

PROPOSAL 15

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Extend the area open to hatchery king salmon on the Ninilchik River as follows:

Upstream from the ADF&G markers:

- Closed year-round to all salmon fishing, **Except the area from the ADFG 2 mile markers to 200’ below the ADF&G weir from June 16-July 15 for hatchery King Salmon only.**
- November 1-July 31: Closed to all fishing in flowing waters, **Except the area from the ADFG 2-mile markers to 200’ below the ADF&G weir from June 16-July 15 for hatchery King Salmon only.**
- August 1-October 31: open to sport fishing, **including hatchery king salmon**, except for **all other** salmon, August 1-October 31 upstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream from the mouth species except salmon.
- only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used (ii) from [August 1] **June 16-** October 31, **above the ADF&G 2 mile marker year-round**
- All other species (except salmon): Follow the General Regulations on pages 66 and 67.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? After the normal king salmon fishery closure (3rd open weekend), the Ninilchik River opens to 24/7 fishing of salmon with retention of hatchery king salmon permitted. Unfortunately, there is a “zone” from the ADF&G 2 mile marker up to the ADF&G weir where king salmon “hang out” not migrating up to the weir. This area is about 1 ¾ miles long. Once at the weir, hatchery fish are killed to deter spawning and wild fish are harvested for hatchery (smolt) production. In this zone some hatchery fish are able to spawn, which is not ideal. Additionally, some wild fish “hang out” not making the move up the weir for utilization for row and smelt needs. Opening this area for the period of June 16-July 15 to fishing and retention on hatchery king salmon only would offer many benefits with very few consequences. The fishing pressure in this area would allow more harvest of hatchery fish for Alaskan dinner tables vs the killing of them at the weir with donation to dog mushers. Additionally, it would also help ADF&G with their goal of minimizing the number of hatchery fish spawning anywhere in the Ninilchik River. Furthermore, wild fish in this area would be encouraged to move up the ADF&G weir for smelt and row collection. The only downside of this regulatory change would be wild fish mortality due to catch and release. This would be minimized and negligible by this area continuing to be only one, unbaited, single-hook artificial lure or fly. Any risk/benefit analysis of this regulatory change leans heavily in favor to the positivity of the fishery.

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