able to fish a 250-fathom purse seine rather than a 225-fathom purse seine, increasing the harvest efficiency of that vessel. Adoption of this proposal may increase the value of Area E purse seine salmon permits, making it more difficult for new entrants into the fishery.

BACKGROUND: At the 2021 PWS Board of Fisheries meeting in Cordova, the board adopted a regulation to allow two PWS purse seine permit holders to operate a lead and purse seine with an aggregate length of up to 250 fathoms. Beginning in 2022, the number of dual permit operations in PWS increased yearly, decreasing the number of vessels participating in the PWS purse seine fishery (Table 73-1). Currently, PWS is the only area in the state where dual purse seine operations are allowed.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on these proposals.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 73-1.–Active PWS purse seine permits by year (2000-2024).

Year	Number of Vessels	Number of Dual Permits	Total Permits
2000	130	-	131
2001	146	-	148
2002	115	-	120
2003	106	-	107
2004	101	-	105
2005	101	-	101
2006	111	-	111
2007	119	-	120
2008	139	-	141
2009	153	-	154
2010	174	-	174
2011	183	-	183
2012	224	-	224
2013	211	-	211
2014	222	-	222
2015	220	-	216
2016	210	-	210
2017	229	-	230
2018	234	-	234
2019	238	-	238
2020	218	-	218
2021	212	-	212
2022	199	22	221
2023	209	27	236
Average 2014–2023	219	-	224
2024	177	28	205

PROPOSALS 56 and 57 – 5 AAC 24.3XX. Requirements and specifications for the use of 200-fathom drift gillnet gear in Area E.

PROPOSED BY: Darin Gilman and Fred Marinkovich.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? These would allow a drift gillnet, up to an aggregate length of 200 fathom, to be fished by a permit holder with two Area E drift gillnet permits (stacked) or by two Area E drift gillnet permit holders concurrently fishing from the same vessel (dual).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations allow one permit holder to fish one drift gillnet that is not more than 150 fathoms in length per vessel.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the number of active PWS salmon drift gillnet permits. It is unclear if it would decrease the number of drift gillnet vessels fishing in PWS. This would increase the harvest efficiency of vessels operating with two permits and 200 fathoms of net. Vessels utilizing latent permits as a second permit will increase gillnet gear being fished. If individuals currently fishing single permit operations choose to fish as a dual permit operation with another active permit holder or if a permit holder creates a stacked permit operation by purchasing an active permit, there may be a reduction in the overall amount of gillnet gear being fished. Drift gillnet fisheries management would be adapted to account for any increase or decrease in drift gillnet harvest efficiency to ensure that allocation and escapement objectives are achieved. The increased harvest efficiency associated with these larger gillnets may provide a competitive advantage to vessels with two permits onboard. Adoption of this proposal may increase the value and decrease the availability of PWS drift gillnet salmon permits, making it more difficult for new entrants into the fishery and fishermen seeking to acquire a second permit.

BACKGROUND: The number of active commercial salmon drift gillnet fishing permits in Area E has decreased steadily over the last 10 years, from a high of 527 permits in 2013 to 444 in 2023, with close to 100 latent permits (Table 56-1). Since the 2021 board meeting, PWS drift gillnet harvest values have been consistently below the 10-year (2013-2022) average (Table 56-1). These below-average harvest values, in combination with persistent inflation, have reduced profit margins and are likely large drivers in the reduction of active permits in recent years. These latent permits could become part of stacked or dual permit fishing operations without decreasing the number of vessels participating in area drift gillnet fisheries. Drift gillnet vessels with two permits on board would have the advantage of a drift gillnet that is 50 fathoms (33%) longer than the 150 fathoms currently allowed, potentially increasing the harvest efficiency of that vessel. The increased harvest efficiency of these larger gillnets may provide a competitive advantage to stacked or dual permit vessels. Currently, dual permits are allowed in Cook Inlet Area and Bristol Bay Area commercial salmon drift gillnet and Prince William Sound Area purse seine fisheries. Stacked permits may be fished in the Cook Inlet Area drift and set gillnet and Yakutat Area set gillnet fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. If the board adopts it, the department recommends that it also adopt new vessel marking requirements to aid in enforcement, similar to what the board has done in other areas where dual and stacked permit operations are allowed.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

Table 56-1.–Active drift gillnet permits, average earnings, and inactive permits by year, 2005–2023.

Year	Number of Permits	Average Earnings	Number of Inactive Permits	Inactive Permits (%)
2005	509	$46,807	26	5%
2006	495	$68,971	40	7%
2007	507	$57,375	28	5%
2008	507	$57,262	28	5%
2009	511	$75,255	24	4%
2010	519	$96,784	16	3%
2011	513	$97,916	22	4%
2012	522	$105,889	13	2%
2013	527	$92,853	8	1%
2014	526	$99,753	9	2%
2015	520	$71,293	15	3%
2016	517	$67,266	18	3%
2017	507	$74,863	28	5%
2018	510	$73,141	25	5%
2019	509	$86,791	26	5%
2020	489	$21,101	46	9%
2021	477	$54,181	58	11%
2022	454	$65,281	81	15%
10-Year Average 2013–2022	504	$70,652	31	6%
5-Year Average 2018–2022	488	$60,099	47	9%
2023	444	$62,074	91	17%

HERRING (9 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 95 – 5 AAC 27.365. Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth Jones.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would make numerous changes to the management of commercial herring fisheries in Prince William Sound (PWS).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The PWS Area for herring fisheries is defined as the waters between Cape Fairfield and Cape Suckling, north of latitude 59° North.

There are currently no herring fishery districts defined in regulation.

The *Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan* aims to provide optimal sustained yield and equitable allocation among user groups. The plan allocates the projected available herring surplus among the five herring fisheries (Table 95-1). It operates under the assumption of a single stock of herring, which can be harvested at a rate between 0% and 20% of the spawning biomass.

The management year runs from July 1 to June 30, with guideline harvest levels (GHLs) set before the fall food and bait season based on the previous year's spawning biomass estimate, cohort analysis, and projected recruitment. A minimum spawning biomass threshold of 22,000 tons must be met for a fishery to open. Harvest rates are adjusted based on age class strength and biomass levels, with a maximum exploitation rate of 20% allowed when the biomass exceeds 42,500 tons.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would redefine the western and eastern boundaries of the PWS herring management area using geographic coordinates, removing overlap with the Yakutat Management Area and ensuring the outer boundary remains within state-managed waters ((Figure 95-1).

This establishes new district boundaries, allowing separate herring management in PWS and Kayak Island. This would provide geographic delineation of area for the department, commercial fishermen, and enforcement. The Kayak Island herring biomass would be managed on an exploratory basis with no specific GHLs. Prince William Sound Area herring fisheries commercial permit holders could participate in the fishery using the gear standard associated with their permit. Herring harvested in the Kayak Island exploratory fishery would occur even if the PWS minimum biomass threshold of 22,000 tons was not met. The herring biomass in the PWS District would continue to be managed and assessed according to the current management plan.

The management year would shift from July 1 through June 30 to January 1 through December 31, placing the food and bait at the end of the season rather than the beginning. Up to 80% of unharvested fish from the spring sac roe fishery would be reallocated to the fall food and bait fishery.

Lowering the minimum spawning biomass threshold to 8,400 tons could increase the likelihood of opening the fishery to all gear groups. However, age class strength would still be considered in management decisions. The minimum spawning biomass would have been below the 8,400-ton threshold three times since 1980 (Figure 95-2).

BACKGROUND: Geographic boundaries for the PWS herring management area are not currently defined by coordinates, leading to overlap with the Yakutat Management Area (Figure 95-1).

There has been no commercial herring fishery around Kayak Island within the PWS Management Area. The current management plan treats all herring in PWS as a single stock and does not include the Kayak Island biomass in its assessment.

Prince William Sound herring stock assessment begins in late March and extends through mid-April. Aerial surveys are used to collect spawn data and document herring distribution. The state research vessel R/V Solstice is deployed multiple times per season to assist in purse seining for disease sampling and collecting age-sex-length data. Aerial surveys are used to measure miles-day of milt and evaluate the distribution of herring. Age-sex-length samples are processed throughout the summer months, and those results, along with aerial spawn data, are provided to the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences to incorporate into their Bayesian age-structured assessment model (BASA). The BASA model estimates the age structure of the stock (age-3 and older) and provides a biomass estimate for managers to evaluate.

In recent years, biomass estimates were unavailable until early winter, past the time needed to prosecute an orderly fall food and bait fishery. The surplus fish (the amount of biomass over the 22,000-ton threshold) has been negligible, and the potential GHL, even at modest exploitation rates, is small, especially when allocated amongst the 5 gear groups. Should the department prosecute a fall food and bait fishery, the other gear groups would also have an opportunity to harvest their respective allocations. However, should spring in-season abundance indices indicate inadequate surplus spawning herring biomass, restrictions to spring herring roe fisheries may be warranted.

At the 1994 board meeting, the minimum spawning biomass threshold for the PWS stock was raised from 8,400 to 22,000 tons. The rationale for changing the threshold was twofold: 1) budget-induced changes in stock assessment methods and 2) advancement in policy for setting thresholds at 25% of unfished biomass. The 22,000-ton threshold is 25% of the long-term average spawning biomass from an unfished stock. In determining that threshold, department biometric staff used a simulation run over 800 years that assumed 68% survival and no fishing mortality; each year's recruitments were drawn randomly from age-structured assessment model estimates for the 1973 through 1989-year classes. (Funk, Fritz, “Prince William Sound Harvest Policy Graphs”, Memorandum, Juneau, AK, ADF&G, 1993).

Currently, the department relies on the BASA model to forecast the size of the pre-fishery run biomass. Through Exxon Valdez Oil Spill funding, the department collects and summarizes the age-length-sex and aerial spawn data, and the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences runs the model and provides the department with a biomass estimate. The BASA model incorporates several different types of data, using varying time series, in its analysis.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation aspects of the proposal but **SUPPORTS** the boundary changes, district creation, and management date adjustments and endorses increased flexibility in the management plan. The department **OPPOSES** changes to the minimum spawning biomass threshold. The department acknowledges that an updated threshold evaluation is needed; however, no analysis is available to support changing the current minimum spawning biomass threshold. Furthermore, funding for PWS herring assessment work, provided through Exxon Valdez Oil Spill funding, is expected to end in a few years. The department currently lacks funding for future assessments.

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.

Table 95-1.–Percentage of the guideline harvest level allocated to each of the five commercial fisheries for Pacific herring in Prince William Sound.

Fishery	Percentage of the guideline harvest level
Purse seine sac roe fishery (spring)	58.1%
Gillnet sac roe fishery (spring)	3.4%
Food and bait fishery (fall/winter)	16.3%
Spawn-on-kelp not in pounds (spring)	8.0%
Spawn-on-kelp in pounds (spring)	14.2%

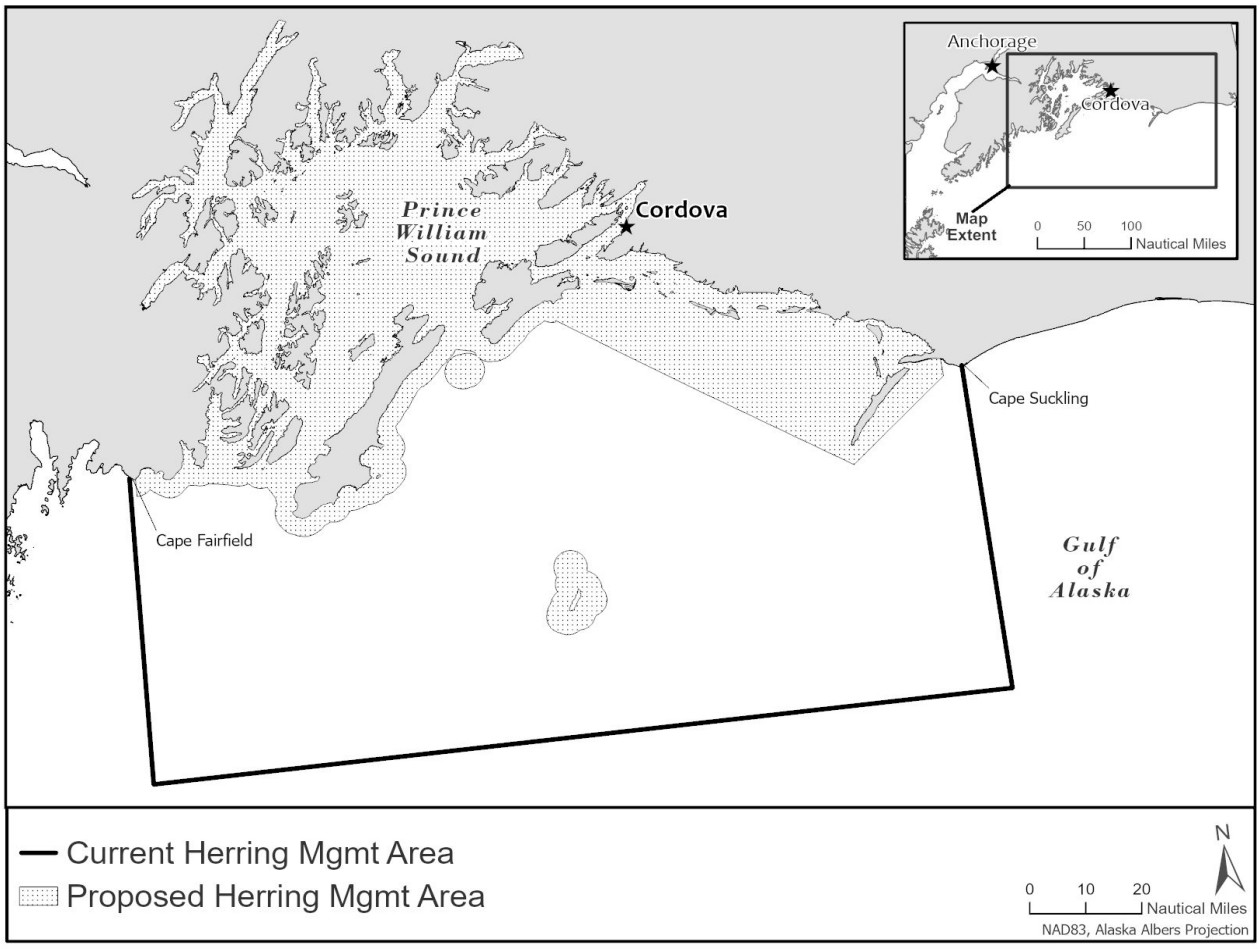

Figure 95-1.–Map of current and proposed Prince William Sound Management Area boundaries.

