

PROPOSAL 67 – 5 AAC 06.368. Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan. Change the Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan to reflect changes in escapement goals that have previously been implemented, as follows:

5 AAC 06.368 is amended to read:

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to provide guidelines to ensure an adequate spawning escapement of coho salmon into the Nushagak River system. It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries (board) that Nushagak coho salmon be harvested by the fisheries that have historically harvested them. The plan in this section provides management guidelines to the department in an effort to preclude allocation conflicts between various users of this resource. The department shall manage coho salmon stocks in a conservative manner consistent with sustained yield principles and the subsistence priority.

(b) The department shall manage the commercial fishery in the Nushagak District to achieve an inriver run goal of **70,000 – 130,000** [100,000] coho salmon present in the Nushagak River upstream from the department sonar counter located near the village of Portage Creek by August 25. The inriver goal provides for

(1) the department's **sustainable** [BIOLOGICAL] escapement goal of **60,000 – 120,000** [90,000] coho salmon upstream from the sonar counter by August 25;

(2) a reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvest of coho salmon; and

(3) a daily bag and possession limit of five coho salmon, and a guideline harvest level of 2,000 fish in the sport fishery; the sport fish guideline harvest level of 2,000 fish does not apply if the total inriver coho salmon return is projected to be greater than **120,000** [100,000] fish by August 25; the department shall manage the sport fishery to ensure that the biological escapement goal of **60,000 – 120,000** [90,000] coho salmon is achieved.

(c) if the total inriver coho salmon return in the Nushagak River is projected by the department to be less than **120,000** [100,000] but at least **70,000** [60,000] fish by August 25, the department shall close, by emergency order, the directed coho salmon commercial fishery in the Nushagak district by July 23; and

(1) during even-numbered years, manage the pink salmon commercial fishery to achieve a **minimum** pink salmon escapement **of 465,000**, [RANGE OF 1.2 TO 2.4 MILLION FISH] (**300,000** [0.3 TO 1.5 MILLION] fish above the **sustainable** [BIOLOGICAL] escapement goal) and close the directed pink salmon commercial fishery no later than 12:00 midnight, August 1; during commercial fishing periods under this paragraph, the use of a commercial gillnet with webbing larger than four and three-quarter inches shall be prohibited for all fishing periods after 12:00 midnight, July 23;

(2) the commissioner may restrict, by emergency order, the coho salmon sport fishery in the Nushagak River drainage upstream from the department sonar counter located near the village of Portage Creek so that the harvest does not exceed 2,000 coho salmon by one or more of the following:

(A) reduce the bag and possession limit;

(B) prohibit the use of bait;

(C) restrict fishing times and areas;

(D) restrict terminal tackle to single hook artificial lures; and

(E) allow catch-and-release fishing only;

(3) it is the intent of the board that the lower the projected inriver coho salmon return is, the more restrictive that management measures will be in the sport and commercial fisheries under this section].

(d) If the total inriver coho salmon return in the Nushagak River is projected by the department to be less than **70,000 fish** [60,000] and the number of spawners is projected to be more than **60,000** [50,000] fish on August 25, the department shall

(1) close the directed commercial fishery no later than 12:00 midnight July 23;

(2) close the coho salmon sport fishery in the Nushagak River drainage; and

(3) restrict the coho salmon subsistence fishery in the Nushagak River drainage by establishing periods by emergency order, during which

(A) coho salmon may be taken only from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, from 9:00 a.m. Wednesday to 9:00 a.m. Thursday, and from 9:00 a.m. Friday to 9:00 a.m. Saturday; and

(B) set gillnets may not be more than 10 fathoms in length.

(e) If the number of coho salmon spawners in the Nushagak River is projected by the department to be less than **60,000 fish** [50,000] by August 25, the department shall close the subsistence, commercial, and sport fisheries.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2012, the department reevaluated the existing escapement goal for Nushagak coho and pink salmon. This new goal has not been incorporated into regulation and the department feels it is appropriate that it is.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F15-018)
