PROPOSAL 85

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Prohibit use of motorized vessels in the Kenai River if the sport fishery is closed as follows:

(d) If the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer, the department shall

(1) close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River **and eliminate the use of vessels with motors to participate in sport fisheries from the regulatory marker below Skilak Lake to Warren Ames Bridge** and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon;

(A) These regulations will stay in affect from the time of emergency order closure through Aug 31, or until the OEG is achieved.

(B) Motorized vessels may not be used to transport fisherman who will or have previously fished from shore.

(C) For the purpose of these regulations "motorized vessel" refers to vessels that have on board more than one single motor greater than 10hp. A motor 10hp or less may be used only downstream of an ADF&G marker at Cunningham Park, and only after fishing from the vessel has stopped for the day. Except in cases of emergency, a vessel that has or will engage in fishing may not be attached in any capacity to a vessel with a propulsion system greater than 10hp while operating.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Large Late Run Kenai King numbers are continuing to decline despite incredible restrictions on the ESSN Fishery. Additional measures are needed to ensure longterm high yield of Kenai King Salmon. In-river users have experienced negligible impact from closing the king fishery, (This is evidenced by in-river guides not qualifying for federal disaster relief since 2012) as its easy to transition to alternative salmon species. This has maintained high levels of motorized activity despite the closure of the king fishery; which provides minimal respite to spawning chinook. A study published in *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, "*Underwater sound of rigid hulled inflatable boats" (23 June 2016), found that underwater decibel levels can range from 90-132 dB based on proximity, frequency and RPM's. In this study the greatest level of noise was observed in shallow water, which is prevalent throughout the Kenai River System. In people, exposure to levels above 110 dB can result in permanent hearing loss after 60 seconds. From this study it can be deduced that motorized activity on the Kenai River creates an inhospitable spawning environment for salmon. If motor vessels are eliminated users will still have easy access to harvesting fish from shore and drift vessels.

Conservation of spawning Late Run Kenai River King Salmon needs to be prioritized moving forward. Set netters have all but been eliminated and allocated out of the fishery, yet large king numbers continue to decline. Drastic steps are needed to ensure the survivability of spawning large kings in river and provide a healthy fishery for all user groups in the future.

Additionally motorized vessels are already banned from March 15 - June 14 between river mile 42 and Skilak Lake entrance to protect breeding Trumpeter Swans. Trumpeter Swans have a healthy population with a 12.3% annual increase in breeding pairs. If we grant a healthy swan population on the Kenai River this protection, it is imperative that large Late Run Kenai King Salmon, on a steady decline, are afforded the same hospitable spawning environment.

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