

PROPOSAL 105

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Allow a 600-foot set gillnet commercial fishery when the Upper Subdistrict would be closed to conserve Kenai River late-run king salmon as follows:

My solution is to open the set net fishery within 600 feet of the mean high tide line, 2 days a week during large king salmon, Kenai River fishery closures. This would allow for a significant amount of Kasilof and Kenai River sockeye to be harvested with very little harvest of king salmon, while helping to prevent the massive over escapement we have experienced the last few fishing seasons. Periods would be restricted to one (29" mesh net) per permit, to further insure very few king salmon would be harvested.

Draft Language:

5AAC 21.359. (d) (3) - the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District will be open on Monday and Thursday from 7am - 7pm within 600 feet of the mean high tide line. Fishing is restricted to one (29" mesh net) not to exceed 210 feet in length, per permit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? If the late run Kenai River king salmon fishery is closed because the escapement goal is projected not to be met, current law pairs that restriction to a complete shutdown of the east side set net fishery. Not only does that cause grave economic harm to the set net user group, but it inevitably causes sockeye escapement goals to be grossly exceeded. In the 2022 season, for example, the Kasilof River escapement reached 971,604 sockeyes. The maximum biological escapement goal is 320,000 fish. We exceeded the maximum goal by 650, 604 fish. On the Kenai River we exceeded the maximum escapement goal in the year 2021 by 1,000,000 fish. It has been shown time and time again without some fishing effort by the set net user group, that the sockeye escapement goals will be exceeded. The drift fishery, the dip net fishery, and the in-river anglers cannot harvest enough fish to prevent this problem. Studies have shown that repeatedly exceeding escapement goals over time will inevitably diminish future returns. The sustainability of future sockeye returns are in jeopardy, which will create just another fishery disaster unless reasonable changes are made.

PROPOSED BY: Philip Sheridan

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