

Personal Use (14 proposals)

PROPOSAL 58

5 AAC 24.361. Copper River King Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the *Copper River King Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 24.361(d) is amended to read:

...

(d) In the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dipnet salmon fishery,

(1) the annual limit for king salmon is one fish;

(2) if the commissioner determines that additional conservation measures are necessary to achieve the escapement goals, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dipnet salmon fishery season and immediately reopen a season during which the retention of king salmon is prohibited; [.]

(3) if the commissioner projects that the upper bound of the escapement goal will be exceeded, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dipnet salmon fishery season and immediately reopen a season during which the king salmon annual limit per household permit is increased.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In December 2021, the board adopted the current drainagewide sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 21,000–31,000 king salmon. Copper River spawning escapement exceeded 31,000 king salmon in 2023. To mitigate exceeding the escapement goal, the only management actions available inriver are limited to liberalizing the sport fisheries, which have limited harvest potential and fishing is concentrated to only three tributaries. Allowing an increase in the king salmon annual household limit for the personal use fishery provides the department a management tool to attempt to stay within the SEG, if needed, across all upper Copper River and upper Chitina River stocks.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-167)

PROPOSAL 59

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Amend the *Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591(e) is amended to read:

...

(e) The total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is **as follows:**

(1) 25 salmon for the head of household and 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household[.];

(2) if the commissioner projects that the upper bound of the Copper River drainage sockeye salmon sustainable escapement goal will be exceeded, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net salmon fishery season and immediately reopen a season during which the annual limit for the head of household is increased by XX sockeye salmon with no increase in the king salmon annual limit established in 5 AAC 77.591(e)(1), or an increase in the king salmon annual limit by conditions specified in 5 AAC 24.361(d).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Since 2003, the Copper River sockeye salmon escapement goal has been exceeded 4 years, from 2012-2015. To mitigate exceeding the escapement goal, the only management actions available inriver are limited to liberalizing the sport fisheries, which have limited harvest potential and are concentrated to only two tributaries. Allowing an increase in the sockeye salmon annual household limit for the personal use fishery provides the department a management tool to attempt to stay within the SEG as well as distributing harvest across all upper Copper River and Chitina River stocks. The department will provide options and potential harvest from several scenarios of increased limits for the board to consider.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-168)

PROPOSAL 60

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Modify the annual limit for the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

Section 5 AAC 77.591(e) The total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is **20** [25] salmon for the head of household and **5** [10] salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Allocation

The Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use Fishery has between 6,000 and 8,000 participants each year. The past three years have gone over the allocated 100,000 – 150,000 salmon limit with a three-year average of 163,989 (an underestimation, based on preliminary 2023 data). Lowering the bag limit by 5 fish per household member will ensure all Personal Use fishermen a reasonable opportunity to participate while accounting for increased interest in the Copper River fishery, and still remain below the 150,000 fish threshold. Closures around the state have brought and will bring more participants to this fishery. Ensuring the sustainability of Copper River salmon is the responsibility of all user groups including the Personal Use.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. No

PROPOSED BY: Shirley Smelcer (HQ-F24-101)

PROPOSAL 61

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Modify the annual limit and establish a supplemental permit for the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan
(e) The total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is [25] **15** salmon for the head of household and 10 salmon for each dependent of the permit holder, except that only one king salmon may be retained per household. **Supplemental permits for an additional 10 salmon**

for head of household will be allotted by EO authority if the in-river goal has a harvestable surplus.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The rationale to change the household limit to 25 salmon was in reflection of “like regulation” between the Upper Cook Inlet and Copper River drainages. However, the Copper River is a completely different watershed, and the historical PU bag limit was 15 for head of household compared to 25 salmon in the upper cook inlet fisheries. Currently the lower copper river subsistence fishery’s bag limit is 15 salmon. The increased bag limit was a reallocation away from the Commercial fishery in (2013). The past few seasons, this increased allocation has hamstrung the lower river biologist’s management due to less than stellar sockeye runs. The productivity of the Copper River differs from the Upper Cook Inlet systems; the bag limits initially reflected what the system could handle on normal run conditions.

The EO authority still allows for an increased bag limit when Copper River sockeye is in an above normal productivity cycle and there is a harvestable surplus.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Developed with other drift gillnetters in the fleet.

PROPOSED BY: Kalistrat Kuzmin (HQ-F24-076)

PROPOSAL 62

5 AAC 5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Allow inseason adjustment of the Copper River personal use maximum harvest level, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

(f) The maximum harvest level for the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishery is 100,000 - 150,000 salmon, not including any salmon in excess of the in-river goal or salmon taken after August 31.

