

PROPOSAL 32

5 AAC 01.160. Fishing seasons and periods.

Repeal the subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of west of Cape Nome in Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District, as follows:

Allow those fishing in Subdistrict 1 marine waters west of Cape Nome to fish 7 days a week – identical regulations to those east of Cape Nome in this subdistrict.

“5 AAC 01.160. Fishing seasons and periods

- (a) In the Port Clarence District, fish may be taken at any time, except as specified by emergency order.
- (b) In the Norton Sound District, fish may be taken at any time, except as follows:
 - (1) in Subdistrict 1,
 - (A) in fresh water, from June 15 through August 31, set gillnets may be used to take salmon only from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. Monday;
 - (B) ~~in marine waters, west of Cape Nome, unless modified by emergency order to ensure reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of available surpluses of salmon, from June 15 through August 15, set gillnets may be used to take salmon from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. Monday;~~

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Regulations for Subdistrict 1 unnecessarily limit subsistence opportunity for salmon fishers in marine waters west of Cape Nome between June 15 – August 15. East of Cape Nome, fishers may fish 7 days a week. West of Cape Nome, the open period is from 6 p.m. Wednesday to 6p.m. Monday. Restrictions were first put in place nearly three decades ago to protect chum returns to the Nome, Snake, and other rivers west of Cape Nome with conservation concerns. The Board has gradually eased restrictions as chum salmon returns in the Subdistrict 1 have improved. Further liberalization of the fishing period is warranted.

It should be noted that those fishing marine waters west of Cape Nome are not only catching chum salmon — we also harvest pinks, a few sockeye, and an occasional chinook salmon. These fish are not just bound for Subdistrict 1 rivers. We are also likely taking salmon bound for rivers in the Kotzebue and Arctic Districts.

Those who fish west of Cape Nome (either because of fish camp location or the shorter distance from town) now contend with extremely challenging weather conditions during the season that: 1) already limit the amount of time one can fish using a set gillnet 2) impact efforts to make dry fish. It is stormier, weather changes rapidly, and we now have to jump on any opportunity when both conditions are present and hope the fish are moving through then. Good conditions in which to fish and preserve using this technique often do not coincide with the fishing period. Even those of us who can afford to take time off work to take advantage of good conditions sometimes struggle to harvest fish and process them.

Allowing additional fishing time should not pose a conservation concern, given the improvements in returns of chum salmon in the Nome subdistrict and long-term shifts in locations used by Nome residents to fish for salmon such as the Pilgrim River.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. It was presented for comment at the March 2025 Northern Norton Sound advisory committee meeting in Nome.

PROPOSED BY: Nicole Braem

(EF-F26-130)
