

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS ON COMMERCIAL, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, AND SUBSISTENCE REGULATORY PROPOSALS

ARCTIC-YUKON-KUSKOKWIM MANAGEMENT AREAS FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

November 18–22, 2025



Regional Information Report No. 3A25-09

The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, November 18–22, 2025, in Fairbanks, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

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Weights and measures (metric)		General		Acronyms	
centimeter	cm	Alaska Administrative		Acceptable Biological Catch	ABC
deciliter	dL	Code	AAC	Alaska Board of Fisheries	board
gram	g	all commonly accepted		Alaska Department of Fish	department
hectare	ha	abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.	and Game	/ADF&G
kilogram	kg			Amount Necessary for	
kilometer	km	all commonly accepted		Subsistence	ANS
liter	L	professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.	Alaska Wildlife Troopers	AWT
meter	m			Biological Escapement Goal	BEG
milliliter	mL	at	@	Central Gulf of Alaska	CGOA
millimeter	mm	compass directions:		Coded Wire Tag	CWT
		east	E	Commercial Fisheries Entry	
Weights and measures (English)		north	N	Commission	CFEC
cubic feet per second	ft³/s	south	S	Cook Inlet Aquaculture	
foot	ft	west	W	Association	CIAA
gallon	gal	copyright	©	Customary and Traditional	C&T
inch	in	corporate suffixes:		Department of Natural	
mile	mi	Company	Co.	Resources	DNR
nautical mile	nmi	Corporation	Corp.	Demersal Shelf Rockfish	DSR
ounce	oz	Incorporated	Inc.	Emergency Order	EO
pound	lb	Limited	Ltd.	Guideline Harvest Level	GHL
quart	qt	District of Columbia	D.C.	Gulf of Alaska	GOA
yard	yd	et alii (and others)	et al.	Global Positioning System	GPS
		et cetera (and so forth)	etc.	Individual Fishing Quota	IFQ
Time and temperature		exempli gratia		Local Area Management Plan	LAMP
day	d	(for example)	e.g.	Lower Cook Inlet	LCI
degrees Celsius	°C	Federal Information		Mean Low Water	MLW
degrees Fahrenheit	°F	Code	FIC	Mean Lower Low Water	MLLW
degrees kelvin	K	id est (that is)	i.e.	No Data	ND
hour	h	latitude or longitude	lat or long	National Marine Fisheries	
minute	min	monetary symbols		Service	NMFS
second	s	(U.S.)	\$, ¢	National Oceanic and	
		months (tables and		Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
Physics and chemistry		figures): first three		Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon	NDFL
all atomic symbols		letters	Jan,...,Dec	North Pacific Fishery	
alternating current	AC	registered trademark	®	Management Council	NPFMC
ampere	A	trademark	™	Optimum Escapement Goal	OEG
calorie	cal	United States		Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	PSR
direct current	DC	(adjective)	U.S.	Prince William Sound	PWS
hertz	Hz	United States of		Prior Notice of Landing	PNOL
horsepower	hp	America (noun)	USA	Private Nonprofit Salmon	
hydrogen ion activity	pH	U.S.C.	United States	Hatchery	PNP
(negative log of)			Code	River Mile	RM
parts per million	ppm	U.S. state	use two-letter	Special Harvest Area	SHA
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰		abbreviations	Sustainable Escapement Goal	SEG
			(e.g., AK, WA)	Trail Lakes Hatchery	TLH
volts	V			Upper Cook Inlet	UCI
watts	W			Western Gulf of Alaska	WGOA

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REGULATORY PROPOSALS**

ARCTIC-YUKON-KUSKOKWIM MANAGEMENT AREAS FINFISH

**ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA**

NOVEMBER 18–22, 2025

by
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Sport Fish, Research and Technical Services
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518–1565

October 2025

ABSTRACT

This document contains Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff comments on commercial, sport, subsistence, and personal use finfish regulatory proposals for the Arctic–Yukon–Kuskokwim Management Areas. The department prepared these comments for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, November 18–22 in Fairbanks, Alaska. The comments are forwarded to assist the public and board. The comments contained herein should be considered preliminary and subject to change as new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral public testimony presented to the board.

Keywords: Alaska Board of Fisheries (board), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department), staff comments, Arctic–Yukon–Kuskokwim, finfish, management, management plan, regulatory proposals, inriver, commercial fisheries, personal use, sport, guided sport, subsistence, bag limits, possession limits, king, sockeye, coho, chum, pink, salmon

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals for Arctic–Yukon–Kuskokwim Finfish – Fairbanks, November 18–22, 2025.

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
12	S	Add eel sticks as an allowable subsistence gear type for fish other than salmon.
13	S	Close king salmon sport fishing in the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream of and including the Holitna River from July 26 through April 30.
14	S	Eliminate bag and possession limits for sheefish in the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Arolik Rivers.
15	O	Close harvest of fall chum salmon for 2 years in the mainstem Yukon River.
16	O	Prohibit the use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River after fall chum salmon are detected in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery project
17	O	Allow the use of 6-inch or smaller mesh set gillnets in Hamilton Slough, the Anen’eq River (Unuk River), and the Ingricuar River from September 1 to September 30, during times of salmon conservation
18	S	Eliminate the provision of the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan to reduce the sport daily bag and possession limit when subsistence harvest is 750 or more northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice. Open season for sport fishing would be changed from June 1 through October 14 to April 15 through October 14
19	N	Eliminate the provision of the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan to reduce the sport daily bag and possession limit when subsistence harvest is 750 or more northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice. Open season for sport fishing would be changed from June 1 through October 14 to May 1 through October 14.
20	O	Modify the provision of the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan to reduce the sport daily bag and possession limit when subsistence harvest is 750 or more northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice to only include waters of the Chatanika River drainage upstream of and including Goldstream Creek.
21	O	Allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike and prohibit the use of bait and barbed hooks in Harding Lake.
22	S	Allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike in Harding Lake.
23	S	Increase the bag and possession limit for northern pike in Volkmar Lake to match the general regulations of 5 fish of which only 1 fish may be 30 inches or longer.

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
24	N	Eliminate the youth-only fishery for Arctic grayling that occurs during 4 weekends (8 days) in June and July.
25	S	Repeal the registration requirement for ice houses that are not removed from the ice daily in the Tanana River Area.
26	S	Modify regulations for Arctic grayling in the Shaw Creek drainage and the Tanana River within a 2-mile radius of the Shaw Creek.
27	S	Modify management of Rainbow Lake, which is a stocked water, and increase the daily bag and possession in Rainbow Lake for all stocked finfish species combined from 5 to 10, of which only 1 may be 18 inches or greater in length.
28	S	Establish beach seine specifications for subsistence fisheries in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence District.
29	N	Establish an annual household limit of 25 sockeye salmon for the Sinuk River subsistence fishery in Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District.
30	N	Move the subsistence net fishing closed waters boundary in the Sinuk River from the confluence of Boulder Creek, approximately 7 miles downstream, to Camp Creek.
31	N	Move the subsistence net fishing closed waters boundary in the Sinuk River from the confluence of Boulder Creek, approximately 7 miles downstream to Camp Creek.
32	N	Rescind the subsistence gillnet fishing schedule for Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District in marine waters West of Cape Nome.
33	N	Prohibit the retention of king salmon by subsistence users when using beach seine gear in the Pilgrim River
34	N	Reduce the Pilgrim River subsistence permit annual household limit to one king salmon.
35	O	Remove the requirement for subsistence users fishing with hook and line attached to a rod or pole to follow sport fish daily bag and possession limits while fishing for salmon in northern Norton Sound.
36	N	Allow for catch and release sport fishing for king salmon when the subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of king salmon in the marine waters of Subdistrict 5 and 6 or in the Unalakleet River Drainage.
37	S	Close the Pilgrim River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.
38	O	Increase the maximum allowable hook size for multiple hooks when fishing for salmon to a gap between point and shank of up to 19/32 inch in the Northwestern Management Area.

Proposal Number	Department Position	Issue
39	N	Reduce the daily background bag and possession limit for sheefish from 10 fish with no size limit to 5 fish with no size limit in the Northwestern Management Area.
40	N	Require a sheefish subsistence permit for fishing through the ice in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area.
41	N, O	Add bow and arrow as a legal subsistence gear type in the Arctic-Kotzebue area for nonsalmon species and eliminate the closed season in the Noatak River sport fishery for northern pike.
42	S	Close marine waters of Subdistrict 1 in the Kotzebue District to subsistence and commercial fishing adjacent to the runway in Kotzebue.

N = Neutral; S = Support; O = Oppose; NA = No Action, WS = Withdrawn Support

PROPOSAL 12 – 5 AAC 01.270(c). Lawful gear and gear specifications and operation.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add eel sticks as an allowable subsistence gear type for fish other than salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Eel sticks are not an allowable gear type for subsistence fishing within the Kuskokwim Area. Currently, fish other than salmon may only be taken by set gillnet, drift gillnet, beach seine, fish wheel, pot, longline, fyke net, dip net, jigging gear, spear, a hook and line attached to a rod or pole, handline, or lead.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Eel sticks would become an allowable gear type for subsistence fishing in the Kuskokwim Area. It is unlikely that eel sticks will substantially change the quantity of lamprey harvested.

BACKGROUND: Kuskokwim River residents have historically used eel sticks (aka “eel rakes”) to harvest lamprey (Charnley 1984) similar to the eel rakes used by residents living in lower and middle Yukon River communities (Brown et al. 2005). Lamprey harvest occurs in the late fall and early winter in the middle Kuskokwim communities (Charnley 1984). Successful lamprey fishing is difficult and requires a specialized skill set. Fishers who target eels monitor ice conditions to ensure sturdy fixed river ice and communicate with neighboring communities to calculate eel travel time upriver. When eels are anticipated, fishers, cut and maintain open water channels, and, because eels often have inconsistent run timing, fishers are prepared to fish continuously while the eels pass by their community.

