

PROPOSAL 237

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Allow bow and spear as legal gear for northern pike and Alaska blackfish year round in the Palmer-Wasilla Zone, as follows:

Amend the Palmer-Wasilla Zone Flowing Waters so that the open season is June 15-April 14, but that bow-fishing and spearing is allowed for Northern Pike and Alaskan Blackfish year round, including the currently closed time, following all current regulations pertaining to bow-fishing.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Invasive Northern Pike and Alaska Blackfish have been found and documented in various waters in the Knik Arm and Susitna River drainages, several of which fall in the "Palmer-Wasilla Zone Flowing Waters" management area. This management area is open to fishing June 15 - April 14, which excludes the spawning season for Rainbow trout, as well as that of Northern Pike. This denies an excellent opportunity for harvesting Northern pike with a bow-fishing setup when they are in shallow waters for the spring spawn when tend to allow people to approach more closely.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta

(EF-F23-002)

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Boats with big motors cause excessive erosion on the Little Susitna River, and this is a major fish habitat issue. There are motor size restrictions on other fisheries in the State, most notably the Kenai River.

I am a bank fisherman. I fish the Little Susitna at the Burma campground a lot, so I know the river well. Over the last 10 years I have averaged fishing there 46 times and averaged fishing 195 hours per year in that river!

There is a cute informational sign on the walking path just down the trail from the main parking lot by the boat launch. This sign informs bank fishermen to be careful while fishing along the bank of the river, so that we do not cause bank erosion to critical salmon spawning habitat. I now laugh at this sign when I see it because I have watched over the years how much erosion every motorized watercraft causes every day of the fishing season. It is not the few bank fishermen who are causing the majority of the habitat erosion on this river, it is the boats!

There are many types of watercraft used on the Little Susitna River. I have seen everything from jet skis to Air Boats. The most common types of boats are flat river boats with 100 (approximate) horsepower motors. But there are also bigger boats with larger motors. The worst boats, for erosion of fish habitat, are the small jet boats with inboard motors in excess of 200 horsepower. The wake and erosion that these larger, faster, more powerful boats create is excessive. The wake size and erosion is better appreciated when you are standing in the water as the boats pass you.

I do not use a boat to sport fish, and I do not profess to be an expert on boat and motor size. I just feel strongly that there needs to be an established limit on motor size on the Little Susitna River. We have restrictions like this on other lakes and rivers across the State. A few years ago the Board of Fish approved a proposal to limit the use of 2-stroke motors on the Little Susitna River. It is time to address motor size for this popular boat dominated fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page (EF-F23-068)

PROPOSAL 239

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area

Establish a large king salmon escapement goal for the Little Susitna River as follows:

The weir is in place, and we have the technology, so we need to start differentiating between large king salmon and jacks. Do not count jacks as part of the escapement goal. Even if ADF&G continues to count all kings at the weir start differentiating between larger kings and jacks.

Additionally, I would like to see a change in regulations to address the “jack” issue on the Little Susitna River. Perhaps allow retention of jacks under 20 inches at all times even when fishing or retention is closed by emergency order.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? My issue is that all king salmon are currently being counted at the ADF&G operated weir. I would like the Board to adopt a large fish Little Susitna River king salmon spawning escapement goal.

Amend the Little Susitna River king salmon management plan to differentiate between large kings and smaller jacks. The Little Susitna River currently has a “jack” problem, and it is affecting future returns.

This is what is written on the Departments web site when you look at fish counts for the Little Susitna River:

“ADF&G operates a weir that is located at river mile 32.5, approximately 4 miles upstream of the public use facility off Point MacKenzie Rd. Escapement is primarily monitored using a resistance board weir. An underwater video system is installed within the weir and motion-detected fish passage is recorded during nighttime hours and at times when the river is heavily glaciated.”

For many years the escapement goal has been between 2,100 4,300 king salmon. Currently every king salmon that passes through the weir is counted (when water conditions permit).

I believe that there is a problem of too many smaller (jack) kings returning annually on the Little Susitna River. Over the past 10 years I have averaged 21 fishing days, 75 hours, and 53 kings caught per year on the Little Susitna River. These data are based on the arbitrary size that jacks are chinook salmon that are under 20 inches in length. Nearly all of these smaller jacks are male. The female component of a king salmon run consists almost entirely of older age-class “large” fish.

