

PROPOSAL 65 - 5 AAC 18.332. Seine specifications and operations. Establish a four and one half inch minimum mesh size for salmon seines from June 1 to July 15, as follows:

We recommend adding a new line under the Seine Specification and Operations. Specifically we recommend the following language be adopted:

(X) Seine mesh size shall be no less than 4-1/2 inches from June 1 to July 15 in all districts within the Kodiak Area.

Justification:

First: Adopting this proposal will allow the juvenile Chinook salmon and chums to pass through the increased mesh size of the seine nets, while allowing the commercial fishermen to more efficiently harvest their intended species and save them from discarding unwanted bycatch.

Second: We are requesting the Department conduct a thorough analysis of the bycatch data to further determine impacts and to recommend additional mitigating measures. The sustainability of the Chinook and chum salmon species into the future justifies positive action on this proposal by the Board of Fish.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue this proposal addresses is the bycatch of juvenile Chinook and chum salmon during some commercial purse seine activities in the Kodiak district. Since the early to mid-1990's, fishermen have begun fishing off the outer capes while targeting Cook Inlet sockeye. However, by fishing there, they also intercept juvenile Chinook and chum salmon. The current mesh size of the purse seine nets, of around 2-1/2 inches to 2-3/4 inches entrap, as bycatch, the juvenile Chinooks that result in substantial amount of mortality to the juvenile Chinooks and Chum salmon. Significant numbers of juvenile fish are intercepted with each seine.

As a consequence of these bycatch activities, over the last 15 to 20 years, Chinook and chum salmon populations in areas within Alaska, such as the many watersheds within Cook Inlet, plus most recently the Karluk River and Ayakulik River, have failed to meet escapement goals and there is growing concern about the long-term population viability of these salmon populations.

We believe that we have reached a point of diminishing returns on these species that if mitigating measures are not taken and this practice is allowed to continue, it will have further detrimental effects on these struggling populations and could lead to their total collapse

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Peterson

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