An eel stick is approximately 10 feet long and several inches wide, the lower 2-4 feet are drilled with holes which are fitted with nails or pegs (5 AAC 39.105(d)(31)). After the narrow channels are cut in the river ice perpendicular to shore, the pegged end of the eel stick is swept across the current. When a lamprey is encountered, the lamprey bends around the pole and rests on the nails. The stick is swept out of the water and the lamprey are deposited on the ice where they freeze in the open air.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Lamprey are not specifically listed, however, 5 AAC 01.286 (1) reads: “halibut, Pacific cod, and *all other finfish*” The board may choose to interpret “finfish” to include lamprey.
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 13 – 5 AAC. 71.010 Seasons, bag, possession annual and size limits for the Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would close king salmon sport fishing in the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream of and including the Holitna River from July 26 through April 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream of and including the Holitna River, there is currently no seasonal closure in regulation for the king salmon sport fishery. However, downstream of the Holitna River (including the Kuskokwim Bay Drainages) sport fishing for king salmon is closed from July 26-April 30 to protect spawning salmon. The background regulation for bag and possession limits for both the upper and lower Kuskokwim areas is 3 king salmon per day, 3 in possession, only 2 of which may be 28 inches or longer, and 10 per day, 10 in possession for king salmon less than 20 inches.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would eliminate the harvest of king salmon during the spawning period and align the king salmon sport fishing season in the upper and lower Kuskokwim River.

BACKGROUND: The regulatory discrepancy between king salmon seasons in the upper and lower portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage has been annually addressed by aligning the upriver closing date with the lower river by emergency order. Due to poor runs of king salmon since 2013, and the subsequent closures by emergency order, there is no data available from the sport fish Statewide Harvest Survey to compare catch and harvest of king salmon between the upper and lower river.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. This will simplify regulations and protect spawning king salmon in the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream of and including the Holitna River drainage.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 14 – 5 AAC 71.010. Seasons and bag, possession annual and size limits for the Kuskokwim-Goodnews Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate bag and possession limits for sheefish in the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Arolik Rivers.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current bag and possession limit for sheefish in all 3 rivers is 2 fish and no size limit. The general bag and possession limit for sheefish in the Kuskokwim River Area is 10 and no size limit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED:

Regulations would be simplified by eliminating bag and possession limits for sheefish in drainages where they are not present.

BACKGROUND: The Kanektok, Arolik, and Goodnews Rivers support popular sport fisheries used by both guided and non-guided anglers. Primary target species include rainbow trout and king salmon (when not restricted), as well as coho salmon, Arctic grayling, Dolly Varden, and sockeye salmon. Sheefish are not reported in the sport harvest from these rivers. Some residents of Quinhagak have occasionally caught sheefish in set gillnets in the saltwater of Kuskokwim Bay or in the brackish outflow from the Kuskokwim River. Subsistence Division data found that 2% of Quinhagak households reported sheefish harvests in open water set nets during a 2017 comprehensive subsistence study. In contrast, sheefish are regularly harvested throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Removing these bag and possession limits would simplify regulations and eliminate the implication that sheefish are present in the Kanektok, Goodnews, or Arolik Rivers.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. The board made positive customary and traditional use findings for halibut, Pacific cod, and all other finfish, except as specified in (2) - (4) of this subsection, in the Kuskokwim Area; (2) salmon in the Kuskokwim Area, except the Kuskokwim River drainage; (3) king, chum, sockeye, coho, and pink salmon in the Kuskokwim River drainage; (4) herring and herring roe, along the coast between the westernmost tip of the Naskonat Peninsula and the terminus of the Ishowik River, and along the coast of Nunivak Island.
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? No, because sheefish do not inhabit these drainages.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses.

5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination

6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 15 – 5 AAC 01.249. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee & Koyukuk River Fish & Game Advisory Committee Andy Bassich, Chair of Eagle AC.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would close harvest of fall chum salmon for 2 years in the mainstem Yukon River. After fall chum salmon are detected in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery project (LYTF), closures would start in the Coastal District and District 1 and would progress upriver by closing each district based on fall chum salmon run timing (as fish enter each district). Closures of directed fall chum salmon fishing would relax after the fall chum salmon runs have ended in each district.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In accordance with the *Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan* (5AAC 01.249), the fall chum salmon management begins July 16. If the projected run size is 300,000 chum salmon or less, the department shall close the commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence directed chum salmon fisheries. If indicators suggest that an individual tributary escapement goal will be achieved, the department may open a subsistence directed chum salmon fishery in that specific tributary. If the projected run size is more than 300,000, but not more than 500,000 chum salmon, the department shall close commercial, sport, and personal use directed chum salmon fishing. If indicators suggest that an individual escapement goal in a tributary will be achieved, the department may open a sport or personal use directed chum salmon fishery in that subdistrict, district, or a portion of a subdistrict or district and manage the subsistence chum salmon directed fisheries to achieve the targeted drainagewide escapement goal. If the projected run size is 550,000 chum salmon or less, the department may open and close the commercial fisheries drainagewide and manage the fisheries to achieve escapements within the established drainagewide escapement goal range of 300,000–600,000 chum salmon (Table 15-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Chum salmon genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) sampling would need to take place as part of the LYTF project to distinguish fall chum salmon from summer chum salmon. Directed chum salmon harvest in the mainstem Yukon River would close in the Coastal District and District 1 as soon as the first genetically identified fall chum salmon was detected in LYTF, which can be as early as mid-June. Closures of directed chum salmon harvest would progress upriver based on fall chum salmon run timing and would not relax until after the fall chum salmon run ended in each district. This would be a hardship on subsistence users that rely on summer chum salmon.

BACKGROUND: From 2020 to 2024, Yukon River fall chum salmon runs have been very low and no primary goals have been met since 2019; the drainagewide escapement goal (SEG range of 300,000–600,000), Fishing Branch River Interim Management Escapement Goal (IMEG range of 22,000–49,000), or the mainstem Canadian Treaty objective (IMEG range of 70,000 – 104,000) (Figure 15-1). The most recent 5-year average drainagewide escapement is 179,300 fall chum salmon (2020–2024) compared to a historic average of 686,400 fall chum salmon (2004–2024) and the most recent 5-year average Canadian mainstem escapement is 21,400 fall chum salmon compared to a historic average of about 149,800 fall chum salmon (2004–2024, Table 15-2). Two Alaskan tributaries have their own escapement goals: Teedriinjik (Chandalar River, SEG 85,000–234,000) and the Delta River (SEG 7,000–20,000) (Figure 15-1). The escapement goals in both tributaries have been achieved in several years since the start of the salmon decline in 2020

including the Delta River SEG in 2020, 2023, and 2024, and the Teedriinjik (Chandalar River) SEG in 2023 (Table 15-2).

Yukon River fall chum salmon have been differentiated from summer chum salmon using MSA since 2004 by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Samples are collected by department staff at the Yukon River mainstem Pilot Station sonar project during test fishing operations (approximately three days travel from LYTF). Shipping and lab processing by USFWS takes 4–7 days and data summaries are used for inseason management. Genetic sampling occurs throughout the season and is required for identifying the transition from summer to fall chum salmon, as well as distinguishing Alaska and Canada stocks. Fall season management begins on the regulatory date of July 16 in the lower Yukon River, but the actual timing when fall chum salmon begin to dominate the samples varies annually. In 2025, the first genetic detection of fall chum salmon occurred in samples collected between June 4 and June 22. On average, fall chum salmon, made up 0.9% of the chum salmon run passing Pilot Station by June 28, from 2004–2024 (Figure 15-2).

From 2004–2024, average composition of fall chum salmon stocks were 34% Tanana Fall stocks (Bluff Cabin, Delta, Nenana, Kantishna, Tanana Mainstem, and Toklat), 36% Border U.S. stocks (Big Salt, Draanjik, Teedriinjik, and Sheenjek), and 26% Canadian Mainstem stocks (Big Creek, Minto, Pelly, Tatchun, Donjek, Kluane, and Teslin). The Mainstem Canada stocks are a subset of total Canada stocks (30% average contribution), which also include the Fishing Branch River (Table 15-3). However, since 2020, the mainstem Canada stock contribution has averaged only 13% and the total Canada stock contribution has averaged 17%, representing a sharp decrease from the historic average (Table 15-3). Fall chum salmon production in Canada has declined likely due to multiple factors that have hindered achievement of the current IMEG.

The dramatic retreat of the Kaskawulsh Glacier since 2016 provides a clear example of environmental change affecting fall chum salmon production. The retreat redirected glacial meltwater eastward into the Kaskawulsh River of the Alsek drainage, rather than northward into Kluane Lake. Kluane Lake is a major contributor to the mainstem Canada fall chum salmon and falling lake levels have impacted downslope groundwater upwellings needed to maintain incubating eggs above freezing. Studies and environmental monitoring are ongoing, but it will take time to determine the long-term environmental impacts on the population.

Beginning part way through the 2020 season, directed fishing for fall chum salmon in the mainstem Yukon River has been closed. Harvest, including test fisheries and drainagewide incidental catches, has been very low with a 5-year average of about 4,000 fall chum salmon, compared to the 2015–2024 average subsistence harvest of about 41,000 fish (Figure 15-3). Directed summer chum salmon subsistence harvest since 2020 has occurred in three years (2020, 2023, and 2024) with a 5-year average of about 21,900 fish, compared to 74,500 fish during 2015–2024. (Figure 15-4).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The *Yukon River drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan* currently prohibits opening the directed fall chum salmon subsistence fishery in the mainstem Yukon River when the run projection is below the lower end of the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000 fish. No directed subsistence fishing on fall chum salmon has occurred in the mainstem Yukon River since 2020. Given recent declines, fishery managers would need to be very confident that both the drainagewide SEG and Canadian Boarder IMEG would be met before allowing directed subsistence fall chum salmon opportunity. The loss of opportunity to fish on surplus yields of summer chum salmon would be a hardship for subsistence

users, especially with food security concerns and the lack of opportunity for passing on culturally important fishing practices, especially given the almost total closure of directed salmon opportunity in the last five years. Recent escapement levels for fall chum salmon have been very low but the data do not support that these stocks are in danger of extinction. Evidence is pointing to improved ocean conditions and salmon runs; the 2025 fall chum salmon run was stronger, and fall chum and coho salmon runs across western Alaska including the Yukon River improved.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? Small portions of the salmon populations in the Yukon River drainage occur within the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? The Board of Fisheries found that king, summer chum, fall chum, coho, and pink salmon are customarily and traditionally taken for subsistence in the Yukon Area (5 AAC 01.236(1)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Under the current management plan, harvest may be allowed if the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000 fall chum salmon is met.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The amount of fall chum salmon necessary for subsistence uses is 89,500 to 167,900 fish (5 AAC 01.236(b)(3)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 15-1.—Yukon River drainage fall chum salmon management plan overview, in U.S. waters.