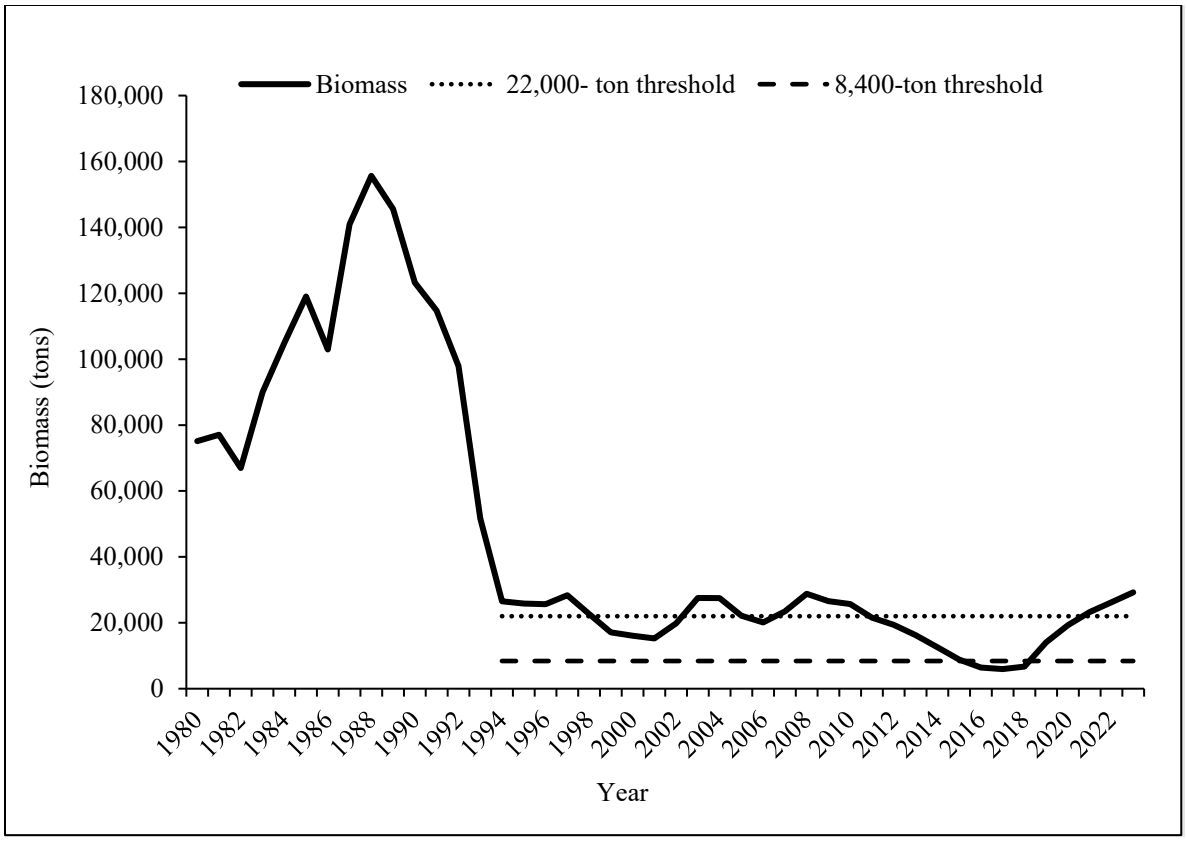

Figure 95-2.–Prince William Sound Bayesian age-structured spawning biomass, 1980–2023.

PROPOSAL 96 – 5 AAC 27.365. Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would change the herring management dates for the Prince William Sound District and allow for the reallocation of unharvested herring from the sac roe fishery to the food and bait fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The management year runs from July 1 to June 30, with guideline harvest levels (GHLs) set before the fall food and bait season based on the previous year's spawning biomass estimate, cohort analysis, and projected recruitment. A minimum spawning biomass threshold of 22,000 tons must be met for a fishery to open. Harvest rates are adjusted based on age class strength and biomass levels, with a maximum exploitation rate of 20% allowed when the biomass exceeds 42,500 tons.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would change the management year from July 1 through June 30 to January 1 through December 31, placing the food and bait at the end of the season rather than the beginning. Up to 80% of unharvested fish from the spring sac roe fishery would be reallocated to the fall food and bait fishery.

BACKGROUND: Prince William Sound herring stock assessment begins in late March and extends through mid-April. Aerial surveys are used to collect spawn data and document herring distribution. The state research vessel R/V Solstice is deployed multiple times per season to assist in purse seining for disease sampling and collecting age-sex-length data. Aerial surveys are used to measure miles-day of milt and evaluate the distribution of herring. Age-sex-length samples are processed throughout the summer months, and those results, along with aerial spawn data, are provided to the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences to incorporate into their Bayesian age-structured assessment model. The model estimates the age structure of the stock (age-3 and older) and provides a biomass estimate for managers to evaluate.

In recent years, biomass estimates were unavailable until early winter and, at times, past the time needed to prosecute an orderly fall food and bait fishery. The surplus fish (the amount of biomass over the 22,000-ton threshold) has been negligible, and the GHLs, even at modest exploitation rates, are small, especially when portioned amongst the five gear groups. Should the department prosecute a fall food and bait fishery, the other gear groups would also have an opportunity to harvest their respective allocations. However, should spring inseason abundance indices indicate inadequate surplus spawning herring biomass, restrictions to spring herring roe fisheries may be warranted.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal but **SUPPORTS** changing the management dates and incorporating additional flexibility into the management plan.

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.

PROPOSAL 97 – 5 AAC 27.365. Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the minimum herring spawning biomass threshold from 22,000 tons to 16,000 tons.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan* aims to provide optimal sustained yield and equitable allocation among user groups. It operates under the assumption of a single stock of herring, which can be harvested at a rate between 0% and 20% of the spawning biomass. A minimum spawning biomass threshold of 22,000 tons must be met for a fishery to open. Harvest rates are adjusted based on age class strength and biomass levels, with a maximum exploitation rate of 20% allowed when the biomass exceeds 42,500 tons. The plan allocates the projected available herring surplus among the five commercial herring fisheries (Table 95-1). The management year runs from July 1 to June 30, with guideline harvest levels (GHLs) set before the fall food and bait season based on the previous year's spawning biomass estimate, cohort analysis, and projected recruitment.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Lowering the minimum spawning biomass threshold to 16,000 tons could increase the likelihood of opening the fishery to all gear groups. However, age class strength would still be considered in management decisions. The minimum spawning biomass would have been below a 16,000-ton threshold 22 times since 1994 (Figure 97-1).

BACKGROUND: At the 1994 board meeting, the minimum spawning biomass threshold for the PWS stock was raised from 8,400 to 22,000 tons. The rationale for changing the threshold was twofold: 1) budget-induced changes in stock assessment methods and 2) advancement in policy for setting thresholds at 25% of unfished biomass. The 22,000-ton threshold is 25% of the long-term average spawning biomass from an unfished stock. In determining that threshold, department biometric staff used a simulation run over 800 years and assumed 68% survival and no fishing mortality; each year's recruitments were drawn randomly from age-structured assessment model estimates for the 1973 through 1989-year classes (Funk, Fritz., "Prince William Sound Harvest Policy Graphs", Memorandum, Juneau, AK, ADF&G, 1993).

Currently, the department relies on a Bayesian age-structured analysis (BASA) model to forecast the size of the pre-fishery run biomass. Through Exxon Valdez Oil Spill funding, the department collects and summarizes the age-length-sex and aerial spawn data, and the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences runs the model and provides the department with a biomass estimate. The BASA model incorporates several different types of data, using varying time series, in its analysis.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** changes to the minimum spawning biomass threshold. The department acknowledges that an updated threshold evaluation is needed; however, no analysis is available to support changing the current minimum spawning biomass threshold Furthermore, funding for PWS herring assessment work, provided through Exxon Valdez Oil Spill funding, is expected to end in a few years. The department currently lacks funding for future assessments.

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.

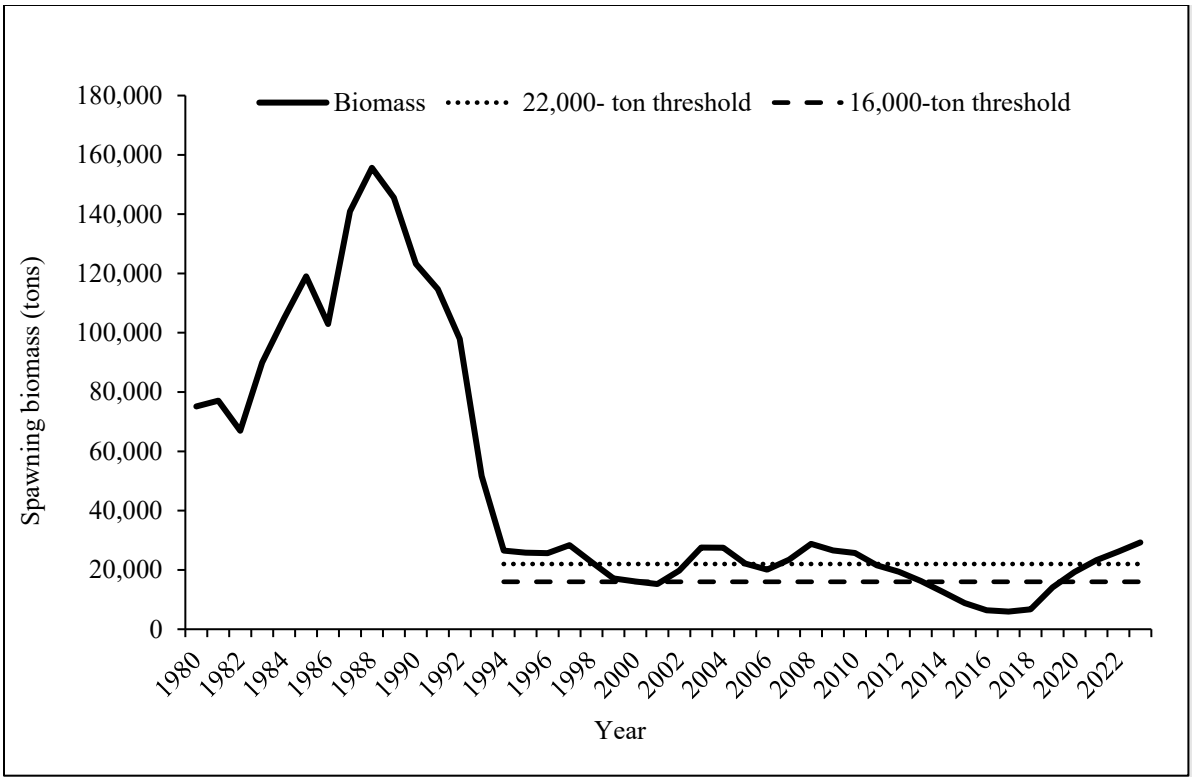

Figure 97-1.–Prince William Sound Bayesian age-structured spawning biomass, 1980–2023.

PROPOSAL 98 – 5 AAC 27.300. Description of area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would amend Prince William Sound (PWS) Area description to align salmon and herring management area descriptions.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The PWS Area for herring fisheries is defined as the waters between Cape Fairfield and Cape Suckling, north of latitude 59° North.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would change the western and eastern boundaries of PWS herring management area to lines defined by geographic coordinates, eliminating overlap with the Yakutat Management Area, and ensure that the outer boundary of the management area is within state-managed waters. This will give commercial fishers and enforcement a consistent and repeatable point of reference for area herring fisheries.

BACKGROUND: There are no geographic coordinates in regulation to accurately define the western and eastern boundaries of the Prince William Sound Area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

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.

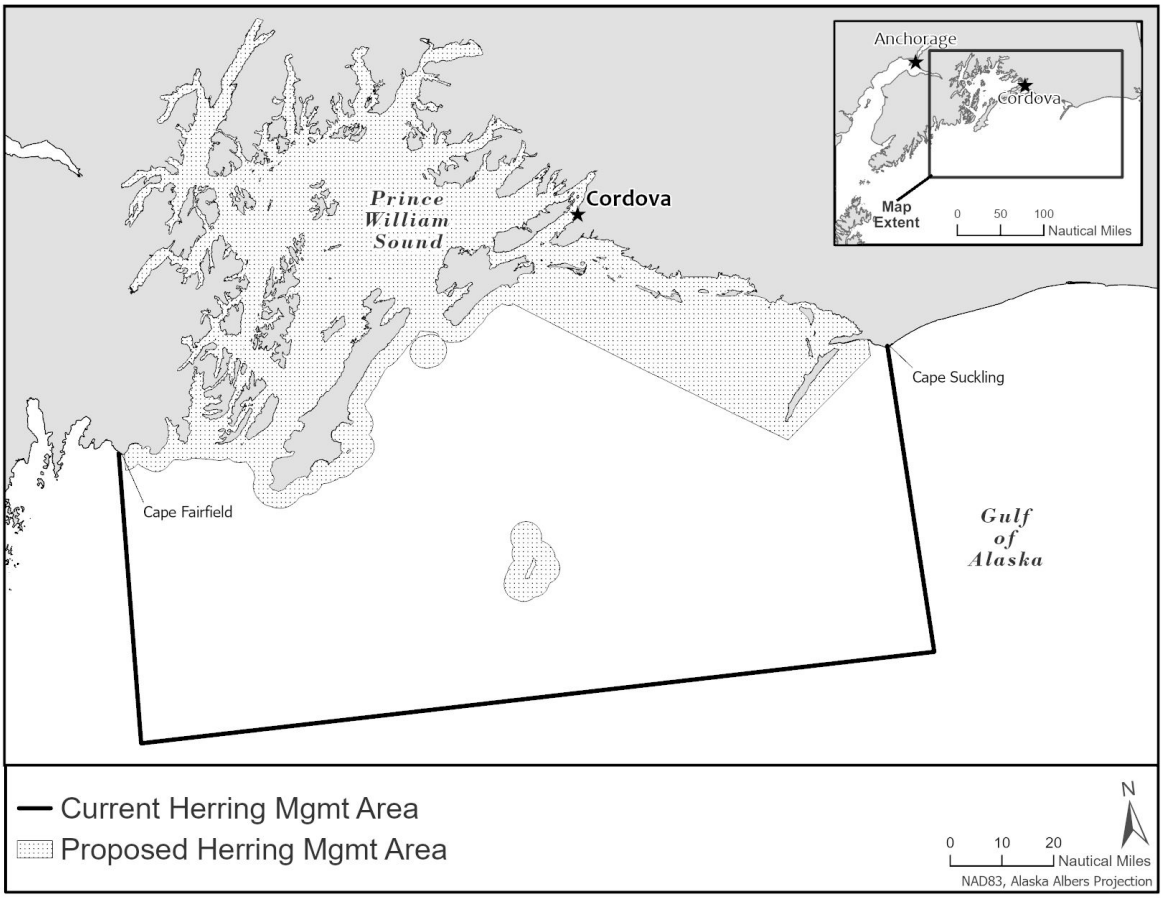

Figure 98-1.–Map of current and proposed Prince William Sound Management Area boundaries.

PROPOSAL 99 – 5 AAC 27.305. Fishing districts, subdistricts, and sections.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would define commercial herring fishery districts in the Prince William Sound Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently no herring fishery districts defined in regulation.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create district boundaries, allowing the department to separately manage the herring biomass in the waters surrounding Kayak Island (Figure 99-1). The herring biomass in the Prince William Sound District would continue to be managed and assessed consistent with historical management practices.

