

PROPOSAL 23

5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.
Prohibit catch-and-release sport fishing in the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River drainages, as follows:

(a)(15) In the Upper Copper River and Susitna River drainages, it is unlawful under sports fisheries to catch and release fresh water finfish.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the Upper Copper River and Susitna River drainages, it is unlawful under sport fisheries regulations to catch and release fresh water finfish. Salmon, trout, and other fresh water finfish are fatally harmed when caught and released into water bodies.

Releasing freshwater finfish into water bodies necessitates rough handling of fish when releasing it into rivers, streams, etc. Fish are struggled with to get fish hooks out of its mouth, grabbing and man handling fish harms it. Finfish are injured when fish hooks are hooked into its mouth or incidentally snagged into its body, then released into waters. Wounds in the mouth increase susceptibility to infection, disease and delayed death. Disease started by a catch and release wound can infect a whole population of returning and rearing salmon stocks. Wounds in the gills result in a more rapid fatality. Continuously catching and releasing finfish eventually kills it as well.

Research studies on the Kenai River by ADFG has confirmed that salmon are harmed when caught and released into water bodies. The report states that, “chinook salmon that was gilled had a significantly reduced chance of surviving compared to a salmon that was not gilled”. We also know that the larger salmon are also more susceptible to handling injuries due to increased body mass and greater force on internal organs, delicate circulatory connections with the gills and skeletal and nervous system structures when handled out of the water.

It is not customary and traditional to catch and release fish. Catch and release is considered to be Engii by the Ahtna people and will make salmon not return to you. Ahtna traditional laws, state that when fish is deliberately harmed, or played with, it is Engii, and will eventually disappear or “not come back” if it is not properly and respectfully cared for. This is what we are seeing with the King Salmon not returning in recent years. They have not been respected. We will see more of this if we don’t change the way we respect the salmon. Not allowing catch and release is a way to start doing this in a small way.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Tene Nene’ (HQ-F17-020)

PROPOSAL 24

5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.
Amend sockeye salmon regulations in the Gulkana River drainage, as follows:

5 AAC 52.023(9)(D), (18)(A) and (B), and (20)(A) and (B) are amended to read:

(9) in the Gulkana River drainage,

(D) in all flowing waters from 100 yards upstream from the narrows at the Paxson Lake outlet downstream to the confluence with the Middle Fork,

(i) sport fishing for [KING] salmon is closed; [KING] salmon may not be taken or possessed;

[(ii) SALMON, OTHER THAN KING SALMON, MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM SEPTEMBER 10 - DECEMBER 31;]

(18) in Paxson Lake,

(A) repealed / / . [IN THE WATERS 100 YARDS UPSTREAM FROM THE NARROWS AT THE LAKE OUTLET TO WITHIN A 100-YARD RADIUS OF THE MOUTH OF THE EAST FORK OF THE GULKANA RIVER AT THE NORTH END OF PAXSON LAKE,

(i) SPORT FISHING FOR KING SALMON IS CLOSED; KING SALMON MAY NOT BE TAKEN OR POSSESSED;

(ii) SALMON, OTHER THAN KING SALMON, MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM JULY 20 — DECEMBER 31;

(iii) RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT MAY NOT BE RETAINED OR POSSESSED; ALL RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT CAUGHT MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY AND RETURNED TO THE WATER UNHARMED;

(iv) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR ARCTIC GRAYLING IS FIVE FISH, OF WHICH ONLY ONE MAY BE 14 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH;

(v) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR LAKE TROUT IS ONE FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;]

(B) repealed / / . [IN THE REMAINDER OF PAXSON LAKE, NOT SPECIFIED IN (A) OF THIS PARAGRAPH,

(i) SPORT FISHING FOR SALMON IS CLOSED; SALMON MAY NOT BE TAKEN OR POSSESSED;

(ii) RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT MAY NOT BE RETAINED OR POSSESSED; ALL RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT CAUGHT MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY AND RETURNED TO THE WATER UNHARMED;

(iii) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR ARCTIC GRAYLING IS FIVE FISH, OF WHICH ONLY ONE MAY BE 14 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH;