Run size estimate ^b (point estimate)	Recommended management action ^a Fall chum salmon directed fisheries				Targeted drainagewide escapement
	Subsistence	Personal use	Sport	Commercial	
300,000 or less	Closure ^c	Closure	Closure	Closure	300,000 to 600,000
300,001 to 550,000	Possible Restrictions ^{c, d}	Closure ^c	Closure ^c	Closure	
Greater than 550,000	No restrictions	Open	Open	Open ^e	

^a Considerations for the Canadian mainstem interim management escapement goal may require more restrictive management actions.

^b Alaska Department of Fish and Game will use the best available data, including preseason projections, mainstem river sonar passage estimates, test fisheries indices, subsistence and commercial fishing reports, and passage estimates from escapement monitoring projects.

^c The fisheries may be opened or less restrictive in areas where indicator(s) suggest the escapement goal(s) in that area will be achieved.

^d Subsistence fishing will be managed to achieve a minimum drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000 fall chum salmon.

^e Drainagewide commercial fisheries may be open and the harvestable surplus above 550,000 fall chum salmon will be distributed by district or subdistrict (in proportion to the guidelines harvest levels established in 5 AAC 05.365 and 5 AAC 05.367).

Table 15-2.–Fall chum salmon cumulative escapement estimates, 2004–2024.

Year	Drainagewide	Delta River	Teedriinjik	Fishing Branch	Mainstem Canada
2004	576,800	25,100	169,800	20,400	154,100
2005	1,906,000	28,100	526,800	119,100	437,500
2006	945,000	14,100	254,800	31,000	220,900
2007	956,500	18,600	243,800	32,200	237,000
2008	639,900	23,100	178,300	19,100	167,900
2009	507,900	13,500	NA	25,800	93,600
2010	507,400	18,000	167,500	15,400	117,800
2011	919,300	23,600	298,200	13,100	205,600
2012	691,400	9,400	205,800	22,400	137,700
2013	854,600	32,000	252,700	25,400	200,300
2014	739,400	32,500	226,500	7,300	156,800
2015	542,400	33,400	164,500	8,400	108,700
2016	833,700	22,000	295,000	29,400	145,300
2017	1,723,000	48,800	509,100	48,500	401,600
2018	653,200	39,700	170,400	10,200	154,100
2019	521,300	51,700	116,300	18,200	99,700
2020	183,200	9,900	NA	4,800	23,500
2021	93,300	1,600	21,200	2,400	23,200
2022	170,800	5,700	69,300	2,900	22,100
2023	287,900	13,000	136,600	11,500	22,100
2024	161,100	16,900	58,500	5,900	16,200
2020–2024 Average	179,300	9,400	71,400	5,500	21,400
2004–2024 Average	686,400	22,900	214,000	22,500	149,800

Table 15-3.—Relative contribution of fall chum salmon stocks based on mixed stock analysis on samples collected from July 19 to the end of operations of the mainstem Yukon River sonar test fishery at Pilot Station, 2004–2024.

Year	Reporting Groups			
	Tanana Fall	Border US	Mainstem CA	Total Canada
2004*	0.36	0.32	0.24	0.32
2005*	0.23	0.48	0.26	0.29
2006*	0.21	0.44	0.32	0.35
2007*	0.29	0.33	0.35	0.38
2008	0.26	0.37	0.35	0.37
2009	0.26	0.40	0.30	0.35
2010	0.32	0.26	0.32	0.42
2011	0.15	0.45	0.32	0.40
2012	0.32	0.40	0.27	0.28
2013	0.37	0.27	0.33	0.36
2014	0.32	0.36	0.32	0.33
2015*	0.29	0.37	0.31	0.34
2016*	0.29	0.36	0.30	0.34
2017	0.37	0.38	0.21	0.25
2018	0.42	0.28	0.28	0.30
2019*	0.37	0.30	0.26	0.32
2020	0.44	0.33	0.17	0.23
2021	0.42	0.40	0.17	0.18
2022	0.59	0.31	0.10	0.10
2023	0.42	0.41	0.15	0.17
2024	0.51	0.35	0.07	0.15
Average All Years	0.34	0.36	0.26	0.30
2004–2019	0.30	0.36	0.30	0.34
2020–2024	0.48	0.36	0.13	0.17
Minimum	0.15	0.26	0.07	0.10
Maximum	0.59	0.48	0.35	0.42

Note: Reporting group Tanana Fall includes populations Delta, Toklat and Kantishna; Border US includes Big Salt, Teedriinjek, Sheenjek, and Draanjik; Mainstem CA is a subset of Total Canada and includes Big Creek, Tatchun, Minto, Pelly, Kluane, Donjek and Teslin. Total Canada includes Mainstem CA populations and Fishing Branch River stock. These proportions are not applicable to U.S. harvests since a portion of the harvest includes summer stocks. Most recent year of data is preliminary.

* Sampling ended August 31 in 2004–2007, 2015–2016 and 2019 while the other years were sampled through September 7, this could affect the overall proportion of Tanana Fall stocks as they typically continue to increase through the end of the run.

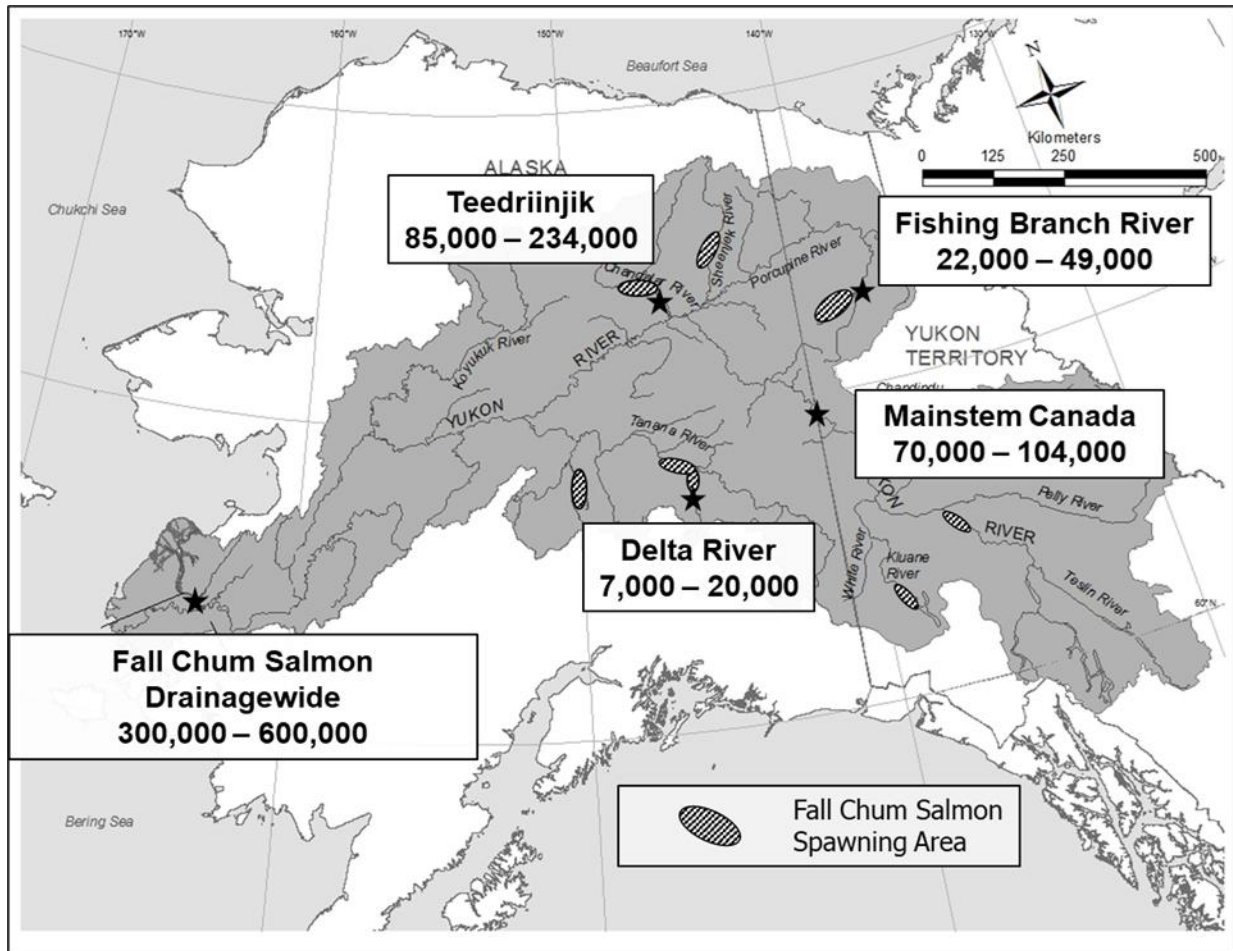


Figure 15-1.—Yukon River drainage fall chum salmon escapement goals and spawning areas.

