

PROPOSAL 99

5 AAC 67.022. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means in the Bristol Bay Area.

Prohibit sport fishing for king salmon in a portion of the Naknek River, as follows:

We propose moving the ADF&G marker located ½ miles above Rapids Camp to the public access road located 1.64 miles below the Rapids Camp road (58° 37.101'N, 156° 34.533' W). In waters from this marker upstream, king salmon may not be targeted at all, and if they are accidentally hooked while targeting other species, must NOT be removed from the water and will be released immediately.

Naknek River Drainage:

- Naknek River main stem

- King Salmon: Closed year round to all king salmon fishing from ADF&G Marker (new location 58° 37.101'N, 156° 34.533' W) upstream to the ADF&G marker at "Trefon's Cabin" near the mouth of Naknek Lake.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Over the years the Naknek River has seen a notable decrease in the numbers of king salmon. Recognizing this decrease, ADF&G has already closed all fishing of king salmon in key spawning areas, including King Salmon Creek and Paul's Creek, and all waters above the first ADF&G marker located half mile upstream above Rapids Camp. There is no retention of king salmon allowed up the Big Creek drainage where fishing remains open. Yearly bag limits of king salmon on the Naknek have been lowered from 5 to 3. These measures have not been enough to bring about any appreciable increase in what are dismal king runs. Further, there is nothing to stop anglers from fishing the portion of the Naknek River immediately below the ADF&G Rapids Camp marker later in the season which are critical king salmon spawning grounds, and which have seen drastic reductions of the numbers of kings over the last decade while at the same time seen increased pressure from anglers.

As pointed out, all waters of the Naknek River upstream of the ADF&G marker are closed to king salmon fishing. These waters are key spawning habitat. However, significant amounts of spawning grounds exist BELOW this marker, which are wide open to the retention of king salmon. These areas are fished very hard in the latter weeks of the season towards the end of July, and it takes a significant toll on the kings when they are most vulnerable, preparing their nests for spawning. Most of this pressure comes from the many sport fishing lodges in the area. Fishing in these locations is popular with the lodges because it is relatively easy to catch kings on their spawning beds, and unlike the spawning beds on the Naknek tributaries (Big Creek, Paul's Creek and King Salmon Creek) these main stem Naknek River spawning beds are open to the retention of kings and are close and easily accessible to the lodges. It is not uncommon to see many boats in these areas at all hours of the day. We propose moving the ADF&G marker located ½ miles above Rapids Camp to the public access road located 1.64 miles below the Rapids Camp road (58° 37.101'N, 156° 34.533' W). This would protect spawning kings as well as spawning trout below the current regulatory marker.

What will happen if nothing is done?

If nothing is done, we risk the health of the world famous Naknek River king run. Future generations will not be able to enjoy our salmon for which the area is world famous for. The Naknek River will cease to be a premier destination for sport fishermen. Local subsistence users who depend on king salmon for an important food source may also suffer. IF THESE CHANGES ARE NOT IMPLEMENTED, WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEE A DECLINE IN OUR OVERALL KING SALMON RETURNS. The added pressure of sport fishermen catching king salmon on their spawning grounds will in no way help the future of the Naknek River's once great king run.

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

PROPOSED BY: Joey Klutsch

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