

PROPOSAL 161 - 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area. Start the Kenai River king salmon sport fisheries as unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure, no retention, as follows:

I recommend a "step up" management philosophy whereas the sport fishery starts with a very conservative single-hook, no bait Catch and Release fishery that (1) provides opportunity but (2) ensures maximum sustainability. According to ADF&G data, specifically the 1991 Terry Bendock study on Hook and Release Mortality, the LR Kenai King survival rate was 94.1%,. Bear in mind that this study was conducted with multiple hooks, bait, and increased handling times (stress) thus it is fair to say that present H&R survival rates would be considerably better, although there is no hard data to support this claim. Still, the translation is that hook and release fishing, which is presently very underutilized by ADF&G, is a highly effective management tool that maximizes opportunity yet minimizes harvest. For this reason, STARTING our sport fishery with this conservative management should be a given. Then, step up, with "harvest" allowed if/when the run shapes up well. Then, should the resource allow it, "bait" could be added, increasing opportunity more.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue I would like the BOF to address is ADF&G's lack of a Kenai river king salmon management plan "step up" policy that puts conservation and sustainability of the resource at the forefront yet still allows for some reasonable amount of sport fish opportunity when possible. Presently, backwards logic during the Late Run is utilized: the KR late run sport fishery opens with full harvest, on a fishery that we do not know run strength. Nobody knows if it is going to make escapement, yet harvest is allowed. thus, hundreds if not thousands of LR kings are taken BEFORE before managers can assess the health of the return. consequently, the sport fishery is often stepped-down abruptly or even suddenly closed, creating for one a very unpredictable fishery but more importantly, creating a scenario where jeopardizing the sustainability of the run becomes more probable since reaching the escapement goal after the fact becomes difficult or impossible. Basically, we can't go back and UN-kill what has already been killed. While I fully understand the Politics of the Sport vs. Commercial fisheries and the implications of restricting/liberalizing one particular fishery, the health of the Kenai King runs must be put as Priority ONE or declines will continue.

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