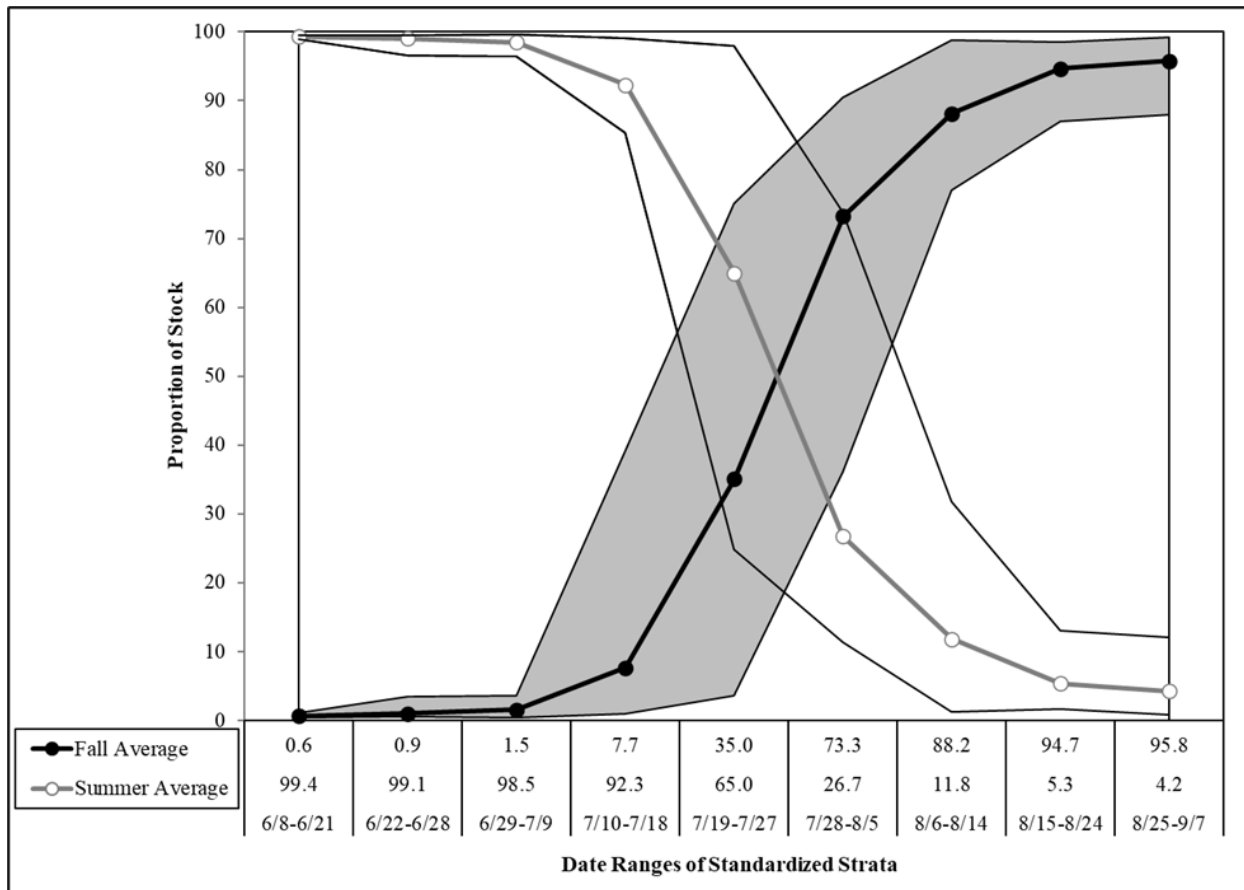


Figure 15-2.—Average proportions and range of summer and fall chum salmon stock groups based on standardizing date ranges for strata, 2004–2024.

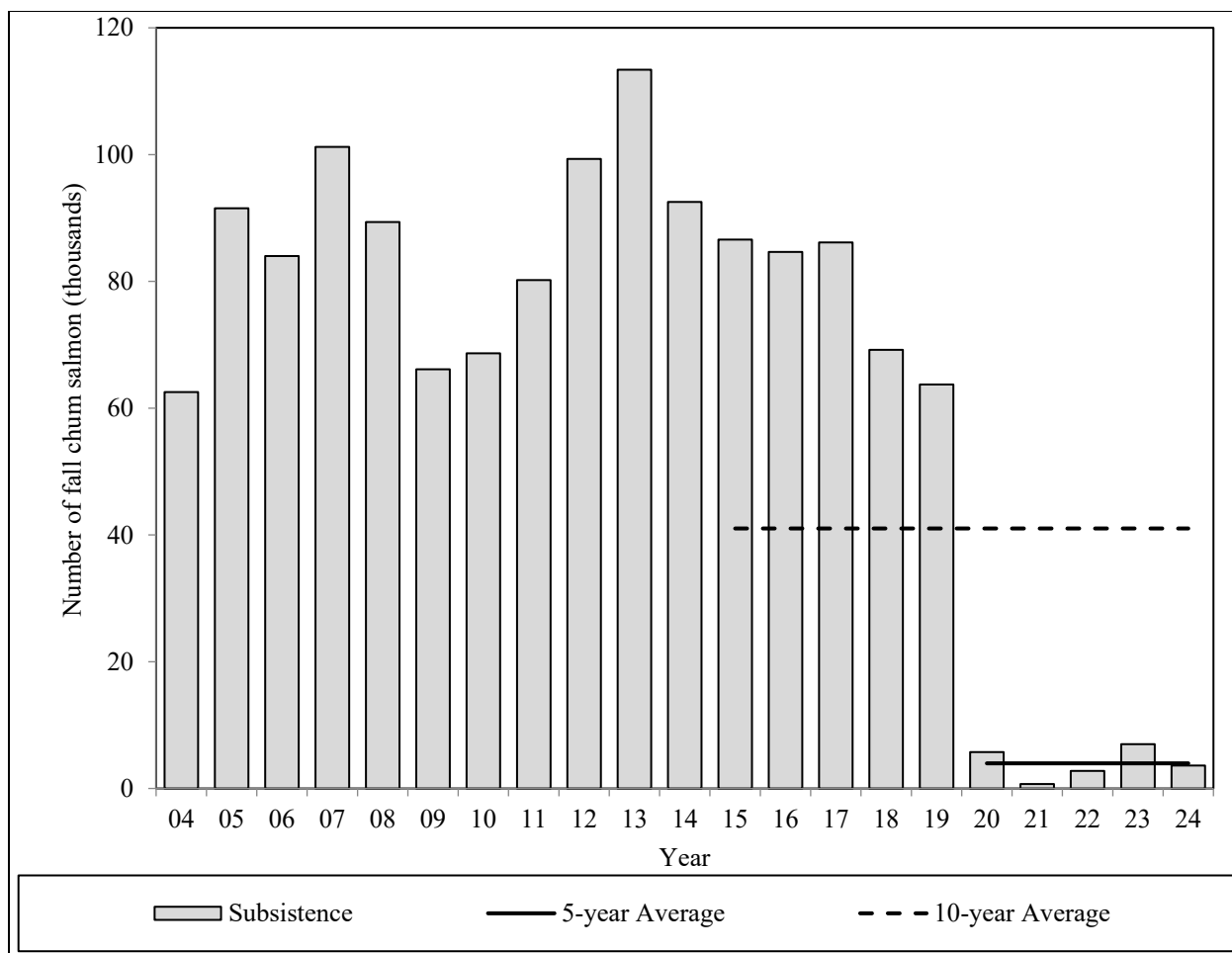


Figure 15-3.—Fall chum salmon subsistence harvest, 2004–2024.

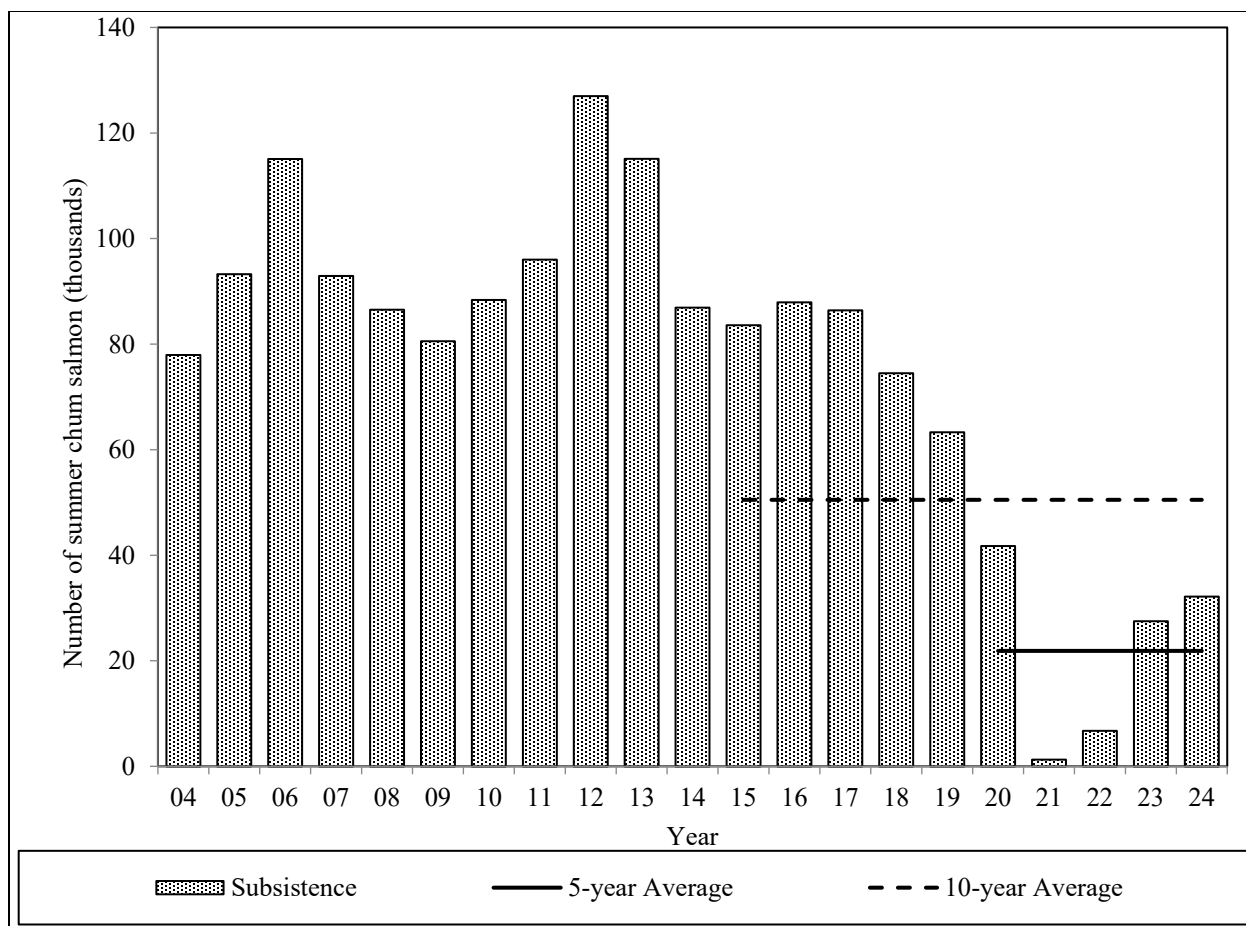


Figure 15-4.—Summer chum salmon subsistence harvest, 2004–2024.

