

PROPOSAL 43

5 AAC 03.610. Fishing seasons.

Repeal the commercial fishing season for Sheefish in the Kotzebue District, as follows:

AAC 03.610. Fishing seasons.

Repealed.

[5 AAC 03.610. FISHING SEASONS.

EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN 5 AAC 39.780, THE COMMERCIAL SHEEFISH FISHING SEASON IN THE KOTZEBUE DISTRICT IS FROM OCTOBER 1 UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER.

5 AAC 03.620. GEAR.

IN THE KOTZEBUE DISTRICT, SHEEFISH MAY BE TAKEN ONLY WITH SET GILLNETS OR JIGGING GEAR.

5 AAC 03.621. GILLNET SPECIFICATIONS AND OPERATIONS.

THE FOLLOWING GILLNET SPECIFICATIONS AND OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS APPLY WHEN TAKING SHEEFISH:

(1) NO PERSON MAY OPERATE MORE THAN 50 FATHOMS OF GILLNET IN THE AGGREGATE;

(2) NO GILLNET MAY BE MORE THAN 12 MESHES IN DEPTH NOR HAVE A MESH SIZE LARGER THAN SEVEN INCHES;

(3) NO GILLNET MAY OBSTRUCT ONE-HALF OR MORE OF THE WIDTH OF A WATERWAY.

5 AAC 03.630. QUOTAS.

IN THE KOTZEBUE DISTRICT THE COMMERCIAL SHEEFISH QUOTA IS 25,000 POUNDS.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Repeal of the commercial fishing season for sheefish in the Kotzebue District. ADF&G commercial and sportfish biologists for the Kotzebue Management Area, brought to the attention of the Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee at its March 11, 2025 meeting, the continued lack of information on the harvest (all user groups) and the stock assessment of sheefish in the Kotzebue District. They suggested it would be good to consider actions that will begin to address these deficiencies in order to avoid overharvest, or at least decrease the risk of same. The Kotzebue AC believes the first step in addressing concerns related to the sustainability of Kotzebue District sheefish harvest, should be to repeal the commercial fishing season, since there is a lack of stock assessment and fishery oversight. Relatedly, there is growing additional pressure being brought to bear on the sheefish stocks due to an ever increasing popularity of users from around the State of Alaska traveling to Kotzebue to fish and harvest sheefish through the ice, utilizing the recent(post commercial sheefish fishery creation) development of local infrastructure (transportation, equipment, and processing) to facilitate this additional sheefish dependent commercial enterprise. Repealing the commercial sheefish fishery would provide a small but beneficial decrease in overharvest risk potential from this increasing additive harvest now occurring, especially within the context of the unknown

Kotzebue District sheefish: total population;annual sustainable yield number (maximum and otherwise); and annual harvest numbers of all user groups combined.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. The Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee discussed the Kotzebue District sheefish methods, harvests, and populations, at length at its March 11, 2025 formal meeting, within the group, and with the State and Federal representatives present. The proposal was initiated and voted on by the Kotzebue Sound AC with a unanimous support vote at that meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

(EF-F26-013)
