

PROPOSAL 126

5 AAC 09.350 Closed waters and 5 AAC 09.369 Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan

Amend closed waters and *Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan* to reduce commercial salmon fishing time and area in the Outer Port Heiden Section, as follows:

This proposal seeks to restrict fishing in the northern portion of the Outer Port Heiden Section. The purpose of this area restriction is to direct more commercial fishing on local Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks, particularly the Meshik River and Ilnik River stocks, that migrate within known channels. This closure will also improve fish quality because of a shorter transport from fishery to processor and also provide for the harvest of Meshik and Ilnik River sockeye salmon stocks.

The proposed line is about 1 statute mile North of North River (Reindeer Creek). The North River (Reindeer Creek) mouth can move as much as 3/8-1/2 statute mile from one year to the next and so the line proposed if adopted by the board will always have North River (Reindeer Creek) in the open area.

Substitute Language

5 AAC 09.350. Closed Waters. Salmon may not be taken in the following locations:

(3)Outer Port Heiden: waters of the Outer Port Heiden Section

(A) repealed 6/5/2016;

(B) east of a line from 57° 02.90' N. lat., 158° 37.66' W. long. to 57° 06.08' N. lat., 158°40.57' W. long.;

5 AAC 09.369. Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan

(1)The Outer Port Heiden Section is open from June 20 through July 31 to commercial salmonfishing in those waters west of a line from 57° 02.90' N. lat., 158° 37.66' W. long. to 57°06.08' N. lat., 158° 40.57' W. long.; based on the abundance of Meshik River sockeye salmon.

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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Overescapement of sockeye salmon into the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers.

Escapements into the Meshik River have exceeded the high end of the current escapement goal (86,000) 4 out of the last 5 years (2017-191,000, 2018-134,000, 2019-107,000, 2020-64,000, 2021-117,000). In the Ilnik River, sockeye salmon escapements have exceeded the high end of the current escapement goal (60,000) 4 out of the last 5 years (2017-238,000, 2018-81,000, 2019-75,000, 2020-41,000, 2021-69,000). The total escapement in 2017 was a record 238,000 sockeye salmon escaped to spawn. This escapement is nearly 4 times the upper end of the current escapement goal.

This proposal seeks to adjust the Section so that more local Northern Peninsula salmon stocks are harvested, resulting in more appropriate escapement to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers.

Note also that WAS SIP indicated that Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks contributed an average of 48% to the SW Ilnik harvest (3 years); 30% to the NE Ilnik harvest (3 years); and 21% to the Outer Port Heiden Section harvest (2 years).

Quality of delivered fish that are harvested in the Outer Port Heiden Section.

Most fishers are fishing very near the northern boundary of the Outer Port Heiden district. Delivery of these fish is delayed by the long travel distance from the point of harvest to the processor, resulting in degraded quality salmon.

Additionally, frequent very rough seas within the Outer Port Heiden Section makes it very difficult to fish and to transport fish to processor, resulting in fish being delivered that are poor quality. If nothing is done, escapements to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers will continue to exceed the upper end of their respective escapement goals. Additionally, poor quality fish will continue to be delivered to processors because of the long travel distance and time.

PROPOSED BY: Lower Bristol Bay Advisory Committee

(HQ-F22-029)
