

PROPOSAL 30

5 AAC 01.175. Waters closed to subsistence fishing.

Increase waters closed to subsistence fishing in the Sinuk River, as follows:

Proposed Solution: To ensure the safety of subsistence fishers and to improve the efficiency of the fishery, I propose relocating the current seining location to a point much further downstream, beyond the upper sections of the river. The new location should be situated at least 9 miles downstream from the current Boulder Creek site, where the river widens, the current slows, and conditions are more suitable for effective seining. I suggest moving the seining location point below Camp Creek. Most of if not all safe and productive seining happens below this point.

Beach seining for red salmon on the Sinuk River allowed below Camp Creek located approximately 7.64 miles from the river mouth.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Introduction: The Sinuk River, west of Nome, is a vital resource for subsistence fishers, and its fishery is of great importance to the local community. However, the current upper seining location set by ADF&G at Boulder Creek is problematic for both safety and efficiency. Individuals unfamiliar with the river are seining far upriver, that can create significant hazards that compromise both the safety of boaters and the ability of other subsistence users to access appropriate fishing areas downstream. Given the narrow, shallow, and fast-moving upper reaches of the Sinuk River, this location is not suitable for effective and safe seining, and it is time to consider relocating it to a safer, more effective location further downstream.

Issue: Currently, some individuals, particularly those new to the river, are attempting to seine too far upriver, where the river's physical conditions are not conducive to safe or effective fishing. These actions create serious safety hazards, including situations where the river is blocked off by seining nets in an unsafe manner. For example, on one occasion, I encountered a seining net that was anchored across a narrow bend of the river on both sides, with anchor lines positioned 2-3 feet above the water. As our boat attempted to navigate the bend, we narrowly avoided a dangerous collision with the unmanned seining net, with our crew at risk of being struck by the anchor lines. This incident highlights the serious safety risks posed by seining in the upper reaches of the river, particularly when individuals unfamiliar with the area do not understand the challenges the river poses or safe seining practices. The upper Sinuk River itself is challenging to navigate with jet boats. In swift currents, particularly in narrow channels with high velocity, jet boats have a reduced "grip" on the water. Unlike traditional propeller-driven boats, which have more direct contact with the water and can rely on more rudder movement for turning, jet boats rely on the force of the water exiting the jet nozzle to create directional control. When the boat is moving at speed through fast-moving water, the stream of water exiting the nozzle can be disrupted by the current, making it harder to turn or even causing the boat to feel "sluggish" or even slide in its response. In the upper reaches of the Sinuk River navigation is challenging.

Additionally, the river is too shallow, narrow, and rocky in the upper sections, with swift currents that make successful seining nearly impossible. As a result, those attempting to seine in these areas often find themselves unable to stop or turn around in time, risking dangerous collisions with other

boats or nets. The current seining location at Boulder Creek—set by local ADF&G staff—is located too far upstream, contributing to these safety hazards and inefficiencies.

Rationale:

1. **Safety Concerns:** The current location at Boulder Creek creates significant safety risks, particularly for boaters and subsistence users who are trying to access downstream fishing spots. By moving the seining location further downstream, we can eliminate the hazards posed by swift, narrow, rocky, shallow bends and reduce the risk of collisions and dangerous encounters

2. **Physical Conditions of the River:** The upper portion of the Sinuk River is simply not suited to effective seining. The upper portion of the river is too shallow, too narrow, too many boulders, and too swift for successful fishing. The downstream location will provide conditions that are more conducive to both safe travel and successful seining, maximizing the effectiveness of the fishery while reducing risks.

3. **Practicality:** Local knowledge and years of experience indicate that more than halfway down the river, or approximately 9 miles from the bridge, is the optimal location for seining. This area is safer, with better access, and provides more consistent conditions for subsistence fishers. Relocating the seining area will not only improve safety but will also enhance the overall efficiency and sustainability of the fishery.

Conclusion: Relocating the seining location to a point further downstream is a practical, commonsense solution to the current issues facing the Sinuk River fishery. By addressing the safety hazards in the upper reaches of the river and improving access for subsistence users, we can ensure that the Sinuk River remains a valuable and sustainable resource for the local community. I strongly urge the Alaska Board of Fisheries to adopt this proposal and work towards

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

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