

Tanana Drainage Sport Fisheries (10 proposals)

PROPOSAL 65

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

Require retention of sport caught salmon, if removed from the water, in the Tanana River Area, as follows:

(b) Except as otherwise specified in (c) and (d) of this section, the following are the general bag, possession, and size limits and means for finfish in the waters of the Tanana River Area:

(1) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length: the bag and possession limit is one fish, **as follows; (A) in all waters, a king salmon that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person that originally hooked the fish; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;**

(2) salmon, other than king salmon: the bag and possession limit is three fish, with no size limit **as follows;**

(A) in all waters, a salmon, including a king salmon as specified in (1)(A) of this subsection, that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person that originally hooked the fish; a person may not remove a salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? During the past several years, runs of Chinook, coho, and chum salmon throughout the Yukon and Tanana drainages have not met escapement goals, resulting in subsistence and sport fishing closures. The sport fishing community that enjoys fishing for salmon species for food and recreation, and also enjoys catching other fish species such as Arctic grayling that benefit from the marine-derived nutrients provided by healthy salmon runs, wishes to contribute towards minimizing stress and mortality of salmon species that can be caused through catch-and-release angling. Scientific studies have shown that removing fish from the water, thereby depriving them of oxygen, is the main cause of catch-and-release stress and mortality. Therefore, it is proposed that regulations be adopted throughout the Tanana drainage in which anglers may not remove a salmon from the water if they are not retaining it as part of their bag limit. Similar regulations are in place in the Susitna River drainage of Southcentral Alaska for Chinook and coho salmon, with the goal to minimize catch-and-release stress on these popular and important food fishes. If this regulation is adopted, sport fishermen can do their part to facilitate the rehabilitation of salmon stocks in the Yukon and Tanana River drainages. This will help ensure that subsistence fishers regain food security associated with catching salmon, and will enhance opportunities for sport fishers to catch salmon into the future, for sustenance and for recreation.

PROPOSED BY: Midnight Sun Fly Casters

(HQ-F22-001)

PROPOSAL 66

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

Allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike in Harding Lake, as follows:

Allow catch and release fishing for Northern Pike in Harding Lake.

Proposed regulatory language

(c)(13)(A) in Harding Lake, northern pike may be taken by catch-and-release fishing only [SPORT FISHING FOR NORTHERN PIKE IS CLOSED].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Sportfishing for northern pike is closed in Harding Lake. If nothing is changed, the restrictions will continue to deny anglers opportunity to catch-and-release northern pike in Harding Lake.

Sportfishing for northern Pike (*Esox Lucius*) has been closed to fishing since 2000 due to declining abundance during the 1990s. These restrictions did not lead to an increase in abundance of northern pike. Northern pike abundance in Harding Lake is a function of available spawning and rearing habitat, and the population abundance reaches equilibrium (carrying capacity) at each water level. The water level in Harding Lake is nearly 4 feet higher than in 2012 and there have been substantial increases in spawning and rearing habitat. Recent surveys of northern pike population indicate recruitment of young northern pike has increased. A catch-and-release fishery will be sustainable at all lake levels.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Advisory Committee Fisheries Sub-Committee (HQ-F22-036)

PROPOSAL 67

5 AAC 74.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish

Prohibit retention of northern pike caught on set lines in the Tanana River drainage, as follows:

(c) A spear or bow and arrow may be used to take suckers and burbot. Unless prohibited in 5 AAC 74.010, northern pike and whitefish, except sheefish, may be speared by a person who is completely submerged at any time, and, from September 1 through April 30, may be taken by spear or bow and arrow.

(d) Retention of pike caught on set lines is prohibited in lakes and flowing waters of the Tanana River drainage.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Confusion has arisen among anglers in the Tanana River drainage as to whether northern pike caught on set lines may be targeted and/or retained. Multiple in-person and social media arguments and discussion in the last several years observed by members of the Midnight Sun Fly Casters have illuminated that the regulations booklet does not clearly state whether pike caught on burbot setlines may be retained. When members of the Midnight Sun Fly Casters have discussed the specifics and the intent of regulations for set lines with officials, Alaska State Troopers and Fisheries Management Biologists have indicated that pike cannot be targeted and retained, as this gear type is intended only for capture of burbot. The ambiguity in the regulations has led to multiple observations of anglers retaining pike caught on set lines, because they were unable to interpret the regulations. Therefore, we propose a clearer statement be included in the regulations that will minimize angler confusion and honor the intent of set line regulations, so that northern pike are not targeted/retained and their populations are not depleted to the detriment of other sport anglers.

PROPOSED BY: Midnight Sun Fly Casters

(HQ-F22-003)

PROPOSAL 68

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

Repeal setline prohibition and bag and possession limit for burbot in T Lake, as follows:

5 AAC 74.010 (22) is amended to read:

(22) **repealed** //. [IN “T” LAKE, THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR BURBOT IS TWO FISH, WITH NO SIZE LIMIT;]

5 AAC 74.010 (d)(1)(F) is amended to read:

(d)(1)(F) **repealed** //. [“T” LAKE; AND;]

5 AAC 74.010(d)(17) is amended to read:

(d)(17) **repealed** //. [IN “T” LAKE, THE USE OF SET LINES IS PROHIBITED;]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current regulation for burbot in T lake is two fish with no size limit and is unnecessarily restrictive compared to the more accessible lakes for burbot that receive higher pressure and are less restrictive. Changing the regulations to the general regulations of 5 fish per day, no size limit, and use of setlines would reduce regulatory complexity. T Lake is a remote lake only accessible by light aircraft and fishing generally occurs for northern pike.

