

PROPOSAL 188 – 5 AAC 12.320. Weekly fishing periods. Establish open commercial salmon fishing periods in the Unalaska District that coincide with the last two open fishing periods in July in the Shumagin Islands Section, as follows:

5 AAC 12.320 is amended to read:

The Unalaska District will be opened for two 22-hour fishing periods. The first period begins on July 26th at 6:00 a.m. and remains open until July 27 at 6:00 p.m. The second period begins on July 30 at 6:00 a.m. and remains open until July 31 at 6:00 p.m.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We would like the board to address the issue that evaluating pink salmon run strength to the Unalaska District solely by use of aircraft surveys, originating from the Sand Point Alaska Department of Fish and Game office, is not and should not be the only tool used to provide ADF&G with adequate information in which to open or not open the Unalaska District to commercial pink salmon fishing. Commercial salmon openings are another tool that can be used by ADF&G to judge run strength and can be used to good effect; especially in the far flung Unalaska District.

In 2013, ADF&G biologists made only one aerial survey to the Unalaska District in mid-July. For the rest of July and August, weather conditions between Sand Point and the Unalaska District did not allow ADF&G biologists the chance to fly a survey and therefore the entire fishing district remained closed to pink salmon fishing. Allowing minimal fishing time in the Unalaska during late July is another tool ADF&G could use to evaluate run strength and avoids the problem of flying aerial salmon surveys in notoriously poor weather fishing districts.

In order to provide the Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologist with early run strength information, other than that collected by sporadic or nonexistent aerial surveys, we recommend that commercial fishing in the Unalaska District should be opened to coincide with the last two July openings in the Shumagin Island Section.

These two openings have two advantages. One, they are scheduled far enough into July to coincide with the start of the Unalaska pink salmon run. Two, these late July openings are simultaneous with the two last week Shumagin Island Section openings and help spread fishing effort out and thus eliminating a mad rush to the Unalaska District.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Kurtz and John Mitchell

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