

PROPOSAL 40

5 AAC 06.358. Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan.

Establish a drawing system for use of the four furthest downriver set gillnet sites in the Wood River Special Harvest Area, as follows:

We recommend that a lottery system be developed for the first four downriver setnet sites in the Wood River Special Harvest Area. Each setnet permit holder can enter the lottery to fish a tide or opening at one of four setnet sites. If a permit holder is the winner of the lottery, he/she can fish that designated site for that designated tide/opening. This solution would be simple, fair, established well ahead of time and easy to enforce.

Draft language:

5 AAC 06.358 (d) (1) (E) For the first two downriver setnet sites on the east and west sides of the WRSWA, a lottery draw will be held before the area is opened to any commercial setnet fishing. Any Nushagak/Igushik setnet permit holder may enter the lottery. If successful, the permit holder will be assigned one of the four sites and specific opening to fish. If that permit holder declines their designated turn, the option is lost and goes to the next permit holder in the lottery draw.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under 5 AAC 06.358, the Wood River Special Harvest Area may be opened by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game by emergency order when conditions meet a number of circumstances outlined in sections 1-5. However, fishing sites for setnets are on a first-net-in-the-water basis during these openings. The first two downriver sites on both the east and west sides of the river are extremely productive given the nature of the salmon passage, and catch drops off substantially at sites going upriver. As a result, the vast majority of the harvest is shared by only four permit holders.

Given that the Nushagak/Igushik areas have a significant number of setnetters, many of whom participate in the Wood River Special Harvest Area openings, it makes sense to establish a mechanism for more permit holders to gain value from the Wood River openings in a fair and orderly manner. If this regulation is not adopted, many setnetters will not benefit from the harvest in the Wood River.

Another solution would be to lease these setnet sites similar to how this is done in the main district, but since the WRSWA is opened only intermittently, it seems burdensome to use this option and it does not open up the harvest to more setnetters as the process outlined here does.

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