

## **PROPOSAL 96**

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

Modify operation of set gillnet gear in the Upper Subdistrict as follows:

5AAC 21.359 (d)(3) Restrict the ESSN fishery to flagged nets only.

If the king salmon paired restrictions continue to include closing the ESSN to ALL fishing when the river is closed to targeted king fishing, this proposal is to instead allow the ESSN to BEGIN fishing flagged nets at that time as opposed to being shut down.

There will be hurdles to implementing this new way of fishing such as how to anchor the nets, how to safely set/retrieve the nets, spacing from other net locations etc. While these details might seem difficult to some, language needs to be put in place during this board cycle to allow this as an option to being shut down in years of low king counts.

Nets can be anchored off of existing set net anchors at one end and either removeable or permanent anchors at the other end. Large Danforth or halibut anchors (depends on ocean bottom make up) could be used or concrete blocks/sandbags. A fisherman could also use an existing anchor on one end and then "swing" the net around the existing anchor with the tide change and tie the loose end to a previously placed anchor or drop a removeable anchor such as a Danforth.

Setting the net would involve tying the net into the permanent anchor and then allowing the current to move the skiff slowly away from the tie in point. When all the net has been placed in the water, the loose end would then be anchored to a previously placed anchor or a removable anchor thrown over. Other fisherman may come up with new ways of fishing a flagged net but the above method has worked for me in the few times that I've found myself with a flagged net as the only option to fish one of my net sites.

5AAC 39.105 (d)(2) states: "a set gillnet is a gillnet that has been intentionally set, staked, anchored, or otherwise fixed" and makes no reference to the net being set across the current or "with the current" so a flagged net is a legal option.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** For years ESSN set netters have been challenged to find ways to lessen the king salmon catch. Short of just not fishing, very few options have been tried or put in place (shallow nets, 600' fishing, drastic reduction in fishing time, etc) and in the eyes of management, these are obviously not working as the 2023 season was cancelled before it even started due to the ESSN not having a "king free" method of catching the other species.

One option that might warrant trying is to fish flagged nets which are nets anchored in a direction parallel to the current as opposed to across the current. The bulk of fish caught in a set net are traveling with the current and get gilled by the mesh or are pressed into the net by the current. Most large kings are not gilled due to their size but rather pressed into the net by the current. If the net is turned 90 degrees and anchored parallel with the current, the catching of kings should be drastically reduced as they will be able to hit the net and swim away.

There is little data to review regarding flagged nets and associated catches. Two flagged net ACR's have been submitted over the last two years but both were rejected by the board and statements were made by the board to "submit the proposal during the next board cycle".

**PROPOSED BY:** Lance Aldrin

(EF-F23-074)

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