

PROPOSAL 169

5 AAC 33.310. Fishing seasons and periods for net gear.

Open Section 6-D the second Sunday of June to commercial fishing for salmon with drift gillnet gear, as follows:

- (c)(2)(A) Sections 6-A, 6-B, [AND] 6-C **and 6-D** open on the second Sunday of June;
- (B) [DELETE ALL MATERIAL]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Gillnet fishermen wishing to harvest pink salmon in District 6 are precluded from doing so under existing regulations. These conditions are in part due to the closures associated with McDonald Lake conservation measures, which have forced fishermen into already crowded and limited areas. This proposal rectifies the situation by providing access for pink salmon in District 6(D) during years of high pink salmon abundance.

Gillnet fishermen will continue to have limited time and area already. Secondly, gillnetters are not adequately harvesting their allocation of wild pink salmon in Southeast Alaska.

PROPOSED BY: United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters (USAG) (HQ-F17-079)

PROPOSAL 170

5 AAC 33.310. Fishing seasons and periods for net gear.

Open a portion of District 10 the third Sunday of June to commercial fishing for salmon with drift gillnet gear only, as follows:

- (k)(1) **District 110-31 opens on the third Sunday of June for gillnet only.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Gillnet fishermen have limited time and fishing area compared to other fishing groups targeting wild salmon in Southeast Alaska. Currently, gillnet fishermen have the smallest amount of area in which to target wild salmon and the fewest number of days available for harvest. Gillnet harvest opportunities are extremely restricted while the current harvests by the gillnet fishery accounts for only 18% of the entire SE salmon harvest.

Gillnetters will continue to have limited opportunities to harvest wild salmon. Gillnetters will have fewer square miles of water in which to target salmon and gillnetters will continue to bear the brunt of most conservation measures as the gillnet fisheries are based around terminal areas.

PROPOSED BY: United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters (USAG) (HQ-F17-080)

PROPOSAL 171

5 AAC 33.331. Gillnet specifications and operation.

Add District 6 to the mesh-size restriction area and allow implementation of the mesh-size restriction for an additional month, as follows:

5 AAC 33.331 (d) is amended to read:

(d) In Districts 6, 8, 11, and 15, through the fourth Saturday in **July** [JUNE], the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish fishing periods during which the maximum gillnet mesh size is six inches.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Southeast Alaska (SEAK) king salmon stocks are currently experiencing a cycle of very low abundance. Over the past five years (2012–2016), the eleven king salmon index systems did not meet escapement goals 45% of the time. In 2017, the Taku and Chilkat Rivers were not expected to meet their escapement goals despite conservation measures. The Stikine River had a terminal run size forecast near the midpoint of the escapement goal range after accounting for conservation measures.

In response to the ongoing cycle of low productivity of SEAK king salmon stocks, Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries held a series of meetings in winter 2017 to develop a management strategy maximizing king salmon escapements across the region that included closures and time and area reductions for subsistence, sport, and commercial salmon fisheries throughout SEAK. Another critical part of this management strategy is a gillnet mesh restriction in districts 6, 8, 11, and 15, implemented over the entire duration of the king salmon runs to Chilkat, Taku, and Stikine rivers. Current regulations allow implementation of mesh restrictions in Districts 8, 11, and 15 through the first Saturday in June, which excludes District 6 and only covers a portion of these king salmon runs. SEAK king salmon runs typically peak in late June to early July and are largely complete by late July.

In March 2017, the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted an emergency regulation allowing the department to implement the mesh-size restriction in District 6 and extend the mesh-size restriction through the fourth Saturday in July for districts 6, 8, 11, and 15. This emergency regulation was in effect for the 2017 fishing season and this proposal seeks to make those provisions a permanent management tool for conservation of SEAK king salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-110)