(iv) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR LAKE TROUT IS ONE FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;]

(C) sport fishing for salmon is closed; salmon may not be taken or possessed

(D) rainbow/steelhead trout may not be retained or possessed; all rainbow/steelhead trout caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

(E) the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is five fish, of which only one may be 14 inches or greater in length;

(F) the bag and possession limit for lake trout is one fish, with no size limit

(20) in the Summit Lake drainage,

(A) repealed / / . [IN SUMMIT LAKE FROM ITS OUTLET TO WITHIN A 100-YARD RADIUS OF THE MOUTH OF GUNN CREEK,]

(i) SPORT FISHING FOR KING SALMON IS CLOSED; KING SALMON MAY NOT BE TAKEN OR POSSESSED;

(ii) SALMON, OTHER THAN KING SALMON, MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM JULY 20 — DECEMBER 31, WITH A BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT OF THREE FISH GREATER THAN 16 INCHES IN LENGTH, AND A BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT OF 10 FISH 16 INCHES OR LESS IN LENGTH;

(iii) RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT MAY NOT BE RETAINED OR POSSESSED; ALL RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT CAUGHT MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY AND RETURNED TO THE WATER UNHARMED;

(iv) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR BURBOT IS TWO FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;

(v) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR ARCTIC GRAYLING IS TWO FISH, OF WHICH ONLY ONE MAY BE 14 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH;

(vi) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR LAKE TROUT IS ONE FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;]

(B) ~~repealed~~ / / . [IN ALL WATERS OF THE GUNN CREEK DRAINAGE AND ALL WATERS WITHIN A 100-YARD RADIUS OF THE MOUTH OF GUNN CREEK AT SUMMIT LAKE,

(i) SPORT FISHING FOR KING SALMON IS CLOSED; KING SALMON MAY NOT BE TAKEN OR POSSESSED;

(ii) SALMON, OTHER THAN KING SALMON, MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM AUGUST 1 — DECEMBER 31, WITH A BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT OF THREE FISH GREATER THAN 16 INCHES IN LENGTH, AND A BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT OF 10 FISH 16 INCHES OR LESS IN LENGTH;

(iii) RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT MAY NOT BE RETAINED OR POSSESSED; ALL RAINBOW/STEELHEAD TROUT CAUGHT MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY AND RETURNED TO THE WATER UNHARMED;

(iv) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR BURBOT IS TWO FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;

(v) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR ARCTIC GRAYLING IS TWO FISH, OF WHICH ONLY ONE MAY BE 14 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH;

(vi) THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR LAKE TROUT IS ONE FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;]

(C) sport fishing for salmon is closed; salmon may not be taken or possessed;

(D) rainbow/steelhead trout may not be retained or possessed; all rainbow/steelhead trout caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

(E) the bag and possession limit for burbot is two fish, with no size limit;

(F) the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is two fish, of which only one may be 14 inches or greater in length;

(G) the bag and possession limit for lake trout is one fish, with no size limit;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Seasonal closures for sockeye salmon in the Gulkana River drainage were established to protect specific sockeye salmon stocks within the drainage. However, complete closure of these fisheries is a better protection for these stocks and greatly simplifies area sport fish regulations, reducing confusion by the sport anglers.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-122)

PROPOSAL 25

5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

Remove the unbaited, single-hook artificial lure restriction in flowing waters of the Upper Susitna River drainage, as follows:

5 AAC 52.022(a)(1) is amended to read:

(1) in all flowing waters **of the Upper Copper River drainage and Tyone River drainage**, only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The bait and hook restriction was originally implemented to protect rainbow trout populations in the Upper Copper River drainage, but were implemented throughout the entire region, unduly complicating sport fishing regulations and restricting fishing opportunity in upper Susitna River drainage. During the open water period (April 16 – October 31) only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used in Lake Louise, Susitna, and Tyone lakes (Tyone River drainage) for lake trout and burbot conservation; including the Tyone River drainage will align tributary regulations with those in the lakes.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-124)