BACKGROUND: There has never been a commercial herring fishery in the waters around Kayak Island within the Prince William Sound Management Area. The Kayak Island herring biomass is not included in the assessment program used to evaluate whether the management area biomass is large enough to support commercial herring fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department assisted in developing and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

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.

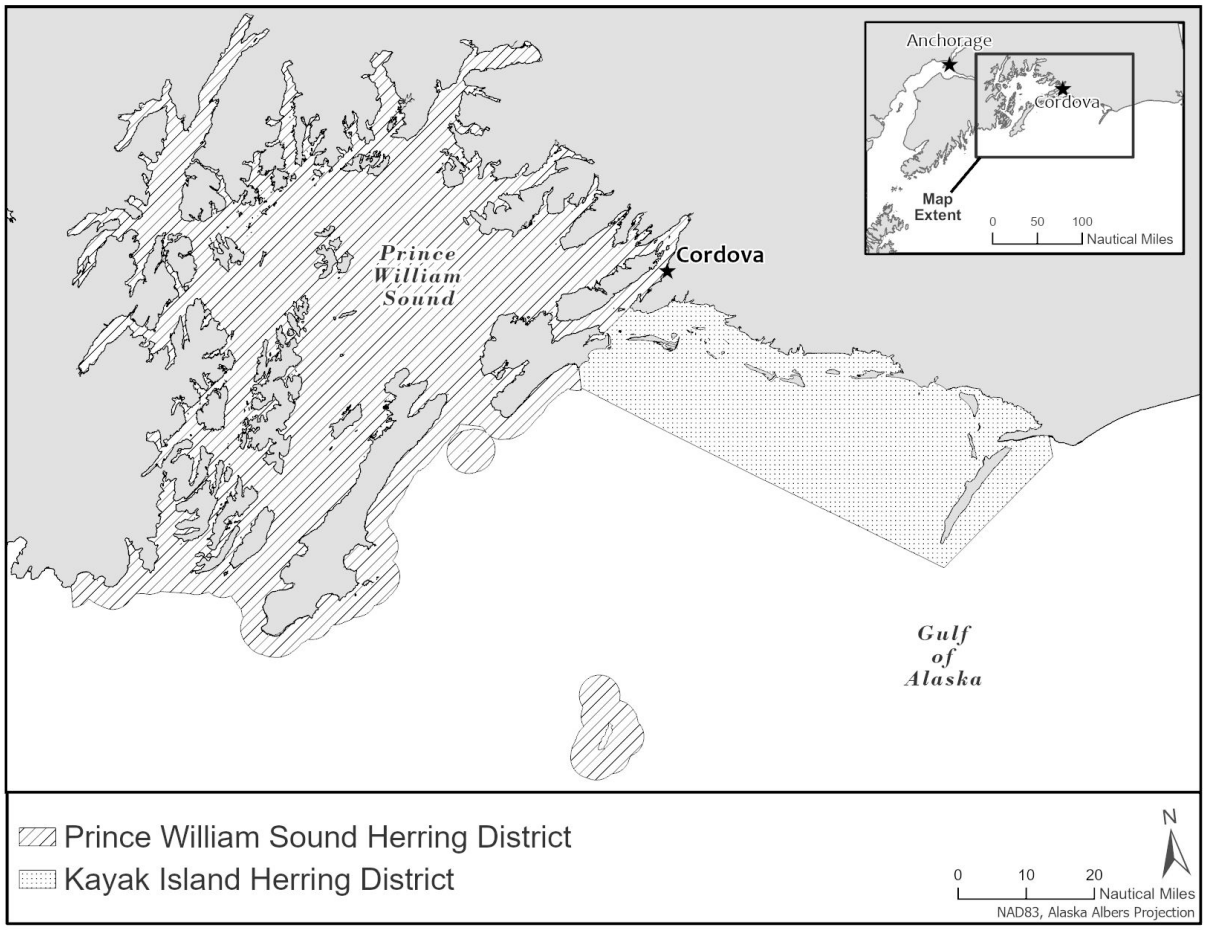

Figure 99-1.–Map of Kayak Island and Prince William Sound Districts.

PROPOSAL 100 – 5 AAC 27.XXX. New Section.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish an exploratory herring fishery near Kayak Island. There would be no specified guideline harvest limit and no allocation of herring among gear groups in the exploratory area. The area would be managed under emergency order authority.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is no regulation specific to Kayak Island. It is currently managed under the *Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan* (5 AAC 27.365).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The Kayak Island herring biomass would be managed on an exploratory basis with no specific GHL. Prince William Sound (PWS) Area herring fisheries commercial permit holders could participate in the fishery using the gear specifications associated with their permit. Herring harvested in the Kayak Island exploratory fishery would occur even if the Prince William Sound minimum biomass threshold of 22,000 tons was not met.

BACKGROUND: There has been no commercial herring fishery near Kayak Island. Kayak Island biomass was not included in the threshold evaluation for commercial fishery consideration because it was historically not surveyed or fished. The current management plan treats all herring in PWS as a single stock and does not include the Kayak Island biomass in its assessment. Although our program focuses on PWS, the department also periodically surveys Kayak Island as funding and weather allow. When assessed, Kayak Island aerial spawn surveys have recently exceeded estimates from Prince William Sound.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department assisted in developing and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The exploratory fishery concept was based on language from Kodiak Area herring regulations (5 AAC 27.535(e)(44)).

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.

PROPOSAL 101 – 5 AAC 27.365. Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Rob Nelson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would redefine Area E boundaries and establish an exploratory herring fishery. The minimum harvest objective would be 500 short tons. Existing gear regulations would remain unchanged and there would be no allocation of herring among gear groups in the exploratory area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The PWS Area for herring fisheries is defined as the waters between Cape Fairfield and Cape Suckling, north of latitude 59° North.

The *Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan* (5 AAC 27.365) aims to provide optimal sustained yield and equitable allocation among user groups. The management plan considers all herring in PWS as one stock. When the minimum spawning biomass size is between 22,000 and 42,500 tons, the management plan allocates the projected surplus to the five fisheries based on a 0 to 20 % harvest rate. The maximum harvest rate of 20% is applied when the stock size exceeds 42,500 tons.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The boundaries of PWS would be redefined, and an exploratory fishery operating south of the historical management area would be created (Figure 101-1). Herring migrating from PWS into the proposed exploratory area would be managed separately from the *Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan*. Herring harvested in the exploratory area would occur even if the minimum biomass threshold of 22,000 tons were not met. If the minimum biomass threshold of 22,000 tons were met, any harvest from the exploratory fishery would be subtracted from the GHL for the other gear groups operating in PWS.

BACKGROUND: At the 1994 board meeting in Cordova, the minimum spawning biomass threshold was raised from 8,400 to 22,000 tons for the PWS stock. No fishery may be opened if the estimated spawning biomass is below this level. The 22,000-ton threshold is 25% of the potential spawning biomass from an unfished stock. The higher threshold established manageable harvest levels while reducing the risk of driving the population to low abundance through overfishing.

Herring tagged at spawning locations within PWS were found to migrate into the Gulf of Alaska through the main entrances of PWS before returning in the spring (Bishop and Eiler, 2018). Based on that study and other studies conducted in the northeastern Pacific Ocean, the consensus is that post-spawned herring often travel with prevailing currents into the Gulf of Alaska to access summer feeding grounds. Aerial surveys conducted by the department also consistently document herring schools in bays and along the shorelines close to the main entrances of PWS, suggesting herring may stage in these locations in the late spring before moving out of PWS for the summer.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** establishing an exploratory fishery in the area described but **SUPPORTS** developing an exploratory fishing area further east near Kayak Island. An exploratory fishery directly outside of PWS has a high potential for harvesting herring from the stock that spawns inside of PWS. This stock has historically been commercially fished under the Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan and is already allocated to existing fisheries. The Kayak Island herring stock has not been fished or assessed as part of this

management plan, and an exploratory fishery would help assess the stock and formulate a management plan.

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.

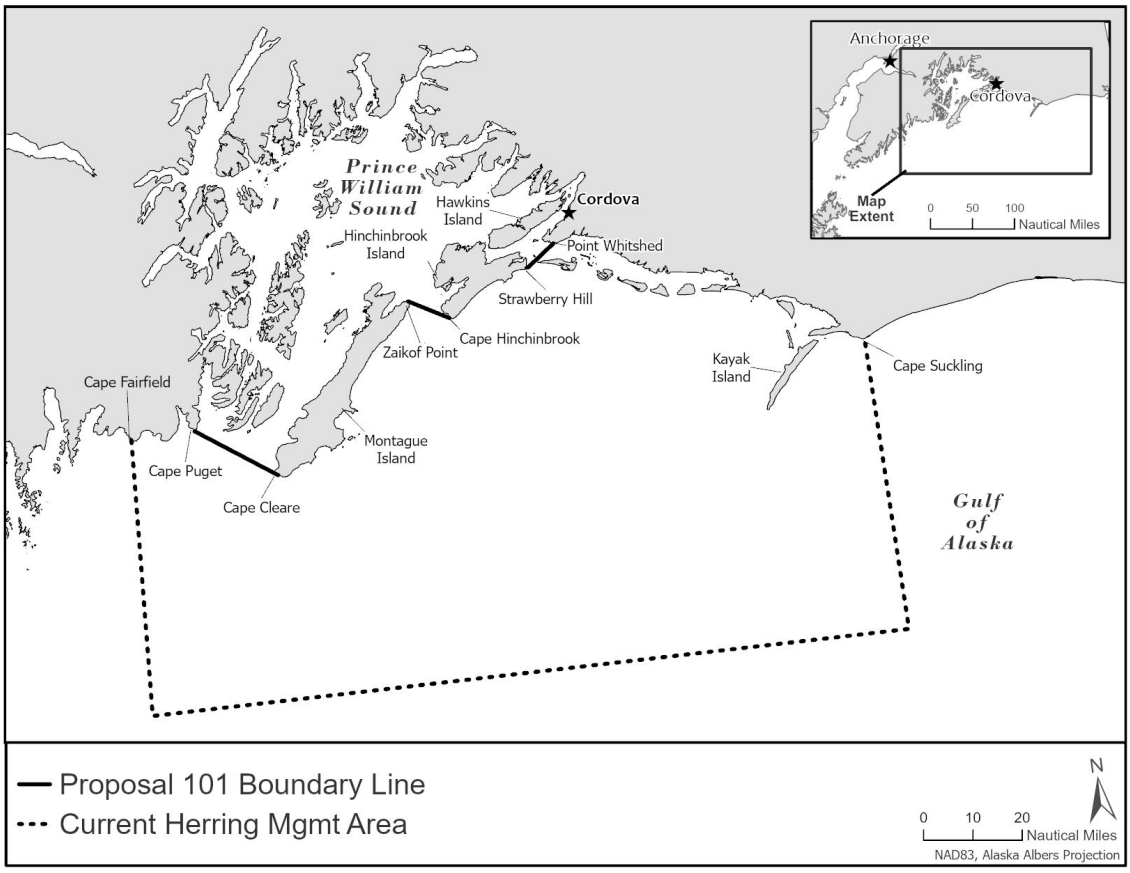

Figure 101-1.–Prince William Sound herring management area with new boundaries defining an exploratory area.

PROPOSAL 102 – 5 AAC 27.XXX. NEW SECTION.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) herring permit holders for Area E to harvest, but not sell, up to one ton of herring for bait per year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, no regulation allows fishing for herring to be used as bait in other fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow for herring harvest at spawning biomass levels below the threshold to open a commercial fishery. Any herring harvested would be deducted from the fall food and bait fishery guideline harvest level. The potential harvest could exceed 100 tons.

BACKGROUND: Other herring registration areas allow CFEC interim use or limited entry permit holders to take but not sell herring for bait. The language used in this proposal is similar to the regulatory language used in the Southeastern Alaska Area (5 AAC 27.170.), Yakutat Area (5 AAC 27.270.), Kodiak Area (5 AAC 27.545.), and the Bering Sea-Kotzebue Area (5 AAC 27.971.)

Prince William Sound herring stock assessment begins in late March and extends through mid-April. Aerial surveys are used to collect spawn data and document herring distribution. The state research vessel R/V Solstice is deployed multiple times per season to assist in purse seining for disease sampling and collecting age-sex-length data. Aerial surveys are used to measure miles-day of milt and evaluate the distribution of herring. Age-sex-length samples are processed throughout the summer months, and those results, along with aerial spawn data, are given to the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences to incorporate into their Bayesian age-structured assessment model (BASA). The BASA model estimates the age structure of the stock (age-3 and older) and provides a biomass estimate for managers to evaluate.

Currently, the department relies on the BASA model to forecast the size of the pre-fishery run biomass. Through Exxon Valdez Oil Spill funding, the department collects and summarizes the age-length-sex and aerial spawn data, and the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences runs the model and provides the department with a biomass estimate. The BASA model incorporates several different types of data, using varying time series, in its analysis.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal and requests that the following regulatory language be included in the regulation should the board adopt this proposal: "a person or vessel may not take more than one ton of herring, except as provided under terms of a permit issued by the department." (e.g., 5 ACC 27.270(3)).

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.

PROPOSAL 103 – 5 AAC 27.332. Seine specifications and operations for Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth B. Jones

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow permit stacking and dual permit operations in the PWS herring sac roe purse seine fishery. When two Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits are on the same vessel, that vessel may operate a single purse seine with a maximum of 1,700 meshes in depth and 200 fathoms in length. Vessels operating as stacked or dual permit operations would be required to display their ADF&G permanent license plate number followed by the letter "D" to identify them as dual permit vessels.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations allow one permit holder to fish one legal complement of purse seine gear per vessel, with a purse seine that is not more than 1,025 meshes in depth and more than 150 fathoms in length. Any number of CFEC permit holders may fish from a single vessel; however, there is no allowance for additional gear associated with multiple permit holders on one vessel.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may increase the number of active PWS herring sac roe purse seine permits and decrease the number of purse seine vessels fishing in PWS herring sac roe fisheries. Purse seine vessels with two permits onboard would have the advantage of a purse seine that is deeper and longer, likely increasing the harvest efficiency of that vessel. Adoption of this proposal may increase the value of Area E herring sac roe seine salmon permits, making it more difficult for new entrants into the fishery.

BACKGROUND: For management purposes, all herring fisheries target what is treated as a single major stock of herring that spawn between mid-April and early May. At the 1994 board meeting in Cordova, the minimum spawning biomass threshold was raised from 8,400 to 22,000 tons for the PWS stock. No fishery may be opened if the estimated spawning biomass is below this level. The 22,000-ton threshold is 25% of the potential spawning biomass from an unfished stock. The higher threshold established manageable harvest levels while reducing the risk of driving the population to low abundance through overfishing. When the stock size is between 22,000 and 42,500 tons, the *Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan* (5 AAC 27.365) allocates the projected surplus to the five fisheries based on a 0 to 20 % harvest rate. The maximum harvest rate of 20% is applied when the stock size exceeds 42,500 tons. The sac roe seine fishery is allocated 58.1 % of the available surplus.

