

PROPOSAL 1 - 5 AAC 01.610. Fishing seasons. Establish a weekly 36-hour subsistence fishing period until the two days after the closure of the commercial salmon season, as follows:

(1) during one weekly 36-hour fishing period beginning 7:00 a.m. Friday and ending 7:00 p.m. Saturday; [from May 15 until two days before the commercial opening of that salmon district, seven days per week; (2) during the commercial salmon season, only during open commercial salmon fishing periods in that district;]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? 1. Subsistence users in the Copper River District do not have reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon outside the commercial salmon fishery and with the frequency available in other subsistence fisheries throughout the state.

2. Under the current regulations, local Alaska Department of Fish and Game managers are often put in the position of determining "reasonable opportunity" during periodic or extended closures of the commercial salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: George Covel (EF-C14-115)

PROPOSAL 2 - 5 AAC 01.610. Fishing seasons. Establish subsistence fishing season that opens when commercial fishing opens in May and closes when the commercial fishery closes in September, as follows:

Subsistence fishing should open starting on the date of the first commercial opener in May, and remain open until the final commercial opener in September.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Copper River Flats are an area where conditions can range from serene to catastrophic very quickly. The commercial gillnet fleet generally uses large bow pickers (most 28–35 feet) well suited to handle these conditions, although these boats are occasionally lost in this area. Boats used for subsistence fishing are generally much smaller (16–22 feet), and are presently only allowed to fish during commercial openers, except for one day a year. Subsistence fishers should not be put into a position where they have to run with large commercial boats to get their fish, nor should they be limited in the days they can fish. Rather, they should be allowed to fish when weather conditions are best for their smaller boats.

Because there is a catch limit imposed on subsistence fishers in this fishery the overall number of fish taken by subsistence fishers would not change. Only the times these fish are taken.

In return for this expanded opportunity, the subsistence fishery should be set up as a test fishery to add an extra data component to the management of this commercial fishery, which is informed by sonar data miles upriver. In seasons when the river holds ice late into the spring, and fish are not detected in the river, they still could be present in the fishery and available for harvest. A test fishery on the fishing grounds would provide an extra data component when inriver estimates are delayed. Subsistence fishers should be required to note the location, size of net, soak time and number of each species caught within 24 hours. This real-time catch per unit effort would provide managers with more tools to manage the fishery, and increase the safety margin for subsistence fishers on the Copper River Flats by allowing subsistence fishers to avoid fishing among large commercial boats, and on the best weather days.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak (EF-C14-128)

PROPOSAL 3 - 5 AAC 01.620. Lawful gear and gear specifications. Establish certain marking requirements for that portion of a commercial drift gillnet that is being used for subsistence fishing, as follows:

(4) if a subsistence permit holder is using a 50 fathom portion of a longer gillnet, that the deployed net shall be clearly marked at 50 fathoms with a cork, permanently fixed to the corkline, of contrasting color and size, that is plainly visible when the gear is in the water.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Commercial fishermen participating in the Copper River District Subsistence Fishery commonly have a 150 fathom gillnet aboard. Clarify the regulations so that deployment of only 50 fathoms of this gear meets the lawful subsistence gear specification would eliminate the need and expense of returning to town to change nets. A method of marking this dedicated shackle of the larger gear unit shall be required to facilitate operation and enforcement. Current bag limits provide the necessary control and shall remain in effect.

PROPOSED BY: George Covel (EF-C14-116)
