

**PROPOSAL 230**

**5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.**

Increase the open season of the Susitna River dipnet fishery as follows:

(h) salmon may be taken by dipnet in the Susitna River only as follows:

July 10 – July 31: Open to fishing only on Wednesdays, and Saturdays from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., **and from August 20 - September 30: open to fishing Wednesdays and Saturdays days per week from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Many people focus a significant portion of their annual food gathering activities around the moose hunting season, yet moose populations fluctuate, abundances of game may be in other locations, and sometimes only illegal moose may be spotted, so it is beneficial to have a additional food gathering opportunities available. Although the largest abundances of salmon have already passed through the lower Susitna River personal use fishery area, there are still some salmon migrating through this area late into moose season- I know because I've seen them squirting through shallower spots below Alexander Creek and have seen seals in the river (presumably hunting salmon).

While on moose hunting trips, I've unsuccessfully attempted to catch salmon with sport fishing gear in Alexander and Anderson Creek, and would like an opportunity to see if food gathering would be successful using a dip net in the lower Susitna River Personal Use fishing area during the moose season. Evidently there is a harvestable surplus, at this time of year, since the Northern District set net fishery is allowed to fish with their maximum of 3 nets during the late season, and their season generally runs all the way through September, until closed by emergency order (issued end of September / early October). Because this proposed personal use harvest opportunity would occur at the end of the salmon runs, if a shortage of salmon were to occur, it should have already been identified by the upstream weirs in the Susitna River Drainage —and an emergency order could be issued to adjust or close the personal use fishery (just like the commercial fishery) if necessary. This fishery would occur so late in the season I anticipate both effort and harvest would be modest, at best. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for several years monitored salmon abundances with fish wheels in and near the current Lower Susitna River personal use area — I do not know their dates of fish wheel operation, but suspect by August 20, wheels may have already been removed, because of declining salmon passage numbers. If so, this would further support anticipated modest or low salmon harvest. At the same time, to cabin owners and Alaska residents hunting along the river, an alternative food gathering opportunity could be significant in providing either a few quality meals, or perhaps, even an additional level of food security for the approaching winter — and especially so for those who do not harvest a moose.

An additional benefit of this fishery is an extra data point for the Department of Fish and Game regarding late season salmon movement in the Susitna River. When combined with the CPUE data from the July fishery, this will give the department extremely low cost information about the Susitna River drainage during a time that has seen relatively little study.

**PROPOSED BY:** Paul Warta

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