PROPOSAL 16 – 5 AAC 01.249I. Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Eagle Fish & Game Advisory Committee Andy Bassich, Chair of Eagle AC.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit the use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River after fall chum salmon are detected in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery project (LYTF). The use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets would be prohibited in the Coastal District and District 1 and would progress upriver by closing each district based on fall chum salmon run timing (as fish enter each district). Four inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River would be allowed after the fall chum salmon run has ended in each district. The use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River would resume after 4 consecutive years in which the current mainstem Canada Border Interim Management Escapement Goal (IMEG; 70,000–104,000 fish) is achieved.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? During times when the commissioner determines it necessary for the conservation of a salmon species, the department may limit gillnets to a maximum mesh size of 4-inch or smaller mesh size to provide harvest opportunity for non-salmon species. Additionally, the department has the ability to restrict the overall length of these 4-inch gillnets and to specify the operation as a set gillnet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted, the use of 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River to target nonsalmon would be prohibited after fall chum salmon are detected in the Lower Yukon Test Fishery project (LYTF). Chum salmon genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) sampling would need to take place as part of the LYTF project to distinguish fall chum salmon from summer chum salmon. Gillnets of 4-inch or smaller mesh could be used in areas off the mainstem Yukon River with a defined setback distance from the mouth of the side slough or tributary. Subsistence fishers targeting nonsalmon in the mainstem would have to use selective gear types including dip nets, beach seines, hook and line attached to a rod or pole, fyke nets, and manned fish wheels when allowed. The efficiency of harvesting nonsalmon in the mainstem would decrease significantly and people may have to buy new equipment to comply with the new regulation. The inability to use 4-inch or smaller gillnets would disrupt subsistence fishing for nonsalmon during a notable portion of June through September, likely reducing subsistence harvest of traditional nonsalmon fishes. The requirement to enact this regulation until 4 consecutive years of achieving the mainstem Canada IMEG occurs would result in foregone harvest opportunity in years when the IMEG is met. Given current concerns with the long-term productivity of mainstem fall chum salmon stocks in Canada, the prohibition could last for the foreseeable future.

BACKGROUND: From 2020 to 2024, Yukon River fall chum salmon runs have been very low and no primary goals have been met since 2019; the drainagewide escapement goal (SEG range of 300,000–600,000), Fishing Branch River Interim Management Escapement Goal (IMEG range of 22,000–49,000), or the mainstem Canadian Treaty objective (IMEG range of 70,000 – 104,000) (Figure 16-1). The most recent 5-year average drainagewide escapement is 179,300 fall chum salmon (2020–2024) compared to a historic average of 686,400 fall chum salmon (2004–2024). The most recent 5-year average Canadian mainstem escapement is 21,400 fall chum salmon compared to a historic average of about 149,800 fall chum salmon (2004–2024). In Alaska, there are two tributaries that have individual escapement goals including the Teedriinjik (Chandalar River) (SEG range of 85,000–234,000) and the Delta River (SEG range of 7,000 to 20,000). The

escapement goals in both tributaries have been achieved in several years since the start of the salmon decline in 2020 including the Delta River SEG in 2020, 2023, and 2024, and the Teedriinjik (Chandalar River) SEG in 2023 (Table 16-1).

Yukon River fall chum salmon have been differentiated from summer chum salmon using MSA since 2004 by US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Samples are collected by department staff at the Yukon River mainstem Pilot Station sonar project during test fishing operations (approximately three days travel from LYTF). Not including the sampling time to achieve appropriate sample sizes, it typically takes 4–7 days for samples mailed from Pilot Station sonar project to be analyzed in the lab. Results are then summarized and reported back to the department for inclusion in management decisions. Genetic sampling occurs throughout the season and is a crucial tool for tracking the transition between summer and fall chum salmon stocks (and includes detection of Alaska vs Canada stocks). Fall season management begins on the regulatory date of July 16 in the lower Yukon River, but the actual transition when fall chum salmon begin to dominate the samples varies annually. In 2025, the first genetic fall chum salmon was identified in the first batch of genetic samples collected between June 4 and June 22. From 2004–2024, fall chum salmon, on average, make up 0.9% of the chum salmon run passing Pilot Station by June 28 (Figure 16-2).

Using MSA, the average relative contribution of fall chum salmon stocks from 2004–2024 have consisted of 34% Tanana Fall stocks (Bluff Cabin, Delta, Nenana, Kantishna, Tanana Mainstem, and Toklat), 36% Boarder US stocks (Big Salt, Draanjik, Teedriinjik, and Sheenjok) and 26% mainstem Canada stocks (Big Creek, Minto, Pelly, Tatchun, Donjek, Kluane, and Teslin) (Table 16-2). Mainstem Canada stocks are a subset of total Canada stocks (30% average contribution) which also include the Fishing Branch River. Since 2020, the mainstem Canada stock contribution has averaged only 13% and the total Canada stock contribution has averaged 17%, representing a sharp decrease from the historic average (Table 16-2). Fall chum salmon production in Canada seems to be declining and that could be due to many factors, including changing environmental conditions such as declining water levels in major spawning areas thus lowering productivity to the point of not being able to achieve the current IMEG.

As an example, Kluane Lake is a major contributor to the mainstem Canada fall chum salmon stock group and meltwater from the Kaskawulsh Glacier helped keep the lake level stable and the fall chum salmon spawning grounds underwater. Fall chum salmon spawning grounds occur around areas of upwelling groundwater that help keep fertilized eggs alive by maintaining stable water temperatures above the freezing point. In 2016, the glacier receded to the point that the meltwater now flows east into the Kaskawulsh River in the Alsek drainage instead of north into Kluane Lake. Without that glacial input, the Kluane Lake water level has dropped significantly, and a portion of fall chum salmon spawning grounds are no longer viable. Further study and monitoring of the area's environmental changes are ongoing but will take time to evaluate the potential loss of production and address the development of future spawning objectives.

Starting part way through the 2020 season, directed fishing for fall chum salmon in the mainstem Yukon River has been closed. Reported harvest of fall chum salmon in test fisheries and incidental catches drainagewide has been very low with a 5-year average of 4,000 fall chum salmon, compared to the 2015–2024 average subsistence harvest of about 41,000 fish (Figure 16-3). Since 2020, directed summer chum salmon subsistence harvest has occurred in three years (2020, 2023, and 2024) with a 5-year average of about 21,900 fish, compared to the 2015–2024 average subsistence harvest of about 74,500 fish (Figure 16-4). The vast majority of summer chum salmon

subsistence harvest occurs in the mainstem with a 5-year average of 20,500 fish taken by mainstem Yukon River communities (Figure 16-5). This compares to the 2015-2024 average subsistence harvest from mainstem Yukon River communities of 45,200 salmon (Figure 16-5).

Subsistence fishing for whitefish and other nonsalmon species is typically open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with all legal gear types and is an important source of food for many subsistence users, especially with the significant loss of salmon fishing opportunity since 2020. Gillnets are the primary subsistence fishing gear in the Yukon River drainage for both salmon and nonsalmon. Current regulations state that when it is necessary for salmon conservation, the department can limit the maximum gillnet mesh size to 4-inch, the net length, and specify its operation as a setnet near shore. This mesh size is intended to be used for targeting nonsalmon while salmon fishing is closed, as it is less efficient than the larger mesh sizes (6-inch and 7.5-inch) that are designed for catching king and chum salmon. Four inch mesh gillnets are also less efficient at catching the larger, more desirable whitefish species (i.e. sheefish, broad, and humpback whitefish) for which there is not a conservation concern. While it is less likely to catch salmon using a 4-inch mesh set gillnet, both king and chum salmon are still caught incidentally in this gear. Nonsalmon subsistence fishing opportunity with 4-inch or smaller mesh gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River has been further reduced in the fall season to only opening three days per week. Closing subsistence fishing with 4-inch mesh gillnets when the first fall chum salmon is detected until after the fall chum salmon run is complete in each district would greatly reduce nonsalmon subsistence fishing opportunity.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The potential loss of opportunity to fish for nonsalmon with 4-inch mesh set gillnets in the mainstem Yukon River would be a hardship for subsistence users. Given the almost total closure of directed salmon opportunity in the last five years, there have been food security concerns and reduced opportunity to pass on culturally important fishing practices and knowledge. Recent reported levels of fall chum salmon harvest have been very low even with 4-inch mesh set gillnets being allowed in the mainstem Yukon River since 2020. Recent escapement levels for fall chum salmon are very low but the data do not support that these stocks are in danger of extinction.

Concerns about future productivity of the mainstem Canada fall chum salmon stock group are warranted. However, there is no conservation concern for any nonsalmon species; thus, unnecessary extended closures for these species would result if harvest opportunity were contingent upon meeting the current mainstem Canada IMEG for 4 consecutive years. The 2025 fall chum salmon run was stronger than in 2024 and, given the improvements in coho salmon runs across western Alaska including the Yukon River, there is some indication that ocean conditions may be improving.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? Small portions of the salmon populations in the Yukon River drainage occur within the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? The Board of Fisheries has found that king, summer chum, fall chum, coho, and pink salmon are customarily and traditionally taken for subsistence in the Yukon Area (5 AAC 01.236(1)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Under the current management plan, harvest may be allowed if the drainagewide escapement goal of 300,000 fish is met.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The amount of fall chum salmon necessary for subsistence uses is 89,500 to 167,900 fish (5 AAC 01.236(b)(3)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 16-1.–Fall chum salmon cumulative escapement estimates, 2004-2024.

