

PROPOSAL 175 – 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Clarify the length and depth of set gillnets that may be used in the Upper Subdistrict commercial salmon fishery, if the use of bait is prohibited in the Kenai River sport fishery, as follows:

A change of wording along the following lines.

5 AAC 21.359 (e)(3)(A)

(i) [THREE SET GILLNETS THAT ARE EACH NOT MORE THAN 35 FATHOMS IN LENGTH] **up to four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length with more than 105 fathoms in the aggregate and 29 meshes in depth or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length** and 45 meshes in depth; set gillnets used that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at the end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter; or ...

Alternatively as some have thought the above confusing

(i) [THREE SET GILLNETS THAT ARE EACH NOT MORE THAN 35 FATHOMS IN LENGTH AND] **a full complement of gear with a maximum** 29 meshes in depth or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth;...

Both are functionally the exact same as "a full complement of gear" is described elsewhere

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? When the King Salmon Conservation Plan was introduced at the 2014 BOF meeting, I believe it was the original intent of the regulation in question to allow for fishing a full complement of 29 mesh deep nets during the first tier of "step-downs". This is generally three 35 fathom gillnets as listed. However, there are provisions elsewhere in the regulations for breaking your gear group into "shorter nets".

5 AAC 21.331

(d) A set gillnet may not be longer than 35 fathoms in length... ...A person may not operate more than four set gillnets with more than 105 fathoms of set gillnet in the aggregate...

There are fishermen in the Cook Inlet East Side set net fishery that utilize this option to fish four "short" nets rather than three 35 fathom nets. In the case where the king salmon management plan is instituted in this fashion, as was done in 2014, they were forced to take a further 25% gear reduction even when fishing "shallow" 29 mesh deep nets and fish only three of their "short" nets. This was pretty clearly unintended when the board action was taken and is merely the result of poor wording of the RC/proposal that produced the new regulation and a reluctance to tamper with it further. It appears unavoidable that in the further step-downs of the plan (the ones that actually reduce the number of nets) "short" net users will take a larger restriction than those who fish standard 35 fathom nets and I am willing to accept this being a consequence of choosing to break your gear up this way, but in the initial tier that exists solely to incentivize fishing shallow nets for king salmon conservation it seems appropriate that they be able to fish a full complement of gear like everyone else when making the sacrifice of fishing 29 mesh deep nets.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person

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