

PROPOSAL 36

5 AAC 04.395. Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan.

Allow catch and release sport fishing for king salmon in the Unalakleet River drainage when the subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of kings as follows:

In the Unalakleet River drainage or [AND] in the marine waters of Subdistrict 5 and 6, if the subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of king salmon, sport fishing for king salmon will be **reduced, by emergency order, to catch-and-release only** [CLOSED].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Issue:

This proposal seeks to allow catch-and-release sportfishing for king salmon in the Unalakleet River drainage when subsistence fishing for king salmon is open in either the Unalakleet River drainage or in the marine waters of southern Norton Sound.

Justification:

1.Economic Viability and Sustainability:

- Extending the sportfishing season through catch-and-release regulations is essential for the financial sustainability of businesses that rely on guided sportfishing operations.

- Local economies, including lodging, airlines, guide services, and other tourism-related industries, would benefit from increased activity during these periods.

- Additional license sales for the State of Alaska would generate revenue to support fisheries management and conservation programs.

2.Successful Implementation of Catch-and-Release Fisheries Elsewhere:

- Data from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game indicates that king salmon in catch-and-release fisheries experience high survival rates when proper handling techniques and bait restrictions are followed.

- The implementation of similar regulations in other regions has demonstrated the feasibility of maintaining a sustainable and balanced fishery while preserving fish stocks.

- Allowing catch-and-release sportfishing would provide a conservation-minded approach while still allowing economic benefits.

3.Equitable Resource Access:

- Sport anglers and subsistence users alike would have opportunities to interact with and benefit from the king salmon population without negatively impacting its sustainability.

Proposed Regulation Change:

Amend 5 AAC 04.395 to include a provision allowing catch-and-release sportfishing for king salmon in the Unalakleet River drainage during periods when subsistence fishing for king salmon is open in either the Unalakleet River drainage or in the marine waters of southern Norton Sound.

By adopting this change, the Board will promote responsible fisheries management while balancing economic, recreational, and subsistence interests in the Unalakleet region.

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

PROPOSED BY: Mitchell Wisniewski - Unalakleet River Lodge

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