Year	Drainagewide	Delta River	Teedriinjik	Fishing Branch	Mainstem Canada
2004	576,800	25,100	169,800	20,400	154,100
2005	1,906,000	28,100	526,800	119,100	437,500
2006	945,000	14,100	254,800	31,000	220,900
2007	956,500	18,600	243,800	32,200	237,000
2008	639,900	23,100	178,300	19,100	167,900
2009	507,900	13,500	NA	25,800	93,600
2010	507,400	18,000	167,500	15,400	117,800
2011	919,300	23,600	298,200	13,100	205,600
2012	691,400	9,400	205,800	22,400	137,700
2013	854,600	32,000	252,700	25,400	200,300
2014	739,400	32,500	226,500	7,300	156,800
2015	542,400	33,400	164,500	8,400	108,700
2016	833,700	22,000	295,000	29,400	145,300
2017	1,723,000	48,800	509,100	48,500	401,600
2018	653,200	39,700	170,400	10,200	154,100
2019	521,300	51,700	116,300	18,200	99,700
2020	183,200	9,900	NA	4,800	23,500
2021	93,300	1,600	21,200	2,400	23,200
2022	170,800	5,700	69,300	2,900	22,100
2023	287,900	13,000	136,600	11,500	22,100
2024	161,100	16,900	58,500	5,900	16,200
2020–2024 Average	179,300	9,400	71,400	5,500	21,400
2004–2024 Average	686,400	22,900	214,000	22,500	149,800

Table 16-2.—Relative contribution of fall chum salmon stocks based on mixed stock analysis on samples collected from July 19 to the end of operations of the mainstem Yukon River sonar test fishery at Pilot Station, 2004–2024.

Year	Reporting Groups			
	Tanana Fall	Border US	Mainstem CA	Total Canada
2004*	0.36	0.32	0.24	0.32
2005*	0.23	0.48	0.26	0.29
2006*	0.21	0.44	0.32	0.35
2007*	0.29	0.33	0.35	0.38
2008	0.26	0.37	0.35	0.37
2009	0.26	0.40	0.30	0.35
2010	0.32	0.26	0.32	0.42
2011	0.15	0.45	0.32	0.40
2012	0.32	0.40	0.27	0.28
2013	0.37	0.27	0.33	0.36
2014	0.32	0.36	0.32	0.33
2015*	0.29	0.37	0.31	0.34
2016*	0.29	0.36	0.30	0.34
2017	0.37	0.38	0.21	0.25
2018	0.42	0.28	0.28	0.30
2019*	0.37	0.30	0.26	0.32
2020	0.44	0.33	0.17	0.23
2021	0.42	0.40	0.17	0.18
2022	0.59	0.31	0.10	0.10
2023	0.42	0.41	0.15	0.17
2024	0.51	0.35	0.07	0.15
Average All Years	0.34	0.36	0.26	0.30
2004–2019	0.30	0.36	0.30	0.34
2020–2024	0.48	0.36	0.13	0.17
Minimum	0.15	0.26	0.07	0.10
Maximum	0.59	0.48	0.35	0.42

Note: Reporting group Tanana Fall includes populations Delta, Toklat and Kantishna; Border US includes Big Salt, Teedriinjek, Sheenjek, and Draanjik; Mainstem CA is a subset of Total Canada and includes Big Creek, Tatchun, Minto, Pelly, Kluane, Donjek and Teslin. Total Canada includes Mainstem CA populations and Fishing Branch River stock. These proportions are not applicable to U.S. harvests since a portion of the harvest includes summer stocks. Most recent year of data is preliminary.

* Sampling ended August 31 in 2004–2007, 2015–2016 and 2019 while the other years were sampled through September 7, this could affect the overall proportion of Tanana Fall stocks as they typically continue to increase through the end of the run.

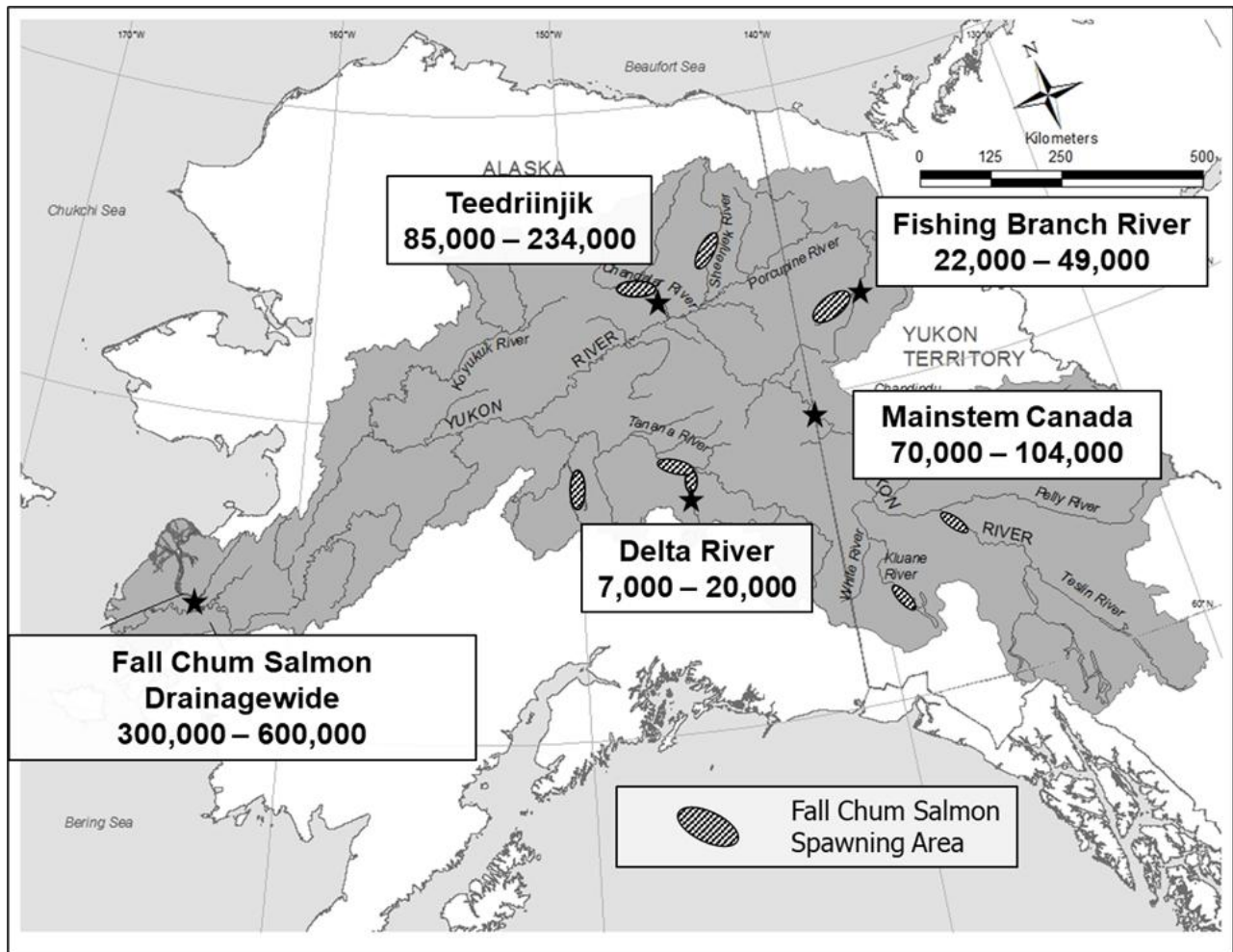


Figure 16-1.—Yukon River drainage fall chum salmon escapement goals and spawning areas.

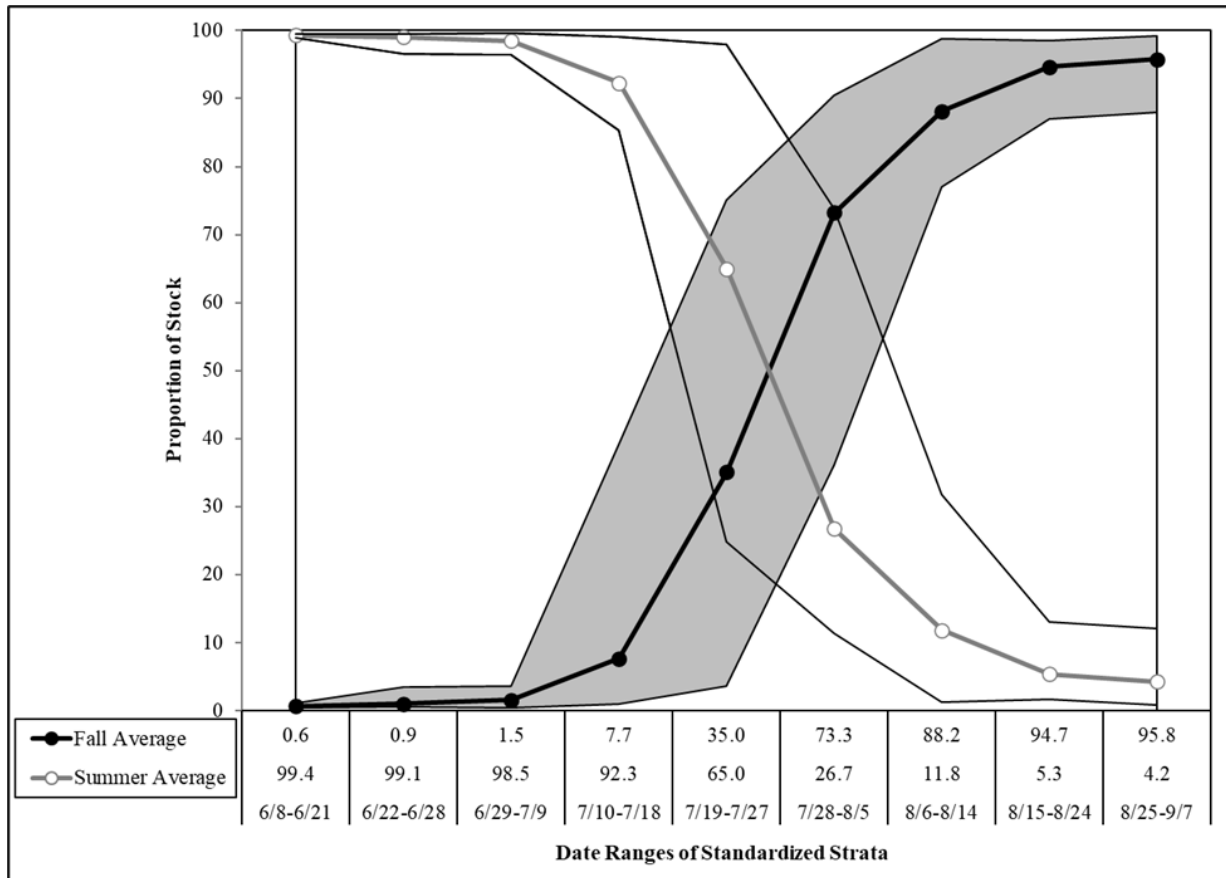


Figure 16-2.—Average proportions and ranges of summer and fall chum salmon stock groups based on standardizing date ranges for strata, 2004–2024.

