

ARCTIC-YUKON-KUSKOKWIM FINFISH (33 PROPOSALS)

Kuskokwim River Subsistence Fisheries (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 12

5 AAC 01.270. Lawful gear and gear specifications and operation.

Add eel stick as a legal subsistence gear type for nonsalmon species in the Kuskokwim Area, as follows:

5 AAC 01.270(c) is amended to read:

(c) Fish other than salmon may be taken only by set gillnet, drift gillnet, beach seine, fish wheel, pot, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear, spear, **eel stick**, a hook and line attached to a rod or pole, handline, or lead.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Eel sticks are currently not a legal subsistence gear type in the Kuskokwim Area and have been traditionally used to harvest arctic lamprey in the Kuskokwim River. A legal definition of eel stick can be found in 5 AAC 39.105(d)(31). The use of eels sticks in the Kuskokwim River are described in Subsistence Division Technical Papers No. 81 (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/techpap/tp081.pdf>) and No. 299 (<https://www.arlis.org/docs/vol1/ADFG/TP/2/TP299-2006.pdf>).

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-021)

Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area Sport Fisheries (2 proposals)

PROPOSAL 13

5 AAC. 71.010 Seasons and bag, possession, annual and size limits for the Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area.

Amend sport fishing season for king salmon in the upper Kuskokwim River, as follows:

5 AAC 71.010(b)(1) is amended to read:

...

(1) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length: the bag and possession limit is three fish, of which only two fish may be 28 inches or greater in length; **king salmon may be taken only from May 1 through July 25;**

5 AAC. 71.010(c)(1)(A) is amended to read:

...

(A) repealed / / [KING SALMON MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM MAY 1 THROUGH JULY 25];

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This addresses an inconsistency in sport fishing regulations (i.e. open seasons) for king salmon between the upper and lower portions of the Kuskokwim River. In the portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage

upstream of the Holitna River, there is currently no seasonal closure in regulation for the king salmon sport fishery. However, downstream of the Holitna River (including the Kuskokwim Bay Drainages) there is a sport fishing season for king salmon that is only open May 1 – July 25 to protect spawning salmon. This seeks to align the entire Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area with an open season of May 1 through July 25.

This would simplify the general regulations for sport fishing for king salmon in the Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area, as well as eliminate harvest of spawning king salmon in the upper Kuskokwim River drainage. The issue of inconsistent open seasons for king salmon during times of conservation have been addressed by emergency orders closing the entire Kuskokwim River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-015)

PROPOSAL 14

5 AAC 71.010. Seasons and bag, possession annual, and size limits for the Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area.

Repeal bag and possession limits for sheefish in the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Arolik Rivers, as follows:

5 AAC 71.010 (c)(7)(E) is amended to read:

...

(E) ~~repealed~~ / / [THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR SHEEFISH IS TWO FISH, NO SIZE LIMIT];

5 AAC 71.010 (c)(8)(D) is amended to read:

...

(D) ~~repealed~~ / / [SHEEFISH IS TWO FISH, NO SIZE LIMIT];

5 AAC 71.010 (c)(9)(C) is amended to read:

...

(C) ~~repealed~~ / / [SHEEFISH IS TWO FISH, NO SIZE LIMIT];

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kanektok, Arolik, and Goodnews Rivers drain into Kuskokwim Bay 30 – 80 miles south of the Kuskokwim River mouth and are not believed to support populations of sheefish. These river systems support sport fisheries (guided and unguided) that target rainbow trout, king, coho, and sockeye salmon, Arctic grayling, and Dolly Varden. Neither subsistence fishers nor sport anglers have reported catching sheefish in these rivers. This stands in contrast to the Kuskokwim River where sheefish are found and harvested throughout the drainage.

There is a special regulation in place for the Kanektok, Arolik, and Goodnews Rivers that limits anglers to two sheefish, no size limit, which incorrectly implies that sheefish are present in these

systems and creates unnecessary regulatory complexity. Removal of these bag limits would simplify the regulations for these drainages and remove any expectation for anglers hoping to catch a sheefish in these drainages.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-014)

Yukon River Subsistence Fisheries (3 proposals)

PROPOSAL 15

5 AAC 01.249. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan.

Place a 2 year closure on harvest of Yukon River Fall Chum salmon, as follows:

Close harvest of Yukon River Mainstem Fall Chum Salmon when these stocks are detected at Lower Yukon Test Fishing site (LYTF) in DISTRICT 1. Walk the closures up river through fishing District 1-5 as fish enter each district.

Reopen mainstem fishing progressively up river as Fall Chum end of the run has moved through each District. These closures must be in effect for 2 years to allow full potential of Fall Chum to jump start rebuilding efforts.

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

Conservation of Yukon River Mainstem Fall Chum Salmon

Yukon Mainstem Fall chum have not met escapement goals for 5 consecutive years (1full life cycle) Only approx. 16,000 fall chum (15% of max escapement goal) crossed the border into Canada at Eagle sonar site in 2024, LOWEST ON RECORD. Current escapement goals are set at 75,000-105,000

1. These stocks are in critical danger of extinction.
2. These stocks are essential for the health of all Salmon spawning streams they run to, both Chum and Chinook by delivering critical marine derived nutrients
3. Marine derived nutrients in spawning habitat is essential for productive spawning ecosystems
4. Fall chum are critical to upper Yukon river districts for Subsistence use, and food security.
5. Maintaining LONG TERM sustainable fish stocks is critical to a Subsistence Lifestyle
6. Rebuilding this critical stock as quickly as possible needs to be a top priority given the dangerously low runs
7. Given the low numbers of returning fish, every FISH & EGG counts to avoid extirpation of these stocks.

It is recognized the short term hardship this 2 year closer will impose on fishers, drainage wide. The Extirpation or Extinction of these stocks would be a much greater hardship FOREVER, both in food security, and cultural longevity.

There is a long history of fishing these stocks in-river early in the run, then closing fishing to other fishers, and not meeting set escapement goals.

This proposal would prevent fish managers from committing in season management actions that would negatively impact a critically low and vital fish stock. Short term sacrifice is the only way to achieve long term gains for all. Escapement goals must be met.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This Proposal was developed through the Eagle AC, with experience from fishers engaged with Eagle AC, local fishers, representatives from the EIRAC, Yukon River Panel members, and Tribal Chief of Eagle Village. The Koyukuk River AC elected to co-sponsor this proposal with a majority vote during a meeting held on April 9th, 2025.

Coordination of knowledge gained through participation with Fairbanks AC, BBAYK Coalition, and some members of Minto-Nenana AC further substantiated development of this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee & Koyukuk River Fish & Game Advisory Committee Andy Bassich, Chair of Eagle AC (EF-F26-132)

PROPOSAL 16

5 AAC 01.249I. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan.

Close the mainstem Yukon River to the use 4" or less mesh gillnets for Fall Chum salmon conservation, as follows:

The use of 4" mesh gillnets shall be closed on the Yukon River Mainstem, starting when Fall Chum salmon are detected at Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) in DISTRICT 1 with subsequent closures walked up river through fishing District 1-5 as Fall Chum enter each district.

Reopen mainstem fishing to 4" mesh gear progressively up river as Fall chum tail end of the run has moved through each District.

These closures should be in effect until Mainstem Fall Chum have achieved current escapement goals 75,000-115,000 for one life cycle, defined as 4 years. This is to allow full potential of Fall chum to jump start long term rebuilding efforts.

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

Conservation of Yukon River Mainstem Fall Chum Salmon

4" mesh gillnets are well known to be a very effective gear type to catch Chum Salmon.

Use of this gear type during the Fall chum migration up the Yukon river is having a serious negative impact to critically low mainstem Fall Chum runs.

This gear type is intended to fish for NON SALMON species, however Fall Chum are being intercepted by fishers both intentionally and unintentionally using 4" mesh gillnets.

Allowing this gear type with cumbersome regulations imposing various time and area restrictions in an effort to protect depleted stocks is incredibly complicated and thus ineffective, for both fishers and law enforcement.