Of my 532 kings caught in that 10 year period, 224 or 42% were under twenty inches in length, and they are what we commonly call “Jacks”. I realize that my sample size is small, but I realistically believe that at least one in three or 33% of king salmon returning to the Little Susitna River are undersized jacks! This also implies that only 33% of the counted spawning run are large females.

ADF&G counts large fish on other fisheries in the State. Recent technology like the underwater video system and motion-detected fish passage for recording during nighttime hours are currently used on the Little Susitna River Weir. Technicians can differentiate between species even when multiple species are in the weir at the same time. Why would managers not want to use this technology to differentiate between large king salmon and the smaller jacks? Why would managers not want to count only larger fish?

I believe that the Little Susitna River has a jack problem, and that ADF&G needs to address this issue. If jacks are viable and they contribute to the spawn, is that what we want? Do eggs fertilized by jacks produce more jacks for future runs. Is there such a thing as too many jacks? Even if ADF&G continues to count all kings at the weir would it not be better to know how many of those kings were jacks?

Is 20 inches really the measurement that differentiates between two year old fish and three year old fish? I catch a lot of kings on the Little Susitna River between 15-24 inches in length.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Page

(EF-F23-069)

PROPOSAL 240

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Increase the number of days bait is allowed in the Little Susitna River drainage as follows:

Change the dates October 1- August 5th to October 1- July 13th so it would read as

(B) from October 1- July 13th in the flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used.

This would be bring the dates into line with other rivers in the Upper Cook Inlet fishery

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? the bag and possession limit for coho salmon in the Knik Arm drainage (including the Little Susitna River)

Bait / lures Specifically for Little Susitna River under 5 AAC. 60.122

(9) in the Little Susitna River drainage'

(B)from October 1- August 5, in the flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Suprak

(EF-F23-111)

PROPOSAL 241

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area

Allow use of bait in the Little Susitna River sport fishery based on location of commercial fishery openings as follows:

Each day salmon are allowed to be harvested commercially within one statute mile of the terminus / channel of Little Susitna River as measured at mean lower low water— the use of bait shall be allowed in the Little Susitna River sport fishery up to the Parks Highway bridge, and (matching the commercial limit) the sport bag and possession limits shall allow harvest of coho, sockeye, king, chum, and pink salmon without limit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Declining numbers of sockeye, king, and coho salmon returning Little Susitna River since 2000 in combination with

regulation allowing commercial salmon harvest within one mile of the Little Susitna River mouth/tide gut is the issue.

I believe this issue has contributed to reduced inriver salmon harvest opportunities and restrictions on what has been one of the most significant coho, sockeye, and king salmon sport fisheries in the Mat-Su Valley. In addition, the most commercially harvested salmon from Susitna Flats statistical area (where Little Susitna River flows into Knik Arm) is coho. According to Northern District Salmon Management Plan intent: the commercial fishery should be managed to “minimize” harvest of coho salmon.

In Upper Cook Inlet commercial fishing is normally closed within one mile of many salmon producing streams. I believe such regulation allows more consistent salmon migration into freshwater streams throughout their entire salmon run.

Through the first week of August Little Susitna River coho salmon appear to stage, for an extended period of time, in the intertidal zone before continuing their migration upstream. This behavior may be why large Susitna Flats commercial coho salmon harvests consistently occur during the last week of July and first week of August. These large commercial harvests (if occurring within one mile of the Little Susitna River mouth) would appear to “maximize” rather than “minimize” commercial coho salmon harvest, and occur at the same time the sport fishery is restricted to artificial lures (through August 6). Coho salmon escapement through Little Susitna River weir and coho salmon harvest from the inriver sport fishery is modest, at best, during this portion of the season.

Even if commercial fishing were to be closed within one mile of the Little Susitna River mouth / tidal gut: 1. I believe significant commercial salmon harvests (including coho salmon harvest) could continue. 2. Higher salmon escapements through the weir and earlier in the season would likely occur - thereby decreasing the chance of inseason restriction or closure for all users. 3. I believe a more reasonable inriver salmon harvest opportunity (throughout the entire season), as specified in the plan, would also be provided.

