PROPOSAL 70

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Allow harvest of Arctic grayling in the lower Chena River from June 1 to March 31, as follows:

Allow retention of one Arctic grayling on the lower Chena River, downstream of Moose Creek Dam (300' downstream of Chena Food control project) June 1 – March 31.

Proposed regulatory language
(c)(3)(B)(i)(ii) in the Chena River and its tributaries, including Chena Slough (Badger Slough), Arctic grayling may be taken by catch-and-release fishing only, except that a person [UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE] may retain Arctic grayling in the Chena River downstream from the Chena River flood control structure from **June 1 through March 31** [DURING A DESIGNATED YOUTH SPORT FISHERY;.THE DESIGNATED YOUTH SPORT FISHERY FOR ARCTIC GRAYLING OCCURS DURING THE EIGHT DESIGNATED YOUTH FISHING DAYS, WHICH OCCUR ON FOUR CONSECUTIVE SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS BEGINNING THE THIRD SATURDAY IN JUNE]; bag and possession limit of one fish, no size limit

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Chena River Arctic grayling fishery has been catch-and-release since 1991 (except since 2019 a youth only bag limit of 1 fish in the lower river downstream of Moose Creek dam 4 weekends each year). If nothing is changed, the restrictions will continue to deny anglers opportunity to harvest Arctic grayling in the Chena River.

The Chena River, the fishery has been catch-and-release for 30 years and the population is stable with numerous larger and older fish distributed throughout the upper drainage. While many of these large fish spawn in the lower river in May, they generally migrate upriver for the summer. A limited harvest fishery (1 fish daily bag limit, June 1 – March 31) in the lower river (below Moose Creek dam) would allow harvest on the younger (3-6 years old), smaller grayling. Larger, older (7-25 years old) Arctic grayling will be in the upper river where catchand- release fishing will continue to be allowed. This proposal would protect larger, older fish while allowing some harvest opportunity in the lower river.

A current study will describe the spring spawner abundance and their migrations upstream after spawning. The data from the study is expected to show that A) the Chena River has a healthy population of Arctic grayling and B) the older, larger fish move upstream beyond the proposed limited harvest fishery. The level of fishing effort on the Chena River for Arctic grayling has the potential to impact the abundance and size composition of the population if harvest is allowed throughout the drainage and year-round. However, this proposal will allow a sustainable harvest in the lower river during below the dam, and still preserve the current population characteristics in the upper river..

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Advisory Committee Fisheries Sub-Committee (HQ-F22-037)
****