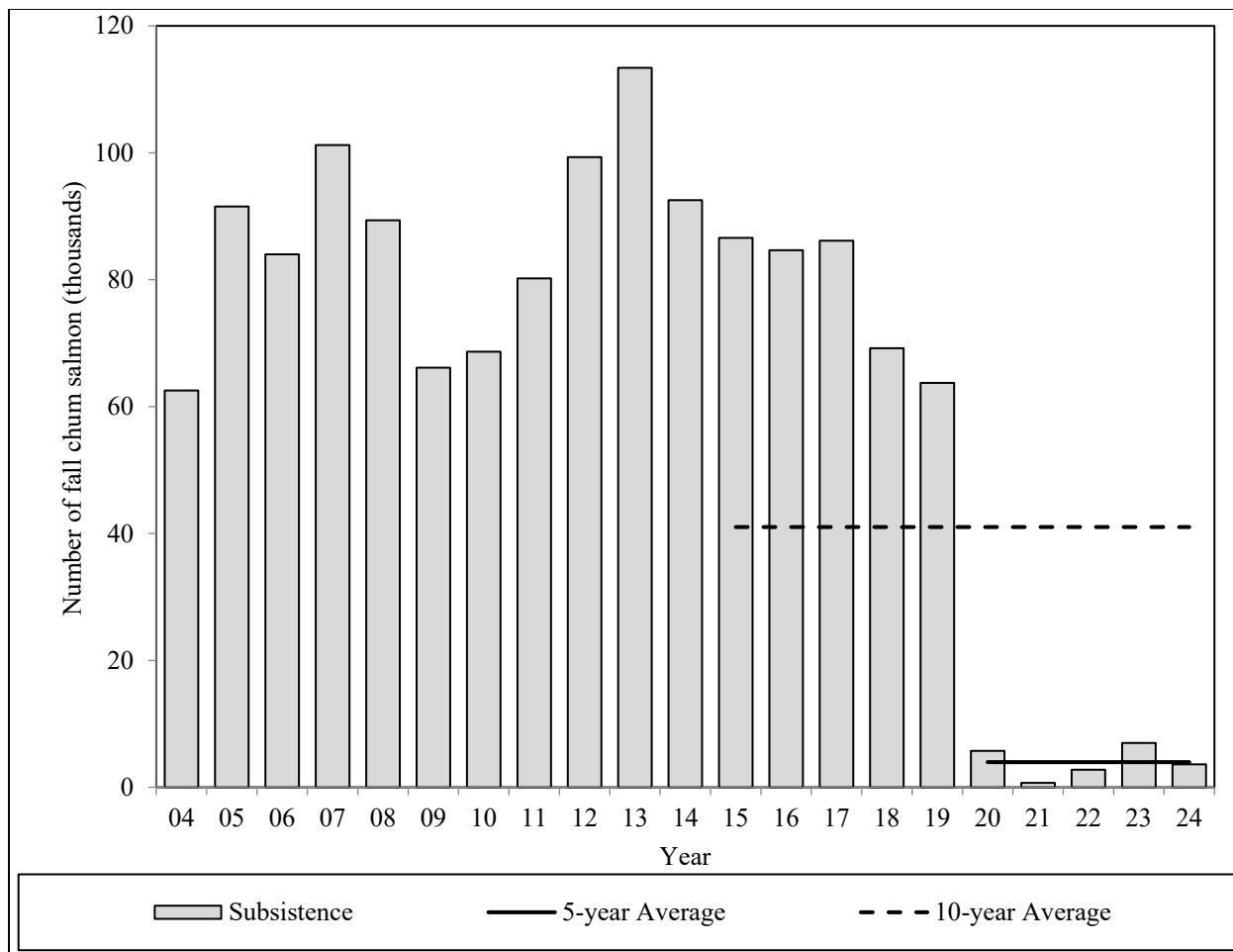


Figure 16-3.—Fall chum salmon subsistence harvest, 2004–2024.

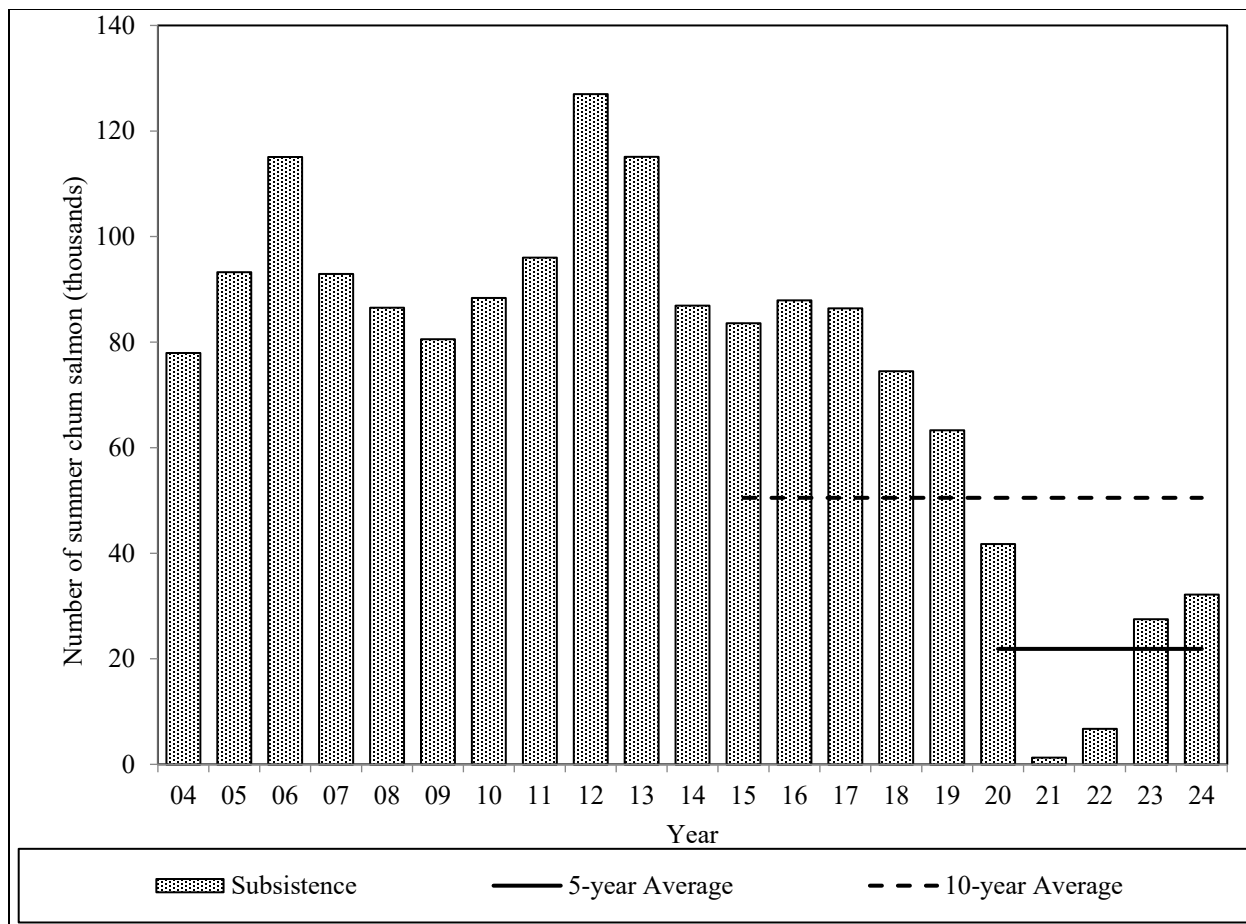


Figure 16-4.—Summer chum salmon subsistence harvest, 2004–2024.

