

*Susitna River Sport Fisheries (10 proposals)*

**PROPOSAL 218**

**5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Allow harvest of king salmon between 20 and 24 inches in Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area as follows:

I would like to harvest small male chinook salmon. The current printed regulations are very useless and out dated to us in unit 4 because we have been operating under an EO for 6+ years for our king season. In the regulation book we can harvest 10 jacks under 20inches a day. Although we haven't been able to eat a King salmon in years.

I'm unaware of a study on immature kings returning early. Nobody knows if they are biologically useful or not. There is a surplus of males. 100 percent of jacks are males. I want to harvest some of our surplus jacks instead of just catch and release. I would like to see regulation changed to be able to harvest 2 chinook 24inches and smaller per day. Once you've harvested 2 immature kings you have to quit salmon fishing that day. That should remove some pressure on our mature breeder kings.

In unit 4 Susitna drainage. Under king salmon regulations add the following:

King Salmon between 20 and 24inches, bag limit 2 per day 4 in possession.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** I have almost no source fresh meat until sockeyes show up in mid July in unit 4.... If they show up then. After a hard winter in Alaska fresh meat is very desirable. I can only harvest 2 rainbows per day starting in mid June so we can't even harvest enough of those to feed my family. The northern pike population in flowing waters is very low and no longer a reliable source of meat. I am very concerned and confused that our fish resources in unit 4 are not being managed to sustained yield (HARVEST) principle.

**PROPOSED BY:** Payton McHoes (EF-F23-109)  
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**PROPOSAL 219**

**5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Close fishing for all species within the confluence of Unit 2 waters when sport fishing for king salmon is closed as follows:

My solution is to close ALL Fishing within a specified distance (¼ mile or ½ mile??), in both directions, of the confluence of all Unit-2 creeks and rivers any time that fishing for king salmon is closed. This closure would apply to the common 4 day closures in the regulation AND any time king salmon fishing is closed by emergency order.

I will defer the distance to be closed to ADF&G, however because some creeks like Willow Creek have multiple mouths and confluences I feel that half of a mile would be the best distance. As for what the new regulation would say??? not sure about this, but...

5 AAC 61.114 is amended to read:

Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(1) from January 1 through July 13, [THE THIRD MONDAY IN JUNE, AND ON SATURDAY, SUNDAY, AND MONDAY FOR THE TWO CONSECUTIVE WEEKS STARTING ON THE SATURDAY FOLLOWING THE THIRD MONDAY IN JUNE] Unit 2 is open to sport fishing for all finfish species except for king salmon **anywhere except for one half mile above and below the confluence of any creek or river.** [INCLUDING KING SALMON] [EXCEPT] sport fishing for king salmon is open only from the third Monday in June, and on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for two consecutive weeks starting on the Saturday following the third Monday in June;

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?**

My issue is that King salmon are still being targeted in Unit-2 of the Parks Highway during closures due to the Board approving proposal 222 at the 2020 Board Of Fish (BOF) meeting.

For many years the regulation closed all fishing after the third Monday in June with 3 day weekend openings over the following two weekends. At the 2020 BOF meeting proposal 222, submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), amended the regulation, so that during these closed periods fishing is permitted for rainbow trout and other resident species. The BOF approved this change.

I believe that the regulatory closures in late June and early July were in place to give spawning king salmon relief from fishing pressure. The kings got a few days off. I also believe that Proposal 222 was intended for fly fishing enthusiast who targeted rainbow trout and other resident species. However, there are some sport fishermen who take advantage of this “loophole” in the regulations to target king salmon with fly fishing gear. This situation occurs most commonly at the confluence of the Unit-2 creeks and the Susitna River which are easily accessible from the Parks Highway. Technically these fly fishermen are not in violation of the regulation, because they say they are fishing for trout. When uneducated spawning king salmon are resting at the confluence of their creek they will strike the flies that are being presented.

As I write this proposal in April 2023, unit-2 of the Susitna drainage was closed to king salmon fishing by emergency order #23-3445 on March 2nd. So, this season the only way to catch a king salmon on a Unit-2 creek is to do so with fly fishing gear despite the fact that fishing for king salmon is closed. Most of the king salmon caught “incidentally while fishing for other species” will be caught near the confluence of Montana, Sheep, and Willow creeks.