(e) These stocks are in critical danger of extinction.

(f) These stocks are essential for the health of all Salmon spawning streams they run to, both Chum and Chinook by delivering critical marine derived nutrients

(g) Marine derived nutrients in spawning habitat is essential for productive spawning eco systems

(h) Fall chum are critical to upper Yukon river districts for Subsistence use, and food security.

(i) Maintaining **LONG TERM sustainable** fish stocks is critical to a Subsistence Lifestyle

- (j) Rebuilding this critical stock as quickly as possible needs to be a top priority given the dangerously low runs
- (k) Given the low numbers of returning fish, every FISH & EGG counts to avoid extirpation of these stocks.

The simple solution for meaningful protection of mainstem Fall chum, is to close the use of this gear type until such time that Mainstem Fall Chum have achieved escapement goals currently in place, for 1 life cycle. i.e. 4 years.

It is recognized the short term hardship this gear closer will impose on fishers' drainage wide. However, the Extirpation or Extinction of these stocks would be a much greater hardship FOREVER, both in food security and cultural longevity.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This Proposal was developed through the Eagle AC, with experience from Fishers engaged with Eagle AC, Local Fishers, Representatives from the EIRAC, Yukon River Panel members, and Tribal Chief of Eagle Village.

Coordination of knowledge gained through participation with Fairbanks AC, BBAYK Coalition, and some members of Minto /Nenana AC further substantiated development of this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee Andy Bassich, AC Chairman
(EF-F26-131)

PROPOSAL 17

5 AAC 01.220. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

Allow the use of 6" or less mesh gillnets during times of salmon conservation, as follows:

In Hamilton Slough, Anen'eq River (Unuk River), and Ingricuar River, set gillnets of six inch or smaller mesh may be used from September 1 to September 30; gillnets must be 60 feet or less in length and at least 300' upstream from the mouth.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Lift the restriction from 4-inch mesh 60 feet gillnets to 6-inch or less mesh 60 feet long gillnets in three areas below Mountain Village; Hamilton Slough leading to 3 Finger Lake, Anen'eq (Anuk) River and Ingricuar River so that sheefish and whitefish can be harvested in the month of September when they are abundant. Salmon species are not a concern.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. [The Mid-Lower Yukon AC met on March 6 and discussed and drafted this proposal. The Mid-Lower Yukon AC met again on March 31; and voted X to X to accept this proposal as written.]

PROPOSED BY: Mid-Lower Yukon AC
(EF-F26-047)

Tanana Drainage Sport Fisheries (10 proposals)

PROPOSAL 18

5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Sport Fish Management Plan.

Repeal the bag limit reduction and modify the open season for northern pike in Minto Flats, as follows:

Change **5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Sport Fish Management Plan** remove the reductions in bag limits and change the open season:

(a) Northern pike stocks in the lakes and flowing waters of the Minto Flats support both subsistence and sport fisheries. The purpose of this management plan is to provide the department with guidance to achieve the goals of managing these stocks consistent with sustained yield principles, providing a reasonable opportunity for the priority subsistence fishery, and providing a sport fishing opportunity. The Minto Flats northern pike management plan for the subsistence fishery is set out in **5 AAC 01.244**. (b) The department shall manage the Minto Flats northern pike sport fishery as follows: (1) the maximum exploitation rate of northern pike in the lakes and flowing waters of the Minto Flats by all users may not exceed 20 percent annually; (2) the following provisions apply to the harvest of northern pike in the Minto Flats area sport fishery: (A) the open fishing season is from **April 15 through October 14**; (B) the daily bag and possession limit is five fish per day, only one of which may be 30 inches or more in length;

[(C) IF THE SUBSISTENCE HARVEST REPORTS INDICATE THAT 750 OR MORE NORTHERN PIKE HAVE BEEN HARVESTED FROM THE CHATANIKA RIVER DRAINAGE UPSTREAM OF THE CONFLUENCE OF THE CHATANIKA RIVER AND GOLDSTREAM CREEK DURING THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1 UNTIL THESE WATERS ARE FREE OF ICE, THE COMMISSIONER SHALL REDUCE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE DAILY BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT TO TWO FISH PER DAY, ONLY ONE OF WHICH MAY BE 30 INCHES OR MORE IN LENGTH, IN THE LAKES AND ALL FLOWING WATERS OF THE MINTO FLATS AREA FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CALENDAR YEAR]

; and (c) in the Chatanika river drainage upstream from the confluence of the Chatanika river and Goldstream creek to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the boundary of the Fairbanks nonsubsistence area (approximately one mile downstream from the murphy dome road), only single hooks may be used.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Minto Northern Pike Management Plan (5 AAC 74.044) imposes restrictions that unnecessarily limit sport fishing opportunities without providing tangible benefits to sustainability. Specifically, when the subsistence harvest of pike from the special Chatanika winter overwintering area exceeds 750 or 1,500 fish, the sport fishing bag and possession limits are reduced from 5 fish per day (with only one over 30 inches) to 2 fish per day (with only one over 30 inches). This change does not effectively support conservation for either the sport or subsistence fishery, as Fish and Game data has shown that reducing the limit from 5 to 2 fish saves fewer than 100 small pike (“Hammer handles”) in Minto Flats—an area that has arguable over 100,000 small fish. These small fish have a very low chance of surviving to reach 30 inches, rendering the restriction ineffective in terms of sustainability.

Additionally, the management plan closes sport fishing entirely in Minto Flats from October 15 through May 31. This means that residents, including cabin owners, are unable to fish during the Memorial Day weekend. The closed period is unnecessarily restrictive and deprives local anglers of a valuable opportunity to enjoy the area.

In contrast, the subsistence fishery in Minto Flats remains open year-round without significant restrictions. Anyone can fish in the summer with unlimited use of large mesh gill nets. The only notable restriction is during winter in the special Chatanika overwintering area, where the daily limit is 10 fish (only 2 over 30 inches) to protect the female pike population. These regulations are necessary due to the extreme vulnerability of the entire population concentrated into a couple of river miles. The department recognized this vulnerability back in 1980s when it closed this area and all of Minto Flats to sport fishing in the area in the 1980s.

It should be noted that the Chatanika winter subsistence fishery is now effectively a sport fishery, with many participants unaware they require a permit. This issue has become more prominent since the discovery of the fishery on social media, which has attracted a large number of non-subsistence fishers.

Overall, there are no significant sustainability concerns in the area, and the current management plan only provides minimal conservation benefits while restricting sport fishing unnecessarily. The stipulations in the plan complicate the regulations and result in lost opportunities, particularly during the Memorial Day weekend. Background sport fishing regulations are very conservative by design to protect large female fish.

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

PROPOSED BY: Tony Hollis

(EF-F26-019)

PROPOSAL 19

5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan.

Repeal the bag limit reduction and modify the open season for northern pike in Minto Flats, as follows:

(l) Northern pike stocks in the lakes and flowing waters of the Minto Flats support both subsistence and sport fisheries. The purpose of this management plan is to provide the department with guidance to achieve the goals of managing these stocks consistent with sustained yield principles, providing a reasonable opportunity for the priority subsistence fishery, and providing a sport fishing opportunity. The Minto Flats northern pike management plan for the subsistence fishery is set out in 5 AAC 01.244.

