

PROPOSAL 185

5 AAC 21.310. Fishing seasons.

Open the Kasilof Section set gillnet fishery June 20 instead of June 25 provided an estimated 20,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River, as follows:

Open the Kasilof section set gillnet fishery on June 20, however if less than 20,000 fish are estimated to be in the river on any opening before June 25 than that opening shall be closed by emergency order.

5 AAC 21.310(b)(2)(C)

...

(i) Kasilof Section: from June **20** through August 15, unless closed earlier by emergency order under (iii) of this subparagraph; however if the department estimates that **fewer than 20,000 sockeye salmon are in the Kasilof River on any day before June 25 on which an opening would occur than that opening shall be closed by emergency order**; from August 11 through August 15, the fishery is open for regular periods only;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? For many years there have been issues with over escaping the Kasilof River Sockeye goal. The reduction from the current escapement goal proposed by the department will increase the difficulty of successfully meeting the range even further. The primary obstacle to managers meeting this goal has been the inherent 'mixed stock' nature of the targeted Kasilof section fisheries. Currently the Kasilof Section set gillnet fishery opens on the 25th of June with possible openings as early as the 20th dependent upon a trigger of 50,000 fish in the river. This fishing time in June is by far the most focused of the entire season, with extremely minimal impacts on any other stocks besides Kasilof Sockeye, consequently it seems evident that the easiest way to increase Kasilof harvest while minimizing impact on other stocks would be to conservatively increase fishing time very early in the season.

The current trigger of 50,000 fish has clearly been insufficient at providing enough of this early season fishing time to allow managers to maintain escapements within the desired range. The lower range of this goal is exceedingly unlikely to ever be missed due to the severe restrictions placed on fishing in July to protect both chinook and sockeye stocks in the Kenai River and the continued escapement in the upper range and in excess of the goal have harmed returns as evidenced by the department's new escapement recommendations. Harvesting surplus Kasilof salmon early in the season is beneficial from many angles. It increases value of the fishery as prices are higher, eliminates impact on other stocks present later in the season, and it reduces pressure on managers to open the Kasilof section in July when all fishing time given is highly contentious.

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