The PWS sac roe purse seine fishery was last opened in 1998 when the projected biomass was 38,640 tons. At an exploitation rate of 15%, the guideline harvest level (GHL) was set at 5,796 tons and the sac roe fishery was allocated 3,367 tons. In early April that year, 46 purse seine vessels harvested 3,491 tons of herring during a 30-minute fishing period. That harvest exceeded GHL of 3,367 tons, and the fishery was closed for the season.

Since 1998, the projected spawning has fluctuated around the 22,000-ton threshold multiple times (Figure 103-1). When it has exceeded the threshold, it has been either by a negligible amount or due to the strength of a dominant age class. Given the allocation implications of prosecuting five different fisheries with a small GHL, the department has not opened any fishery due to concerns of overharvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The sac roe fishery is a limited-entry fishery with 105 permits. This proposal can potentially increase the efficiency of

purse seine vessels, making it challenging to prosecute a sustainable herring fishery with a small GHL and large number of permits. It would be difficult to control the harvest with the current potential effort. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal.

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.

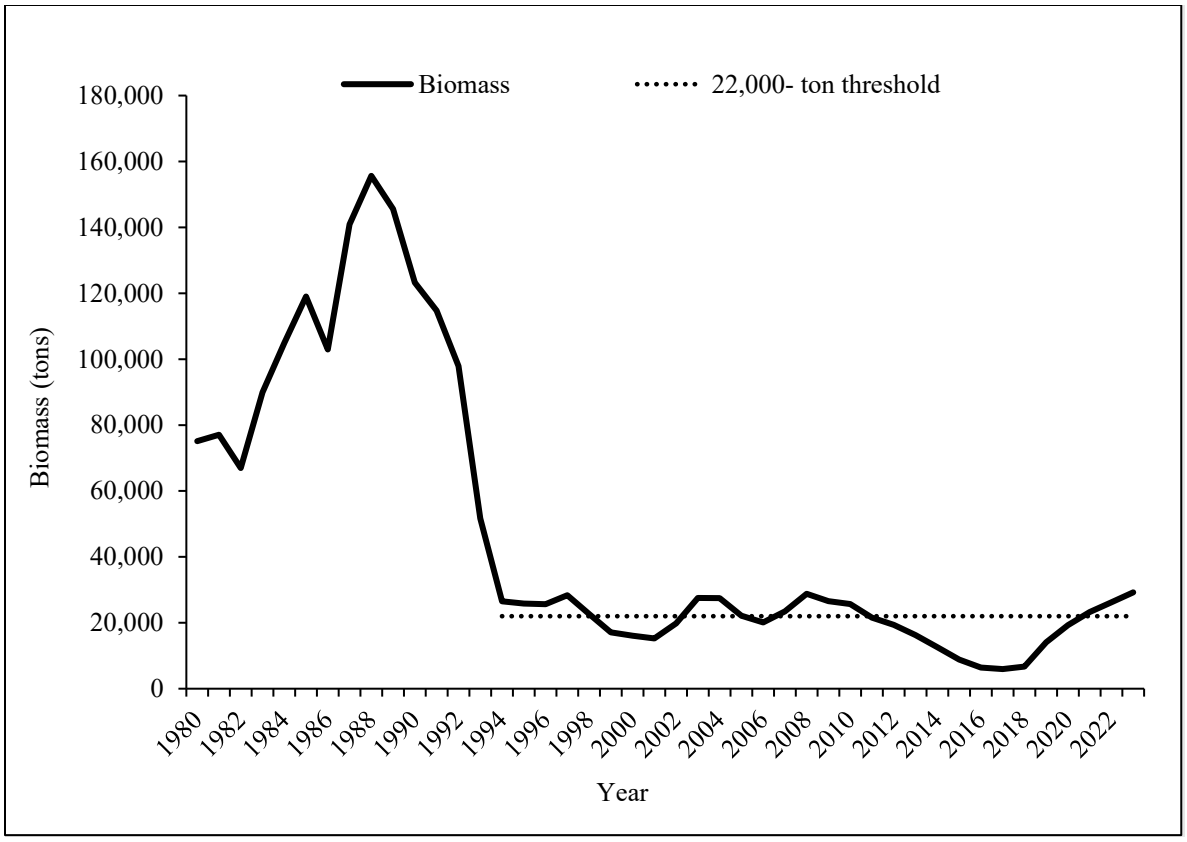

Figure 103-1.–Prince William Sound Bayesian age-structured spawning biomass, 1980–2023.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – GROUP 5: PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AND UPPER COPPER AND UPPER SUSITNA RIVERS SPORT (13 PROPOSALS)

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND (7 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 82 – 5 AAC 55.005. Description of the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Raymond Nix.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would redefine the Prince William Sound Area as two sport fish management units, inside and outside waters.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current description of the Prince William Sound Area (PWSA) consists all waters of the Gulf of Alaska and its drainages, west of the longitude of Cape Suckling (144° W. long.), and east of the longitude of Cape Fairfield (148° 50.25' W. long.), excluding the Copper River drainage upstream of a line crossing the Copper River between the south bank of the confluence of Haley Creek and the south bank of the confluence of Canyon Creek in Wood Canyon (5 AAC 55.005).

Four terminal harvest areas (THAs) exist in the PWSA that have higher bag limits for coho salmon. These are locations where hatchery fish (coho and king salmon) are released to provide additional sport fish harvest opportunity.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Defining Prince William Sound-Inside (PWSI) and Prince William Sound-Outside (PWSO) would set in regulation a line (Figure 82-1) that could be used for management but would add regulation complexity for anglers.

BACKGROUND: Prince William Sound (PWS) is characterized by a variety of coastal habitats that include glacial fjords, high-relief rocky islands, and tidally influenced bays and estuaries. It is one of the deepest inland bodies of water in the world with a maximum depth of around 2,400 feet. The range of depth and habitat in PWS provides for diverse salmon and groundfish sport fisheries. The inside waters of PWS are separated and protected from the northern Gulf of Alaska (NGOA) and include the towns of Cordova, Whittier, and Valdez, and the Alaska Native villages of Chenega and Tatitlek. The outside waters of the PWSA are located in the NGOA between Cape Fairfield and Cape Suckling and extend out to 200 nautical miles. These waters are often accessed from the community of Seward, in addition to the PWSA communities. Within 3 nautical miles of shore, the outside waters of the PWSA are in state waters and the remainder lies in federal waters of the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ).

The Prince William Sound Area description for sport fishing regulations in 5 AAC 55.005 was changed in 2009 to align with the commercial fishing regulations in 5 AAC 24.100. This changed the boundary from Cape Puget to Cape Fairfield to better align the management area between fisheries. The Prince William Sound Area for commercial groundfish fisheries were further divided into the inside and outside districts in 1992 using the boundaries described in this proposal.

The department has not identified distinct stocks of species that are isolated between the proposed inside and outside waters of the PWSA. Although, ongoing stock assessment efforts for yelloweye rockfish in the PWSA by the department have been focused on the inside waters of PWS to date,

future efforts will be towards outside waters. Many species, including salmon bound for PWS inside waters, travel across the proposed boundaries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The authority to adjust area specific regulations within the PWSA is currently allowed by emergency order authority.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

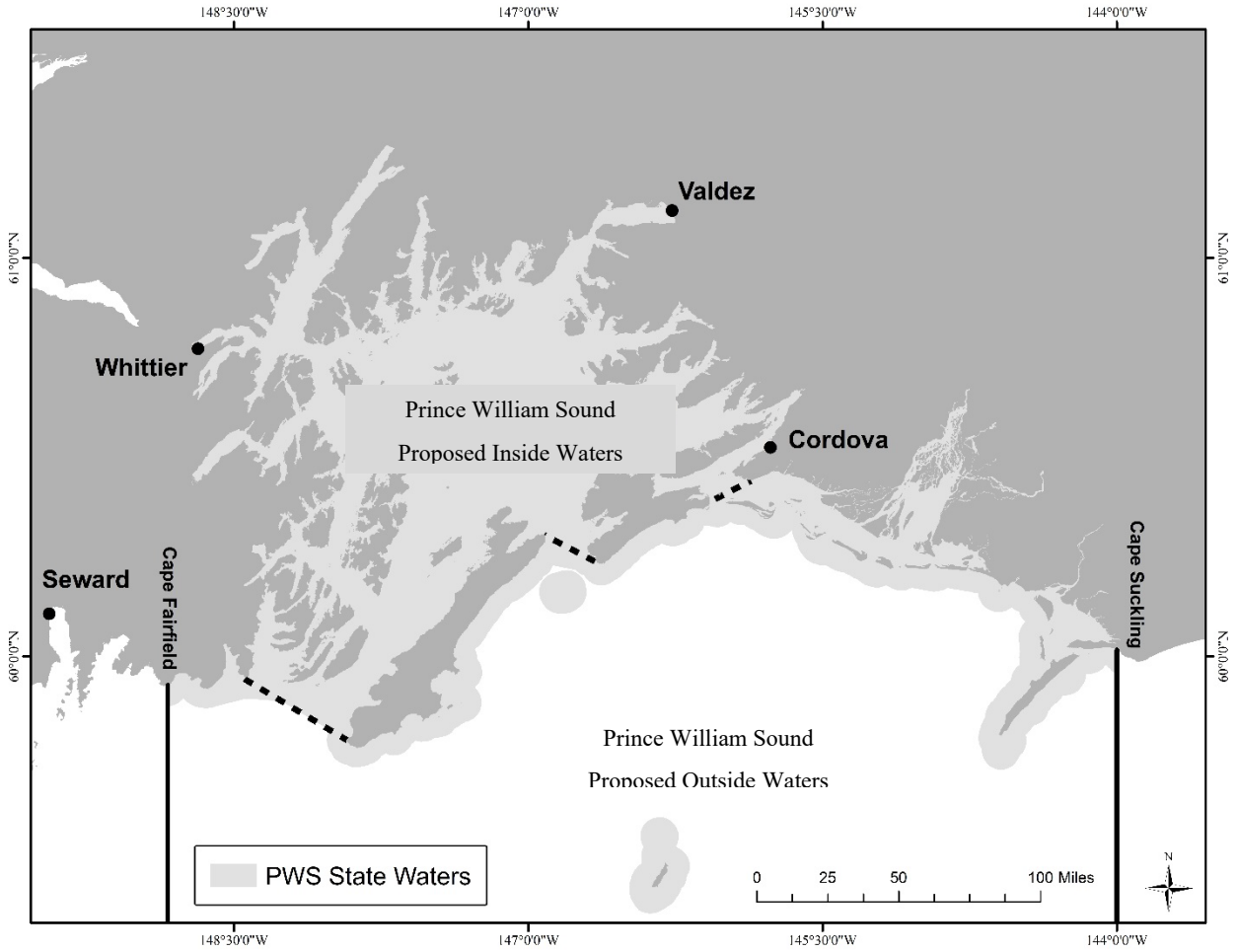

Figure 82-1.–Prince William Sound Area (all waters between the solid black lines) and proposed (dashed) lines for delineating inside and outside waters.

PROPOSAL 83 – 5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Andy Mezirow.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow resident anglers to use two rods when fishing for salmon in Prince William Sound.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Prince William Sound Management Area (PWSMA) waters adhere to the statewide sport fishing methods and means, which only allows anglers to use a single closely attended line.

Under PWSMA general provisions, the bag and possession limit for salmon other than king salmon is six per day, 12 in possession, of which only three per day, three in possession may be coho salmon. There are four terminal harvest areas (THAs) in in the PWSMA (Chenega, Cordova, Valdez, and Whitter) with higher bag and possession limits (six salmon per day, 12 in possession, of which all may be coho salmon). Freshwater special regulations include: Copper River Highway streams (three per day, three in possession), Robe River fly-fishing only designated waters (three per day, three in possession, of which only one may be sockeye salmon and one may be a coho salmon), Johnstone Bay fresh waters (three per day, three in possession, of which only two per day and in possession may be coho salmon), and Shelter Bay fresh waters (three per day, three in possession, of which only one per day and in possession may be coho salmon). The bag and possession limit for king salmon is two per day, four in possession, where king salmon fishing is allowed.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would likely increase the harvest of all salmon species by a small, unknown amount. It may reduce the harvest of other nonsalmon species caught while targeting salmon because anglers would be required to release them. It would only apply to resident anglers and add regulatory complexity. Bag and possession limits for anglers would not change, regardless of an additional rod.

BACKGROUND: Prince William Sound supports a diversity of salmon sport fishing opportunities. Throughout the summer and fall, anglers target coho, chum, sockeye, and pink salmon and target king salmon year-round. While Prince William Sound salmon fisheries are supported by multiple hatchery releases, wild stocks are also present throughout Prince William Sound and the salmon fishery is considered a mixed stock. Currently, there no sport fish management plans for salmon in PWS.

From 2013 through 2022, the SWHS estimates that the average annual catch of salmon in the PWSMA sport fisheries was just under 150,000 salmon, of which approximately 60% (89,101 salmon) were harvested. The majority of annual salmon catch and harvest is coho salmon (57% and 71%, respectively), and most coho salmon that are caught, are harvested (74%). Peak catch and harvest for all salmon species were observed in the early to mid-2000s, except for king salmon that had a more recent peak catch (12,051 fish) and harvest (7,222 fish) in 2020 (Table 83-1).

In salt waters of Southeast Alaska vessels are limited to a maximum of six sport fishing lines and an additional fishing line per angler is only allowed when the management plan specifies it is warranted. The *Southeast Alaska King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 47.055) directs the department to establish bag, possession, annual limits, and other management measures for the king salmon sport fishery in Southeast Alaska. This management plan contains seven management tiers which correspond to the annual allocation of king salmon to the sport fishery with opportunity

increasing as allocation increases. Under some allocation levels all anglers may use two rods during the winter fishery (October–March) when fishing for king salmon and may only retain salmon. At other allocation levels only Alaska resident anglers may use two rods during the winter fishery. In years of low sport fish allocation, sport fishing gear is limited to the standard statewide definition of only one line per angler. The *Stikine River King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 47.057) directs the department, by emergency order, to take specific actions in the sport fishery if allowable king salmon catch is available; this includes the use of two rods per angler for king salmon. In PWSMA, there are no sport fish salmon management plans providing the department guidance to allow additional rods per angler.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal as it increases regulatory complexity and creates different methods and means between the PWSMA and other Southcentral Alaska areas. Although the department does not have conservation concerns for salmon in PWS it may increase harvest of king salmon returning to other parts of the state. This would be difficult to enforce because anglers may catch other nontarget species while using two rods.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 83-1.–Sport fish catch and harvest of anadromous salmon, Prince William Sound Management Area, 2004–2023.