(m) The department shall manage the Minto Flats northern pike sport fishery as follows:

(1) the maximum exploitation rate of northern pike in the lakes and flowing waters of the Minto Flats by all users may not exceed 20 percent annually;

(2) the following provisions apply to the harvest of northern pike in the Minto Flats area sport fishery:

(A) the open fishing season is from **MAY 1** [JUNE 1] through October 14;

(B) the daily bag and possession limit is five fish per day, only one of which may be 30 inches or more in length; AND

[(C) IF THE SUBSISTENCE HADVEST REPORTS INDICATE 750 OR MORE NORTHERN PIKE HAVE BEEN HARVESTED FROM THE CHATANIKA

RIVER DRAINAGE UPSTREAM OF THE CONFLUENCE OF THE CHATANIKA RIVER AND GOLDSTREAM CREEK DURING THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1 UNTIL THESE WATERS ARE FREE OF ICE, THE COMMISSIONER SHAL REDUCE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE DAILY BAG LIMIT AND POSSESSION LIMIT TO TWO FISH PER DAY, ONLY ONE OF WHICH MAY BE 30 INCHES OR MORE IN LENGTH, IN THE LAKES AND ALL FLOWING WATERS OF THE MINTO FLATS AREA FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CALENDAR YEAR; AND]

(C)[(D)] in the Chatanika River drainage upstream from the confluence of the Chatanika River and Goldstream Creek to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the boundary of the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area (approximately one mile downstream from the Murphy Dome Road), only single hooks may be used.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The existing sportfish management regulations for northern pike in the Tolovana drainage include:

Bag and possession Limit: 5 fish per day, only one over 30 inches. The bag and possession limit is reduced to 2 fish only one over 30 inches by emergency order when the Chatanika River subsistence winter permit fishery exceeds a harvest of 750 northern pike. .

Seasonal Restrictions: June 1 through October 15

While these regulations have played a role in maintaining pike populations, recent angler reports and biological assessments indicate potential issues, including overabundance of smaller pike, increased competition for food, and reduced trophy-sized fish availability.

Based on ecological assessments, angler feedback, and best practices in pike fishery management, we propose the following modifications to the sportfish management plan:

Eliminate the provision that the sportfish bag limit is reduced when subsistence harvest in the Chatanika over winter area exceeds 750 northern pike.

Change the open season dates for sportfishing to May1 through October 14

Implementing these changes is expected to:

Enhance sport fishing opportunities and satisfaction among anglers

Improve the overall health and size structure of the northern pike population.

Reduce competition among juvenile pike, leading to better growth rates.

Strengthen long-term sustainability of the fishery.

Not impact subsistence fishing which is open year round in Minto Flats, except in the Chatanika permit ice fishery which closes in that area when harvest exceeds 1,500 northern pike

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. The Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee met on April 9th, 2025 and voted unanimously to submit this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee Jeff Lucas, Chair

(EF-F26-139)

PROPOSAL 20

5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan.

Repeal the bag limit reduction for northern pike in portions of Minto Flats, as follows:

Since the majority of northern pike harvested in the upper Chatanika winter subsistence pike fishery inhabit that southeast ¼ section of Minto Flats, then any reduction to the summer sport

pike fishery should encompass only that southeast portion of Minto Flats and not dictate a reduction in the $\frac{3}{4}$ remainder, where the sport pike daily bag and possession limit should remain at 5 fish with only one 30" or more in length.

New regulation language for 5AAC 74.044 is in bold.

5AAC 74.044 (c) if the subsistence harvest reports indicate that 750 or more northern pike have been harvested from the Chatanika River drainage upstream of the confluence of the Chatanika River and Goldstream Creek during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice, the commissioner shall reduce, by emergency order, the daily bag and possession limit to two fish per day, only one of which may be 30 inches or more in length , **for the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Minto Flats encompassing Minto Lakes, Goldstream Creek and the upper Chatanika River upstream of the confluence with Goldstream Creek** [IN THE LAKES AND ALL FLOWING WATERS OF THE MINTO FLATS AREA FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CALENDAR YEAR]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? 5AAC 01.244 identifies the Upper Chatanika winter pike subsistence fishery boundaries as "in the Chatanika River drainage, from an ADF& G regulatory marker approximately one river mile upstream of the confluence of the Chatanika River and Goldstream Creek to an ADF& G regulatory marker at the boundary of the Fairbanks Non-subsistence Area (approximately one mile downstream from Murphy Dome Road)"

Currently under 5AAC 74.044 if the northern pike harvest in the upper Chatanika winter subsistence pike fishery reaches 750 fish, then the daily bag and possession limit for the sports fishery for the whole of Minto Flats is reduced from 5 fish with only one 30" or more in length to a daily bag and possession limit of 2 fish with only one 30" or more in length. The upper Chatanika River winter subsistence fishery boundaries encompass only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the whole of Minto Flats and includes only one of three identified Minto Flats major pike overwintering areas. The two other overwintering areas are far downstream on the Tolovana River and Swan Neck Slough. Through tagging programs, F&G determined the majority of the pike overwintering and harvested in the upper Chatanika winter subsistence pike fishery are from the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Minto Flats, which includes Minto Lakes, Goldstream Creek and the upper Chatanika River. Winter pike harvest in this small portion of Minto Flats should not dictate the summer pike sport daily bag and possession limit for the whole of Minto Flats.

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

PROPOSED BY: Chuck Derrick

(EF-F26-053)

PROPOSAL 21

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike and modify gear in Harding Lake, as follows:

To ensure the protection of Harding Lake's northern pike population, we propose the following regulatory framework:

Fishing Season:

Open year-round or seasonally (May–October) to coincide with peak fishing periods.

Gear Restrictions:

Single-barbless hooks only to minimize injury.

No use of bait to reduce deep-hooking risk.

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

Harding Lake, one of the largest and deepest lakes in Interior Alaska, has historically supported a population of northern pike (*Esox lucius*). Currently, the lake remains closed to sport fishing for northern pike to protect population dynamics. However, based on biological assessments and angler interest, we propose opening Harding Lake to ****catch-and-release- only**** sport fishing for northern pike. This regulation change would allow recreational fishing opportunities while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the pike population.

Current Management Status

Harding Lake is presently closed to northern pike sport fishing under existing ADF&G regulations. The closure aims to protect and rebuild the pike population after previous declines.

Limited biological studies have been conducted to assess population trends in recent years.

Justification for Catch-and-Release Sport Fishing

Sustainable Recreational Opportunity: Allowing catch-and-release fishing provides angling opportunities without negatively impacting the northern pike population.

Minimal Biological Impact: Research indicates that catch-and-release fishing, when practiced with proper handling techniques, has minimal long-term effects on pike survival rates.

Increased Monitoring and Data Collection: Opening the lake to catch-and-release would encourage data collection through angler reports and ADF&G studies, improving population assessment efforts.

Boost Local Economy and Outdoor Engagement: Expanding fishing access at Harding Lake would benefit local guides, bait shops, and tourism-related businesses while promoting outdoor recreation.

Expected Benefits of Proposed Changes

Conservation-Friendly Access: Maintains protection for pike while offering anglers a responsible way to enjoy the resource.

Improved Fisheries Data: *Increases opportunities for ADF&G to assess the pike population and its recovery.

Community and Economic Growth: Generates interest in Harding Lake as a destination for sport anglers, benefiting local outdoor businesses and tourism.

Educational Value: Provides an opportunity to promote ethical fishing practices and conservation awareness among the angling community.

Conclusion and Next Steps

We respectfully request the Alaska Board of Fisheries to review this proposal and consider implementing a trial period for catch-and-release northern pike fishing in Harding Lake. This approach ensures that recreational fishing can be enjoyed while safeguarding the long-term health of the fishery. We welcome discussions with ADF&G biologists, local stakeholders, and angler groups to refine and implement this plan.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. The Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee met on April 9th, 2025 and voted unanimously to submit this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee Jeff Lucas, Chair
(EF-F26-140)

PROPOSAL 22

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike in Harding Lake, as follows:

Several options:

- Allow catch and release fishing in Harding Lake.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Sportfishing for northern pike in Harding Lake has been closed since 2000. However, despite this long-term restriction, northern pike abundance has not increased to a level that can sustain a harvest or bag limit. It is time to finally allow for a catch-and-release pike fishery.

There are several factors indicating that a harvest or bag limit would not be sustainable. First, the abundance of northern pike in Harding Lake is primarily determined by the availability of suitable spawning and rearing habitat, which is directly influenced by water levels. Harding Lake levels are actively managed at a predetermined level, effectively placing a cap on maximum population size. Second, water levels are likely to fluctuate downward over the long term, which will continue to impact population sizes and the availability of suitable habitat. Third, the harvest potential is very high because the lake is a popular recreational area surrounded by cabins. Lastly, any form of harvest would remove the larger fish, leaving behind an undesirable population of “hammer-handles.”

