

PROPOSAL 141

5 AAC 21.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.

Restrict set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict as follows:

Direct or incentivize use of 29” rather than 45” gillnets in the east side set net fishery even when not operating under paired restrictions with the following addition under 5 AAC 21.331 *Gillnet Specifications and operations*:

(d) A set gillnet may not be more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. South of the latitude of Anchor Point, 30 fathoms of seine webbing may be used on shore between high and low water levels. A person may not operate more than four set gillnets with more than 105 fathoms of set gillnet in aggregate, except that

(2) In the Upper Subdistrict, a CFEC permit holder shall be restricted to up to four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length, 105 fathoms in aggregate length and 29 meshes in depth, or two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. [REPEALED 6/11/2005.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current regulations do not provide adequate protection for harvest of Kenai late-run king salmon in the east side set gillnet fishery in the event that numbers recover enough to get out of paired restrictions. We are currently in an extended period of low king productivity and are likely to continue to be challenged by low abundance even if we are not under paired restrictions. Without additional management tools, more-normal management is likely to fish us back into paired restrictions in the course of a season under reduced king

Paired restrictions are identified in the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan as a conservation measure during periods of low abundance. The plan incentivizes use of shallow nets as a conservation measure during periods of low king abundance. The regulation allows for 4 nets if 29” but only 2 nets if 45” (or 2 @ 29” vs. 1 at 45”). However, current regulations do not allow for ADF&G to limit set gillnets to shorter depths during normal fisheries when paired restrictions are not in effect and the fishery is governed by the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan. Under normal circumstances a set gillnet in the Central District commercial fishery may be up to 45 meshes in depth.

Use of shallow nets needs to be extended under normal circumstances when paired restrictions are not in effect. Use of shallow set gillnets will increase the opportunity of the commercial setnet fishery to harvest abundant sockeye while reducing harvest of king salmon. Shallow nets are more selective for harvest of sockeye than kings because kings often travel deeper in the water column.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association

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