	King salmon		Coho salmon		Sockeye salmon		Chum salmon		Pink salmon		Total	
Year	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest
2004	5,660	2,414	186,208	107,407	13,107	9,971	12,820	1,972	114,519	28,980	332,314	150,744
2005	6,702	3,350	195,672	126,583	8,960	6,144	4,870	720	123,012	39,935	339,216	176,732
2006	7,021	4,647	138,446	99,608	7,020	4,978	7,968	1,937	68,144	19,180	228,599	130,350
2007	6,874	3,193	188,535	134,449	17,966	12,672	7,432	1,077	136,220	35,506	357,027	186,897
2008	6,187	3,886	136,305	101,645	11,500	7,652	9,492	1,149	82,518	24,081	246,002	138,413
2009	8,935	4,379	120,611	85,353	12,929	9,401	6,171	932	64,957	21,460	213,603	121,525
2010	5,275	3,477	158,982	118,371	8,909	6,960	5,084	2,299	49,273	20,310	227,523	151,417
2011	4,954	1,990	143,718	100,417	9,869	7,528	13,406	701	51,597	14,903	223,544	125,539
2012	2,523	1,929	56,754	39,705	6,849	4,442	3,348	937	37,700	15,933	107,174	62,946
2013	5,692	3,609	145,363	104,681	11,029	8,499	5,787	1,372	38,921	10,282	206,792	128,443
2014	3,537	2,751	66,420	42,825	14,993	10,875	3,988	858	33,040	11,312	121,978	68,621
2015	3,365	2,227	153,066	113,352	6,982	4,548	3,180	584	50,874	16,382	217,467	137,093
2016	4,607	3,457	47,648	34,610	5,267	4,784	844	253	36,741	15,635	95,107	58,739
2017	3,754	1,928	84,295	67,858	7,614	4,726	3,389	678	39,798	12,692	138,850	87,882
2018	5,086	2,954	60,570	47,122	7,214	6,112	1,653	468	48,176	15,445	122,699	72,101
2019	8,186	4,528	83,514	63,726	12,443	10,005	4,950	1,468	63,276	20,432	172,369	100,159
2020	12,051	7,222	61,267	43,577	13,813	10,312	2,200	239	38,205	11,882	127,536	73,232
2021	8,715	5,433	93,115	68,275	10,612	7,536	2,092	544	54,134	13,664	168,668	95,452
2022	4,310	3,411	52,332	43,474	11,665	9,345	1,686	456	36,527	12,606	106,520	69,292
2023	9,638	6,325	64,021	47,189	7,327	5,343	2,972	403	36,157	12,237	120,115	71,497
Average 2013–2022	5,930	3,752	84,759	62,950	10,163	7,674	2,977	692	43,969	14,033	147,799	89,101

PROPOSAL 84 – 5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Copper River/PWS Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit charter vessel operators and crewmembers from retaining king salmon or rockfish while clients are on board the vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Charter vessel operators and crewmembers may retain a bag limit of king salmon and rockfish while clients are on board the vessel. The bag limit is two king salmon per day, four in possession and four rockfish per day, eight in possession, of which only one per day, one in possession may be a nonpelagic rockfish. Charter vessel operators and crew members are not allowed to retain halibut.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Sport harvest of both king salmon and rockfish in Prince William Sound would be reduced by approximately 2% due to no retention allowed by charter operator and crew member.

BACKGROUND: Operators and crewmembers are allowed to harvest any fish species excluding halibut when guiding and may transfer their fish to clients under the provisions of 5 AAC 75.010. Currently, the department collects charter vessel catch and harvest data, including crewmember harvest, through the charter logbook program which is a mandatory reporting process.

Since the inception of the charter logbook program in 2006, annual harvest of king salmon by charter operators and crewmembers has ranged from a low of 0 fish (2008 and 2009) to a high of 166 in 2022, which equated to 5% of the total king salmon harvested in the PWSMA sport fishery that year (Table 84-1). In recent years (2015–2022), charter operators and crewmembers harvest approximately 78 king salmon annually. The recent annual harvest by operator and crewmembers has nearly tripled the historic average (2006–2014) of 27 fish; however, the proportion of the total annual king salmon harvest retained by charter operator and crewmembers remains small (2%, on average).

From the charter logbook data, rockfish harvest by charter operator and crewmembers has ranged from a low of 30 fish (2007) to a high of 1,835 in 2019 (Table 84-1). The rockfish harvest by charter operators and crew members has never exceeded 2% of the total rockfish harvest in the PWSMA. Recently (2015–2022), the rockfish harvest by charter operators and crewmembers has been 1,560 fish annually, or 2% of the total sportfish harvest of rockfish, which is approximately double the historical average (2006–2014: 657 fish or 1%). The department collects rockfish catch and harvest data on pelagic and nonpelagic rockfish from the charter logbook program, dock side sampling and interviews, and the annual Statewide Harvest Survey program. Harvest by guided anglers, unguided anglers, and operator/crewmember can be apportioned to rockfish assemblage (i.e., pelagic and nonpelagic rockfish) and in some cases, even species (i.e., black and yelloweye rockfish). Data from charter logbooks indicates that on average (2006–2022), charter operator and crewmember harvest of rockfish is composed of 18% yelloweye rockfish, 9% other nonpelagic rockfish, and 73% pelagic rockfish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 84-1.–Charter operator and crewmember harvest of king salmon and rockfish in numbers, total PWSMA species harvest, and percentage of total sport fish harvest by crew, Prince William Sound Management Area, 2006–2023.

	King salmon			Rockfish		
Year	Crew	Total	% Crew	Crew	Total	% Crew
2006	75	4,910	2	872	35,268	2
2007	4	3,282	0	30	52,906	0
2008	0	3,977	0	86	47,708	0
2009	0	4,438	0	59	51,290	0
2010	30	3,490	1	790	46,179	2
2011	19	1,990	1	778	70,939	1
2012	24	2,074	1	1,088	57,241	2
2013	51	3,609	1	1,405	78,614	2
2014	40	2,803	1	803	85,607	1
2015	48	2,227	2	1,314	92,174	1
2016	27	3,457	1	1,725	107,654	2
2017	23	1,928	1	1,472	91,908	2
2018	59	2,954	2	1,408	75,840	2
2019	112	4,528	2	1,835	113,703	2
2020	45	7,222	1	1,444	84,681	2
2021	98	5,433	2	1,504	106,920	1
2022	166	3,411	5	1,736	104,521	2
2023	123	6,325	2	1,598	81,123	2
Average						
2006–2014	27	3,397	1	657	58,417	1
2015–2023	78	4,165	2	1,560	95,392	2

PROPOSAL 85 – 5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

PROPOSED BY: Raymond Nix.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the possession limit for coho salmon in Prince William Sound (PWS) from three to six fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under PWS general provisions, the bag and possession limit for salmon other than king salmon is six per day, 12 in possession, of which only three per day, three in possession may be coho salmon. Exceptions include reduced limits in the freshwaters of Johnstone Bay, Shelter Bay, and the Robe River fly-fishing only designated waters. There are also four terminal harvest areas (THAs) in PWS (Chenega, Cordova, Valdez and Whitter) with higher bag and possession limits (six coho salmon per day, 12 in possession).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Coho salmon harvest by sport anglers will increase by an unknown amount. Increased possession limits would allow anglers without a means of preserving fish to retain more coho salmon on multiple-day fishing trip. Increasing the coho salmon possession limit in PWS would also establish different possession limits between North Gulf Coast and PWS salt waters and many vessels transition between the two management areas.

BACKGROUND: The possession limit is the maximum number of unpreserved fish a person may have in possession. Preserved fish are fish prepared in such a manner, and in an existing state of preservation, as to be fit for human consumption after a 15-day period and does not include unfrozen fish temporarily stored in coolers that contain ice, or dry ice, or fish that are lightly salted.

Coho salmon are the primary salmon species targeted by PWS anglers (Table 83-1). Additional opportunities exist for anglers to target hatchery-origin coho salmon in PWS THAs, where the bag and possession are more liberal than the remainder of PWS. In PWS outside of the THAs and for specific locations, such as the freshwaters of Johnstone and Shelter Bays, conservative bag limits were established in 1999 to protect wild stocks. Overall, recent (2020–2022) coho salmon catch and harvest have declined by 45% and 41%, respectively, from the historic averages (Table 83-1; 2003–2019). Currently, there are no formal coho salmon stock assessments in the Prince William Sound Management Area except for the Copper River Delta and Bering River stocks. Anecdotal information suggests that multiple day trips are common for private anglers in PWS during the weekends and a small portion of the charter fleet operates multi-day trips.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. It increases regulatory complexity by creating different regulations between the adjacent PWS and North Gulf Coast areas. This would be difficult to enforce because many vessels transition between the two management areas.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 86 – 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound.

PROPOSED BY: Copper River/PWS Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit sport harvest of coho salmon on Ibeck Creek 1.5 miles above the Copper River Highway after September 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon sport fishing is open year-round, with a bag and possession limit of three coho salmon in freshwater drainages crossed by the Copper River Highway except on Ibeck Creek, which is closed 3 miles upstream of the Copper River Highway year-round to all sport fishing. A coho salmon that is removed from the water must be retained and become part of the bag limit of the person who hooked the fish. From August 15 – September 15, sport anglers that harvest a bag limit of coho salmon in the fresh waters may not sport fish with bait for the remainder of the day in those waters.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the area open to sport harvest on Ibeck Creek for coho salmon beginning on September 21 by 1.5 miles. Angler effort and harvest on Ibeck Creek would likely be unaffected as anglers would move downstream to sport fish which would likely increase crowding. As written, the regulatory language would need to be clarified that sport fishing for coho salmon would be closed from September 21 to align with the proposer's statement that this would protect spawning coho salmon. As written, only harvest of coho salmon would be prohibited. In addition, a sunset date would need to be set for this seasonal restriction.

BACKGROUND: The Copper River Highway streams are popular for coho salmon sport fishing. Anglers focus on coho salmon from mid-August through September. There are three main locations where anglers focus their efforts on coho salmon: Eyak River, Ibeck Creek, and Alaganik Slough. Ibeck Creek is the most popular location for shore-based anglers due to its easy, road-accessible location (Figure 86-1).

Harvest of coho salmon on Ibeck Creek by sport anglers has ranged from 135 coho salmon in 2004 to 10,315 coho salmon in 2015 (Table 86-1). The recent 10-year average harvest of coho in Ibeck Creek is estimated at 5,117 coho salmon. The distribution of harvest location by anglers on Ibeck Creek is unknown, but surveys indicate that less than 10% of angling effort occurs between 1.5–3 miles above the Copper River Highway. Copper River Delta coho salmon have been managed to achieve a drainagewide sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 32,000–50,000 since 2022. From 2003–2021, the upper end of the SEG was 67,000. Escapement is estimated through inseason aerial surveys, and the SEG has been achieved each year since 2003, except in 2022, when it fell below the lower bound of the goal range by 1,660 coho salmon. Restrictions were made in the sport fishery in 2019 and 2022, and additional details can be found in proposal 88 (Table 88-1).

In December 2011, the board adopted a proposal to close sport fishing on Ibeck Creek 3 miles above the Copper River Highway. During this meeting there was extensive discussion of the impacts of limiting the fishing area and the board adopted this regulation as written to protect the upstream coho salmon spawning area on Ibeck Creek. There is no guided sport fishing on Ibeck Creek.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not have a biological concern for the Copper River Delta coho salmon stocks. Current emergency

order authority allows the department to restrict the sport fishery inseason to meet the Copper River Delta drainagewide SEG.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

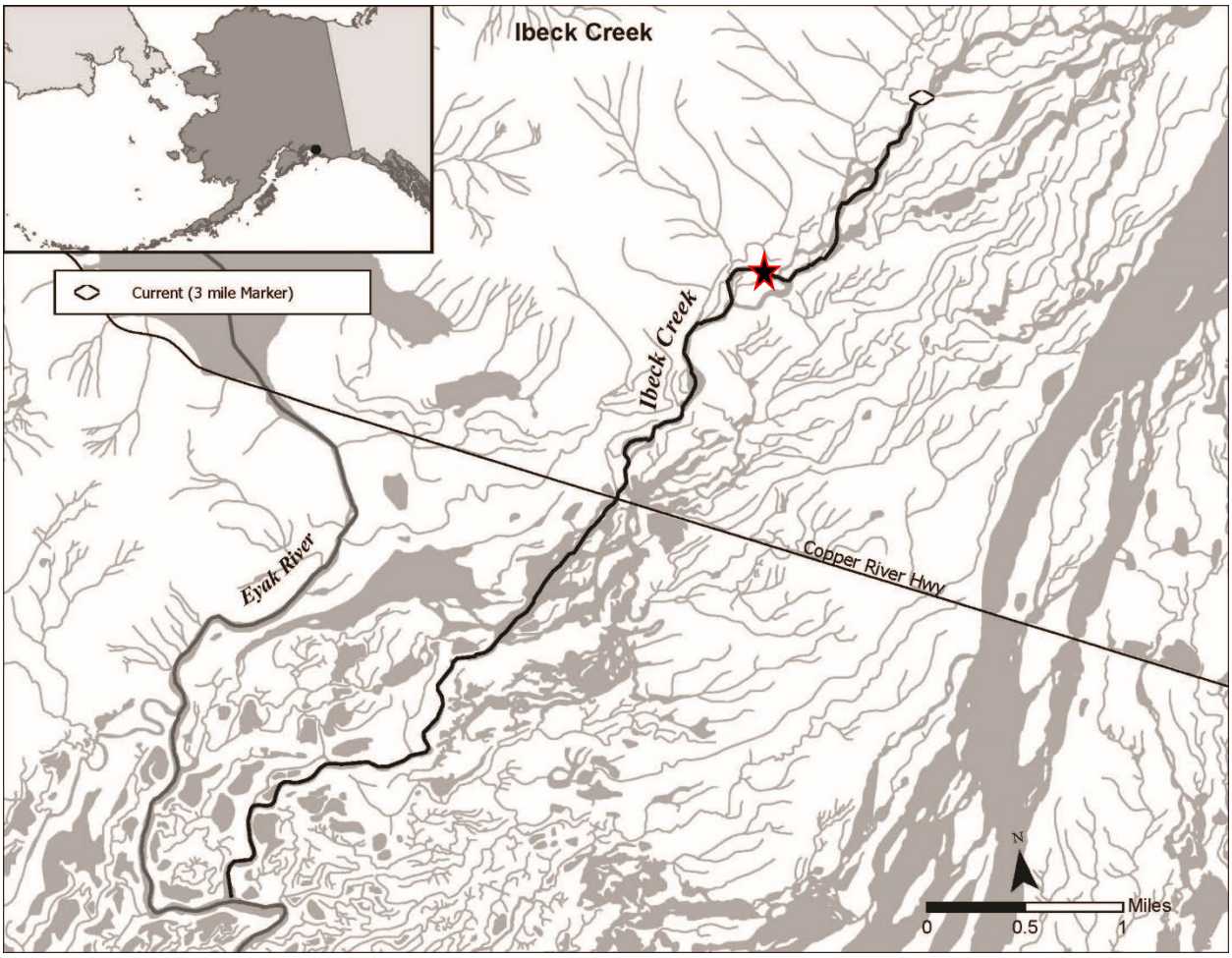

Figure 86-1.–Ibeck Creek drainage. The star represents the approximate 1.5 mile location proposed.