A catch-and-release fishery would be sustainable for several reasons. Northern pike are highly prolific, hardy, and nearly impossible to eradicate. The current regulations allow only a single-hook setup, which is well-suited for catch-and-release fishing. Additionally, studies have shown that northern pike have a high post-release survival rate when handled properly, making catch-and-release a viable management strategy that balances conservation and recreation.

Allowing catch-and-release fishing will provide sportfishing opportunities without depleting the population or creating an overabundance of hammer-handles. It would also establish a much-needed, roadside-accessible northern pike fishery.

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

PROPOSED BY: Tony Hollis
(EF-F26-020)

PROPOSAL 23

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Repeal special regulations for northern pike in Volkmar Lake, as follows:

5 AAC 74.010 (c)(28) is repealed:

...

(28) repealed / / [IN VOLKMAR LAKE, THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR NORTHERN PIKE IS TWO FISH, OF WHICH ONLY ONE FISH MAY BE 30 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH];

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Volkmar Lake is a remote lake with 15 recreational cabins located 16 air miles to the northeast of Delta Junction. The lake has light fishing pressure due to access and is managed using a restrictive bag, possession, and size limit of two northern pike, only one of which may be 30 inches or greater in length. Access is only by float/ski plane to fly-in or snow machines along a 24-mile winter trail to the lake.

The current regulations are unnecessarily restrictive due to low effort and harvest. Removing the special regulations would default to the general bag, possession, and size limits for northern pike (five fish, of which only one may be ≥ 30 inches in length) and would simplify regulations and increase harvest opportunity.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-018)

PROPOSAL 24

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Repeal designated youth fishing days for Arctic grayling in the Chena River, as follows:

**(3) in the Chena River and its tributaries, including Chena Slough (Badger Slough),
(C) downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located 300 feet downstream from the Chena River flood control structure, the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is one fish, any size from June 1 through March 31, [EXCEPT THAT A PERSON 16 YEARS OR OLDER MAY NOT SPORT FISH FOR ARTIC GRAYLING IN THE CHENA RIVER DOWNSTREAM FROM ADF&G REGULATORY MARKER LOCATED 300 FEET DOWNSTREAM FROM CHENA RIVER FLOOD CONTROL STRUTURE DURING THE EIGHT DAYS DESIGNATED YOUTH FISHING WHICH OCCUR ON FOUR CONSECUTIVE SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS BEGINNING THE THIRD SATURDAY IN JUNE]**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Youth grayling fishing during the eight designated fishing days, which occur on four consecutive Saturdays and Sundays beginning the third Saturday in June; Currently this opportunity is for youth under the age of 16 years old. An Adult may not assist the youth catching grayling and the adult/s may not fish for grayling during these days. This restriction unfairly does not work for families/parents who may have a handicap child or children who may need assistance while fishing. Since the creation of this youth opportunity and allowing other anglers an opportunity to catch grayling outside the special 8 days. Crowding or competition (combat fishing) has not been an issue. The elimination of this youth only fishing, will not impact youth fishing opportunity. In fact, it may enhance it. By allowing parents to participate as a family unit in a great grayling opportunity and not be at risk of a possible fishing violation and may receive citation. Eliminating this special opportunity will have no biological effect on the grayling fishery in the Chena River below the flood control.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. The Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee met on April 9th, 2025 and voted unanimously to submit this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee Jeff Lucas, Chair
(EF-F26-141)

PROPOSAL 25

5 AAC 74.035. Ice house registration.

Repeal registration requirement for ice houses that are not removed from the ice daily in the Tanana River Area as follows:

Several options:

- **Remove the ice-house registration requirement for all ice houses – my preferred choice.**
- **Remove registration, at a minimum for soft sided “pop-up” ice houses and define ice house as “constructed with rigid, load bearing materials for the floor, walls and sides”.**
- **Require the Boroughs to register ice houses.**
- **Remove registration requirements, but require all ice houses and pop up that are left on the ice for more than a month to have label with name and contact information posted by the entrance.**

Repeal: [5 AAC 74.035. ICE HOUSE REGISTRATION. (A) FROM OCTOBER 1 THROUGH APRIL 30, A PERSON USING AN ICE HOUSE THAT IS NOT REMOVED FROM THE ICE DAILY SHALL REGISTER THAT ICE HOUSE WITH, AND RECEIVE A PERMIT FROM, THE DEPARTMENT FOR THAT YEAR. (B) AN ICE HOUSE REGISTERED UNDER THIS SECTION MUST DISPLAY THE DEPARTMENT'S PERMIT NUMBER ON ONE SIDE AND ON THE ROOF OF THE ICE HOUSE IN NUMBERS NOT LESS THAN 12 INCHES HIGH, ONE INCH WIDE, AND PLAINLY VISIBLE. THE NUMBERS MUST BE IN A COLOR THAT CONTRASTS WITH THE COLOR OF THE ICE HOUSE. (C) AN ICE HOUSE MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE ICE BY APRIL 30, HOWEVER, THE DEPARTMENT MAY DESIGNATE OTHER CONDITIONS ON THE PERMIT, INCLUDING OTHER TIME AND AREA RESTRICTIONS].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I understand that in order to go fishing and leave my soft-sided pop-up “ice house” set up overnight, I am required to register it with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). However, this process presents several inconveniences. Not only do I have to go through the time-consuming task of registering my ice house, but I am also required to affix large 12-inch letters to the top, front, and side of my expensive ice house, which feels like an unnecessary defacement of the equipment with tape residue, paint, or punching hole with safety pins. And my number may change from year-to year.

Additionally, if I decide to move my pop-up to a different lake, I am supposed to notify ADF&G about the new location. This becomes particularly challenging when I am out of cellphone range, such as when fishing for lake trout along the Denali Highway. This added step feels burdensome, both for me and for ADF&G, and I question its necessity.

From my understanding, the primary goal of this registration is to ensure that troopers can cite individuals who fail to remove their trash before spring. However, given that ice houses are

generally too valuable to simply abandon and are likely to be registered if left behind, this process seems to be more of an administrative burden than a real solution. For example, I inquired with ADF&G in Fairbanks and they could only recall one instance where an icehouse was left on the ice on (lost Lake), and unsurprisingly it was NOT registered!

In Anchorage and Wasilla, there are no such ADF&G registration requirements for ice houses, and yet these areas seem to manage just fine without them. This suggests that the registration may not be as essential as it is made out to be.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough provides an Ice House Registration Form, but it is not mandatory. The form highlights concerns about unsanitary conditions and safety hazards if ice houses are abandoned after breakup, but it does not impose a legal requirement for registration. For lakes with a listed management plan; “Registration is required only for ice houses on the following lakes: Big Lake; Diamond Lake; Lake Five; Little Question Lake; Little Lonely Lake and the two unnamed lakes located between Question Lake and the Talkeetna Spur Rd., Sec. 30 7 31, T25N, R4W, S.M.

For lakes with lots of cabins and property owners, let them work with their own local entities if ice house registrations are desired on “their” lake. Please don’t make me duct tape numbers onto my \$400 ice house.

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

PROPOSED BY: Tony Hollis (EF-F26-018)

PROPOSAL 26

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Repeal Arctic grayling special regulations and gear restrictions for the confluence area of the Tanana River and Shaw Creek, as follows:

5 AAC 74.010(c)(21), (23) are amended to read:

...

(21) **repealed** / / [IN THE SHAW CREEK DRAINAGE AND ITS TRIBUTARIES, ARCTIC GRAYLING MAY BE TAKEN FROM APRIL 1 THROUGH MAY 31, BY CATCH AND RELEASE FISHING ONLY];

(23) **repealed** / / [IN THE TANANA RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES WITHIN A TWO-MILE RADIUS OF ITS CONFLUENCE WITH SHAW CREEK, ARCTIC GRAYLING MAY BE TAKEN FROM APRIL 1 THROUGH MAY 31, BY CATCH-AND-RELEASE FISHING ONLY];

5 AAC 74.010(d)(16), (18) are repealed:

...