If there is some measurable salmon abundance on which the current liberal commercial harvest opportunity is based, then inriver users should also have a shared liberal harvest opportunity. Unfortunately, as a sport angler experiencing how few coho salmon are available inriver during the last half of July and first week of August, I believe there is little — if any — biological, scientific basis for providing this commercial opportunity to harvest salmon with large gill nets within one mile of the river mouth. Scientific justification is most problematic early in the season — before inseason and reliable abundance estimates can be made by ADF&G from coho salmon passage through Little Susitna River weir.

My work schedule may preclude me from participating during most of the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet BOF meeting. Through this proposal I bring current commercial regulation to the board’s attention. In hopes of providing a science-based discussion, including ADF&G’s historical and most recent data, I make a proposal providing a similar liberal harvest opportunity for inriver users. Feel welcome to view my first fishing regulation proposal as you will. Bottomline, it is my intent, the

board will adopt a better Science-Based regulation to address shared harvest opportunities in saltwater and inriver during the 2024 Upper Cook Inlet meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Chuck Martin (EF-F23-121)

PROPOSAL 242

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Prohibit anglers from releasing coho salmon in the Little Susitna River as follows:

The Little Susitna river coho fishery, below the weir, is restricted to catch and keep up to the daily bag limit. Coho salmon shall not be released no matter where they are hooked. When the daily bag limit is caught the angler cannot continue to fish in the Little Susitna River for the remainder of the day. No snagging is allowed.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce the waste of salmon, from catch and release mortality, that is caused by the large number of salmon that are caught and released each year, resulting in high mortalities as verified in the ADF&G coho catch and release mortality studies. ADF&G reports show there is an average of well over 650,000 salmon caught and released in the Cook Inlet sports fishery every year. Catch and release results in hundreds of thousands of salmon wasted each year from either becoming a valuable food source or becoming a spawner for producing future returns. Coho are extremely susceptible to catch and release mortality. The 1993 ADF&G report on the "Mortality of coho salmon caught and released using sport tackle in the Little Susitna, Alaska-ADF&G (Doug Vincent-Lang ,Marianna Alexandersdottir and Doug McBride) documented a 69% mortality on coho salmon in the lower (10 to 15 miles) of fresh water systems when using bait. This lower section is where the majority of catch and release occurs. This lower section of fresh water systems is the highest for mortality because of the stress caused by hook and release when salmon are the most susceptible because of chemical changes the body is undergoing to acclimate to fresh water. This stress and lactic acid build up is being compounded with the trend of warmer water temperatures. The Little Susitna coho fishery is overcrowded and not sustainable.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-037)

PROPOSAL 243

5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Create a bag and possession limit of 3 coho salmon in the Knik Arm Drainages, as follows:

(2) salmon, other than king salmon,

(A) 16 inches or greater in length may be taken from January 1 — December 31; bag and possession limit is three fish, [OF WHICH NO MORE THAN TWO PER DAY AND TWO IN POSSESSION MAY BE COHO SALMON;]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2000 the sport fishery general coho salmon bag and possession limits throughout Knik Arm drainages, was reduced from 3 fish daily and in possession to 2 fish daily and in possession as a paired restrictions conservation package where the Northern District set net fishery was restricted to one set gillnet per permit holder from July 20 — August 10 under an Upper Cook Inlet Coho Salmon Conservation Plan.

Since 2000 the Northern District commercial set net fishery has been liberalized by: 1. allowing Northern District permit holders with more than one permit to fish additional gear (permit stacking). 2. the dates for fishing with restricted nets has been decreased to July 20 - August 6. 3. a stipulation was added where set netters (who likely harvest significant numbers of Knik Arm coho salmon) in the General Subdistrict south of the Susitna River could be allowed to fish with two set gillnets after July 30 (during peak coho salmon abundance). — Words in parentheses added.

Whereas, the first sentence of the Northern District Salmon Management Plan states a purpose to minimize the harvest of coho salmon bound for the Northern District . . . ,

Whereas, the second sentence states the department shall manage chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks for both commercial and inriver uses to provide an opportunity to harvest these salmon resources based on abundance.

