

PROPOSAL 31

5 AAC 24.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.

Reduce the maximum depth of drift gill nets in the Copper River District commercial drift gillnet salmon fishery to 29 meshes through the start of Statistical Week 24, as follows:

Reduce the maximum depth of gill nets fished through the start of Week 24 (end of May) to 29 meshes.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Deep nets harvest too many Kings in the May Gillnet fishery.

The board has to look to the commercial King harvest in May of 2014, 2016, and 2017 to understand the reason why the escapement goal was not met. It needs to do something (or many things) to restrict the King Harvest in the May sockeye fishery. The area biologists may have the tools in their toolbox, but they refuse to use them to affect any meaningful conservation of Kings. This proposal was written before the 2017 season, but how many Kings were harvested in Cordova by 500 gillnetters in the combined commercial harvest, educational, and subsistence fisheries? How many Kings did 15,000 dipnetters and sport fishers upriver get to harvest? Was the escapement goal met? Did the department come anywhere close to its goal of restriction the commercial harvest to 3,500?

These answers are predictable before the season even starts. Dipnetters and sport anglers will not even get to fish, and the escapement goal will not be met, and the department will have failed miserably to keep the commercial harvest below its 3,500 goal.

Business as usual in Cordova has driven Copper River Kings to stock of concern status, and the board needs to do something that has been proven to reduce King Harvest in a sockeye fishery, reduce the depth of the nets during the May fishery, if you must prosecute a May fishery at all.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F17-042)
