

PROPOSAL 172 – 5 AAC 15.357. Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan. Increase the passage of sockeye salmon above the Chignik River weir to provide additional subsistence fishing opportunity, as follows:

The following draft regulatory language was developed and approved by all five Tribal councils:

5 AAC 15.357. Chignik Area Salmon Management Plan is amended to read:

(b)

(3) from the end of the transition period, described in (2) of this subsection until September 14,

...

(B) the department shall manage the commercial fishery to allow for the passage of at least **150,000** [50,000] sockeye salmon above the Chignik River weir, in addition to late-run sockeye salmon escapement needs, to provide an in river harvestable surplus above the Chignik River weir in August and September of at least **[75,000]** 25,000 fish in August and **[75,000]** [25,000] fish from September 1 through September 15;

Increasing the numbers of late-run sockeye salmon required to be passed through the weir will result in additional late season subsistence harvest opportunity.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? During the past four years, subsistence fishers of Chignik Bay, Chignik Lake, Chignik Lagoon, Perryville, and Port Heiden have experienced challenges when attempting to harvest late-run sockeye salmon returning to Chignik Lake and its tributaries. Many elders and high harvesting subsistence fishers indicate that sockeye salmon used to be available in the Chignik Lake watershed well into the winter months for as long as they can remember, until the recent four years. Historically, local subsistence fishers depended upon the availability of red fish well into January and February, but recently fishers are unable to locate fish in the traditional subsistence fishing areas of the Chignik Lake watershed as early as December.

The same issue was brought to the board before and action was taken to establish the existing in-river goals. Local subsistence fishers believe that the existing in river escapement goals are no longer satisfying the subsistence needs of residents in all five communities. The current escapement goals and management practices in August require modification in order to provide for traditional subsistence opportunities during the fall and winter months.

According to 5 AAC 15.357 (b)(3)(B), ADF&G managers must allow at least 50,000 sockeye salmon to pass through the Chignik Weir in addition to the late-run sockeye salmon escapement needs. This is to provide an in-river harvestable surplus above the Chignik River weir in August of at least 25,000 fish in August and an additional 25,000 fish from September 1 through September 15. The Chignik Lake late-run sockeye salmon escapement goal for the month of August for spawning purposes, as it is published in the ADF&G escapement objective schedule, is 40,000 to 53,000 sockeye salmon (not including the 50,000 fish for in river subsistence harvestable surplus). During August 2007–2014, the spawning escapement goal (not including the additional 25,000 sockeye salmon passing through the weir for subsistence in August) fell below once, exceeded six times and met twice. While escapement was not met only once during

the past eight years, subsistence users are continually unable to harvest their late-run sockeye salmon.

The current escapement goals set for September 1–15 may be the reason that subsistence fishers are unable to get their fish. The ADF&G has only met the escapement goal for September 1–15 twice in the last eight years (2007°2014). During only two of those years were sockeye salmon passed through the weir for escapement needs above the in-river subsistence harvestable surplus goal.

Local subsistence fishers are concerned because the later arriving salmon normally have a commensurate later stream life and are the fish believed to be available to subsistence fishers during the winter months. Not managing the September 1–15 portion of the late sockeye run of the Chignik River to provide for the regulation required passage of subsistence fish is unacceptable. Modification of management practices and goals are necessary to provide for subsistence opportunities of sockeye salmon well into the winter months.

Five tribal councils have joined together to submit this proposal to the board requesting greater opportunity for subsistence fishers during their traditional harvesting months or December-March.

The five Tribal councils submitting this proposal request that the board increase the additional late-run escapement goal for August and September 1–15 to provide opportunity for subsistence fishers. The five Tribal councils recommend adding 50,000 sockeye salmon to the August goal and 50,000 sockeye to the September 1–15 goal above what is currently in regulation (currently there are 25,000 additional fish in August and 25,000 additional fish during Sept. 1–15).

Local community members and active fishers have been informed that the late-run has recently been managed for the lower end of the goal ranges with hopes of protecting feed for juvenile salmon and to therefore increase the size of the late-run. While this effort may scientifically be justifiable, the reduction of the goals and management to minimize late-run escapement has directly impacted or eliminated portions of the late season subsistence fisheries and action is required to provide greater subsistence opportunity. All of the reasons contributing to the decline of the late fall and winter sockeye salmon population may not be known (intercept fisheries, climate change, ocean conditions, etc.), the numbers of sockeye salmon passing through the weir is known and manageable. From 2007–2014, as little as 21,000 late-run sockeye salmon passed through the weir from August 1–September 15 to meet spawning needs not including the 50,000 sockeye salmon required for subsistence opportunity.

PROPOSED BY: The federally recognized tribes of Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, Perryville & Port Heiden (EF-C15-131)