Whereas, the third sentence further requires, the department shall manage the chum, pink, and sockeye stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, to provide sport, guided sport, and other inriver users a reasonable opportunity to harvest these resources over the entire run. . . ,

Therefore, since commercial fisheries have been liberalized and their coho salmon harvest percentages have been allowed to expand over the past decade, there must be enough coho salmon to allow the Knik Arm sport fishery bag and possession limits, to at least return to the long-time level they were set at before 2000. If coho salmon abundance has indeed risen that much, then Alaska Sportfishing Association requests a return to the 3 salmon per day (all of which may be coho salmon) limits for Knik Arm drainages. Note: ADF&G has more coho salmon escapement goals in the Knik Arm drainage than in the entire remainder of Upper Cook Inlet, so coho salmon abundances may be monitored and inseason adjustments made for years with shortages or extra abundances of coho salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Sportfishing Association (EF-F23-140)

PROPOSAL 244

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Define the mouth of Fish Creek as follows:

5AAC 60.122(a)(5)(A) is amended to read:

...

(A) [THE WATERS FROM ADF&G REGULATORY MARKERS LOCATE AT ITS MOUTH] **from its mouth, including all waters within a ¼ mile radius of its confluence with Knik Arm,** upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located one-quarter mile upstream from the Knik-Goose Bay Road, are open to sport fishing every Saturday and Sunday June 15 through July 14, and beginning the second Saturday in August through December 31 on Saturdays and Sundays from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., except that sport fishing for king salmon is closed;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Regulatory markers posted at the mouth of Fish Creek do not adequately delineate fresh vs. salt water because the markers, due to large tidal fluctuations, must be posted at a higher elevation, well upstream of mean low tide that distinguishes fresh from salt water in statewide regulations. Special regulations that restrict salmon harvest in the Fish Creek sport fishery to three salmon per day of which only two may be a coho salmon and limit fishing to weekend only, currently do not conserve salmon caught within the Fish Creek channel downstream of the markers where sport fishing under saltwater regulations is allowed seven days per week, with six salmon allowed per day. Returning to the definition for fresh waters given in statewide regulations and adding a quarter-mile radius to the freshwater determination, will ensure special regulations developed for Fish Creek salmon conserve all salmon entering the Fish Creek channel that are bound for Fish Creek.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-008)

PROPOSAL 245

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Allow sport fishing in the Fish Creek drainage 7 days a week as follows:

(5) In the Fish Creek drainage,

(A) the waters from ADF&G regulatory markers located at its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located one-quarter mile upstream from the Knik—Goose Bay Road, are open to sport fishing [EVERY SATURDAY AND SUNDAY] June 15 — July 14, and beginning the second Saturday in August through December 31 [ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS] from 5 a.m. — 10 p.m., except that sport fishing for king salmon is closed;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The area open to sport fishing for salmon at Fish Creek in the Knik Arm drainage is incredibly small — upstream of tidewater there is less than 1/2 mile open to salmon fishing. Once above tidewater, the Creek is shallow, in the waters open to salmon fishing, and the fish tend to move through this area rapidly resulting in a low harvest rate for the sport fishery. Because of these conditions this proposal asks the board to consider making the area open to sport salmon fishing on a 7-day per week basis.

Even with a 7-day per week sport fishery, as proposed, there would remain a 7-hour window every evening / morning, when the salmon could migrate uninhibited through the area open to salmon fishing. In addition, there would also remain a 5-day closure window (at or near peak run timing)

between the first weekend and second weekend in August where additional sockeye and coho salmon escapement could occur.

Utilizing Fish Creek Weir, ADF&G has been monitoring this stream for various lengths of time over many seasons during the sockeye and coho salmon returns, and has gained considerable information on salmon run timing and entry patterns for both species with established escapement goals. When the weir is in the creek, it provides tight inseason monitoring of escapement levels so the sport fishery regulations could be altered quickly if any escapement concerns were to occur. Even at times when the Fish Creek Weir has been removed in late July or early August, ADF&G data supports that Little Susitna River weir coho salmon data could be used as a surrogate for inseason management — when needed. the issue statement here.

PROPOSED BY: Stephanie Nowers (EF-F23-021)

PROPOSAL 246

5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. and 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

Update the lists of lakes where anglers may use five lines while fishing for northern pike through the ice in designated Northern Cook Inlet waters as follows:

5 AAC 60.120(7)(C) is amended to read:

...

