

PROPOSAL 173 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Decrease the projected inriver run goal of late-run king salmon to 19,000 fish and remove the Upper Subdistrict commercial set gillnet fishery from “paired” restrictions, as follows:

(c) amend From July 1 through July 31, if the projected inriver run of late-run king salmon is less than 19,000 [22,000], in order to achieve the sustainable escapement goal and provide reasonable harvest opportunity, the commissioner may, by emergency order, **under AS 16.05.060 use this authority to achieve established salmon escapement goals described and directed under (j).** Delete [establishing fishing seasons as follows]; delete : (e) (3) (A), (e) (3) (A) (i), (ii); (e) (B).

(f) repeal (delete)

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Difficulty in the management of large runs of sockeye salmon due to inability of ADFG to distribute escapements evenly within the SEG and BEG sockeye salmon ranges established by the Department and Board. Yield / Recruitment - lost harvest and future lost benefit on Kasilof sockeye salmon and Kenai River late-run sockeye estimated at over 5 million sockeye salmon within the last five years.

The 2014 (2015 in-season) Kenai late run chinook projected inriver goal of 22,500 from July 1 – July 31 does not “benefit Cook Inlet fisheries.” The 7500 chinook ‘allocation’ above the minimum goal was subjectively written that impeded commercial fisheries management. The projected mid-point of the Kenai River late-run king salmon changed from July 20th to July 28th while the directed in-river sport fishery closes July 31. However, the mid-point on Kenai late-run sockeye salmon is July 23rd and July 14th for Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapements.

Kenai late-run Chinook salmon SEG goal of 15,000 – 30,000 included 3,000 fish above the 90% MSY range of 12,000 – 27,000 in the escapement goal review (run reconstruction / Fleischman and McKinley 2013). Yet, ‘sustained yield is maximized between 15,000 – 19,000 spawners’. Escapement of 15,000 represent returns (R) of 50,060 with Sustained Yield (SY) of 35,060. Escapement of 19,000 represents return (R) of 55,670 with Sustained Yield (SY) of 36,670, “Conservation” includes the ‘full utilization’ of salmon harvest levels and incorporates 90% MSY rule under escapement goals. Overfishing (OF) definitional standards – less than 80% MSY (9,600 escapements) produces 29,000 Sustained Yields (SY) with median returns of 38,000.

Furthermore, from August 1 through August 15th when the minimum goal of 15,000 been met – instead, a capricious spawning goal of 22,000 now in effect with closure times on the commercial eastside sockeye salmon fishery if between 16,500 – 22,000 is estimated by July 31 even when the directed inriver sport fishery normally is ended. There is no other escapement goal within the state that operates this way. In fact, by default directs commercial fishery managers to manage for an escapement goal of 22,000 instead of in-river goal during the month of July. Instead, Chinook goals elsewhere are stated by the Department as “achieved when the minimum goal is met within the escapement goal range (SEG, BEG, or SET).”

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