

PROPOSAL 130

5 AAC 01.725. Waters closed to subsistence fishing.

Close subsistence fishing for salmon in Chilkat Inlet through July 15, and Chilkat River from June 15 to August 1, as follows:

(3) District 15, Waters of the Chilkat Inlet are closed to fishing prior to July 15th and waters of the Chilkat River are closed to fishing from June 15th to August 1st

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal addresses the need for conservation of the Chilkat Chinook salmon population through a closure of the Chilkat Inlet through July 15th and the closure of the Chilkat River from June 15th to August 1st in the District 15 Southeast Alaska subsistence fishery. With the low returns of Chinook salmon to the Chilkat River over the last 10 years this closure would allow for the maximum number of returning Chinook salmon to reach the spawning grounds in the upper reaches of the river system without having to navigate past fishing gear. Although this closure may seem extreme, Chinook stocks in the Haines area and throughout Southeast Alaska have been suffering low returns and this measure will help a larger proportion of the returning population spawn to ensure the future survival of this stock. This closure would only effect the Chilkat side of the subsistence fishery, thus allowing subsistence fishermen who wanted to fish earlier in the season fishing opportunity in the Chilkoot Inlet and Lutak Inlet areas of the district. Leaving the Chilkat river open from June 1st to June 14th which is currently done will allow for the harvest of early sockeye when Chinook returning to the river system are in limited numbers. Sockeye, Chum and Coho salmon are still returning to Chilkat River in large numbers after August 1st so fishermen wanting opportunity in the river system would still have ample time after the closure period to harvest fish also. I feel this proposal would help in the local conservation effort to protect the Chilkat Chinook stock and the overall conservation effort to protect Chinook salmon stocks in Southeast Alaska while still allowing for subsistence users time to harvest fish throughout the season. This conservation measure is commensurate with other restrictions applied to Southeast Alaska commercial and sport fisheries by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

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