**PROPOSED BY:** Daniel Page

(EF-F23-067)

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**PROPOSAL 220**

**5 AAC 62.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.**

Open additional waters in the Big River drainage to sport fishing for coho salmon as follows:

On the South Fork of the Big River in the Big River drainage. From July 20th until September 15th silver salmon fishing will be allowed for 800 yards above the current cut off point for no fishing. Any red (sockeye) salmon caught must be released immediately.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** On the West Side of Cook Inlet in the Big River and Big River Lake drainages. On the south fork of the Big River in the area recently closed to red (sockeye) salmon fishing. I would propose that area be open above the current cutoff point for approximately 800 yards for silver salmon fishing only. The period that I am requesting is from July 20th until September 15th. By July 20th. the June and the only run of red salmon have run, spawned and are dying. So this request would not effect the red salmon at all.

**PROPOSED BY:** William Davis (EF-F23-022)

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**PROPOSAL 221**

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

Create a bag and possession limit of 3 coho salmon in the Susitna River Drainage, 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 the Susitna River drainage was reduced from 3 fish daily and in possession to 2 fish daily and in possession.

More recently sport coho bag and possession limits in most units of the Susitna River drainage were restored to their previous level, however the restrictive limits still remain in the general drainage-wide listing — which now may only cover Unit 2. If harvest of coho salmon is indeed being minimized in the Northern District commercial fishery as repeatedly directed in the Northern District salmon management plan, then we believe there should be enough coho salmon to return to the former limits and especially in a rural area like Unit 2. Unlike year 2000, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) now has a Deshka River coho salmon escapement goal, whereby the Susitna River drainage may be monitored and inseason adjustments made during times of low or high coho salmon abundance.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Sportfishing Association

(EF-F23-137)

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**PROPOSAL 222**

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

Increase the Susitna River drainage sport fish limits for pink salmon as follows:

5 AAC 61.110. General Provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area

...

(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 **for chum, sockeye, and coho salmon** is three fish, of which not more than 2 per day and 2 in possession may be coho salmon, **and in addition the bag and possession limit for pink salmon is six fish**;

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Opportunities for sport fishermen to catch and harvest salmon in the Susitna River drainage are often limited by salmon abundance and conservative regulations deemed necessary to protect less abundant, or more desirable salmon species and other fish stocks. Pink salmon are the most abundant salmon in the Susitna River drainage. In addition because of their smaller size, and to many people, less palatable flavor, many commercial users in saltwater, freshwater personal use permit holders, and even sport fishermen within the Susitna River drainage choose to release rather than harvest abundant pink salmon.

In order to better maximize the benefit from this abundant, but very under-utilized salmon resource, I propose amending the Susitna River drainage salmon sport fishery bag and possession limit consistent with how the board successfully modified the sport fishery salmon bag and possession limit on the Kenai River, to better maximize benefit from pink salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Farley Dean

(EF-F23-046)

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**PROPOSAL 223**

**5 AAC 61.185. Special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Redefine the special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna River Drainage Area as follows:

(c) rainbow trout catch-and-release special management areas are those waters managed to maintain historical size and age distributions. the rainbow trout catch-and-release special management areas in the Susitna River drainage area are the following:

(1) that portion of the Deshka River upstream from the forks;

- (2) the north fork of the Kashwitna River;
- (3) Fish Creek (in the Talkeetna River drainage);
- (4) the Talachulitna River and all waters within a three-quarter mile radius of its confluence with the Skwentna River;
- (5) the Lake Creek drainage upstream from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately one-quarter mile upstream of Bulchitna Lake;
- (6) X Lake;
- (7) Montana Creek drainage;
- (8) Willow Creek, below the Parks Highway;
- (9) Alexander Creek;
- (10) Canyon Creek; and
- (11) Prairie Creek.

**(12) the Susitna River, from Alexander Creek to Devils Canyon from September 15-May 15**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Various tagging studies have shown that seasonal movements of rainbow trout in the Susitna River drainage show a bulk of the fish overwintering in the mainstem Susitna, Talkeetna, and Chulitna Rivers where they are susceptible to being over exploited due to lack of bait restrictions and allowable harvest. The proposed addition would allow for bait when fishing for burbot due to 5AAC 61.110 (7) and bait would be allowed for coho fishing in the early fall, thus having minimal impact on other fisheries while protecting overwintering congregations of trout from already designated special management areas.

