

PROPOSAL 44 - 5 AAC 24.310. Fishing seasons. Prohibit commercial salmon fishing until a salmon is recorded at the Copper River sonar, as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 24.310(a) to add "...the first commercial salmon opening of any year may only be announced after the department has verified by sonar that a salmon has escaped into the river."

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Kings in the Copper River have been the subject of numerous harvest restrictions and prohibitions in recent years. Escapement goals (even lowered goals) have not been consistently met. Genetic studies have identified three runs of kings. The upper river stocks enter the mouth in May, and these stocks have been subject to the most restrictions including complete restrictions on harvest in the Gulkana River, and significantly restricted harvests in the Chitina fishery. While the commercial fleet has recently been fishing outside the barrier islands more than regulations require, they are still harvesting thousands of kings from this imperiled upriver stock. When runs were healthy, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game always announced the first mid-May opener several days or weeks in advance, historically declaring a 12-hour opening inside the barrier islands. While advance notice is helpful for the fishers and processors to plan, it can be devastating to the early kings, especially when there is a late spring and the Copper River is full of ice and low water, preventing the kings from entering the river and causing them to mill longer in the mouth, where they are easily harvested by getting rolled up in loose hanging mesh dragging along the bottom of the river channels, or outside the islands in the same loosely hung mesh. If the sonar is not deployed by May 17 it is because the river is full of ice and the fish are not there anyway.

With the decimated king runs in the upper Copper River, especially the Gulkana, it is biologically indefensible to allow such a high rate of exploitation on these early returning fish by having commercial opener(s) before even a single fish has been counted inriver.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Advisory Committee (EF-C14-155)

PROPOSAL 45 - 5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan. Repeal mandatory inside-waters closure in Copper River King Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

Repeal mandatory inside commercial closures for any statistical week from regulation.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Mandatory inside closures.

The use of mandatory closures has always been unnecessary as Alaska Department of Fish and Game has the authority and shown the ability to manage the fisheries. Alaska Department of Fish and Game also opposes mandatory closures on sport fisheries because they have to be instituted even if the circumstances of the year and run strength do not require them. I am not suggesting getting rid of inside closures as a tool if conditions warrant, just ridding the mandatory language from statute.

PROPOSED BY: Shawn Gilman (EF-C14-050)

PROPOSAL 46 - 5 AAC 24.3XX. New Section. Restrict retention of commercially caught king salmon for a person's own use to not exceed the king salmon sport bag limit in area caught, as follows:

The regulation requiring "home pack" to be recorded, should specify that home packed king salmon may only be retained by a single commercial license holder present on the vessel and that the number of kings harvested, but not sold, may not exceed the applicable sport harvest limits for the area fished.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current regulation allows a commercial fisher, and presumably any crew member, to harvest an unrestricted number of king salmon for personal consumption without a subsistence permit, personal use permit, or even a sport fishing license. This unlimited consumptive use of a fully allocated fishery needs to be addressed seriously by the board. Someone should publicly justify why an individual person (Alaskan or not) should be allowed by law to kill and keep threatened kings for personal consumption or to give away to friends, neighbors, relatives or others. Yes, though these fish would likely be harvested anyway, they should all be sold as envisioned by the concept of commercial fishing. No other Alaskan, and especially no other person by virtue of their occupation, gets to keep as many kings as they want for their personal consumptive use. There are significant opportunities for these persons to harvest kings in sport and even subsistence fisheries with their commercial gill nets. If the home pack of kings is still justified despite the fact that many thousands of Alaskans have been, in recent years, completely denied the opportunity to harvest even a single king to eat from the Copper River, or have been limited to a single king, this harvest should be limited based on the applicable local sport fishing bag and possession limits.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Advisory Committee (EF-C14-158)

PROPOSAL 47 - 5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan. Allows use of dip nets for commercial salmon fishing during emergency order closures of the commercial drift gillnet fishery, as follows:

During times when the commissioner determines that it is necessary for the conservation of king salmon, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the commercial gillnet fishing season and immediately reopen a fishing season during which dip net gear may be used and all king salmon caught in a dip net must be returned immediately to the water.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Conservation of king salmon and harvest of abundant sockeye salmon within the inside closure of the Copper River district described in 5 AAC 24.350(1)(B).

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-C14-146)

PROPOSAL 48 - 5 AAC 24.XXX New Section. Mark district boundaries, as follows:

Re-establish the installation and maintenance of markers for the commercial fishing boundaries on the Copper River Flats during the commercial fishing season.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There are no regulatory markers for the commercial fishing boundaries on the Copper River Flats. These boundaries are established by landmarks which are often obscured during periods of low visibility, forcing commercial fishers to rely on other, indirect, means of determining their position relative to these boundaries. These markers had been in place previously.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak (EF-C14-129)