(C) [ANDERSON LAKE, FIGURE EIGHT LAKE] **all waters east of the Susitna River, west of the Little Susitna River and south of the Enstar Gas Pipeline right-of-way (Figure Eight area lakes), Anna Lake, Beaverhouse Lake, Cow Lake, East Papoose Lake,** Flathorn Lake, **Gerry Lake, Horseshoe Lake, Hourglass Lake, Loonsong Lake, Lynda Lake,** Memory Lake, all Nancy Lake drainage lakes except Nancy Lake, Prator Lake, **Sevenmile Lake, Stephan Lake, West Beaver Lake, West Horseshoe Lake, and West Papoose Lake,** [AND STEPHAN LAKE] with five lines through the ice; allowable gear is limited to standard ice fishing gear as specified in 5 AAC 61.110(8)(B); fishing gear must be closely attended as specified in 5 AAC 75.033; all other species of fish caught must be released immediately.

5 AAC 61.110(8)(C) is amended to read:

(C) Alexander Creek, **Bulchitna Lake, Eightmile Lake,** Fish Creek (lower Susitna River drainage), Fish Creek (Kroto Slough), Indian Creek, Witsoe Creek, and in Alexander Lake, Amber Lake, Crystal Lake, Donkey Lake, **Fish Lakes,** Hewitt Lake, Kroto Lakes, Lady Slipper Lake, **Little Bulchitna Lake,** Lockwood Lakes, Long Lake, Neil Lake, No Name (Cabin) Lake, Onestone Lake, Parker Lake, **Scotty Lake,** Shell Lake, Shirley Lake, Sucker Lake, Trail Lake, Trapper Lake, Upper and Lower Vern Lakes, Whitsol Lake, and Whiskey Lake, with five lines through the ice; allowable gear is limited to standard ice fishing gear as specified in 5 AAC

61.110(8)(B): fishing gear must be closely attended as specified in 5 AAC 75.033; all other species of fish caught must be released immediately;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Northern pike are a predatory fish invasive to Southcentral Alaska and can pose a significant threat to salmon and resident fish species in the region. To encourage anglers to harvest northern pike, systems that primarily contain northern pike have regulations allowing anglers to use five lines through the ice. Expanding that list to include the proposed waters may encourage anglers to fish these areas and harvest northern pike. Northern pike were eradicated from Anderson Lake and this lake can now be removed from the list.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-001)

PROPOSAL 247

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Prohibit chumming in Big, Mirror, and Flat Lakes as follows:

5 AAC 60.122(a)(5)(F) is amended to read:

...

(F) in Big Lake, **Mirror Lake, and Flat Lake,**

(i) from November 1 – April 30, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, except when fishing through the ice, two lines may be used, if only one single hook is used on each line; **a person may not place in the water any substance for the purpose of attracting fish by scent, including**

- 1. fish eggs in any form;**
- 2. natural or preserved animal, fish, fish oil, shellfish, or insect parts;**
- 3. natural or processed vegetable matter; and**
- 4. natural or synthetic chemicals.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Regulations prohibiting use of bait during the ice fishery on Big Lake are difficult to enforce. Determining whether an angler is using bait or an attractant on the hook while chumming is difficult; an angler may be scenting hooks under the guise of chumming to attract fish.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-004)

PROPOSAL 248

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Restrict Big Lake Arctic char to catch-and-release in the Fish Creek drainage as follows:

5 AAC 60.122(a)(5)(G) is amended to read:

...

(G) [THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT FOR ARCTIC CHAR/DOLLY VARDEN IS ONE FISH, WHICH MUST BE 20 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH;] **Arctic char may not be retained or possessed;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Review of Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) data shows a decline in the abundance of Arctic Char, particularly of large fish over 20 inches in length. Nonretention would maximize recruitment into mature age classes and maximize spawning events to help rebuild the stock. The department has been issuing emergency orders to restrict sport fishing for Arctic char in Big Lake to catch-and-release only for the past two calendar years.

Mirror and Flat lakes have direct connections with Big Lake, allowing migration and sharing of fish between lakes. Resident species such as Arctic Char and burbot in Big Lake are no longer protected by conservative regulation when they migrate to neighboring Mirror and Flat lakes.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-007)

PROPOSAL 249

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

Remove the effective date of regulation pertaining to sport fishing from a motor driven boat as follows:

5 AAC 60.122(a)(9)(L) is amended to read:

(L) [BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2017, a] **A** person may not sport fish from a boat that is powered by use of a motor, unless the motor is a four-stroke motor or a direct fuel injection two-stroke motor;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? A implementation date for this regulation is no longer necessary.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-013)