(16) **repealed** / / [IN SHAW CREEK,

(A) ONLY ONE UNBAITED, SINGLE-HOOK, ARTIFICIAL LURE MAY BE USED;

(B) DOWNSTREAM FROM THE RICHARDSON HIGHWAY BRIDGE, BAIT MAY BE USED ONLY ON SINGLE HOOKSWITH A GAP SIZE LARGER THAN THREE-QUARTERS OF AN INCH];

(18) ~~repealed~~ / / [IN THE TANANA RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES WITHIN A TWO-MILE RADIUS OF ITS CONFLUENCE OF SHAW CREEK, BAIT MAY BE USED ONLY ON SINGLE HOOKS WITH A GAP SIZE LARGER THAN THREE-QUARTERS OF AN INCH];

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Shaw Creek is a small tributary of the Tanana River that crosses the Richardson Highway 19 miles northwest of Delta Junction. Shaw Creek and the upland areas adjacent to the Tanana River have limited legal access for anglers. The current regulations for Shaw Creek and the adjacent areas of the Tanana River were originally adopted in February 1987 as a conservative measure for a fishery that had developed on the Shaw Creek Arctic grayling spawning population of Arctic grayling. Radiotelemetry data on nearby Arctic grayling summer populations show that the spawning population of Arctic grayling in Shaw Creek is composed of fish from at least three different drainages all with healthy summer populations. These populations inhabit clear, spring-water streams in the summer, while Shaw Creek has poor summer feeding habitat and is primarily used by Arctic grayling for spawning and juvenile rearing. These changes would simplify regulations and increase opportunity.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-017)

PROPOSAL 27

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Increase the bag and possession limit of stocked species in Rainbow Lake, as follows:

5AAC 74.010(c)(18) is repealed:

...

(18) ~~repealed~~ / / [IN RAINBOW LAKE, THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR RAINBOW TROUT, LANDLOCKED SALMON, ARCTIC CHAR/DOLLY/VARDEN, AND ARCTIC GRAYLING, COMBINED IS FIVE FISH, OF WHICH ONLY ONE FISH MAY BE 18 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH];

5 AAC 74.010(c)(29) is amended to read:

...

(29) in stocked waters, the bag, possession, and size limit for rainbow trout, Arctic char/Dolly Varden, landlocked salmon, lake trout, and Arctic grayling is 10 of all stocked species combined, of which no more than two fish may be lake trout and only one fish may be 18 inches or greater in length; for the purposes of this paragraph, “stocked waters” include Backdown Lake, Ballaine Lake, Big “D” Pond, Birch Lake, Bluff Cabin Lake, Bolio Lake, Brodie Lake, Bullwinkle Lake, Chena Lake, Chet Lake, CHSR 25.0 Mile Pit, CHSR 30.0 Mile Pit, CHSR 45.5 Mile Pit, CHSR 47.9 Mile Pit, CHSR 56.0 Mile Pit, Coal Mine Road #5, Craig Lake, Cushman Lake, Dick’s Pond, Doc Lake, Donna Lake, Donnelly Lake, Dune Lake, Forrest Lake, Four Mile Lake, Fourteen Mile Lake, Geskakmina Lake, Ghost Lake, Grayling Lake (Eielson Air Force Base), Hidden Lake (Eielson Air Force Base), Hidden Lake (Tetlin NWR), Horseshoe Lake, “J” Lake, Jan Lake,

Johnson Pit #2, Kenna Lake, Ken's Pond, Kids Fishing Pond, Koole Lake, Last Lake, Lisa Lake, Little Donna Lake, Little Harding Lake, Little Lost Lake, Lost Lake, Lundgren Pond, Manchu Lake, Mark Lake, Monte Lake, Monterey Lake, Mosquito Creek Lake, Mullins Pit, Nenana City Pond, Nickel Lake, Nordale #2, North Chena Pond, North Pole Pond, North Twin Lake, Olness Pond, Otto Lake, Parks 261 Pond, Parks 285 Pond, Paul's Pond, Pyrite Pond, Quartz Lake, **Rainbow Lake**, Rangeview Lake, Rapids Lake, Richardson Hwy. 28 Mile Pit, Richardson Hwy. 31 Mile Pit, Richardson Hwy. 81 Mile Pit, Shaw Pond, Sansing Pond, Sheefish Lake, Sirlin Drive Pond, South Twin Lake, Steese Hwy. 29.5 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 31.6 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 33.5 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 34.6 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 35.8 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 36.6 Mile Pit, Stringer Rd. Pond, Triangle Lake, Wainwright #6, Weigh Station Pond #1, Weight Station Pond #2, Weasel Lake, West Iksgiza Lake, Z Pit (Chena Floodway);

5 AAC 74.065(h)(3) is amended to read:

...

(3) **repealed** __/__/__[RAINBOW LAKE].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current bag and possession limits for Rainbow Lake are overly restrictive given the difficulty of access, light fishing effort, abundant population, and the inability of the lake to yield fish larger than 18 inches under the conservative management approach as defined in the *Tanana River Area Stocked Waters Management Plan* (5 AAC 74.065). Rainbow Lake is a remote stocked lake located 12 air miles from Delta Junction, and it is accessible by float/ski plane or by snowmachine along an 11-mile winter trail.

Under the *Tanana River Area Stocked Waters Management Plan* (5 AAC 74.065), the department manages stocked waters to meet demand for diverse fishing opportunities. Since 2013, Rainbow Lake has been managed using the plan's conservative approach which endeavors to provide a reasonable expectation of catching the daily bag limit with a reasonable chance of catching a fish 18 inches or longer in length. Due to existing fishery conditions, the plan's regional management approach should instead be used (bag limit 10 fish, only one fish 18 inches or greater in length) as it increases fishing opportunity and simplifies regulations by aligning it with nearly all stocked lakes within the drainage.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F26-016)

Norton Sound-Subsistence Fisheries (8 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 28

5 AAC 01.170. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

Define beach seine gear specifications in effect when Norton Sound-Port Clarence subsistence fisheries are closed and immediately reopened with the nonretention of specific salmon species, as follows:

5 AAC 01.170(m) is amended to read as follows:

(m) During times when the commissioner determines that it is necessary for the conservation of specific salmon species, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the fishing season in any

portion of the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area and immediately reopen the season in any portion of the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area to subsistence fishing with beach seines and require that specific salmon species caught with a beach seine be returned immediately to the water alive[.]; **a beach seine may not be constructed of monofilament web and may not exceed:**

- (1) 50 fathoms in length;**
- (2) 100 meshes in depth;**
- (3) a mesh size of three and one-half inches stretched measure.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, when the subsistence fishery is restricted to use of beach seine gear with nonretention of a specific salmon species for conservation, there are no specifications of how beach seines can be constructed. Defining beach seine specifications will ensure that beach seines are constructed in a manner that will allow for live release of nontarget salmon species.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-022)

PROPOSAL 29

5 AAC 01.180. Subsistence fishing permits; annual limits for salmon.

Establish a seasonal harvest limit of 25 sockeye salmon for the Sinuk River subsistence fishery as follows:

Proposed Regulation: Given the concerning state of the Sinuk River red salmon population and the historical mismanagement of this fishery, I propose the following regulatory changes:

1. **Implement a Strict Harvest Limit:** Establish a **seasonal harvest limit of 25 red salmon per permit holder**. This conservative limit will allow for more cautious management of the run and help prioritize escapement, ensuring that enough salmon reach the spawning grounds.

2. **Prevent Overfishing:** There should be no increases in harvest limits beyond the initial 25 red salmon per permit holder. Given the Sinuk River's vulnerability, any increase in the harvest limit could push the population closer to collapse, especially considering the ongoing fishing pressure from nearby rivers. By maintaining this strict limit, we can protect the population and avoid potential overexploitation.

