

PROPOSAL 93

5 AAC 01.275. Waters closed to subsistence fishing; 5 AAC 71.010. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Kuskokwim - Goodnews Area.

Close the Buckstock River between June 14 and September 1 to all fishing, as follows:

Close the Buckstock River upstream of a point (-159.219607, 61.342717) between June 14th and September 1st to all fishing.

The purpose of the closure is to protect spawning salmon during low flow periods (discharges below 400 cfs.) when chum salmon are present and actively spawning

5 AAC 01.275. Waters closed to subsistence fishing

(a) Repealed 4/15/81.

(b) The Goodnews River is closed to the subsistence taking of fish by nets east of a line between ADF&G regulatory markers placed near the mouth of the Ufigag River and an ADF&G regulatory marker placed near the mouth of the Tunulik River 16 hours before, during, and six hours after each open commercial salmon fishing period.

(c) The Kanektok River is closed to the subsistence taking of fish by nets upstream of ADF&G regulatory markers placed near the mouth 16 hours before, during, and six hours after each open commercial salmon fishing period.

(d) The Arolik River is closed to the subsistence taking of fish by nets upstream of ADF&G regulatory markers placed near the mouth 16 hours before, during, and six hours after each open commercial salmon fishing period.

(e) The Buckstock River is closed to subsistence fishing upstream of ADF&G regulatory marker placed near its upper most confluence with the Aniak River between June 14th and September 1st.

And;

5 AAC 71.010. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Kuskokwim - Goodnews Area.

(a) Except as otherwise specified in this section or through an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, sport fishing is permitted year round in the waters of the Kuskokwim - Goodnews Area.

(b) Except as otherwise specified in (c) of this section, the following are the general bag, possession, and size limits for finfish and shellfish in the waters of the Kuskokwim - Goodnews Area:

(3) in the Aniak River drainage,

(A) The Buckstock River is closed to fishing upstream of ADF&G regulatory marker placed near its upper most confluence with the Aniak River between June 14th and September 1st.

[(A)] (B) the bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is two fish, with an annual limit of two fish 20 inches or greater in length; an angler fishing for king salmon must possess and complete a current year's nontransferable harvest record as specified in 5 AAC 75.006;

[(B)] (C) the bag and possession limit for pink, sockeye, chum, and coho salmon is three fish, with no size limit; however, the aggregate daily bag and possession limit of all salmon species may not exceed three salmon, of which no more than two fish may be king salmon;

[(C)] (D) the bag and possession limit for Arctic char/Dolly Varden is three fish, with no size limit;

[(D)] (E) rainbow trout may not be possessed or retained; all rainbow trout must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

[(E)] (F) the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is two fish, with no size limit;

[(F)] (G) the bag and possession limit for sheefish is two fish, with no size limit;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Aniak River and its tributaries support one of the largest sport and subsistence fisheries in the Kuskokwim Area. One of its major tributaries is the Buckstock River located about 40 miles up the Aniak River. It is a popular destination for people from all over the area and the world to frequent, either on their own or through guided fishing operations. The Aniak and Buckstock Rivers supports all five species of pacific salmon and provides world class rainbow trout, and Dolly Varden fishing opportunities.

Chum salmon returns to the Aniak River are a shadow of what they were just decades ago, and recent years returns have only served to cause further concerns. Local residents have long recognized the important role the Buckstock River plays in providing spawning habitat for all salmon, but particularly for chum salmon. Local residents have made it a point to minimize disturbance of spawning fish on the Buckstock by avoiding the area during low water periods.

With increased use and the availability of small jet powered boats access to the spawning areas has become less difficult. The spawning areas are often sought out by fishermen because of the presence large numbers of rainbow trout feeding on fugitive eggs floating just downstream of actively spawning fish.

The Buckstock is intercepted by several side channels of the Aniak River in its lower reaches. At about 1.5 miles upstream of its main confluence with the Aniak the river the Buckstock River

changes dramatically. The river above this point can be characterized as; a low gradient (1-2%), highly mobile gravel bedded, clear ground water fed stream, averaging around 25 ft. in width and 0.5 – 2.0 ft. in depth at average to low flows, making it ideal spawning habitat for summer chum salmon. These stream conditions extend upstream for miles and can be accessible by small jet boat or easily waded.

Boating and even wading the Buckstock under summer low flow conditions causes' significant disturbance by displacing spawning fish and potential egg mortality in the redds as eggs are dislodged and then preyed on, or ruptured by boat pressure waves or by foot traffic.

The AC recognizes that the BOF does not make regulations regarding access or boat use, but that they can regulate the reason for accessing such a vulnerable area, i.e. to fish. Ample opportunity to fish still exists in the lower 1.5 miles of the Buckstock and the entire Aniak River drainage. By seasonally closing the upper Buckstock River the BOF would be in affect create a sanctuary area to protect spawning salmon during low water periods, something local people have been practicing, and trying to encourage for many years.

PROPOSED BY: Central Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F22-006)
