

PROPOSAL 125

5 AAC 04.310. Fishing Seasons.

Lengthen the commercial salmon fishing season in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area, as follows:

5 AAC 04.320

...

Except as provided in 5 AAC 01.190 and 5 AAC 04.320 – 5 AAC 04.390, salmon may be taken only follows:

- (1) In Subdistrict 1, from a date established by emergency order after July 1 through August 31
- (2) In Subdistricts 2 and 3, from a date established by emergency order between June 8 to June 20 through August 31
- (3) In Subdistricts 4–6, from a date established by emergency order between June 8 to June 20, through September 7;
- (4) In the Port Clarence District, during fishing periods established by emergency order from July 1 through July 31.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? It is recommended that season dates in northern Norton Sound, including Subdistrict 1, be amended to reflect recent management practices of prosecuting salmon fisheries beyond the existing regulatory closure date of August 31. Since the early 2000s, the overall trend toward increased coho salmon abundance in northern Norton Sound has led to commercial fishing opportunities being extended into September via Emergency Order. This is particularly evident in low water years with delayed coho salmon migration and in years of above average coho salmon runs that often have late pulses of fish near the tail end of the run.

Additionally, in warm years with earlier than average chum salmon run timing, there is no reason to delay the onset of Nome Subdistrict commercial chum salmon fishery in years of sufficient abundance. In years of lower abundance or later salmon run timing, the department retains the discretion to delay openings until escapement goals are achieved and subsistence uses of chum salmon are not jeopardized. However, in years of high abundance, an earlier start would provide the department with early indices of run strength and provide commercial users with additional opportunity.

Therefore, we propose that the potential opening of a commercial fishery in the Nome Subdistrict occur via a date established by Emergency Order on or after June 20. This would result in an alignment of season dates for all northern Norton Sound Subdistricts. We propose amending 5 AAC 04.310.

PROPOSED BY: Northern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F18-012)
