

PROPOSAL 14

5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan.

Modify the season dates for the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence salmon fishery based on the preseason king salmon harvest projection, as follows:

(e) In the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence salmon fishery, **if the department preseason forecast of the Copper River king salmon run estimates a maximum harvest by all fisheries to be less than 10,000 king salmon, then the commissioner shall, by emergency order, delay the start of the season by one week, to be from June 8 through September 30. If** [if] the commissioner determines that additional conservation measures are necessary to achieve the escapement goals, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence salmon fishery season and immediately reopen a season during which any one or a combination of the following restrictions may be implemented to reduce king salmon harvest in the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence salmon fishery, in the following priority order:

- (1) a bag limit is established for king salmon taken by fish wheel;
- (2) the bag limit for king salmon taken by fish wheel and dip net is reduced;
- (3) the retention of king salmon taken by fish wheel and dip net is prohibited;
- (4) modify methods and means for fish wheels and dip nets.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Recent declines in the Copper River Chinook salmon run have occurred in which the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) has not been consistently met (including years 2010, 2014, and 2016). Existing regulations and salmon management plans for Copper River Chinook salmon could be improved to provide more specific guidance to State managers for their decisions on management actions which may assist with achieving the established SEG.

As an example of management planning for a low return year, for 2017 the State released a preliminary forecast of the Copper River Chinook salmon run to be 29,000 fish. The established SEG is 24,000 Chinook salmon; this left a forecast harvestable surplus of only 5,000 Chinook salmon for all combined fisheries. Included in the State forecast was a maximum projected commercial harvest of 3,500 Chinook salmon. This commercial harvest projection implies an apparent management plan of providing only 1,500 Chinook salmon available for harvest in all other fisheries; when in recent years, the average up river subsistence harvest alone is roughly 2,500. To assure the long term health of Copper River Chinook salmon stocks, prudent management of all combined fisheries affecting this run should attempt to keep the harvest within the limit which is forecast to be surplus to the SEG, at least until inseason run strength indicators may suggest otherwise.

In the Upper Copper River subsistence fisheries, the ratio of Chinook salmon to sockeye salmon in the harvest is higher in the early season than in the latter part of the season. Delaying the start date of the season would allow additional Chinook salmon to migrate to their spawning grounds at times when a conservation concern exists. This proposal is intended to be a management tool for stocks of concern and provides clear direction to the State for this management action in the subsistence fishery of the Glennallen Subdistrict.

PROPOSED BY: Wrangell-St.Elias National Park Service Subsistence Resource Commission
(EF-F17-050)
