

PROPOSAL 63

5 AAC 06.391. Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan.

Amend the *Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 06.391 (e)

- (1) [the annual limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is four fish, of which only one fish may be 28 inches or greater in length;] **the daily limit for king salmon under 20 inches is five per day and five in possession, the annual limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is four fish, only one of which may be 28 inches or greater in length, and the one king salmon 28 inches or greater in length may only be retained after a minimum inriver goal of 70,000 is reached, window closures will be implemented for the king salmon sport fishery consistent with a tidal schedule, daily king salmon harvest below the sonar site will be reported for inseason estimates, all required sport fishing annual harvest record cards will also record king salmon under 20 inches and cards will be submitted to ADF&G after the completion of fishing;**
- (2) if the total inriver king salmon run return in the Nushagak River is projected to exceed 95,000 fish, the commissioner may, by emergency order, increase the annual limit for king salmon to four king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, with no restrictions for fish over 28 inches in length, **with the elimination of closure windows.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Add regulations to sports fisheries as part of the Nushagak District King Salmon Management Plan.

Currently, all specific regulatory language for triggers has been removed and the sport fishery is managed based on ADF&G emergency orders (EOs). The Board of Fisheries queried ADF&G during the development of the Nushagak District King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan about the need for specific regulatory language. At the time, ADF&G stated that EO authority would be more responsive and adaptive to inseason data. This has not been the case, and triggers or data for issuance of EO(s) is unclear, with the fishery being restricted to catch and release only in July.

Enumeration of Chinook salmon and assessing run strength is much worse in years of high Sockeye escapement. Previous removal of regulatory language was based on sonar being a poor inseason indicator of Chinook run strength (sonar was only 40-60% enumeration). The accuracy is now considered to be even less accurate on years with large Sockeye escapement. Minimum inriver escapement goals are likely reached in these years when considered for decreased enumeration compared with historical assessments. Chinook harvested below the sonar should be reported daily as their harvest can have a negative impact on inseason inriver escapement projections.

Regardless of the projected Chinook escapement, the sport fishery allows a daily harvest of 5 Chinook under 20 inches in length, an annual harvest of larger sizes (4 Chinook, only one of which can be greater than 28 inches). ADF&G has stated that anglers are encouraged to harvest smaller Chinook, as they have little impact on spawning success and the genetic health of the population,

and removal is actually beneficial, as small Chinook skew the genetics of the population toward smaller Chinook, whereas large Chinook can be 10x more fecund than Chinook half their size. Additional protection for harvest of larger Chinook and windowed closures for migration through the river to their spawning grounds should be favored by sport fishermen for increased inriver conservation and genetic diversity.

A lack of regulations for a primarily commercially guided sports fishery (90% nonresident, 95% guided) and a phase-out instead of phase-in approach is inconsistent for Chinook conservation. Additionally, the required Sport Fishing Annual Harvest Record Card should be submitted to ADF&G, online or otherwise, at the end of the season to increase available data for the stock of concern.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Proposal was developed from countless conversations and correspondence with fishermen and ADF&G.

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