PROPOSED BY: Upper Tanana Fortymile Advisory Committee

(HQ-F21-002)

PROPOSAL 69

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

Restrict the sport fishing season for Arctic grayling in the lower Chena River, as follows:

(3) in the Chena River and its tributaries, including Chena Slough (Badger Slough),

(C) Sport Fishing for arctic grayling, in the Chena River and its tributaries, including Chena Slough (Badger Slough), downstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located 300 feet downstream from the Chena River flood control structure, is closed from April 1 through May 15.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? With the increased population growth in the Fairbanks and North Pole areas stemming from the military expansions of Fort

Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base, there has been increase and pronounced early-season sportfishing pressure on Arctic Grayling in the lower Chena River and its tributaries, including Chena Slough (Badger Slough). This is, in large part, due to these being the first and only ice-free waters in the regions during this time of year.

Over the past 25 years of fishing these waters, I have notice more anglers using treble hooks (although illegal), and increasingly poor landing and releasing technique with arctic grayling. This has resulted in my witnessing scores of injured, mangled and dead arctic grayling while fishing on the lower Chena River and its tributaries, including Chena Slough (Badger Slough) during late-April and early-May each year. Very often, my UAF sportfishing classes have been witness to these conditions as well.

Although these waters are regulated as Catch-and-Release for arctic grayling, if a limited closure is not instituted during the time the arctic grayling are preparing to spawn, and until other Interior waters are ice-free, this population will be at high risk for future sustainability.

PROPOSED BY: Shann Paul Jones (EF-F21-011)

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 catch-and-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)

PROPOSAL 71

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

Remove the size limit for lake trout in Fielding Lake, as follows:

In Fielding Lake, allow retention of one lake trout of any size.

Proposed regulatory language

(c)(9)(B) in Fielding Lake, lake trout may be taken only from October 1 through August 31, with a bag and possession limit of one fish [, WHICH MUST BE 26 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH; ALL LAKE TROUT CAUGHT THAT ARE LESS THAN 26 INCHES IN LENGTH MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In Fielding Lake, the current regulation allows harvest of 1 lake trout over 26 inches in total length. If nothing is changed, the restrictions will continue to deny anglers opportunity to harvest lake trout less than 26 inches.

The length limit concentrates fishing on the oldest and largest fish, which reduces the number of bigger fish available to anglers, prevents anglers from retaining a “foul-hooked” fish, and denies anglers the opportunity to choose the size of lake trout to harvest. Many anglers have stated that they would like to keep a dinner sized lake trout (14-20 inches), rather than a lake trout >26 inches.

Based on staff comments presented in 2019, ADF&G stated that the 26-in length limit results in a sustainable yield of 78 fish. Based on the department’s angler surveys, harvest have been well below this level. Removal of the length limit would allow a total annual harvest or yield of 202 lake trout. The length limit is unnecessarily restrictive. Similar removals of the length limit did not

increased harvests in the Copper River lakes such as Paxson, Summit, Louise, Crosswind, and Susitna Lake.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Advisory Committee Fisheries Sub-Committee (HQ-F22-038)

PROPOSAL 72

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

Allow for catch-and-release fishing in Bathing Beauty Pond, Bear Lake, Moose Lake, Polaris Lake, Piledriver Slough, and Moose Creek, as follows:

5 AAC 74.010(c)(17) is amended to read:

(17) in Piledriver Slough and its tributaries **and in the Moose Creek drainage, finfish species** [UPSTREAM FROM ITS CONFLUENCE WITH MOOSE CREEK, ARCTIC GRAYLING] may be taken by catch-and-release fishing only;

5 AAC 74.010(c) is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

(33) in Bathing Beauty Pond, Bear Lake, Moose Lake, and Polaris Lake, finfish species may be taken by catch-and-release fishing only;

5 AAC 74.010(d)(13) is amended to read:

(d) In the Tanana River Management Area, the following special provisions to methods and means apply:

...

(13) in Piledriver Slough **and in the Moose Creek drainage** [UPSTREAM OF ITS CONFLUENCE WITH MOOSE CREEK], only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2019, the board provided the department emergency order authority to restrict stocked waters to catch-and-release fishing when potentially unsafe levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) were detected in the water or fish tissue. Bathing Beauty Pond, Bear Lake, Moose Lake, Polaris Lake, Piledriver Slough, and Moose Creek are within or immediately adjacent to ground water plumes contaminated with PFAS, and this contamination will likely persist for an extended period. This proposal modifies the bag and possession limits for these lakes to catch-and-release only out of an abundance of caution.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-056)

PROPOSAL 73

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

Update the Tanana River Area stocked waters regulations, as follows:

5 AAC 74.010 (c)(29) is amended to read:

(c) The following are the exceptions to the general bag, possession, and size limits, and fishing seasons specified in (a) and (b) of this section for the Tanana River Area:

...

