

PROPOSAL 124

5 AAC XX.XXX.000. New Section.

Modify resident sport fishing opportunity prescribed by Southeast Alaska king salmon action plans, as follows:

In years when the ADF&G pre-season forecast for the Chilkat, Taku, Stikine or Unuk River Chinook run is anticipated to exceed the lower bound of the escapement goal, the sportfishery in the related saltwater district(s) or affected portions of those district(s) including SHA/THA opportunities, shall re-open for residents one week earlier than the re-opening dates established in the current SOC Action Plans. The non-resident sportfishery shall continue to adhere to the dates in the existing Action Plans until the SoC status is lifted or other change to the SoC plan is made.

Stock Related District(s) or portions of District(s)

Unuk 1-2

Stikine 5- 10

Taku 11

Chilkat 12-15

For example, if the Taku run is predicted to exceed 19,000 large Chinook, the Juneau area District 11 sport king fishery would reopen to residents on June 7 and reopen to non-residents on June 14 with the DH SHA reopening for residents on May 25 and to non-residents on June 1.

Alaska is required under the Treaty to manage our king fisheries in a manner that respects the escapement goals. Since this provision would only trigger in years when the escapement goal is expected to be met, and would only result in a very small harvest of wild Chinook, Alaska would remain in compliance with our Treaty obligations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Stock of Concern restrictions that closed sport king fishing in the inside waters while spring spawners are present have placed a particularly heavy burden on resident sport fishermen, as the spring time has historically been the most productive time of year. Residents who live and work in the communities affected by the closures are not as mobile as commercial fishermen or non-resident sportfishermen. These latter user groups that can fairly easily relocate their fishing efforts to outside waters that remain open, but resident sport fishermen generally have work or school obligations that make traveling to distance waters not only expensive, but also impractical.

The dates of the closure were established when the stocks were at their lowest points and hence were set to be highly conservative. By the time all of the wild stocks leave the saltwater and the sport fisheries reopen, the hatchery fish are past their prime. In years when runs are partially recovered, but not yet to the point where all restrictions can be rescinded, these dates could be slightly relaxed for resident sportfishermen and still provide sufficient adequate protection for wild stocks while giving better access to hatchery kings while they remain bright.

As SE residents have only token access to officially-designated Chinook subsistence fisheries, SE residents meet their subsistence king salmon needs primarily through the sportfishery. As a quasi-subsistence fishery, the resident sportfishermen should have priority above other user groups, but the original SOC Action Plans did not provide for any degree of resident sport priority. Instead, the inside resident sportfishery has been proportionally the most affected of any of the directed Chinook fisheries.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have spoken with other resident sportfishermen about this concept, but have not brought it to any ACs. It would be considered out of area for my local AC.

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(EF-F24-037)
