

PROPOSAL 67

5 AAC 01.244. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan.

Expand waters closed to subsistence harvest of northern pike in the Chatanika River drainage downstream of the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area boundary, as follows:

In order to protect, restore, and promote the long term health of the pike fishery and habitat, and to prevent overfishing and rebuild the stock, several years of 3 mile protection will be required; therefore I propose that we reinstate the three mile restriction.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Board of Fisheries just reduced the new three mile closure in the overwintering area of the Chatanika River Harvest Area adopted in 2017 to one mile. Fish and Game records reflect that there are almost no pike that overwinter in that first mile, and they estimate that approximately 50% of those local fish are upstream between miles 1 and 3. The majority of the fish that are caught through the ice are the large pre-spawning egg-bearing females that need to be protected. It takes 15 to 20 years to grow a 40" pike, and all pike over 30" are female. It seems prudent to return the three mile restriction so that 50% of the stock of large females are protected. It will take several more years for the beneficial effects of the closure to be observed in the affected population. A reasonable opportunity for subsistence fishing is available year-round in the rest of the Tolovana River drainage- this is only a three mile protected overwintering area for the Minto Lakes drainage.

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