

**PROPOSAL 150**

**5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.**

Require retention of sockeye salmon caught in the Kenai River, as follows:

The Kenai River sockeye salmon fishery is catch and keep. Every sockeye salmon caught, up to the daily bag limit, must be kept. Once the bag limit is caught, the angler cannot fish on the Kenai River for the remainder of that day. There is no release of sockeye salmon regardless of where the sockeye salmon is hooked. No snagging is allowed.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Reduce the waste of sockeye salmon, from catch and release mortality, in the Kenai River. Because the Kenai River is on the road system it gets heavily fished by tens of thousands of anglers. Hundreds of thousands of sockeye salmon are caught and released. It is well known that sockeye salmon do not readily bite a fly and have to be legally snagged by a method called lining, which results in snagging in the mouth or other parts of the body. If snagged other than in the mouth, the salmon has to be released. The sockeye salmon also have to be in the river in large numbers for this lining method to be effective. It is common for anglers to spend the day catching and releasing sockeye salmon for the fun of it. When the sockeye are thick in the river it is not unheard of for an angler to catch and release forty, fifty, sixty or more sockeye in a day. These sockeye are going through an enormous amount of stress at this time because their body is chemically acclimating from leaving salt water and entering fresh water. The added stress from catch and release, especially when snagged and released with gashes, results in a high mortality or nonviable eggs because of the build up of lactic acid.

Most anglers do not know or use best practices on catch and release which compounds the mortality. This large mortality number, from allowing catch and release sockeye fishing in the Kenai River, is nothing more than legally allowing a wanton waste fishery. The released salmon often swims off only to die unseen, in the murky water. This fishing practice is not sustainable and is not being good stewards of the resource nor is it portraying to tourist the value Alaskans put on salmon for food, recreation, jobs and economic importance. The vast number of anglers spending the whole day on the river, also greatly contributes to bank erosion and habitat degradation, which jeopardizes future salmon production. There are many other systems in the Cook Inlet drainage for angler opportunity to fish, which will help relieve this unsustainable fishing pressure on the Kenai River.

**PROPOSED BY:** Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F19-101)

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