Rationale: The Sinuk River's red salmon population is inherently vulnerable due to its small size and the high fishing pressures from nearby systems. It is clear that the river's salmon run has not been managed with the level of caution it requires. The removal of the camera at Glacial Lake without adequate alternatives for monitoring the population—has left a significant gap in data, making it difficult to assess the true status of the run.

Furthermore, the absence of any harvest restrictions has exacerbated the risk of overfishing. With no limits in place, the potential for high levels of catch by a few permit holders could rapidly deplete the population, leading to irreversible damage. The Sinuk River's red salmon population is already under stress, and without immediate intervention, the fishery could collapse under unsustainable practices.

Conclusion: The proposed regulatory changes are essential to safeguard the Sinuk River’s red salmon population. By implementing a strict harvest limit of 25 red salmon per permit holder and committing to sustainable, precautionary management practices, we can prevent the collapse of the fishery. The Sinuk River needs immediate and long term intervention, the red salmon population could continue to decline. I respectfully urge the Alaska Board of Fisheries to adopt this proposal to ensure that the Sinuk River’s red salmon population remains viable for future generations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Introduction: The red salmon run on the Sinuk River, west of Nome, has shown a marked decline over the past several years. Historical data from the ADF&G indicated run sizes ranging from approximately 800 to 3,000 fish, significantly lower than those in neighboring systems such as the Pilgrim River, which can support runs of 60,000 to 80,000 fish. However, since the removal of the Glacial Lake camera, there has been no reliable data to track the current state of the Sinuk River’s red salmon population. This lack of data, combined with the increasing pressure from other fisheries, raises serious concerns about the future sustainability of this run.

Issue: In 2024, the red salmon fishery on the Sinuk River was closed abruptly with minimal notice to the public. ADF&G staff did not provide advance warning or information regarding the declining state of the run. While closures are necessary in response to population declines, the lack of communication and foresight points to a reactive, rather than a proactive, approach to management.

Additionally, the Sinuk River is experiencing increasing fishing pressure, particularly when the Pilgrim River, a nearby system, faces restrictions. With no harvest limits in place, a small number of permit holders could potentially overharvest a significant portion of the Sinuk River’s already vulnerable run. For instance, if six permit holders each harvest 100 red salmon during a low-run year, this could decimate up to 75% of the entire run. This is not sustainable management—this is depletion.

Population Vulnerability and Mismanagement: Unlike the much larger Pilgrim River, the Sinuk River is at a higher risk of collapse due to its smaller, more fragile salmon run. The current management approach, which has allowed open access without clear, harvest restrictions, has failed to account for this vulnerability. It is possible that the Sinuk River has been mismanaged for years, leading to its current precarious state. The lack of proactive monitoring, combined with an insufficient harvest control system, has put the fishery at risk.

This situation demands a serious reevaluation of how the Sinuk River is managed. The proposed regulations aim to address this by instituting a harvest limit that reflects the fragility of the run and prioritizes the long-term health of the population. It is not enough to react to closures after the fact; we need to implement a management system that protects the run from further depletion.

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

PROPOSED BY: Brandon Ahmasuk (EF-F26-011)

PROPOSAL 30

5 AAC 01.175. Waters closed to subsistence fishing.

Increase waters closed to subsistence fishing in the Sinuk River, as follows:

Proposed Solution: To ensure the safety of subsistence fishers and to improve the efficiency of the fishery, I propose relocating the current seining location to a point much further downstream, beyond the upper sections of the river. The new location should be situated at least 9 miles downstream from the current Boulder Creek site, where the river widens, the current slows, and conditions are more suitable for effective seining. I suggest moving the seining location point below Camp Creek. Most of if not all safe and productive seining happens below this point.

Beach seining for red salmon on the Sinuk River allowed below Camp Creek located approximately 7.64 miles from the river mouth.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Introduction: The Sinuk River, west of Nome, is a vital resource for subsistence fishers, and its fishery is of great importance to the local community. However, the current upper seining location set by ADF&G at Boulder Creek is problematic for both safety and efficiency. Individuals unfamiliar with the river are seining far upriver, that can create significant hazards that compromise both the safety of boaters and the ability of other subsistence users to access appropriate fishing areas downstream. Given the narrow, shallow, and fast-moving upper reaches of the Sinuk River, this location is not suitable for effective and safe seining, and it is time to consider relocating it to a safer, more effective location further downstream.

Issue: Currently, some individuals, particularly those new to the river, are attempting to seine too far upriver, where the river's physical conditions are not conducive to safe or effective fishing. These actions create serious safety hazards, including situations where the river is blocked off by seining nets in an unsafe manner. For example, on one occasion, I encountered a seining net that was anchored across a narrow bend of the river on both sides, with anchor lines positioned 2-3 feet above the water. As our boat attempted to navigate the bend, we narrowly avoided a dangerous collision with the unmanned seining net, with our crew at risk of being struck by the anchor lines. This incident highlights the serious safety risks posed by seining in the upper reaches of the river, particularly when individuals unfamiliar with the area do not understand the challenges the river poses or safe seining practices. The upper Sinuk River itself is challenging to navigate with jet boats. In swift currents, particularly in narrow channels with high velocity, jet boats have a reduced "grip" on the water. Unlike traditional propeller-driven boats, which have more direct contact with the water and can rely on more rudder movement for turning, jet boats rely on the force of the water exiting the jet nozzle to create directional control. When the boat is moving at speed through fast-moving water, the stream of water exiting the nozzle can be disrupted by the current, making it harder to turn or even causing the boat to feel "sluggish" or even slide in its response. In the upper reaches of the Sinuk River navigation is challenging.

Additionally, the river is too shallow, narrow, and rocky in the upper sections, with swift currents that make successful seining nearly impossible. As a result, those attempting to seine in these areas often find themselves unable to stop or turn around in time, risking dangerous collisions with other boats or nets. The current seining location at Boulder Creek—set by local ADF&G staff—is located too far upstream, contributing to these safety hazards and inefficiencies.

Rationale:

1. **Safety Concerns:** The current location at Boulder Creek creates significant safety risks, particularly for boaters and subsistence users who are trying to access downstream fishing spots.

By moving the seining location further downstream, we can eliminate the hazards posed by swift, narrow, rocky, shallow bends and reduce the risk of collisions and dangerous encounters

2. Physical Conditions of the River: The upper portion of the Sinuk River is simply not suited to effective seining. The upper portion of the river is too shallow, too narrow, too many boulders, and too swift for successful fishing. The downstream location will provide conditions that are more conducive to both safe travel and successful seining, maximizing the effectiveness of the fishery while reducing risks.

3. Practicality: Local knowledge and years of experience indicate that more than halfway down the river, or approximately 9 miles from the bridge, is the optimal location for seining. This area is safer, with better access, and provides more consistent conditions for subsistence fishers. Relocating the seining area will not only improve safety but will also enhance the overall efficiency and sustainability of the fishery.

Conclusion: Relocating the seining location to a point further downstream is a practical, commonsense solution to the current issues facing the Sinuk River fishery. By addressing the safety hazards in the upper reaches of the river and improving access for subsistence users, we can ensure that the Sinuk River remains a valuable and sustainable resource for the local community. I strongly urge the Alaska Board of Fisheries to adopt this proposal and work towards

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

PROPOSED BY: Brandon Ahmasuk (EF-F26-012)

PROPOSAL 31

5 AAC 01.175. Waters closed to subsistence fishing.

Expand waters closed to subsistence fishing for salmon in the Sinuk River, as follows:

5AAC01.175 Waters close to subsistence fishing

- (1) The following waters are closed to subsistence fishing for salmon, except when fishing with a hook and line attached to a rod or pole:**
- (2) the Sinuk River upstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the confluence of [Boulder] Camp Creek;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The net fishing closure for subsistence salmon fishing needs to be extended downstream for safety and conservation reasons. The Sinuk River is a swift, difficult river to run nets in. Avoiding conflicts among fishers in chutes and riffles has been a problem. The original direction by the BOF was to close potential chum salmon spawning beds. Moving the netfishing area to below Camp Creek meets both those goals.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, there was confusion about the original proposal brought by one of the NNSAC members and this idea was endorsed unanimously by the AC.

