

PROPOSAL 137

5 AAC 09.365 South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the *South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan* to reduce commercial salmon fishing time, as follows:

ONC would like to reduce the current commercial fishing period hours for all gear types during the June fishery described in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan, 5 AAC 09.365. Specifically, ONC proposes to amend section (d), to reduce total commercial fishing time to 100 hours. Alaska Peninsula is one of six Fisheries on the migratory path of CWA chum salmon; Alaska Peninsula, Bristol Bay, AK Peninsula, Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim, Yukon, Norton Sound and Arctic. Therefore, the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fisheries should have a harvest window that accounts for approximately one 6th of the total harvest window of the Commercial June fishery.

These reduced harvest hours create fishing closures that will span over a longer period of time, allowing passage of chum salmon stock through the Alaska Peninsula area and return to spawning grounds along Western Alaska. Below are our proposed fishing periods. Still, ONC is open to the Board of Fisheries decision on restructuring the fishing openers to account for reduced 100 harvest hours. All gear types and dates may be modified for the June commercial fishery.

Regulation of 5 AAC 09.365 South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan, specifically amendment to section (d):

“... (d) In the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands fisheries, the commissioner may establish, by emergency order, commercial fishing periods as follows:

[(1) FOR SET GILLNET GEAR,

(A) BEGINNING JUNE 6, COMMERCIAL FISHING PERIODS WILL BEGIN AT 6:00 A.M. AND RUN 64 HOURS UNTIL 10:00 P.M. TWO DAYS LATER; BEGINNING JUNE 10, COMMERCIAL FISHING PERIODS WILL BEGIN AT 6:00 A.M. AND RUN 88 HOURS UNTIL 10:00 P.M. THREE DAYS LATER; COMMERCIAL FISHING WILL THEN CLOSE FOR 32 HOURS AND REOPEN AT 6:00 A.M. TWO DAYS LATER;

(B) NOTWITHSTANDING (A) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, THE FINAL COMMERCIAL FISHING PERIOD WILL END AT 10:00 P.M. ON JUNE 28;]

(1) [(2)] for seine and drift gillnet gear,

(A) Beginning June 10, All daily fishing periods will be 16 hours in length, from 6:00 AM until 10:00 PM. The following fishing period will be 48 [six] hours later. After June 25th, the following fishing period will be 4 hours, not to exceed a total of 100 hours of commercial fishing.

[(A) BEGINNING JUNE 10, COMMERCIAL FISHING PERIODS WILL BEGIN AT 6:00 A.M. AND RUN 88 HOURS UNTIL 10:00 P.M. THREE DAYS LATER; COMMERCIAL FISHING WILL THEN CLOSE FOR 32 HOURS AND REOPEN AT 6:00 A.M. TWO DAYS LATER;]

(B) notwithstanding (A) of this paragraph, the final commercial fishing period will end at 10:00 p.m. on June 28.

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) is a federally recognized Tribal governing body for the Native Village of Bethel, Alaska. Bethel is located along the delta of the Kuskokwim River, approximately 90 miles inland from the Bering Sea and approximately 398 miles northwest of Anchorage. ONC serves approximately 4,500 Alaska Native residents from all villages throughout Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (YK Delta), over 3,800 of which are enrolled as Tribal members.

ONC is extremely concerned about the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of our Tribe and the YK Delta Region after experiencing the lowest chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*) return on record in 2021. Therefore, ONC would like to address the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan, 5 AAC 09.365. Specifically, ONC proposes to establish reduced fishing time for all gear types during the June fisheries in South Unimak and Shumagin Islands.

Both chum salmon and sockeye salmon (*O. nerka*) are harvested in the month of June along the south Alaska Peninsula; the sockeye salmon are predominantly Bristol Bay and Alaska Peninsula origin and the chum salmon, however, are bound for a number of areas, including the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) region. In 2021, the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June salmon commercial fishery experienced an abundant harvest of approximately 1,168,601 chum salmon¹, while subsistence users on the Kuskokwim and Yukon River approximately harvested 9,621² and 1,253³ chum salmon, respectively. This drastic difference of harvest between fisheries signifies that further protection is needed on the migratory route of Coastal Western Alaska (CWA) chum salmon to comply with the Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries, 5 AAC 39.222. Therefore, it is critical to reduce commercial fishing periods in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands, where chum salmon stock is bound for the AYK region, among many other regions.

The Kuskokwim River faced a record low return of chum salmon in 2021 and yet again is expected to face another poor return in 2022. Declining stock of salmon creates unrest and stability in our community as food security declines further. It is of utmost importance that we act right away, to protect our livelihood and allow future generations to continue harvesting salmon.

¹Regional Report No. 4K22-01 - 2021 South Peninsula Salmon Annual Management Report and 2020 Subsistence Fisheries in the Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, and Atka-Amlia Islands Management Areas

²Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Draft Preliminary Kuskokwim River Salmon Harvest Estimates 2021 Postseason Surveys

³Yukon River Salmon 2021 Season Summary and 2022 Season Outlook, Regional Information Report 3A22-01 ADF&G

PROPOSED BY: Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council (HQ-F22-019)
