

PROPOSAL 62

5 AAC 18.330. Gear.

Increase commercial salmon fishing opportunity for set gillnet permit holders as follows:

5 AAC 18.330. Gear

...

(b) In the Northwest Kodiak District, salmon may be taken only by purse seines and beach seines, except that in the Central Section, salmon may also be taken by set gillnets. **In the Central Section, set gillnet fishing shall open 48 hours before seine fishing may occur. Seine fishing may only occur during combined set gillnet, beach seine, and purse seine fishing periods. In the Central Section, during continuous combined set gillnet and seine fishing periods, seine fishing shall be closed for 48 hours after each 5-day continuous combined fishing period, allowing one 48-hour set gillnet only fishing period per week.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The percentage of the sockeye and pink salmon poundage caught annually by Kodiak Island's Westside set gillnet fleet has declined significantly since 1990.

By regulation, Kodiak's Westside set gillnetters may only fish in the Central Section of the Northwest Kodiak District. The Central Section is not a terminal area; but salmon returning to the inner bays of the Northwest Kodiak District, to the common property fishery of the Telrod Cove SHA, and to the Inner and Outer Karluk sections of the Southwest Kodiak District, travel through it. All of these are managed by the 1990 Westside Management Plan and all have been historically targeted by set gillnetters. However, because set gillnets are fixed gear and are prohibited by statute from fishing in these terminal areas, set gillnet fishermen have only one opportunity to catch these fish. With these facts in mind, any changes to the Westside Management Plan which attempt to allocate an historically equitable percentage of salmon to Westside set gillnetters must include an equitable percentage of the salmon swimming to these terminal areas.

The percentage of sockeye salmon harvested by Westside set gillnetters out of the total of all sockeye salmon caught by all gear groups in the Northwest Kodiak District, Telrod SHA and Inner and Outer Karluk Sections of the Southwest District has declined from a 23-year average (1990-2012) of 50% to a 34% average in the years 2013-2022.

The percentage of pink salmon harvested by Westside set gillnetters out of the total of all pink salmon caught by all gear groups in the Northwest Kodiak District, Telrod SHA and Inner and Outer Karluk Sections of the Southwest Kodiak District has declined from a 23-year average (1990-2012) of 30% to 19% in the years 2013-2022.

In the most recent five years (2017-2022) the set gillnet fleet's percentage of the catch in these areas has fallen even more precipitously - to 29% for sockeye and 14% for pinks.

This loss of catch percentage by Westside set gillnetters since 1990 has resulted in a significant loss of income for the set gillnet fleet. If not reversed, this trend of declining catch share and declining income may result in the demise of Kodiak's Westside set gillnet fishery.

Advanced opening periods for set gillnet fishermen in the Central Section of the Northwest Kodiak District can help set gillnetters regain an equitable harvest percentage.

PROPOSED BY: Northwest Setnetters Association

(HQ-F23-075)