PROPOSED BY: Northern Norton Sound F&G Advisory Committee (EF-F26-123)

PROPOSAL 32

5 AAC 01.160. Fishing seasons and periods.

Repeal the subsistence fishing schedule in the marine waters of west of Cape Nome in Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District, as follows:

Allow those fishing in Subdistrict 1 marine waters west of Cape Nome to fish 7 days a week – identical regulations to those east of Cape Nome in this subdistrict.

5 AAC 01.160. Fishing seasons and periods

(a) In the Port Clarence District, fish may be taken at any time, except as specified by emergency order.

(b) In the Norton Sound District, fish may be taken at any time, except as follows:

(1) in Subdistrict 1,

(A) in fresh water, from June 15 through August 31, set gillnets may be used to take salmon only from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. Monday;

(B) ~~in marine waters, west of Cape Nome, unless modified by emergency order to ensure reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of available surpluses of salmon, from June 15 through August 15, set gillnets may be used to take salmon from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. Monday;~~

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Regulations for Subdistrict 1 unnecessarily limit subsistence opportunity for salmon fishers in marine waters west of Cape Nome between June 15 – August 15. East of Cape Nome, fishers may fish 7 days a week. West of Cape Nome, the open period is from 6 p.m. Wednesday to 6p.m. Monday. Restrictions were first put in place nearly three decades ago to protect chum returns to the Nome, Snake, and other rivers west of Cape Nome with conservation concerns. The Board has gradually eased restrictions as chum salmon returns in the Subdistrict 1 have improved. Further liberalization of the fishing period is warranted.

It should be noted that those fishing marine waters west of Cape Nome are not only catching chum salmon — we also harvest pinks, a few sockeye, and an occasional chinook salmon. These fish are not just bound for Subdistrict 1 rivers. We are also likely taking salmon bound for rivers in the Kotzebue and Arctic Districts.

Those who fish west of Cape Nome (either because of fish camp location or the shorter distance from town) now contend with extremely challenging weather conditions during the season that: 1) already limit the amount of time one can fish using a set gillnet 2) impact efforts to make dry fish. It is stormier, weather changes rapidly, and we now have to jump on any opportunity when both conditions are present and hope the fish are moving through then. Good conditions in which to fish and preserve using this technique often do not coincide with the fishing period. Even those of us who can afford to take time off work to take advantage of good conditions sometimes struggle to harvest fish and process them.

Allowing additional fishing time should not pose a conservation concern, given the improvements in returns of chum salmon in the Nome subdistrict and long-term shifts in locations used by Nome residents to fish for salmon such as the Pilgrim River.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. It was presented for comment at the March 2025 Northern Norton Sound advisory committee meeting in Nome.

PROPOSED BY: Nicole Braem

(EF-F26-130)

PROPOSAL 33

5 AAC 01.172. Limitations on subsistence fishing gear.

Prohibit the retention of king salmon when subsistence fishing with a beach seine in the Pilgrim River, as follows:

In coordination with management practices for the conservation of the Pilgrim River king salmon stock, it is recommended for the non-retention of king salmon through subsistence practices when beach-seining while targeting other species like sockeye salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The northern latitudinal limit for king salmon is near southern Norton Sound, however, king salmon are present in the Pilgrim River, Port Clarence District in small numbers. The five and 10-year average for king salmon escapement on the Pilgrim River is 30 and 55 kings, respectively. Current regulations in the Port Clarence District for the Pilgrim River state that the annual limit for king salmon is three fish and 25 fish for sockeye salmon, unless modified by the commissioner by emergency order.

The Pilgrim River receives significant subsistence pressure from Nome-area residents seeking sockeye salmon, largely through beach seining efforts. While these fishers are not targeting king salmon, the current regulations allow for, and result in, their harvest up to an annual limit of three king salmon. Pilgrim River continues to exhibit a low abundance of king salmon due to overall production of the stock. This proposal would address management actions for non-retention of king salmon through subsistence practices when beach-seining while targeting other species such as sockeye salmon to conserve and sustain what king salmon stock is available at the Pilgrim River.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This proposal has been endorsed by the Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (EF-F26-052)

PROPOSAL 34

5 AAC 01.180. Subsistence fishing permits; annual limits for salmon.

Reduce the subsistence fishing annual limit for Pilgrim River king salmon, as follows:

In coordination with management practices for the conservation of the Pilgrim River king salmon stock, it is recommended to reduce the annual limit of king salmon from three fish to one fish. Regulatory language would suggest as follows:

(g)In the Port Clarence District, in the following waters, the annual limits for salmon are as follows:

(1)in the Pilgrim River, the annual limit for

(A)king salmon is one fish

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The northern latitudinal limit for king salmon is near southern Norton Sound, however, king salmon are present in the Pilgrim River, Port Clarence District in small numbers. The five and 10-year average for king salmon escapement on the Pilgrim River is 30 and 55 kings, respectively. Current regulations in the Port Clarence District for the Pilgrim River state that the annual limit for king salmon is three fish. Pilgrim River continues to exhibit a low abundance of king salmon due to overall production of the stock. This proposal would address management actions to reduce king salmon retention through subsistence practices to conserve and sustain what stock is available.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This proposal has been endorsed by the Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (EF-F26-050)

PROPOSAL 35

5 AAC 01.172. Limitations on subsistence fishing gear.

Repeal the requirement for hook and line subsistence fishermen to follow sport fishing bag and possession limits in the northern Norton Sound area, as follows:

Remove the requirement that those subsistence fishing for salmon using rod and reel in flowing waters that drain into northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald Point (between Elim and Koyuk) keep to sport fish bag limits. Suggested language:

5 AAC 01.172. Limitations on subsistence fishing gear

(a) Except when fishing through the ice, for subsistence fishing in state waters of, and all flowing waters that drain into, northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald Point (between Elim and Koyuk) with a hook and line attached to a rod or a pole, the following provisions apply:

(1) the methods and means specified in 5 AAC 70.011, 5 AAC 70.030, and 5 AAC 75.022; and

(2) the bag and possession limits [for non-salmon fish], by species, specified in 5 AAC 70.011.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Rod and reel has been recognized by the Board of Fish as a legal subsistence gear type in all flowing waters that drain into northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald Point (between Elim and Koyuk) under 5AAC 01.172(a). As a result, Alaska residents in multiple communities are not required to purchase a sport fishing license to use this method to harvest fish. However, under that same section of code, 5AAC 01.172(a)(2), we are required to adhere to sport fish bag and possession limits per 5 AAC 70.011.

In Norton Sound Subdistrict, the sport fish bag limits for salmon are different than those under we fish under by the subsistence permit required to fish in Norton Sound Subdistrict 1. The sport fish bag limits are much more restrictive than the subsistence limits, and unnecessarily so. For example, under the subsistence permit, using a setnet, we can take up to 20 coho annually from Bonanza Channel. Under the rules governing subsistence rod and reel fishing, we can only take 3 coho per day at the same location. As a result, we would have to spend 5 days fishing using rod and reel to catch as many coho as setting a net. This is very inefficient, we would spend more time and gas. Not everyone has a net and boat.

Elsewhere in the area where rod and reel has been determined to be a subsistence gear type, subsistence permits are also required.

My memory of the reason for this requirement that subsistence fishers using rod and reel in this area keep to sport fish bag limits is that it is related to law enforcement concerns about how to distinguish between a sport and subsistence fisher in the field. Because subsistence salmon fishers are required to get a permit and are required to record our catch before leaving our fishing location – we have the subsistence permit in the field. Law enforcement can easily determine who is subsistence fishing.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I presented this proposal for discussion and comment at the Northern Norton Sound advisory committee meeting in March 2025.