Table 86-1.–Harvest and catch of coho salmon at selected sites on the Copper River Highway, PWSMA, 2003–2023 (SWHS).

	Cordova area sites									
	Eyak River		Alaganik Slough		Ibeck Creek		Other Cordova sites		Total	
Year	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest
2003	15,604	8,473	4,655	1,708	11,857	3,318	15,041	3,329	47,157	16,828
2004	25,746	10,235	13,032	3,843	377	135	15,447	2,839	54,602	17,052
2005	10,639	5,228	4,049	1,777	4,120	2,437	11,304	2,601	30,112	12,043
2006	6,579	3,328	2,237	1,236	1,803	913	6,055	2,537	16,674	8,014
2007	8,141	4,677	1,641	1,052	2,260	927	7,352	2,874	19,394	9,530
2008	8,103	4,714	3,994	1,738	1,811	620	7,393	2,279	21,301	9,351
2009	13,065	8,464	2,425	1,379	7,925	3,780	4,728	909	28,143	14,532
2010	15,052	8,379	3,554	2,208	7,321	4,818	4,608	1,258	30,535	16,663
2011	8,633	5,206	2,303	1,332	12,223	7,351	6,909	1,198	30,068	15,087
2012	11,775	7,010	949	623	10,345	7,430	5,054	591	28,123	15,654
2013	10,260	7,229	4,698	2,752	13,204	6,986	3,247	1,495	31,409	18,462
2014	13,093	7,857	2,815	1,728	10,890	6,274	4,607	1,066	31,405	16,925
2015	10,655	8,338	12,483	5,862	22,875	10,315	3,283	1,152	49,296	25,667
2016	6,794	5,217	4,817	2,413	8,868	5,464	2,829	588	23,308	13,682
2017	4,429	3,088	1,980	887	8,081	5,584	3,323	888	17,813	10,447
2018	6,634	4,958	3,773	2,291	3,980	2,747	2,156	1,093	16,543	11,089
2019	8,950	5,900	5,831	3,102	4,578	3,899	3,212	740	22,571	13,641
2020	8,123	4,150	4,720	2,067	3,282	2,226	2,600	751	18,725	9,194
2021	7,293	4,813	3,670	1,612	7,907	5,541	3,063	698	21,933	12,664
2022	2,748	2,177	3,356	2,416	3,774	2,129	2,819	1,368	12,697	8,090
2023	4,456	3,212	7,359	4,836	10,479	6,661	4,684	1,164	26,978	15,873
Average										
2003–2012	12,334	6,571	3,884	1,690	6,004	3,173	8,389	2,042	30,611	13,475
2013–2022	7,898	5,373	4,814	2,513	8,744	5,117	3,114	984	24,570	13,986

PROPOSAL 87 – 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound.

PROPOSED BY: Copper River/PWS Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit sport harvest of coho salmon in the Eighteen Mile system, one mile above the confluence with Alaganik Slough, effective September 21.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sport fishing for coho salmon in Eighteen Mile Creek is open year-round, with a bag and possession limit of three coho salmon (Figure 87-1).) A coho salmon that is removed from the water must be retained and become part of the bag limit of the person who originally hooked the fish. From August 15 – September 15, sport anglers that harvest a bag limit of coho salmon in the fresh waters may not sport fish with bait for the remainder of the day in those waters. Eighteen Mile Creek is open year-round to cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden fishing.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create an exception to the Copper River Highway Road system regulatory provisions as this area would be the only tributary with a seasonal closure prohibiting the harvest of coho salmon. As written, the regulatory language would need to be clarified that sport fishing for coho salmon would be closed from September 21 to align with the proposer's statement that this would protect spawning coho salmon from removal and catch-and-release mortality. As written, only harvest of coho salmon would be prohibited. Anglers would move to waters that are not affected and still fish on the Copper River Highway Road system. Anglers would still be able to fish for trout and other salmon in this area on September 21. Harvest and escapement of coho salmon is unlikely to be affected by a seasonal closure as anglers could move downstream of the closed area. This would increase effort and harvest at other coho salmon fishing locations by an unknown amount as anglers would shift downstream or to an alternative location.

BACKGROUND: The Copper River Highway streams are a popular sport fishing location. Anglers focus on coho salmon from mid-August through September. There are three main locations where anglers focus their efforts on coho salmon: Eyak River, Ibeck Creek, and Alaganik Slough. Flowing into Alaganik Slough is the Eighteen Mile Creek tributary, which crosses the Copper River Highway and receives effort by sport anglers. Anglers target trout, Dolly Varden, and salmon, including coho salmon, in Alaganik Slough and Eighteen Mile Creek.

The Eighteen Mile Creek drainage can be accessed from the Copper River Highway or from Alaganik Slough Road. Off of Alaganik Slough Road, anglers can access Eighteen Mile Creek via a USFS trail that parallels Alaganik Slough. In 2018, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) improved a trail system that anglers can utilize to reach the Eighteen Mile Creek from the Copper River Highway, providing improved access to this fishing location. This trail does not take anglers right to the creek but rather was built to tie into an already existing trail system. This trail has become more popular with anglers over the past few years as Eighteen Mile Creek is a popular location to fish for coho salmon when other systems are experiencing high water levels and for anglers who want to get further away from crowded, roadside-accessible locations, such as Ibeck Creek.

Effort levels in Eighteen Mile Creek are too low to be captured in the Statewide Harvest Survey, so the department has no estimates of catch or harvest of coho salmon from this tributary, although anecdotal evidence suggests it has grown in popularity over the last 10 years. The bag and

possession limit of three coho salmon has been in effect since 1989 in the Prince William Sound Management Area.

The Copper River Delta coho salmon SEG is 32,000–50,000 fish. The Copper River Delta coho salmon SEG, which includes the Eighteen Mile Creek drainage, is estimated by department aerial surveys and has been achieved for coho salmon each year except for 2022 (Table 87-1). The USFS has conducted some ground-based surveys and observations have been made by department staff and other individuals identifying that spawning habitat begins approximately 1.5 – 2 miles above the confluence with Alaganik Slough. In the two years where below average runs were anticipated, inseason restrictions were put in place (2019 and 2022). In 2019, the goal was met and in 2022, survey conditions were poor, and the final escapement was approximately 1,660 coho salmon below the SEG.

In 2011, the board took up but did not adopt a proposal to close Eighteen Mile Creek to coho salmon fishing 1,000 yards above the confluence with Alaganik Slough. In 2021, the board took up but did not adopt a proposal to close Eighteen Mile Creek to sport fishing a quarter mile above the confluence with Alaganik Slough.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. There is not a biological concern for Copper River Delta coho salmon stocks and escapement goals have been met in all years since the goal was established, except for 2022. This would increase regulation complexity.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 87-1.–Copper River Delta coho salmon escapement, 2004–2023.

Copper River Delta Coho Salmon 2021–2024: SEG: 32,000 – 50,000 2003–2020: SEG 32,000 – 67,000	
Year	Escapement
2004	99,505
2005	99,682
2006	89,070
2007	51,215
2008	76,892
2009	41,294
2010	41,077
2011	38,145
2012	37,010
2013	34,680
2014	43,010
2015	41,665
2016	76,200
2017	43,760
2018	53,800
2019	37,020
2020	36,425
2021	45,485
2022	30,340*
2023	43,940

Note: *=Escapement goal was not achieved.

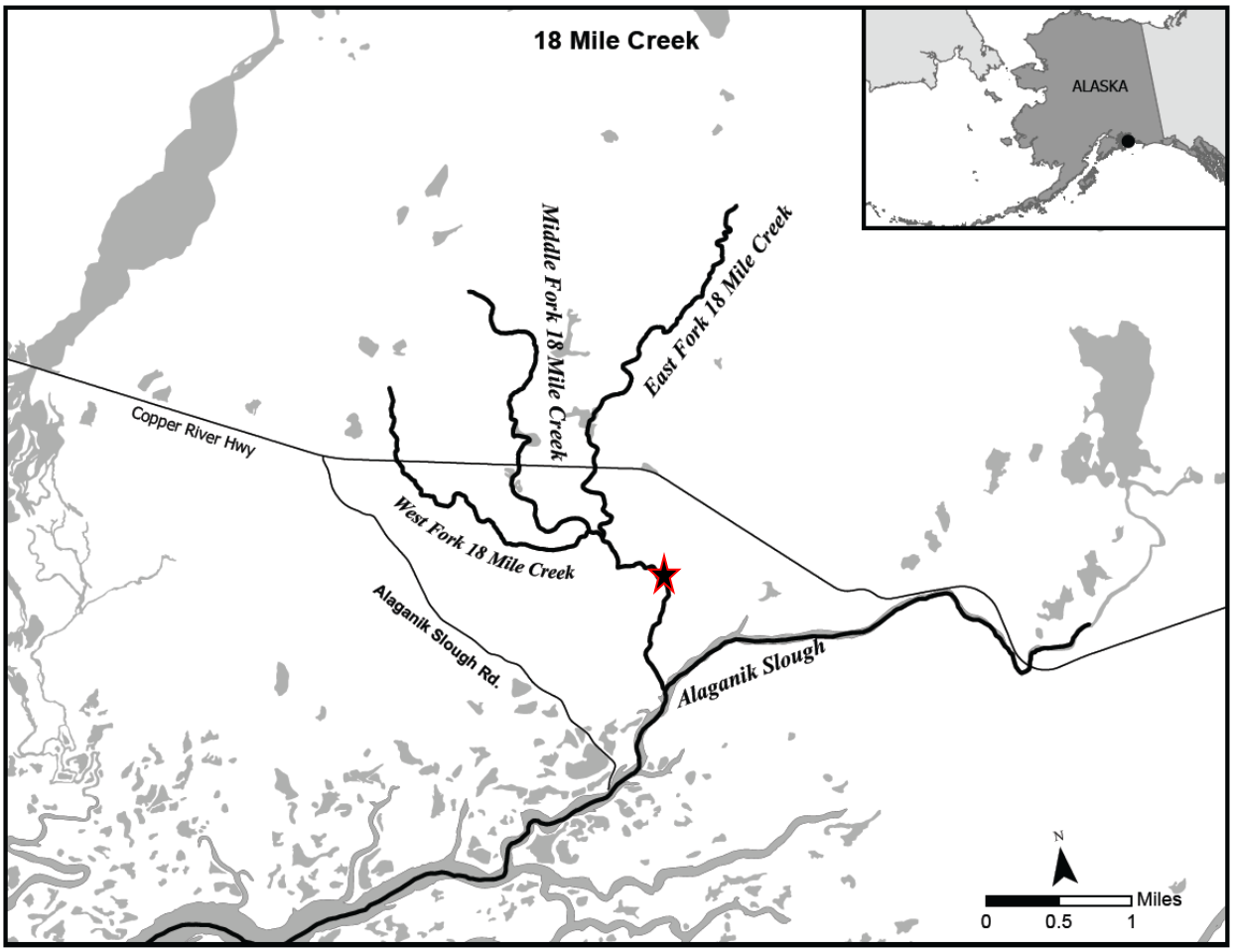

Figure 87-1.–Eighteen Mile Creek and Alaganik Slough on the Copper River Delta. The star represents the approximate 1 mile location proposed.

PROPOSAL 88 – 5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound.

PROPOSED BY: Copper River/PWS Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish restrictions in the Copper River Delta coho salmon sport fishery based on low aerial survey counts and number of days the commercial fishery is closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon sport fishing is open year-round, with a bag and possession limit of three coho salmon in freshwater drainages crossed by the Copper River Highway. A coho salmon that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person who originally hooked the fish. From August 15 – September 15, sport anglers that harvest a bag limit of coho salmon in the fresh waters may not sport fish with bait for the remainder of the day in those waters. Commercial fisheries on the Copper River Delta for coho salmon are closed unless opened by emergency order.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may reduce the sport harvest and increase escapement of coho salmon, both by an unknown amount. This would increase regulatory complexity and increase the likelihood of inseason emergency orders. It may also reduce sport fishing effort due to the uncertainty of what regulations may be in effect.

BACKGROUND: Copper River Delta coho salmon are managed to achieve a sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 32,000 – 50,000 since 2021. From 2003–2020 the upper end of the SEG was 67,000. This goal is evaluated through inseason aerial surveys, and has been achieved each year since 2003, excluding 2022 when it fell below the lower bound of the goal range by 1,660 coho salmon.

The Statewide Harvest Survey estimates an average (2013–2022) sport harvest of 13,982 coho salmon annually in the Copper River Delta sport fisheries which accounts for approximately 7% of the total coho salmon harvested on the Copper River Delta and in adjacent salt waters (Table 88-1). In the Copper River District, the average annual commercial coho salmon harvest from 2013–2022 was approximately 227,142 fish and on average, 92% of the total harvest of coho salmon. The Copper River District commercial fishery harvest includes an unknown proportion of Copper River coho salmon spawning upstream of the delta and coho salmon traveling to spawning areas outside of the delta. Commercial fisheries in the Copper River District are opened by emergency order and are typically announced 36–60 hours prior to an opening. The standard management strategy for coho salmon is one or two 24-hour fishing periods per week beginning August 15, depending on escapement and harvest levels. Time and area of fishing periods are adjusted depending on run-strength indicators.

Emergency orders modify the sport fishery regulations and are issued when the escapement is anticipated to be below or exceed the SEG. Since the inception of the Copper River Delta escapement goal, emergency orders have never been issued to liberalize the fishery and have only been issued to restrict the sport fishery in 2019 and 2022. In 2019, due to drought conditions and delayed coho salmon returns, two emergency orders were issued for the sport fishery. The first emergency order was issued effective September 18, prohibiting the use of bait and a second emergency order was issued September 23 reducing the bag limit to one per day. The commercial

fishery also had reduced harvest opportunities in 2019, and the final estimated escapement was within the goal range (37,202 fish; Table 88-1).

In 2022 and 2023, the department anticipated lower returns based on the drought conditions observed in 2019 and potential mortality of coho salmon fry. In 2022, due to low counts during aerial surveys and commercial fishery indicators, an emergency order was issued effective September 9, reducing the bag limit to 2 fish and prohibiting the use of bait. Also in 2022, harvest was the lowest since 1997 for the commercial fishery and the second lowest harvest estimate in the sport fishery in the last 20 years. In 2022, the escapement was 1,660 fish below the lower bound of SEG (Table 88-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department does not have a biological concern for Copper River Delta coho salmon stocks and has the authority to liberalize, restrict, or close the sport fishery when needed, to stay within the escapement goal range. This would increase regulation complexity.

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. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 88-1.–Harvest and escapement of coho salmon on the Copper River Delta (2004–2023).

