

PROPOSAL 76

5 AAC 03.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.

Allow Kotzebue commercial salmon fishermen to leave their set gillnet gear unattended during commercial fishing periods, as follows:

5 AAC 03.XXX In the Kotzebue District a CFEC permit holder must be physically present for the initial deployment of the gear at the beginning of the commercial fishing period; present during any and all working of fishing gear and harvesting of fish from the gear; present at the end of the commercial fishing period to terminate operation of the gear. The CFEC permit holder must also be present when fish caught by that permit holder's gear are being sold to a licensed buyer. The CFEC permit holder (including crew) may leave their net and any fishing gear during the fishing period for reasons including to sell fish, acquire needed supplies or perform other duties, but the permit holder will remain responsible for their gear during any absence from the gear.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I've commercial fished for salmon in Kotzebue Sound for 47 years--starting a few years before Limited Entry came along. During those many seasons fishermen consistently and customarily let their nets (gear) to go back to their tents, camps, homes, or wherever to eat, rest, get gas, harvest food, dry meat, gather wood, work on other projects, etc. between working their gear and picking fish. This is a small fishery, and at times a "slow" salmon fishery, mostly fished by local residents, many who are related to each other and integral to the community. Recently--this past summer season--a new trooper began citing fishermen for "leaving" their nets. Fishermen were outraged and confused at why they were being ticketed for what we've basically always done, what we need to be able to do to make this fishery viable. I've talked with the ADFG area fish biologist and the above mentioned trooper who both assisted me in writing this, and also with the local Fish Board President and other fishermen and Copper River Seafoods and our other buyers, who are all in agreement that a small change would help clarify and improve this situation and bring regulations in alignment with actual practices here.

PROPOSED BY: Seth Kantner

(EF-F21-008)