**PROPOSED BY:** Patrick McCormick (EF-F23-084)  
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**PROPOSAL 224**

**5 AAC 61.185. Special management areas for rainbow trout in the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Extend the special management areas for rainbow trout to include the portion of Willow Creek upstream of the Parks Highway as follows:

- (8) Willow Creek, **Below the Parks Highway;**
- (9) Alexander Creek;

(10) Canyon Creek; and

(11) Prairie Creek.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Extend special management areas for rainbow trout to include the portion of Willow Creek Upstream of the Parks Highway.

Populations of trout in the Willow Creek drainage typically are not found below the Parks Highway bridge for extended periods of the season. Because of the migratory nature of the trout populations in Willow Creek, this designation makes no sense and does not protect a majority of the fish a majority of the time.

**PROPOSED BY:** Patrick McCormick (EF-F23-085)  
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**PROPOSAL 225**

**5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Open rainbow trout fishing in Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage year-round with a bag limit of 5 fish, 10 in possession as follows:

Susitna River Drainage Unit 4

Rainbow/Steelhead Trout

In flowing waters

No closed season 5 per day 10 in possession

Canyon Creek

No closed season 5 per day 10 in possession

Lake Creek

No closed season 5 per day 10 in possession

Talachulitna River

No closed season 5 per day 10 in possession

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Increase the opportunity to harvest rainbow trout for food and reduce predation of rainbow trout on depressed salmon populations that provide far more economic and food value to subsistence, sport, personal use and commercial user groups. It has been over 30 years since rainbow trout regulations were changed to reduce the human harvest of rainbow trout in the two major king salmon streams to catch and

release only and limited much of unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage to a reduced open water season and a daily limit of 2 fish. In that time frame the king salmon harvest for both sport and commercial fishermen has been reduced to zero. Rainbow trout numbers are significantly higher than when I started guiding here in 1993. This is a reflection of a successful management goal of increasing rainbow trout populations. Rainbow populations are overly abundant and possibly negatively affecting the king salmon and other salmon species as a main predator of salmon and their eggs. If we continue to have these overly restrictive rainbow trout regulations we will continue to limit people's ability to catch significant numbers of trout to replace the lost harvest of King Salmon and we may be limiting the growth of salmon populations due to overwhelming in river predation of salmon by the inflated rainbow populations that we created.

I considered proposing that we treat rainbow trout predators like we treat Northern Pike predators in Unit 4, however I rejected this as too extreme for the people who will come to the board screaming and crying about this proposal. It will be a miracle enough, if this common sense proposal passes.

**PROPOSED BY:** David McHoes (EF-F23-016)

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### **PROPOSAL 226**

#### **5 AAC 61.110. General Provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area**

Allow anglers to use two artificial lures in tandem in Susitna River Drainage waters as follows:

In the Susitna River Drainage allow the use of dropper flies with the following language where it appears adding the bold section:

Only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used **except that two artificial flies may be used in tandem.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Alaska is the only western state that prohibits anglers from fishing two flies in tandem for trout. It is a common practice throughout the world and is even allowed in competitive fly fishing where up to three flies can be used. This would also erase confusion with the regulation of “only single hook artificial lures may be used” which does allow for dropper rigs and is widely used in trout management waters throughout the state.

**PROPOSED BY:** Patrick McCormick (EF-F23-083)

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### **PROPOSAL 227**

#### **5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.**

Remove the length restriction on Dolly Varden in Unit 4, as follows:

Arctic Char/Dolly Varden

5 per day, 10 in possession

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Strange and seemingly pointless dolly varden regulation for Unit 4 Susitna River. Dollies are not common in most of Unit 4. Most are likely caught by accident. If we do catch big enough ones, we may keep it for supper. I'm not sure why we cannot keep two over 12 inches? We generally don't keep any under 12 inches. Not much meat on a 11 inch or smaller dolly. Be rare in most of the unit to catch 5 dollies in a day. Only place I have accomplished this is in DNP of the Yentna River and Judd Lake.

**PROPOSED BY:** David McHoes

(EF-F23-043)

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