	Copper River Delta Sport				Copper River District Commercial		Cordova Area Subsistence			
Year	EO's issued	Action	Estimated Harvest (SWHS)	Percentage of Total Harvest	Harvest	Percentage of Total Harvest	Harvest	Percentage of Total Harvest	Estimated Total Harvest	Copper River Delta Estimated Escapement* (SEG 32,000 - 50,000)
2004	0	None	17,052	4%	467,861	96%	46	0.01%	484,959	99,505
2005	0	None	12,043	4%	263,584	96%	156	0.06%	275,783	99,682
2006	0	None	8,014	2%	318,422	98%	101	0.03%	326,537	89,070
2007	0	None	9,531	7%	117,522	92%	83	0.07%	127,136	51,215
2008	0	None	9,351	4%	203,198	96%	172	0.08%	212,721	76,892
2009	0	None	14,532	7%	208,543	93%	207	0.09%	223,282	41,294
2010	0	None	16,663	7%	211,647	93%	95	0.04%	228,405	40,377
2011	0	None	15,087	10%	128,054	89%	615	0.43%	143,756	38,145
2012	0	None	15,654	11%	131,298	89%	392	0.27%	147,344	36,735
2013	0	None	18,426	7%	245,234	93%	311	0.12%	263,971	34,630
2014	0	None	16,925	5%	316,922	95%	630	0.19%	334,477	44,040
2015	0	None	25,667	16%	138,404	84%	888	0.54%	164,959	42,065
2016	0	None	13,682	4%	368,983	96%	557	0.15%	383,222	76,200
2017	0	None	10,447	3%	308,232	97%	557	0.17%	319,236	43,760
2018	0	None	11,089	3%	306,538	96%	450	0.14%	318,077	53,800
2019	2	Restrictions	13,641	15%	79,147	85%	810	0.87%	93,598	36,420
2020	0	None	9,194	5%	170,114	95%	699	0.39%	180,007	36,445
2021	0	None	12,664	8%	147,018	92%	682	0.43%	160,364	45,485
2022	2	Restrictions	8,090	15%	44,533	83%	889	1.66%	53,512	30,340
2023	0	None	15,873	10%	135,361	89%	431	0.28%	151,665	44,440

Note: *=From 2003–2020 the Copper River Delta coho salmon SEG was 32,000–67,000

UPPER COPPER AND UPPER SUSITNA RIVER (6 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSAL 89 – 5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the bag and possession limit for burbot in Lake Louise limit from one to two fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Lake Louise (within the Tyone River drainage), the bag and possession limit for burbot is one fish, with no size limit. In the remainder of the Tyone River drainage, the bag and possession limit for burbot is two fish, with no size limit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide consistency in the sport fishing regulations within the Tyone River drainage (including Lake Lousie, and Susitna and Tyone Lakes). There will likely be an increase in the harvest of burbot from Lake Louise.

BACKGROUND: Lake Louise burbot were overfished when unattended set lines and liberal bag limits were allowed prior to 1988. In 1988, the bag and possession limit were reduced to two fish. In 1991, unattended set lines were prohibited within the Upper Copper Upper Susitna Management Area, and Lake Louise was closed to burbot fishing to allow the population to recover. In 2003, the Lake Lousie burbot fishery was reopened with a bag and possession limit of one fish. More recent observations by area staff and anecdotal reports from anglers of increased catches of burbot indicated a possible increase in the Lake Louise burbot population.

An assessment was conducted in 2021 to determine if the burbot population increased since last assessed in 2005. The 2021 catch per unit effort (CPUE) for burbot (>18 in) in Lake Louise was 0.71, which is 48% greater than the last CPUE of 0.48 in 2005 and is the highest CPUE attained in the lake since 1987 (Table 89–1). Abundance of fully recruited burbot (>18 in) was calculated using a CPUE expansion, and the point estimate was determined to be 7,140 fish (90% CI = 5,217–9,063). Mean length of burbot had also increased by nearly 4 inches since 1999. Interpretation of the 2021 results indicate that the burbot population in Lake Louise has recovered to a level that will sustain increased fishing mortality associated with a two fish bag and possession limit.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The recent 2021 stock assessment indicated an increase in the bag limit of burbot from one to two fish will be sustainable. This liberalization will provide additional harvest opportunity and align the burbot regulation with the remainder of the Tyone River drainage reducing regulatory complexity.

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

Table 89-1.–Sportfishing effort (angler days), harvest, estimated CPUE and abundance for burbot ≥18 in FL in Lake Louise, 1996–2023.

Year	Effort	Harvest	Estimated CPUE	Estimated Abundance
1996	5,436	0	0.46	4,525
1997	3,544	0		
1998	3,490	0		
1999	6,654	0	0.38	3,821
2000	5,671	0		
2001	3,048	0		
2002	3,408	0		
2003	5,934	32		
2004	4,658	317		
2005	2,396	25	0.48	4,827
2006	2,732	210		
2007	4,487	185		
2008	3,790	241		
2009	4,666	489		
2010	7,891	1231		
2011	2,964	168		
2012	3,460	184		
2013	3,694	266		
2014	3,244	221		
2015	1,872	71		
2016	1,788	83		
2017	2,040	55		
2018	3,606	213		
2019	4,109	305		
2020	3,796	302		
2021	2,419	139	0.71	7,140
2022	1,134	53		
2023	3,348	117		

PROPOSAL 90 – 5 AAC 52.022. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Butch Reinhart.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reduce the bag and possession limit for burbot in Crosswind Lake to two burbot per day, thereby reducing the number of attended lines that may be used for burbot from five lines to two lines.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? At Crosswind Lake, the bag and possession limit for burbot is five fish and for lake trout is one fish. From April 16 – October 31, only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used. During November 1–April 15, baited, single-hooks or single-hook, artificial lures are allowed. Statewide regulations allow burbot to be taken by the number of lines and hooks equal to the bag limit for burbot in the water body, provided they meet the regulatory requirements of sport fishing gear for burbot (at least a 3/4" gap hook, rested on the bottom, strike indicator, and properly labeled). Statewide regulations also allow sport fishing through the ice with two closely attended lines. Unattended set lines are prohibited year-round in the Upper Copper Upper Susitna Management Area (UCUSMA).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest of burbot would likely decrease. The maximum number of closely attended lines allowed would be reduced from five to two, and the incidental catch and mortality of lake trout would likely decrease by some amount.

BACKGROUND: Crosswind Lake is the largest lake in the West Fork Gulkana River drainage. It has dozens of lakeside cabins, is not road-accessible, and people primarily access it by snowmachine in winter and airplane in summer. Anglers target both lake trout and burbot at Crosswind Lake.

Burbot regulations at Crosswind Lake have remained unchanged since 1991 with bag and possession limits for burbot of five per day. Unattended set lines have been prohibited throughout the UCUSMA since 1991. Lake trout regulations for Crosswind Lake have changed several times from 1986 through 2011. Crosswind Lake was restricted to a bag limit of two lake trout over 20 inches and 10 under 20 inches from 1986–1987, then two lake trout of any size from 1988–1995, then one lake trout over 24 inches from 1996–2011, and currently is limited to one lake trout of any size.

The burbot population in Crosswind Lake was last assessed in 2007 when there was an estimated 3,130 fully recruited (≥18 in) burbot with a corresponding CPUE of 0.52 during spring. For the purpose of modeling theoretical estimates of MSY and evaluating sustainability, mean length and weights of the lake trout population were estimated, during March and June of 2024. Based on that sampling the estimated sustainable annual harvest (harvest plus 10% of the reported catch minus harvest) of lake trout was determined to be 589 total fish.

Since 2012, the number of SWHS respondents for Crosswind Lake has been too low to produce accurate estimates of annual harvest or catch (Table 90–1). However, the low response rate indicates that fishing effort is low, and presumably harvests of lake trout have been well below the estimated sustained yield of 589 fish. Similarly, the harvest of burbot is assumed to be relatively low and sustainable based on the estimated population size.

Public reports have indicated that anglers are purposefully targeting lake trout by using burbot lines that are not rigged in accordance with regulation (i.e., hook gaps less than three-quarters inches and suspended instead of resting on the bottom). This practice is illegal and enforcement will need to be adjusted to specifically address such concerns.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Current regulations provide for sustainable burbot and lake trout harvest in Crosswind Lake and best estimates indicate effort is historically low. Reducing the bag and possession limit for burbot from five to two fish would unnecessarily reduce fishing opportunity. Anglers intentionally targeting lake trout using burbot gear is a concerning regulatory compliance issue that is best addressed by improved angler education and enforcement.

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

Table 90-1.–Crosswind Lake estimated angler statistics and yield potential, 2004–2023.

		Burbot	Lake trout				
Year	Effort [a]	Harvest [b]	Catch [b]	Harvest [b]	Fishing Mortality [c]	Yield Potential	Size Limit
2004	1,401	336	861	105	181	361	≥24 in
2005	2,392	859	2,256	519	693	361	≥24 in
2006	765	229	483	191	220	361	≥24 in
2007	**759**	**55**	**1,211**	**97**	**208**	361	≥24 in
2008	**1,333**	**302**	**1,338**	**90**	**215**	361	≥24 in
2009	2,056	452	2,657	295	531	361	≥24 in
2010	**667**	**129**	**1,298**	**140**	**256**	361	≥24 in
2011	**439**	**60**	**360**	**50**	**81**	361	≥24 in
2012	**385**	**0**	**167**	**32**	**46**	361	≥24 in
2013	**1,174**	**421**	**1,483**	**300**	**418**	565	none
2014	**567**	**0**	**336**	**16**	**48**	565	none
2015	**160**	**0**	**775**	**56**	**128**	565	none
2016	**163**	**77**	**135**	**47**	**56**	565	none
2017	**747**	**117**	**3,280**	**211**	**518**	565	none
2018	**195**	**68**	**99**	**27**	**34**	565	none
2019	**261**	**0**	**138**	**29**	**40**	565	none
2020	**833**	**101**	**569**	**75**	**124**	565	none
2021	**72**	**0**	**36**	**0**	**4**	565	none
2022	**68**	**23**	**53**	**9**	**13**	565	none
2023[d]	**123**	**9**	**49**	**11**	**15**	565	none

[a] Effort is not apportioned by species and represents angler days.

[b] Estimates in **bold** are based on fewer than 12 respondents, are subject to extreme variance, and should only be used to document that sport fishing occurred.

[c] Total fishing mortality includes estimated catch-and-release mortality and equals harvest + 10% of the catch after subtracting the harvest.

[d] Data for 2023 are preliminary.

PROPOSAL 91 – 5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove closed seasons and modify bag and possession limits for Arctic grayling in Mendeltna Creek, Moose Lake and Our Creek, as well as remove the minimum length limit for Mendeltna Creek Arctic grayling.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Mendeltna Creek anglers may not fish Arctic grayling during April and May and may only keep two fish greater than 12 inches long per day. In Moose Lake and Our Creek, anglers may not fish Arctic grayling during April and May and may only keep two fish with no size limit per day.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Regulations would be consistent with the *Wild Arctic Grayling Management Plan* (5 AAC 52.055) regional management approach and align with general background regulation, which has no closed seasons, no size limits and a bag and possession limit of five Arctic grayling. This would increase fishing opportunities and anglers would no longer be required to measure fish, prior to retention, in Mendeltna Creek.

BACKGROUND: Due to potential sustainability concerns, regulations for Arctic grayling were restricted for Mendeltna Creek (2000) and Moose Lake and Our Creek (2003). Our Creek and Moose Lake had been used for Arctic grayling egg collection to support the regional stocking program, potentially removing some unknown level of future production. Since 2000, angler effort on all these systems has greatly decreased, and egg collections from Moose Lake and Our Creek were terminated after 2001. Since 2004, there have been fewer than 12 Statewide Harvest Survey respondents for all 3 systems combined. Of the 2 primary vehicular access points (Glenn Highway and Oil Well Road) for the Mendeltna Creek Arctic grayling fishery, the Oil Well Road access has greatly deteriorated and now requires ATVs and a significant amount of brush and tree clearing. Research conducted in Mendeltna Creek in 2023 concluded that the section from the Glenn Highway to Old Man Lake during summer the creek supports primarily subadult fish (less than 5% achieving 12 inches in length) due to its relatively warm water.

Management of UCUSMA Arctic grayling is guided by the *Wild Arctic Grayling Management Plan* which attempts to achieve sustained yield while providing diverse fishing opportunities. The department manages wild Arctic grayling fisheries under one of three management approaches: (1) regional management approach; (2) conservative management approach; or (3) special management approach. Most wild Arctic grayling fisheries in the UCUSMA fall under the regional management approach and are open to fishing all year and have a bag and possession limit of five fish with no size limit.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Current regulations are unnecessarily restrictive given the current level of sport fishing effort. Changing these special regulations for Arctic grayling in Moose Lake and Mendeltna and Our Creeks to general provisions for the UCUSMA will be sustainable, simplify Arctic grayling regulations, and provide additional fishing opportunity.

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

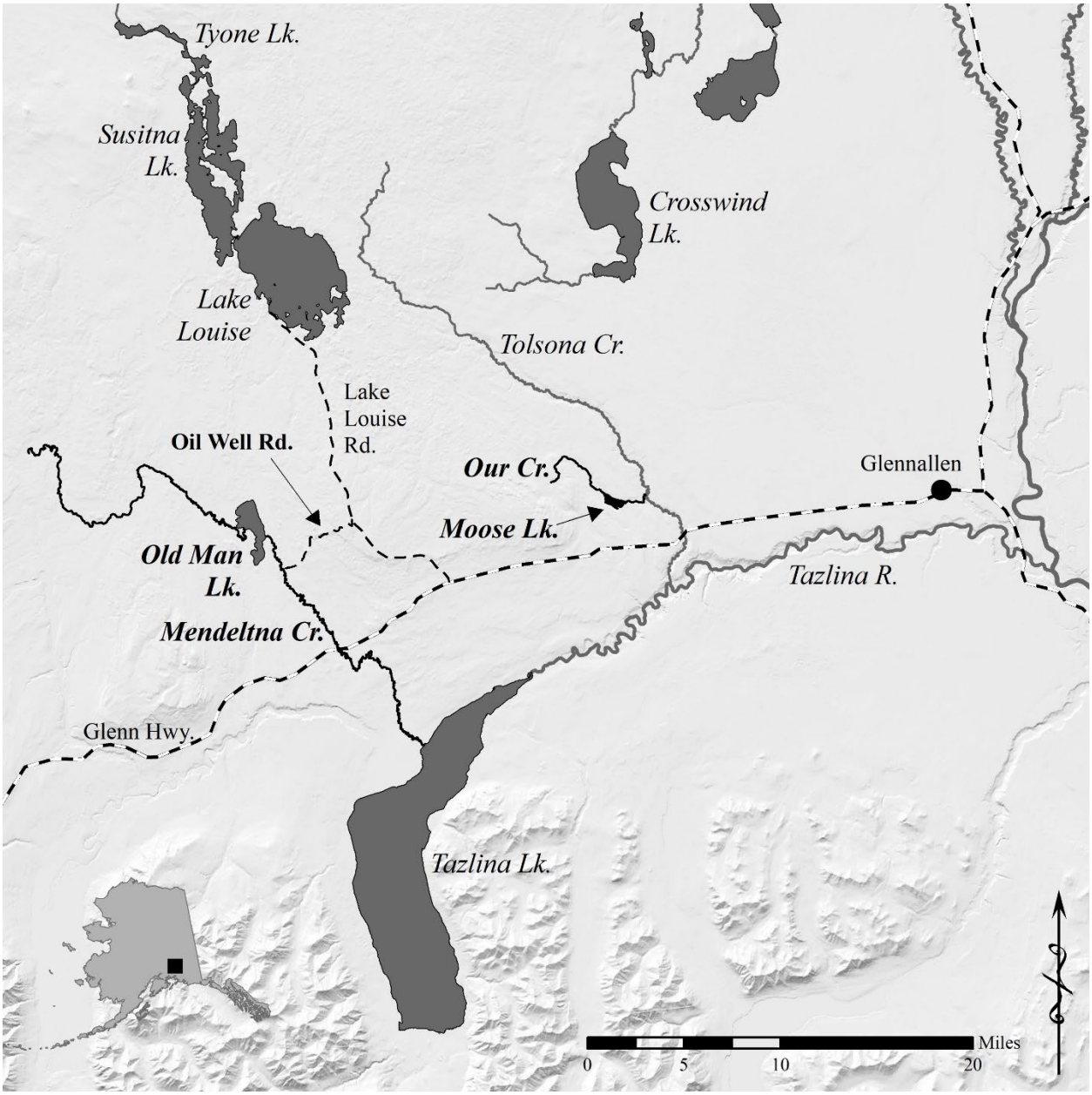

Figure 91-1.–Location of Mendeltna and Our Creeks and Moose Lake.