IF THE COPPER RIVER DISTRICT COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERY IS CLOSED FOR 13 OR MORE CONSECUTIVE DAYS, THE MAXIMUM HARVEST LEVEL IN THE CHITINA SUB DISTRICT IS REDUCED TO 50,000 SALMON

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current condition of the copper river salmon stock on years of low abundance is dire. Ever growing non limited populations of upriver users are pulling out salmon at their most fragile and critical adult stage, during their late stages of migration and pre spawning. These pre spawning salmon must be protected on years of low abundance and all user groups need to share equitably in these conservation measures. In December 2017 the board of fish adopted proposal 18 which repealed and replaced regulatory language and has put the copper river salmon runs at risk ever since. The action taken by the board of fisheries to repeal what was known as the “shared burden” regulation resulted in the copper river nearly missing escapement during the 2018, and 2021 seasons, all despite unprecedented commercial closures. In 2020 despite achieving lower bound sonar goals the stock for the first

time actually missed the in river escapement levels. During that year unprecedented commercial fishery closures also occurred, the lions share of the harvest in those low abundance seasons took place upriver, putting the runs at risk. Had this regulation been in place and enforced, the salmon runs would not have missed their escapement goals. It is essential that the burden of conservation is shared among all users not just placed solely on the historical commercial user which has been the case since 2017.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, other fisherman are overwhelmingly in support of this.

PROPOSED BY: Kenneth B. Jones (HQ-F24-009)

PROPOSAL 63

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Amend the opening date of the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591 (b) Salmon may be taken from June 21 [7] or 2 weeks after a daily management of fish passage is met at Miles Lake sonar through September 30. The commissioner shall establish a preseason schedule, including fishing times, for the period June 21 [7] through August 31 based on daily projected sonar counts at the sonar counter located near Miles Lake. This abundance-based preseason schedule will distribute the harvest throughout the season. The commissioner must [MAY] close, by an emergency order effective June 21 [7], the Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishing season and shall reopen the season, by emergency order, on or before June 21 [15] depending on the run strength and timing of the sockeye salmon run. Adjustments shall be made to the preseason schedule based on actual sonar counts compared to projected counts. If the actual sonar count at Miles Lake is more than the projected sonar count, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the season and immediately reopen it during which additional fishing times will be allowed. If the actual sonar count at Miles Lake is less than the projected sonar count, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the season and immediately reopen it during which fishing times will be reduced by a corresponding amount of time.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Protecting genetic diversity of salmon in the Copper River Watershed.

Currently, the Personal Use (PU) fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict (CSD) may begin as early as June 7. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of Tribal citizens and accounts from local residents indicate the run timing of Copper River salmon has been delayed by two to three weeks in recent years, most likely due to changing environmental conditions i.e. late ice-out. Data from the Miles Lake Sonar and harvest analysis quantify and validate these accounts. The first fish to enter the river are typically Chinook and sockeye stocks that travel furthest upriver. With the PU fishery catching approximately 9.6% of the total sockeye and 4.4% of the Chinook run (most recent 5-year average), which is equivalent to approximately 164,000 total salmon reported (3-year average), the fishery disproportionately impacts Chinook and upriver sockeye stocks in the beginning of the season. Chinook have failed to meet escapement goals four of the past 10 years, even despite lowering the escapement goal from 24,000 to a range of 21,000-31,000 in 2021.

Protecting Chinook and the genetic diversity of Copper River sockeye is a proactive step to ensure robust populations.

While PU participants are only allowed one Chinook per household, there are approximately 6,000 permits issued annually. In addition to high participation, there is also undocumented en route mortality as a result of fish handling during catch and release while dipnetting.

Based on radio telemetry studies, it is understood that salmon migrating past the Miles Lake Sonar take between 7 and 14 days (based on environmental factors i.e. streamflow) to reach the CSD where the PU fisheries occurs. By delaying the fishery by two weeks, or until 2 weeks after a daily management objective for fish passage is met at the Miles Lake Sonar (which is met on average between June 1 and 4), we will protect the diversity of Copper River salmon by not disproportionately impacting early returning genetic stocks.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Ahtna Intertribal Fish and Wildlife Committee and Ahtna Tene Nene' jointly recommended this change to address Tribal concerns of the sustainability of Chinook and upper Copper River sockeye stocks. This change in management will help prevent future restrictions and closures.

