

PROPOSAL 39

5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.

Reduce the annual bag and possession limits for sheefish, as follows:

Except as otherwise specified in (c) of this section, the general bag and possession limit for sheefish in the Northwestern Area is **5** [10] fish, with no size limit.

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

Sheefish harvest limits.

As lifelong residents of the Kobuk River and Kotzebue Sound area we are concerned about growing pressure on sheefish, from local residents and non-residents alike, especially as available caribou and chum salmon food resources have recently plummeted.

We have an important resource here, one that is vital for subsistence food, and understandably also are valuable as a state sport fishing resource. The local fishery includes Kobuk and Selawik Rivers and Hotham Inlet and Selawik Lake, where sheefish are harvested year-round by villagers and local residents. To a certain extent this resource has been taken for granted as abundant and nearly limitless for our entire lives--much the way caribou and salmon were until these last few years. Now, we've seen a large increase in fishers from other regions of the state, nation and world flying on Alaska Airlines to Kotzebue to ice-fish—this at a time when there is also more pressure locally on sheefish to substitute for limited caribou meat and salmon.

The sport fishermen who are discovering this fishery often ship out large quantities of fish, and many of them are overjoyed to experience something that has become so rare in our world—a perceived limitless abundance.

Sheefish are many amazing things. They are not limitless. We would like the State of Alaska to recognize this and help to protect this species and keep sheefish plentiful for all.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, we spoke to the regional Advisory Committee about concerns and usage, to villagers about subsistence needs, and to local and non-local fishers out on the ice about perceived bag limits, actual bag limits, needs and wants. We spoke to local sport guides for their input, and to the local brown-shirt State Trooper Steve Cantine about regulations and in-possession limits, and received assistance from Brendan Scanlon at ADFG for help with wording and administrative coding, and for information on sheefish spawning and population levels. We also spoke with elders and our own families about generations of interaction and use of sheefish here in the region.

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