

PROPOSAL 180

5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Close waters of the Kenai River from the Sterling Highway Bridge to Kenai Lake to sport fishing as follows:

Amend 5 AAC 57.123 (9) to read as follows:

5 AAC 57.123 Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

...

(9) the following waters of the Upper Section are closed to sport fishing as follows:

(A) from May 1 -June 10, all flowing waters of the Upper Section;

(B) from May 1 - June 10, and from September 15 - October 31, the Quartz Creek drainage upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge, including Devils Creek, Johns Creek, Jerome Creek, Summit Creek, slate Creek, and the South Fork of the Snow River.

C) from January 1 – April 1 within one quarter mile of Kenai Lake outlet downstream to the Sterling Highway Bridge located at approximately mile 53 of the Sterling Highway.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Increased angler pressure during winter months on coho salmon spawning areas on the Upper Kenai River.

The Upper Kenai River from the outlet of Kenai Lake downstream to the Sterling Highway bridge located at mile 53 of the Sterling Highway is a highly utilized spawning area for coho salmon. The Upper Kenai River lacks much study and data regarding coho populations, as the breadth of the published research and datasets regarding coho populations focuses on the Lower Kenai River and Moose River (Massengill 2006- ADFG Fishery Data Series No. 08-21, Massengill 2007- ADFG Fishery Data Series No. 13-42). However, late run coho salmon can be observed staging and spawning in the area throughout the winter months.

With limited angling opportunity during winter months, and anglers aware that spawning coho salmon on the Upper Kenai River in Cooper Landing are available as “bycatch” while sport fishing for resident species. Angler pressure has increased exponentially during winter months when spawning coho salmon are most vulnerable and the Upper Kenai River is easily accessible.

At current levels of limited law enforcement resources citations have been issued in this fishery within the Cooper Landing area.

If the increased angling pressure and bycatch on sensitive spawning coho salmon populations in this area remains unchecked, the result could be lower smolt abundance, diminished coho salmon returns, and ultimately reduced harvest opportunity for all users.

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-044)
