

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)
