

**PROPOSAL 177**

**5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan and 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.**

Modify Kenai River coho salmon season and bag limits as follows:

**Southcentral Alaska 2022 Sport Fishing Reg. Booklet Pg.51**

**Coho (Silver) Salmon**

**July 1 - November 30:**

2 per day, 2 in possession. The limits for coho (silver) salmon in combination with sockeye or chum salmon. For example, you may have 1 sockeye or chum and 2 coho per day (or 2 sockeye or chum and 1 coho) -not 3 sockeye or chum and 2 coho per day.

Delete [ SEPTEMBER 1-NOVEMBER 30

3 PER DAY, 6 IN POSSESSION IN COMBINATION (ALL 3 MAY BE COHO PER DAY]

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** I am proposing to keep the limit of coho salmon in the Kenai River at 2 throughout the entire season instead of raising it to 3 after September 1. Since the decline in king salmon fishing opportunity there has been more pressure on the coho fishery. We have witnessed marginal to low returns of coho over the last several years but the department keeps refusing to keep the limit at 2 fish after September 1 despite requests from fishermen to do so. When the run is weak, especially in the late run, many fishermen move their effort to the spawning areas in the middle river to enhance their chances for success. When these spawning holes are hit day after day late into the season one has to wonder how many fish are left for reproduction. We no longer enumerate coho in the Kenai and management relies strictly on anecdotal information from anglers to gauge the run strengths, but even when they are told that fishing is poor they still refuse to issue an emergency order keeping the limit at 2 fish instead of 3 that's allowed in the regulations. When we chose not to enumerate a certain species that receives heavy fishing pressure it is better to err on the side of conservation. Most anglers I know would support a 2 fish limit if it helps perpetuate this species and lends itself to more future sustainability of coho salmon in the Kenai.

What would happen if nothing is changed: The growing pressure on the Kenai River coho will continue to take its toll on the amount of spawning fish necessary for future sustainability. Future declining stocks could be inevitable if we do not take some measures to reduce harvest potential on these stocks.

What are other solutions you considered: Go back to enumerating coho on the Kenai River. This resource is too important to keep shooting in the dark on proper management decisions necessary to protect this species.

**PROPOSED BY:** Dwight Kramer

(HQ-F23-055)

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