PROPOSED BY: AITRC Fish and Wildlife Committee (HQ-F24-104)

PROPOSAL 64

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Prohibit a household from possessing permits for multiple personal use salmon fisheries in the same year, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan

(a) Salmon may be taken in the Chitina Subdistrict only under the authority of a Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishing permit. Only one Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishing permit may be issued to a household per calendar year. A household may not be issued both a Copper River subsistence salmon fishing permit and a Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishing permit. **A household may not be issued a Chitina Subdistrict personal use salmon fishing permit if the household has been issued an Upper Cook Inlet personal use salmon fishing permit in the same calendar year.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Personal Use bag limits reflect a user's household needs. However, the number of people participating in both Cook Inlet and Copper River PU fisheries is increasing. Four out of five PU Dip Net fisheries are operated under one permit and one bag limit in the Upper Cook Inlet PU Dip Net fisheries. We want to see a loophole closed to those taking advantage of multiple bag limits, by limiting a user to either a Chitina Sub district PU salmon fishing permit OR an Upper Cook Inlet PU salmon fishing permit in the same calendar year.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU)

(EF-F24-112)

PROPOSAL 65

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Require a weekly permit and inseason reporting in the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591 **(x)**

A participant must purchase a one-week Personal Use dipnet permit from Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Reporting is required within one week of the expiration of the permit. If harvest bag limit is not reached, additional permits may be obtained upon satisfying reporting requirements.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In-season reporting for more accurate harvest assessment and for in-season decision making The Personal Use Fishery in the past three years has exceeded the allocated 100,000 – 150,000 limit with a three-year average of 163,989 (an underestimation, based on preliminary 2023 data). In-season reporting will help inform managers with responsible decision making

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. No.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Tene Nene’

(HQ-F24-110)

PROPOSAL 66

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Manage the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery to achieve the Gulkana Hatchery broodstock goal, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591 Add subsection (i) as written

(i) The department, in consultation with the hatchery operator, shall manage the Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use salmon fishing through restricting time and area by emergency order to achieve the Gulkana Brood Stock escapement goal.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Prince William Sound Aquaculture has failed to achieve its broodstock goal for the Gulkana hatchery for the 8 most recent years, despite ample escapement passing the lower Copper River sonar. Many of the fish necessary to achieve broodstock are caught in the personal use fishery. We ask the board to require the department to manage to achieve this goal with input from PWSAC and grant them the necessary tools to do so. Full utilization of the Gulkana Hatchery will benefit all users over the long term.

There is precedent set in other Prince William Sound fisheries in which hatchery operators and ADFG managers consult each other to restrict fishing time for broodstock escapements goals. One Example is in 5 AAC. 24.365 part (a).

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) (EF-F24-113)

PROPOSAL 67

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Prohibit removing king salmon from the water if it is to be released in the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

Add 5 AAC 77.591 (c) (1)

(c) Salmon may be taken only with dip nets.

(1)King salmon intended or required to be released may not be removed from the water.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Removing king salmon from the water, that are intended to be released, is not allowed in sport fisheries. This is because it severely impedes the ability for king salmon to complete their life cycle. Removing king salmon should not be allowed in personal use fisheries.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) (EF-F24-114)

PROPOSAL 68

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Prohibit dipnetting from a boat in the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

5 AAC 77.591 (c) Salmon may be taken only with dip nets **while not in a boat.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce undue stress on Copper River king and sockeye salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict

Being able to target holding areas during times of high water that are not accessible from shore enhances the ability to catch king salmon. Based on ADF&G data, average king harvest per permit from 2019 to 2023 is 0.4 from boat and 0.3 from shore. About 6,000 Personal Use permits are issued each year. Only one king salmon can be retained annually per household. Fishing from a boat increases the number of kings caught and released. En route mortality of king salmon due to catch and release stress is not documented and could be contributing to decreased escapements. Copper River king salmon have failed to meet escapement goals 4 of the last 10 years.

High stream flows have become more frequent in recent years, slowing the migration time by forcing fish to find refuge in eddies and pools until conditions are favorable for continued migration. Prior to use of boats for dipnetting, the salmon could seek this refuge in inaccessible areas to fishermen during times of high water. Now these areas are targeted.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. No

PROPOSED BY: Faye Ewan (HQ-F24-107)

PROPOSAL 69

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Establish restrictions when dipnetting from a boat in the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

(C) Salmon may be taken only with dip nets. Salmon taken with a dipnet from a powerboat will be subject to more time and area restrictions to allow fish passage to return to a pattern that more closely resembles past practices in the fishery.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The change in the nature, efficiency and scope of area not previously accessed by the Personal Use fishery in the Chitina Subdistrict. The use of power boats and especially the increase in charter power boats has allowed the take of fish holding on the bottom of the river during high water events and throughout the season in areas the were never before fished or exploited. This change in harvest method and area combined with increased commercialization is a drastic change that the Department has not fully recognized.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Coordinated with others watching the river activities.