(29) in stocked waters, the bag, possession, and size limit for rainbow trout, Arctic char/Dolly Varden, landlocked salmon, Arctic grayling, and **lake trout** is 10 of all stocked species combined, of which no more than **two fish may be lake trout and only one of the 10** fish may be 18 inches or greater in length; for the purposes of this paragraph, "stocked waters" include Backdown Lake, Ballaine Lake, [BATHING BEAUTY POND, BEAR LAKE (EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE)], Big "D" Pond, Birch Lake, Bluff Cabin Lake, Bolio Lake, Brodie Lake, Bullwinkle Lake, [CATHERS LAKE], Chena Lake, Chet Lake, CHSR 25.0 Mile Pit, CHSR 30.0 Mile Pit, CHSR 45.5 Mile Pit, CHSR 47.9 Mile Pit, CHSR 56.0 Mile Pit, Coal Mine Road #5, Craig Lake, Cushman Lake, Dick's Pond, Doc Lake, Donna Lake, Donnelly Lake, Dune Lake, Forrest Lake, Four Mile Lake, Fourteen Mile Lake, Geskakmina Lake, Ghost Lake, Grayling Lake (Eielson Air Force Base), Hidden Lake (Eielson Air Force Base), Hidden Lake (Tetlin NWR), **Horseshoe Lake**, "J" Lake, Jan Lake, Johnson Pit #2, Kenna Lake, Ken's Pond, Koole Lake, Last Lake, Lisa Lake, Little Donna Lake, Little Harding, Little Lost Lake, Lost Lake, Lundgren Pond, Manchu Lake, Mark Lake, Monte Lake, Monterey Lake, [MOOSE LAKE (EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE)], Mosquito Creek Lake, Mullins Pit, Nenana City Pond, Nickel Lake, Nordale #2, North Chena Pond, North Pole Pond, North Twin Lake, Olnes Pond, Otto Lake, Parks 261 Pond, **Parks 285 Pond**, Paul's Pond, [POLARIS LAKE], **Pyrite Pond**, Quartz Lake, Rangeview Lake, Rapids Lake, Richardson Hwy. 28 Mile Pit, Richardson Hwy. 31 Mile Pit, Richardson Hwy. 81 Mile Pit, **Sansing Pond**, Shaw Pond, Sheefish Lake, Sirlin Drive Pond, South Twin Lake, [STEESE HWY. 28.8 MILE PIT], Steese Hwy. 29.5 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 31.6 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 33.5 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 34.6 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 35.8 Mile Pit, Steese Hwy. 36.6 Mile Pit, Stringer Rd. Pond, Triangle Lake, Wainwright #6, **Weigh Station #1, Weigh Station #2**, Weasel Lake, West Iksgiza Lake, Z Pit (Chena Floodway);

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In conjunction with the Alaska Board of Fisheries cycle, the department reviews the stocked waters in each management area. Stocked waters are removed from the stocking plan and corresponding regulations due to a loss of public access, poor fish growth or survival, insufficient fishing effort, or contamination. In 2020 lake trout were added back into the stocking plan and this proposal includes that species in the bag, possession, and size limit. As new waters are identified, and stocked fish species are added and included in the stocking plan they are added to the regulations. The proposed language will update the Tanana River Area stocked waters regulations.

PROPOSAL 74

5 AAC 74.065. Tanana River Area Stocked Waters Management Plan

Update the Tanana River Area Stocked Waters Management Plan, as follows:

5 AAC 74.065 is amended to read:

(d) Regional management approach. Under the regional management approach, stocked waters will be managed so that there will be a reasonable expectation of high catch rates and harvesting a daily bag limit. The bag and possession limit is 10 fish in combination of all stocked species, **of which only two fish may be lake trout**, and only one of those **10 fish in combination**, [FISH] may be 18 inches or greater in length. The fishing season is open year round and bait may be used.

(e) Conservative management approach. Under the conservative management approach, stocked waters will be managed so that there will be a reasonable expectation to catch a daily bag limit with a reasonable chance of catching fish 18 inches or greater in length. The bag and possession limit is five fish in combination of all stocked species, **of which only two fish may be lake trout**, and only one of those **five fish in combination**, [FISH] may be 18 inches or greater in length. The fishing season is open year round and bait may be used.

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2020 the department added lake trout into the stocking program. Under current regulations for stocked waters lake trout are not included. Under the Regional management approach, which is the least restrictive of the management approaches, the regulations are 10 fish in combination of all stocked species only one of which may be 18 inches or greater in length. The Conservative management approach is the moderately restrictive management approach, and the regulations are five fish in combination of all stocked species only one of which may be 18 inches or greater in length. To remain consistent with general regulations for lake trout in the Tanana Management Area, it is recommended that the stocked lake trout be added to the “stocked species” designation and have a bag and possession limit of two fish.