PROPOSED BY: Nicole Braem

(EF-F26-027)

Norton Sound Commercial Fisheries (1 Proposal)

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 (EF-F26-091)

Northwestern Area Sport Fisheries (3 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 37

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

Close sport fishing for king salmon in the Pilgrim River, as follows:

In coordination with management practices for the conservation of the Pilgrim River king salmon stock, it is recommended to close king salmon sport fishing and incidental king salmon caught must be released back into the waters immediately.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The northern latitudinal limit for king salmon is near southern Norton Sound, however, king salmon are present in the Pilgrim River, Port Clarence District in small numbers. The five and 10-year average for king salmon escapement on the Pilgrim River is 30 and 55 kings, respectively. Current sports fish regulations in the Port Clarence District for the Pilgrim River are open to sport fishing year-round. Pilgrim River continues to exhibit a low abundance of king salmon due to overall production of the stock. This proposal would address management actions to close sports fishing for king salmon to conserve and sustain what stock is available.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This proposal has been endorsed by the Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (EF-F26-051)

PROPOSAL 38

5 AAC 70.030. Methods, means, and general provisions - Finfish.

Modify hook size specifications when sport fishing for salmon in the Northwestern Management Area, as follows:

HOOK SIZE:

Multiple hooks with a gap between point and shank larger than 19/32 inch, or a 2/0 hook, may be used for taking fish other than salmon, except where noted.

HOOK SIZE:

MULTIPLE HOOKS WITH A GAP BETWEEN POINT AND SHANK LARGER THAN

[½] INCH MAY BE USED FOR TAKING FISH OTHER THAN SALMON, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the Nome area, many individuals have received a citation while fishing from the riverbank; they were cited while fishing for salmon, and were not fishing from a man-made structure. Individuals were not making the snagging motion, just honestly fishing for salmon from the riverbank, casting and reeling in. Individuals have their favorite fishing lure that brings them good luck while fishing for salmon (example a 7/8 ounce Blue Fox Pixee). By regulation this lure is illegal when fishing for salmon, as the hook size is just a shade bigger than what is allowed. We strongly encourage the Board of Fish to consider adopting a small increment in hook size, or two (2) size increment, when fishing for salmon.

We do not condone snagging, fishing from bridges or other man-made objects as this provides an unfair advantage. However, individuals that are honestly trying to fish for salmon from the riverbank and are using a hook size larger than a #1 hook should not be punished or cited for just trying to put food on the table.

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

PROPOSED BY: Melanie Bahnke, Kawerak, Inc. President (EF-F26-049)

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.

PROPOSED BY: Seth Kantner and Aakatchaq Schaeffer (EF-F26-084)

Kotzebue Subsistence Fisheries (3 Proposals)

PROPOSAL 40

5 AAC 01.130. Subsistence fishing permits.

Establish a subsistence sheefish permit in the Kotzebue Area, as follows:

5 AAC 01.130 Subsistence fishing permits. (a) Except as provided in this section, fish may be taken for subsistence purposes without a subsistence fishing permit.

(b) a subsistence sheefish fishing permit is required when fishing through the ice.

If adopted, this proposal would require subsistence fishers who are ice-fishing in the Kotzebue fishing district to carry free ADF&G-issued harvest records (permits) while fishing and record harvests on this permit in ink before leaving the fishing site. Similar permits are found in subsistence and personal-use fisheries throughout the state.

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

Sheefish harvests under ice (hooking through the ice, and nets set under ice, intended for catch of sheefish) during fall/winter/spring near Kotzebue.

Sheefish have long been an important subsistence resource to Kotzebue Sound area residents. In the dog-team days, the return of brighter sun in February often marked a time of dwindling food—and extra reliance on these large fat fish for people and for dogs.

Nowadays, a large and growing subsistence fishery for sheefish occurs through the ice in Hotham Inlet close to Kotzebue. A new user-group growing the fastest is non-local fishers who fly to Kotzebue, trade for snowmobile use, or hire a local guide or an outfitter, and then ship out boxes of fish on Alaska Air, NAC and other carriers. (NOTE: People using under-ice nets also ship out fish to sell or trade to dog mushers and others for dog food and for people food.)

The amount of sheefish harvested is poorly documented. Basically, catches are not reported, nor required to be reported, and there has been no stock assessment of sheefish spawning populations in the Kobuk or Selawik River by ADFG since 2018, and no subsistence catch survey since 2015.

Overharvest of sheefish is a growing concern, particularly as chum salmon runs decline and fishers focus more on non-salmon species. At the very least, we should attempt to gather reliable harvest data to understand this fishery better, and do our best to protect this important species. A required, free paper or online reported permit would be a start at documenting harvest pressure of this important local species.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, we spoke to the Advisory Committee about our concerns about lack of numerical data on subsistence and sport harvests of sheefish, and to guides, and Trooper Steve Cantine, and we were assisted by Brendan Scanlon at ADFG with administrative coding and understanding of subsistence permitting, values, uses, requirements, and past surveys.

PROPOSED BY: Seth Kantner and Aakatchaq Schaeffer (EF-F26-085)

PROPOSAL 41

5 AAC 01.120. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

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

Allow the use of bow and arrow when subsistence fishing for non-salmon fish species in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area, as follows:

I am open to a variety of solutions to address this issue, including changing subsistence regulations or sport fishing regulations, and opening only the lower Noatak drainage to summer harvest or the entire subsistence or sport fishing management areas. I believe adopting one of the following changes to regulations would accommodate this request:

- Allow use of bow and arrow for subsistence harvest in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area. Proposed change in regulation required (that I'm aware of) would be:

*5AAC 01.120 (b) Fish other than salmon may be taken by set gillnet, drift gillnet, beach seine, fish wheel, pot, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear, spear, **bow and arrow**, and lead, or, as specified in (f) of this section, by hook and line attached to a rod or a pole.*

OR

- Allow harvest of pike under sport fishing regulations, year-round, in the Noatak River Drainage. Change in regulations required (that I'm aware of) would be:

*5 AAC 70.011 (c) **(10) in the Noatak River Drainage, northern pike may be taken by bow and arrow year-round.***

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the opportunity to harvest Northern pike using a bow and arrow during the summer in sloughs and lakes connected to the lower Noatak River. The current regulations do not allow for the harvest of Northern pike in Northwestern Drainages with bow and arrow May 1-August 31. Ice can be expected on waters of the lower Noatak from early October to late May, leaving September as the only practical time to attempt to harvest pike with a bow and arrow.

Use of bow and arrow allows for selective harvest of fish of a desirable size for consumption, without incidental catch of fish that are too small or too large. I do not anticipate an overall increase in harvest of pike in the Noatak drainage if use of bow and arrow were allowed in the summer as the harvest would likely be minimal, and would replace fish taken by other legal means (ie by hook and line or gill net under subsistence regulations).

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. No. I will attend the Kotzebue Advisory Committee fall 2025 meeting to discuss the issue.

PROPOSED BY: Wilhelm Wiese (EF-F26-161)

PROPOSAL 42

5 AAC 01.125. Waters closed to subsistence fishing and 5 AAC 03.350. Closed waters.

Close waters in the Kotzebue District adjacent to the end of the Kotzebue airport runway to subsistence and commercial fishing, as follows:

5 AAC 01.125 (c) is amended by adding a new subsection to read, as follows:

(c) In Subdistrict 1 of the Kotzebue District, marine waters from ADF&G markers located at the Weather Service Dome south of the airport runway to the NANA building and extending one mile offshore into Kotzebue Sound perpendicular to the beach will be closed to subsistence fishing.

5 AAC 03.350 is amended by adding a new paragraph to read, as follows:

(5) In Subdistrict 1 of the Kotzebue District, marine waters from ADF&G markers located at the Weather Service Dome south of the airport runway to the NANA building and extending one mile offshore into Kotzebue Sound perpendicular to the beach are closed to commercial fishing.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Each year the department issues emergency orders closing waters adjacent to the end of the Kotzebue airport runway to subsistence and commercial fishing. This closure is promulgated to mitigate the potential hazard to aircraft flights in Kotzebue posed by birds being attracted to fishing gear. Adopting this closure into regulation will provide greater transparency and codify longstanding practices.

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

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-020)

Kotzebue Commercial Fisheries (1 Proposal)

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)
