

PROPOSAL 62

5 AAC 67.020. General provisions for seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Bristol Bay Area.

All sport-caught fish removed from the water in all freshwater drainages of the Bristol Bay Area must be retained, as follows:

5 AAC 72.XXX

It is illegal to completely remove sport caught fish in the freshwaters of Southwest Alaska from the water (stream, river, lake, slough etc.) unless the fish is TO BE HARVESTED.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The removal of non-harvestable fish from the water for catch and release (to be referred as c&r henceforth) purposes. Documented c&r studies for salmonids in fresh water removed during the c&r process have a mortality increase exponentially greater than those fish not removed from the water for release (72% mortality @ 60 seconds air exposure) (Ferguson and Tufts 1992).

The common practice of hook removal as well as photographing a catch for whatever purpose has historically involved removal of the non-harvestable fish from its environment (the water). During this period, piscatorial stress hormones are released in greater quantities and O2 levels drop (Dauwalter 2014). This causes increased stress (shock) and greater recover time for the salmonid to return to it homeostatic wellbeing. The incomplete removal (lessened air exposure) of a salmonid from the water allows the fish to stay in its environment and be released while maintaining the lowest possible c&r mortality rate (Cooke and Suski 2005).

The State of Alaska has adopted a regulation for removal of non-harvestable king salmon from the water (5AAC 67.020 (1)(C)). The same regulation should be applied to all sportfish in the Southwest Alaska region.

The State of Washington has adopted a regulation for non-removal of salmon, steelhead and bull trout/ dolly varden from the water. (WAC 220.310.100).

Obviously, there is irrefutable proof that the removal of salmonids from the water for whatever purpose increases c&r mortality. This subsequently decreases population size and could allow ecosystems to become unnaturally unbalanced.

I would like to see this regulation adopted for the 2019 Southwest Alaska Regulations. I would not oppose the regulation to be adopted state wide.

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