

Northern District Subsistence (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 204

5 AAC 01.593. Upper Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery.

Allow hook and line attached to a rod or pole as subsistence gear to take king salmon in the Yentna River drainage as follows:

[UPPER] Yentna River subsistence salmon fishery

(7) throughout the Yentna River drainage (any waters exceptions stipulated in permit) by rod, reel, and bait / terminal tackle as stipulated in the permit only.

(A) from June 1 through June 30 from 4 a.m. through 8 p.m. Thursday through Monday;

(B) Three king salmon per household permit, however the commissioner may adjust the limit all the way down to one king salmon per household permit, based on the department's preseason and / or inseason assessment of abundance, and the fishery may be closed, by emergency order, when the department estimates that 70 - 90% of the harvestable surplus may be taken.

(C) in addition, three salmon, other than king salmon, 16 inches or long in length, may be harvest by permit per day during the open hours of 4 a.m. - 8 p.m., and following sport fishing bag and possession limits.

(D) reporting, within 3 days of harvest as specified by the department in the permit.

(E) only one Yentna River or Tyonek king salmon subsistence permit may be attained per household.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under current sport fishing regulations, the long tradition of Alaska residents harvesting king salmon with a rod and reel for their own subsistence has been made illegal in recent years, since there are no current regulations recognizing and allowing this tradition during times the sport fishery is closed for harvest. I, my family, and many other Alaska residents have a history of harvesting king salmon from the Yentna River drainage and Alexander Creek with rod and reel, that should be recognized as subsistence, and allowed to continue under the subsistence priority — when there are harvestable surplus king salmon.

Although the board recently provided a fishwheel fishery during the king salmon season in a small part of the Yentna River drainage — most Alaskan residents with a history of harvesting king salmon from the Yentna River drainage neither own nor have ready access to a fishwheel. The vast majority of king salmon harvested from the Yentna River drainage by Alaska residents during the past 45 years, have been taken by rod and reel in clear water areas entering the otherwise turbid Yentna River drainage. This is the fishery that has recently provided the most sustenance for Alaskans, and its history is well documented by Alaska Department of Fish & Game data. The Department may also have some estimates as to how much of the “sport” king salmon harvest was

taken by resident Alaskans (useful for considering amount necessary for subsistence). This is a fishery that should be recognized as subsistence.

Subsistence hunting and fishing is not allowed in non subsistence areas — however all of Game Management Unit 16B (which is bounded on the east by the east bank of the Yentna River to the Susitna River, then along the east bank of the Susitna River to Cook Inlet and along the inlet well past Tyonek) is already designated for subsistence moose hunting. In addition the board has already adopted a subsistence net fishery and a subsistence fishwheel fishery in portions of this same subsistence area.

I was hesitant to submit a subsistence proposal, but when Alexander Creek, and now the entire Yentna River drainage has been closed to King salmon harvest for the average Alaskan with a rod and reel, I was afraid my family's and other Alaskans' harvest opportunity may never come back — so this subsistence proposal has been submitted.

I hope board members agree, even when there may not be enough king salmon to allow a directed commercial king salmon fishery and a catch and release fishery for out of state visitors, there could and may be enough king salmon to provide a limited resident subsistence fishery. I see the subsistence king salmon fisheries currently in place, and think they are similar to the Yentna River drainage harvest fishery we had — but they have larger king salmon limits, more liberal means of harvest, and a board adopted priority to fish for subsistence. Please adopt a more conservative rod and reel subsistence fishery for king salmon, throughout the Yentna River drainage, and let more Alaskan residents share a reasonable opportunity to harvest a king salmon.

Note: Similar regulation(s) under sport fishing / commercial sections that truly attempted to provide a reasonable season of resident harvest opportunity without prioritizing commercial harvest or catch and release sport fishing of stocks from a subsistence area could also be acceptable, and would have the financial benefit of helping to fund king salmon management. I could not conceive how to word such regulation(s), but would be open to their consideration as an alternate solution.

PROPOSED BY: Lloyd McDaniels

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