

PROPOSAL 56

5 AAC 24.XXX. New Section.

Allow permit stacking by Prince William Sound commercial salmon drift gillnet permit holders, as follows:

5.AAC.24.3XX Requirements and specifications for use of 200 Fathoms of Drift Gillnet gear in Area E.

- (a) A CFEC permit holder who holds two Area E drift gillnet permits may operate 200 Fathoms of gear.
- (b) Two Area E drift gillnet CFEC permit holders may concurrently fish from the same vessel and jointly operate up to 200 fathoms of drift gillnet gear under this section.
- (c) When two Area E drift gillnet CFEC permits are fished from the same vessel and jointly operate drift gillnet gear under this section, the vessel must display its ADF&G permanent license plate number followed by the letter "D" to identify the vessel as a dual permit vessel. The letter "D" must be removed or covered when the vessel is operating with only one drift gillnet CFEC permit on board the vessel. The identification number and letters must be displayed (1) in letters and numerals 12 inches high with lines at least one inch wide; (2) in a color that contrasts with the background; (3) on both sides of the hull; and (4) in a manner that is plainly visible at all times when the vessel is being operated.
- (d) When two permit holders jointly operate gear under this section, each permit holder is responsible for ensuring that the entire unit of gear is operated in a lawful manner.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Allow stacking of Copper River Drift permits like what has been successfully done in Bristol Bay and Cook Inlet.

The Copper River Drift Fleet has evolved into a more efficient fleet with improved hull and machinery and communication. This is not the same fleet that existed when limited entry was executed. The recent downturn of poor salmon runs, and poor prices has led to this fishery being barely financially viable. The average ex-vessel gross in 1990 was \$44,000 and in 2022 was \$29,000 adjusted for 1990 inflation. The ex-vessel gross is less than it was 32 years ago. Fuel prices, nets, and equipment have gone up dramatically in price the past 34 years while the overall gross has gone down.

The national average for a gallon of gas was \$1.05 in 1990 while in 2021 it was \$3.05.

The mean permit prices were \$159,797 in 1990 meanwhile in 2023 the mean permit prices adjusted for 1990 inflation was \$38,604. This is a complete collapse of permit values and the economic viability of this fishery.

This fleet is barely keeping its head above water, permit stacking would allow two things to happen.

1.) Allowing one vessel to operate two permits would be a fleet consolidation and allow this community fishery to be financially viable once again.

This is near a full participation fishery, allowing people to stack permits would reduce the amount of overall net in the water during commercial openers. This would reduce the overall harvesting efficiency of the fleet but would allow the remaining fishery participants more opportunity.

2.) Most importantly when comparing permit stacking to a buyback like was done in southeast seining permit stacking does not increase the difficulty for new entrants into the fishery. Permit stacking instead creates another path to ownership and experience in the fishery for deckhands who can buy a permit and stack it on the boat they crew on until they can afford to buy their own operation.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This idea has been tossed around by members of the fleet as a potential solution to allowing more financial stability in this fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Darin Gilman

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