PROPOSED BY: Shawn Gilman (EF-F24-028)

PROPOSAL 70

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Extend the lower boundary of the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

The Chitina Dipnetters Assn. is requesting the BOF extend the lower boundary of the Chitina Personal Use Dipnet Fishery with new language in 5AAC 77.591(h) as defined below.

For the purpose of this section, the Chitina Subdistrict consists of all waters of the mainstream Copper River from the downstream edge of the Chitina-McCarthy Bridge downstream **to a line crossing the Copper River from a point just upstream of Canyon Creek on the east (lat. 61 deg 24'36.00"N – lon. 144 deg. 28'25.34"W) angling across the Copper River to the existing lower limit sign at Haley Creek** [to an east west line crossing the Copper River approximately 200 yds. Upstream of Haley Creek]

This extension would, at its longest point, increase the drift area by approximately .4 of a mile or 694 yds. and give boat dipnetters a longer continuous drift, allowing more spacing between boats and alleviate the dangerous congestion of boats that occurs now. The revised language would still give law enforcement a straight line sight of the entire boundary line as viewed from Haley Creek. This small increase in size of the Chitina Sub-district is unlikely to result in increased harvests, since the fishery is managed by emergency order to stay within the allocation contained in the

management plan and because Personal Use dipnetters are held to an annual bag limit and once met they are done for the year.

A map identifying the existing and proposed lower boundaries will be submitted to the BOF prior to the December 2024 Copper River/Prince William Sound meeting.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the last 12 years, drift dipnetting from both personal and guided boats has substantially increased as a method of harvesting salmon in the Chitina Personal Use Dipnet Fishery (CPUDF). This is in large part due to the very limited number of suitable sites available for shore based dipnetting. Because much of the CPUDF lies within the deep turbulent waters of Woods Canyon on the Copper River, productive areas to dip from boats are very limited. A favorable and high use area for drift dipnetting from boats lies at the downstream end of Woods Canyon, on the east side of the Copper River, just upstream of the lower boundary of the CPUDF. This short drift area is only approximately 250 yards long, has a gravel bottom and stays relatively snag free saving the loss of \$150+ dipnets. This short drift area has become the go-to spot for boat dipnetters and often becomes very congested with up to and over 15 boats drifting the same area. This congestion of boats in this short drift area has created a very dangerous navigation hazard for these boaters within the swift waters of the Copper River and boat accidents are inevitable.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. The Chitina Dipnetters Assn. and the Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee.

PROPOSED BY: The Chitina Dipnetters Assn. (HQ-F24-030)

PROPOSAL 71

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Prohibit guiding in the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

5 AAC 01.620(x) Fishing guide services are prohibited in the Copper River Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use Fishery.

(x) "fishing guide services" means assistance, for compensation or with the intent to receive compensation, to a Personal Use Fishery participant to take or to attempt to take fish from a vessel by accompanying or physically directing the Personal Use Fishery participant in fishing activities during any part of a fishing trip

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Guided fishing from a boat is already not allowed in the Glennallen Subdistrict. We would like to expand this to apply to the Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use Fishery as well.

The Personal Use Fishery in the past three years has exceeded the allocated 100,000 – 150,000 limit with a three-year average of 163,989 (an underestimation, based on preliminary 2023 data).

Guided fishing from a boat provides expertise and allows targeting of holding areas especially during times of high water that are not accessible from shore and enhances ability to catch king

salmon and sockeye salmon. Based on ADF&G data, average king harvest per permit from 2019 to 2023 is 0.4 from boat and 0.3 from shore. About 6,000 to 8,000 Personal Use permits are issued each year, many of which use guide services. Only one king salmon can be retained annually per household. Fishing from a boat increases the number of kings caught and released. En route mortality of king salmon due to catch and release stress is not documented and could be contributing to decreased escapements. Copper River king salmon have failed to meet escapement goals 4 of the last 10 years.

High water levels have become more frequent in recent years, slowing the migration time by forcing fish to seek refuge in eddies and pools until conditions are favorable for continued migration. Prior to use of boats for dip netting and guided fishing trips, the salmon could seek this refuge in inaccessible areas to fishermen during times of high water. Now these areas are targeted by guides.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. No.

PROPOSED BY: Ahtna Tene Nene'

(HQ-F24-112)
