

## **PROPOSAL 137**

### **5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.**

Increase waters closed to commercial fishing in Upper Cook Inlet as follows:

Closed Waters:

(c) Northern District

(1) within one statute mile of the terminus of the following salmon streams:

(A) Swanson Creek

(B) Bishop Creek

(C) Three-mile Creek

(D) Chuit River

(E) Nikolai Creek

(F) McArthur River

**(G) Susitna River**

**(H) Little Susitna River**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In Upper Cook Inlet most significant salmon streams with established salmon spawning escapement goals have 1-mile radius or larger commercial fishing closed water areas near the drainage terminus at saltwater. This provides a protected zone where salmon may be bunching up as they explore the freshwater / saltwater mixing zone or make the osmoregulatory change from the saltwater to freshwater environment. Avoiding excessive harvests near stream mouth terminus areas is a strategy that may allow all user groups to fish throughout an entire season (and sometimes for multiple species) uninterrupted by inseason restrictions or closures.

In Upper Cook Inlet's Northern District (the end of the harvest gauntlet) two significant salmon stream terminus areas lack these standard 1-mile radius commercial closure areas. Susitna River drainage and Little Susitna River each support populations of 5 species of salmon. Each river has a long history of emergency inseason restrictions to both saltwater and freshwater user groups in efforts to attain different salmon escapement goals. Even with emergency restrictions and closures each river also has a history of failing to attain salmon spawning escapement goals. Therefore, consistent with the purpose of the Northern District Salmon Management Plan, we request the board add Susitna River and Little Susitna River to the regulatory list of Northern District salmon streams with one statutory mile commercial closed waters from their terminus. **Note:** Both Susitna River and Little Susitna River support much higher levels of inriver users than all other streams on the current Northern District list.

At the Susitna River terminus we are unaware of current commercial fishing — providing an opportune time to make this change. There are currently registered setnet sites within one mile of the Little Susitna River terminus.

**PROPOSED BY:** Matanuska Valley Advisory Committee

(EF-F23-133)

\*\*\*\*\*