PROPOSAL 92 – 5 AAC 52.022. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Paxson Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the season that bait is allowed in Paxson and Summit Lakes by one month from April 15 to May 15. The proposer's dates are in error because they mistakenly proposed to change the date to March 15 instead of the intended date of May 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Paxson and Summit Lakes, only unbaited single-hook, artificial lures or flies may be used from April 16 – October 31. Bait and single hooks are allowed November 1 – April 15. Set lines are prohibited year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The annual catch and harvest of burbot and lake trout may increase by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: Paxson and Summit Lakes are roadside lakes located in the upper reaches of the Gulkana River along the Richardson Highway. Paxson Lake has lakeside cabins and a Bureau of Land Management campground. Summit Lake has a large number of nearby cabins, primarily used by recreational snowmobilers.

In the Upper Copper Upper Susitna Management Area (UCUSMA) several lakes only allow the use of bait from November 1 – April 15. These include Paxson, Summit, Crosswind, Susitna, and Tyone Lakes, and Lake Louise. These lakes are more easily accessed and receive most of the sport fishing effort for lake trout and burbot. Fishing effort and the harvest of lake trout and burbot has been declining since 2003 for all these lakes (Tables 92–1 and 92–2).

Allowing baited, single-hook lures during November 1 – April 15 increases the effectiveness when fishing for burbot and lake trout when fishing through the ice, which limits the amount of water that can be fished. Safe ice fishing conditions can often extend until mid-May in the UCUSMA.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal with modification to include all UCUSMA lakes with a seasonal bait restriction, including Crosswind, Summit, Susitna, and Tyone Lakes, and Lake Louise in addition Paxson and Summit Lakes. Extending the season when bait is allowed for all these lakes will provide for additional fishing opportunity during spring. Any increase in the catch and harvest of lake trout and burbot would likely be minimal and would be sustainable.

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

Table 92-1.–Sport fishing effort (angler-days), total fishing mortality of lake trout, and harvest of burbot in Paxson, Summit, and Crosswind Lakes, 2004–2023.

Year	Paxon Lake			Summit Lake			Crosswind Lake		
	Effort[a,b]	Lake trout mortality	Burbot harvest	Effort[a,b]	Lake trout mortality	Burbot harvest	Effort[a,b]	Lake trout mortality	Burbot harvest
2004	1,080	64	20	**392**	**135**	**0**	1,401	191	336
2005	1,403	187	112	**530**	**101**	**0**	2,392	745	859
2006	1,077	90	0	**483**	**23**	**0**	765	239	229
2007	1,543	142	0	**849**	**70**	**0**	**759**	**218**	**55**
2008	1,412	270	40	**1,195**	**184**	**0**	**1,333**	**224**	**302**
2009	1,227	259	0	**946**	**216**	**0**	2,056	561	452
2010	1,154	459	166	**794**	**335**	**0**	**667**	**256**	**129**
2011	**533**	**46**	**61**	**845**	**43**	**24**	**439**	**86**	**60**
2012	1,028	257	33	**656**	**0**	**0**	**385**	**49**	**0**
2013	1,035	178	35	**203**	**4**	**0**	**1,174**	**448**	**421**
2014	1,247	239	0	**737**	**120**	**0**	**567**	**50**	**0**
2015	1,347	280	16	**552**	**176**	**0**	**160**	**134**	**0**
2016	1,705	381	0	**559**	**49**	**0**	**163**	**61**	**77**
2017	**717**	**270**	**0**	**558**	**73**	**0**	**747**	**539**	**117**
2018	847	84	0	**54**	**0**	**0**	**195**	**37**	**68**
2019	981	187	0	**609**	**144**	**0**	**261**	**43**	**0**
2020	2,138	209	0	**851**	**55**	**0**	**833**	**132**	**101**
2021	**911**	**22**	**0**	**288**	**2**	**25**	**72**	**0**	**0**
2022	**489**	**14**	**0**	**276**	**47**	**0**	**68**	**14**	**23**
2023[d]	**589**	**41**	**0**	**257**	**47**	**0**	**123**	**15**	**79**

[a] Effort is not apportioned by species and represents angler days.

[b] Estimates in **bold** are based on fewer than 12 respondents, are subject to extreme variance, and should only be used to document that sport fishing occurred.

[c] Lake trout harvests includes estimated catch-and-release mortality that equals harvest + 10% of the catch after subtracting the harvest.

[d] Data for 2023 are preliminary.

Table 92-2.–Sport fishing effort (angler-days), total fishing mortality of lake trout, and harvest of burbot in Lake Louise, Susitna Lake and Tyone Lake, 2004–2023.

Year	Lake Louise			Susitna Lake			Tyone Lake		
	Effort[a,b]	Lake trout mortality[c]	Burbot harvest	Effort[a,b]	Lake trout mortality[c]	Burbot harvest	Effort[a,b]	Lake trout mortality[c]	Burbot harvest
2004	4,658	1,169	317	1,236	109	91	72	0	0
2005	2,396	627	25	977	530	37	**70**	**0**	**37**
2006	2,732	347	210	1,223	227	46	**223**	**0**	**0**
2007	4,487	574	185	1,044	111	30	**1,998**	**1**	**0**
2008	3,790	788	241	2,562	345	452	**260**	**0**	**0**
2009	4,666	850	489	**2,233**	**309**	**237**	**604**	**4**	**0**
2010	7,892	1,336	1,213	1,648	140	147	**45**	**2**	**0**
2011	2,989	416	156	**846**	**166**	**0**	**249**	**0**	**36**
2012	3,460	266	134	**944**	**102**	**0**	**536**	**10**	**134**
2013	3,694	676	266	**1,160**	**169**	**407**	**229**	**0**	**0**
2014	3,244	434	221	**1,699**	**185**	**237**	**56**	**0**	**0**
2015	1,872	578	71	**1,387**	**314**	**0**	**16**	**0**	**0**
2016	1,788	331	83	**687**	**20**	**90**	**ND**	**ND**	**ND**
2017	2,040	370	55	**643**	**27**	**22**	**252**	**50**	**33**
2018	3,606	677	213	**474**	**113**	**0**	**219**	**72**	**15**
2019	4,109	470	305	**2,647**	**312**	**104**	**ND**	**ND**	**ND**
2020	3,796	483	302	**969**	**80**	**44**	**152**	**0**	**88**
2021	2,419	69	139	**1,553**	**137**	**142**	**215**	**0**	**0**
2022	1,134	44	53	**1,210**	**60**	**45**	**34**	**0**	**0**
2023[d]	3,319	525	117	**861**	**63**	**48**	**169**	**0**	**0**

[a] Effort is not apportioned by species and represents angler days.

[b] Estimates in **bold** are based on fewer than 12 respondents, are subject to high variance, and should only be used to document that sport fishing occurred.

[c] Lake trout harvests includes estimated catch-and-release mortality that equals harvest + 10% of the catch after subtracting the harvest.

[d] Data for 2023 are preliminary.

PROPOSAL 93 – 5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the area closed to sport fishing in Hungry Hollow Creek.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All waters of Hungry Hollow Creek, Twelvemile Creek, the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River from the outlet of Dickey Lake to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 3 miles downstream are closed to fishing from April 15 June 14. These waters are closed to fishing for king salmon fishing year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase fishing opportunity in waters within and upstream of Wait-a-Bit Lake that are accessed from the Denali Highway. Sustainable increases in the harvest of lake trout and Arctic grayling may occur and spawning steelhead and rainbow trout downstream of Wait-a-Bit Lake would remain protected.

BACKGROUND: A seasonal sport fishing closure (April 15 to June 14) was implemented in a section of the Middle Fork Gulkana River and Hungry Hollow Creek in 1997 to protect spawning rainbow and steelhead trout. Twelvemile Creek was included in the sport fishing closure regulations in 2003. Since 1997, several surveys (the last one conducted in 2024) and radiotelemetry work have failed to identify the presence of rainbow trout or steelhead in Hungry Hollow Creek upstream from the outlet to Wait-a-Bit Lake. This portion of Hungry Hollow Creek drains several road-accessible lakes along the Denali Highway including Octopus, Teardrop, and Ten Mile Lakes. These waters support lake trout, Arctic grayling, and whitefish populations, but not steelhead or rainbow trout. The number of SWHS respondents for Wait-a-Bit Lake and waters upstream have been too low to produce estimates of annual harvest or catch. However, the low response rate indicates that fishing effort overall is minimal, and harvests of lake trout and Arctic grayling are very low.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal because current regulations are unnecessarily restrictive. Allowing sport fishing year-round in the upper portions of Hungry Hollow Creek will be sustainable and provide additional fishing opportunity for waters near the Denali Highway during the early open-water and late ice fishing periods.

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

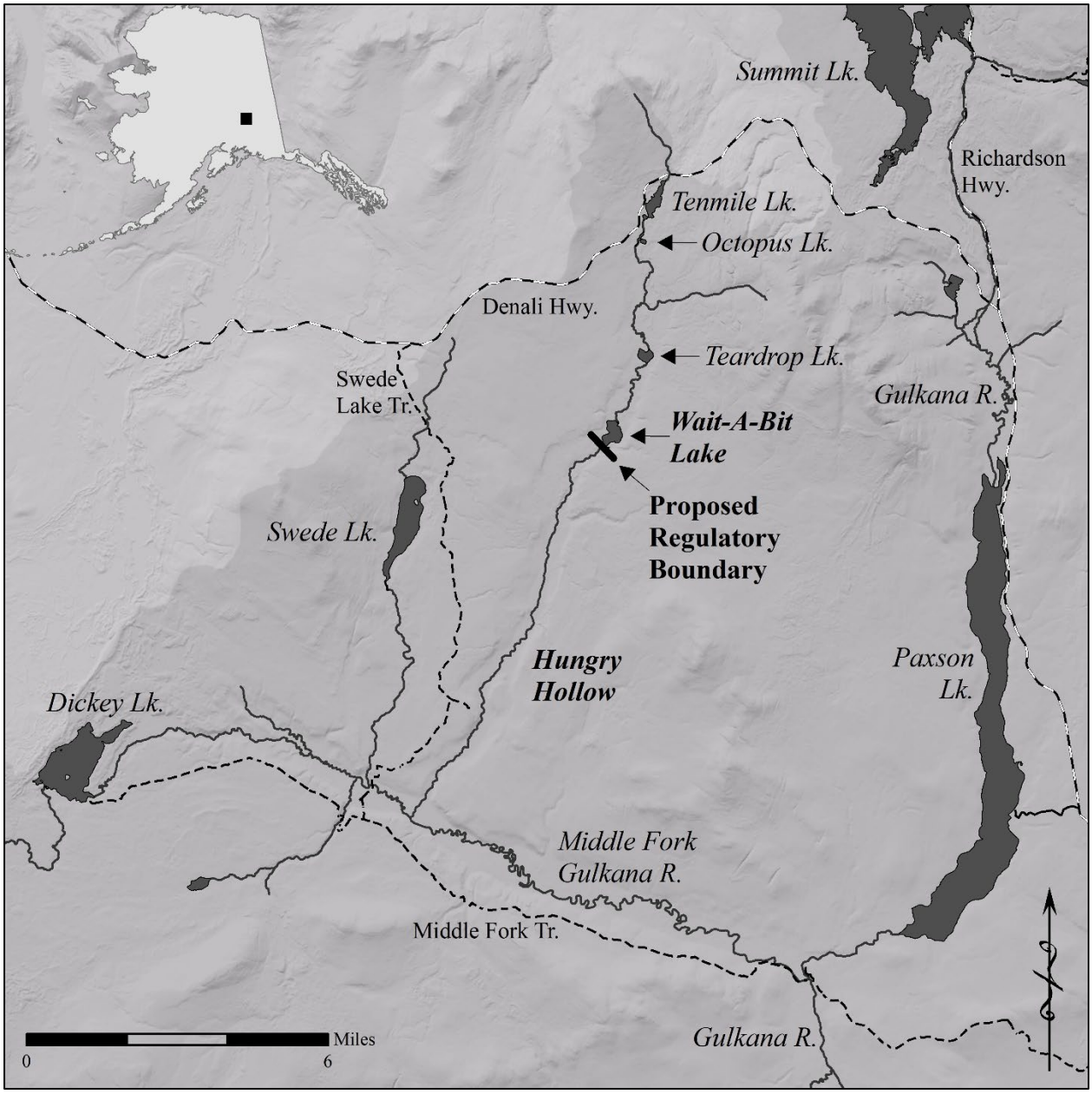

Figure 93-1.–Map depicting the Upper Gulkana and Middle Fork Gulkana River drainages and the location of the proposed regulatory boundary on Hungry Hollow at the outlet of Wait-A-Bit Lake.

PROPOSAL 94 – 5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the definition of "bow" under area regulations leaving the statewide definition of "bow and arrow" to apply within the Upper Copper Upper Susitna Management Area (UCUSMA).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Statewide Provisions (5 AAC 75.995) there is a definition of "bow and arrow", which means a long bow, recurve bow, compound bow, or crossbow, with an arrow with a barbed tip attached by a line to the bow. In the UCUSMA, there exists a definition of only "bow", which is defined as a "long bow, recurve bow, compound bow, or crossbow".

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide consistency in the sport fishing regulations across the state because the UCUSMA is the only management area where "bow" is defined separately from the statewide definition.

BACKGROUND: The board added the definition of "bow and arrow" to Statewide Provisions under 5 AAC 75.995 during the statewide meeting in March 2019. A portion of the bow and arrow language was removed from the UCUSMA regulations, but the definition in the area regulations was not repealed. This proposal corrects this oversight.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. This proposal aligns the definition of "bow and arrow" with the statewide sport fishing regulation definition and is not necessary in the area regulations.

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