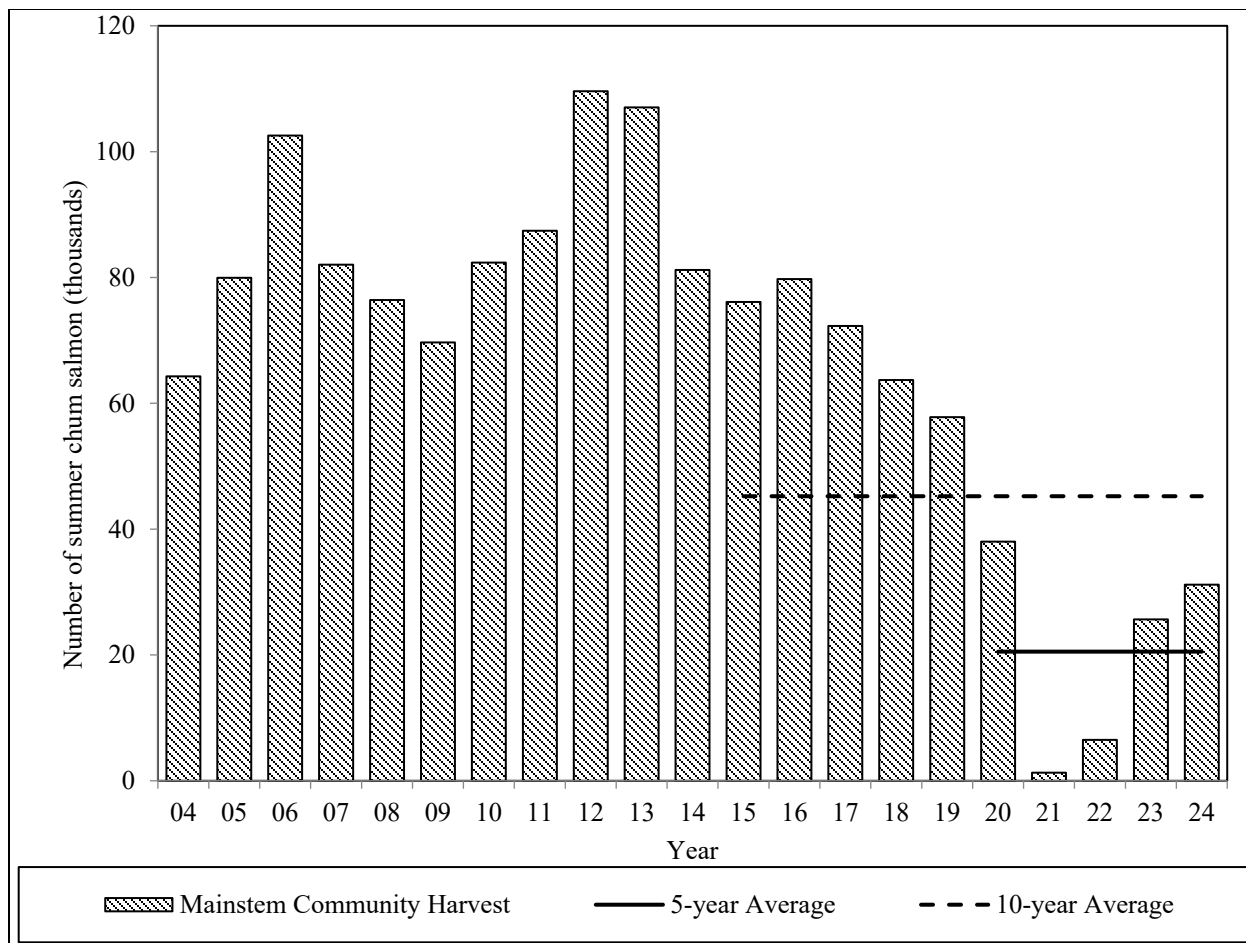


Figure 16-5.—Summer chum salmon subsistence harvest by mainstem communities, 2004–2024.

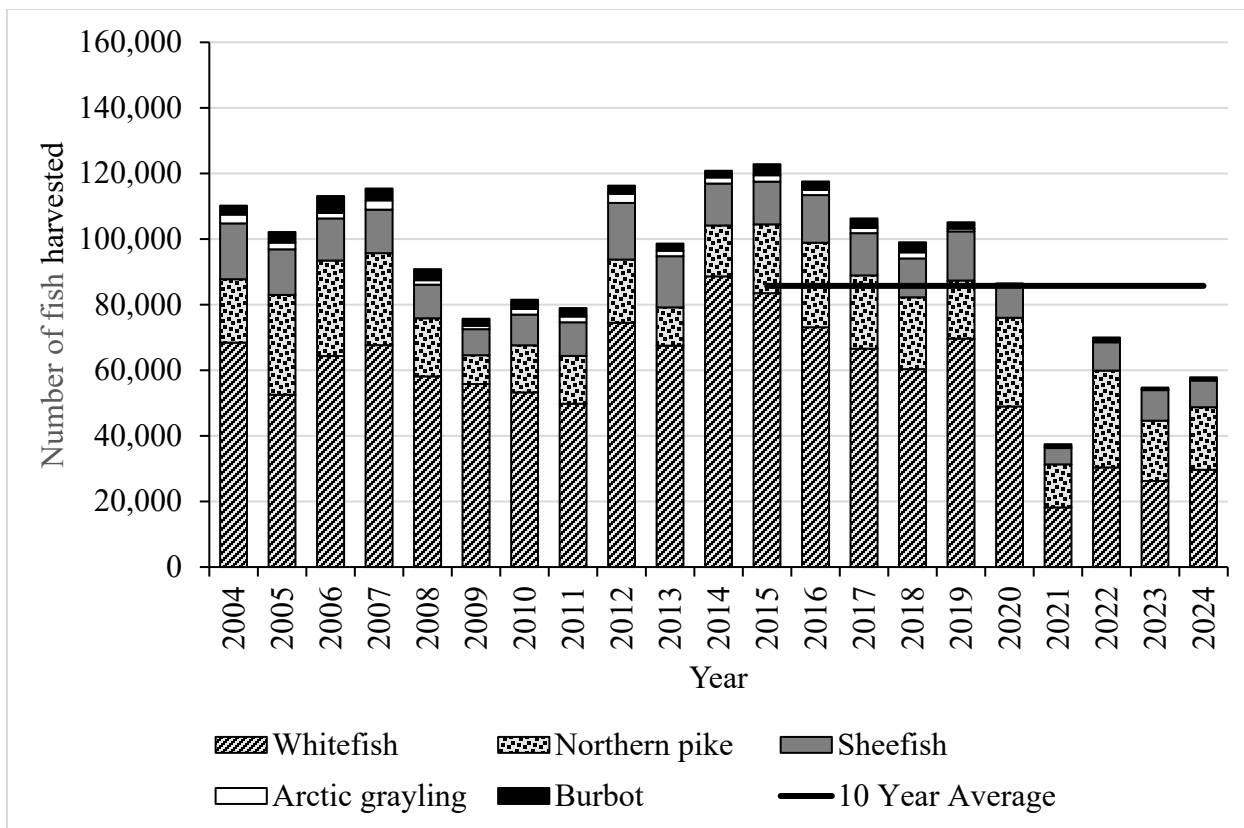


Figure 16-6.—Drainagewide nonsalmon subsistence harvest, 2004–2024.

PROPOSAL 17 – 5 AAC 01.220. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

PROPOSED BY: Mid-Lower Yukon AC.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the use of 6-inch or smaller mesh set gillnets in Hamilton Slough, the Anen'eq River (Unuk River), and the Ingricuar River from September 1 to September 30, during times of salmon conservation. These gillnets would be 60-feet or shorter in length and need to be set 300 feet upstream of the mouth to target nonsalmon species.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? During times when the commissioner determines it necessary for the conservation of a salmon species, the department may limit gillnets to a maximum mesh size of 4-inch or smaller and a maximum length specified by the department in the emergency order. Current practices set the length of the nets at 60 feet or less.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow for harvest opportunity on larger nonsalmon species in these specified areas during times of salmon conservation.

BACKGROUND: Starting July 16 in the lower Yukon River, the subsistence salmon fishery is managed for fall chum and coho salmon. In recent years, declining salmon runs resulted in restricting the maximum gillnet mesh size to 4-inch when gillnet gear was allowed throughout the drainage, including all adjacent sloughs, tributaries, and lakes. During the fall season, subsistence fishing effort targeting whitefish increases as their flesh begins to firm up and they start to migrate between summer feeding areas in lake systems to spawning areas elsewhere in the drainage. Local fishers prefer to use larger mesh gillnets during this time to target the larger whitefish species (sheefish, broad, and humpback whitefish) while avoiding the more numerous northern pike in those areas. By September 1, the king and summer chum salmon runs are nearly over and the fall chum and coho salmon runs are beyond their historic peaks, reducing their potential to be caught accidentally in these areas.

In recognition of recent severe declines in Yukon River salmon runs and resulting subsistence fishing restrictions, the department, in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), expanded subsistence fishing opportunity targeting whitefish and other nonsalmon species drainagewide by allowing the use of 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets late in the fall season in designated areas where migrating or spawning salmon have not been documented. This opportunity started on August 17, 2025 in designated, named areas and rivers, sloughs, and lakes that do not have inflow from drainages closed to salmon fishing. Gillnets were limited to 60-feet or less in length, operated as a setnet near shore, and were required to be set upstream of global positioning system (GPS) coordinates listed in the announcement. Coordinates were set 500 feet upstream from the mouths of designated areas that flow into the Yukon, Koyukuk, or Tanana rivers and 1 mile upstream of the mouth of designated areas flowing into the coast to avoid harvest of salmon that may be temporarily present before continuing their migration.

These designated areas without documented salmon migration or spawning were identified using the ADF&G Anadromous Waters Catalog and local knowledge gained through engagement with local fishers. Detailed maps were developed of each district, showing open, designated named areas and other open rivers, sloughs, and lakes without a closed drainage flowing into them to be included with the accompanying Advisory Announcements. The 3 rivers included in this proposal met the criteria of undocumented migrating or spawning salmon and, therefore, were open during

the nonsalmon opportunity described above. Open areas (including Nanvaranak (Hamilton) Slough, the Anen'eq River (Unuk River), and the Ingricuar River) in Districts 1 and 2 are shown below in Figures 17-1 and 17-2.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This would add unnecessary regulatory complexity because the department currently has the management flexibility to provide the proposed fishing opportunity through its emergency order authority, during times of salmon conservation. If adopted, this proposal would permanently open these rivers to 6-inch or smaller mesh set gillnets and may reduce the department's flexibility to adapt quickly to changing management considerations in the future.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? Nonsalmon fish populations occur throughout the Yukon River drainage, including the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Freshwater fish species, including sheefish, whitefish, lamprey, burbot, sucker, grayling, pike, and char have a positive customary and traditional use finding in the Yukon Area (5 AAC 01.236 (2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? In 1997 in a formal administrative board finding, which has yet to be adopted into regulation, the board found that 133,000–2,850,000 pounds of freshwater fishes is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Yukon Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

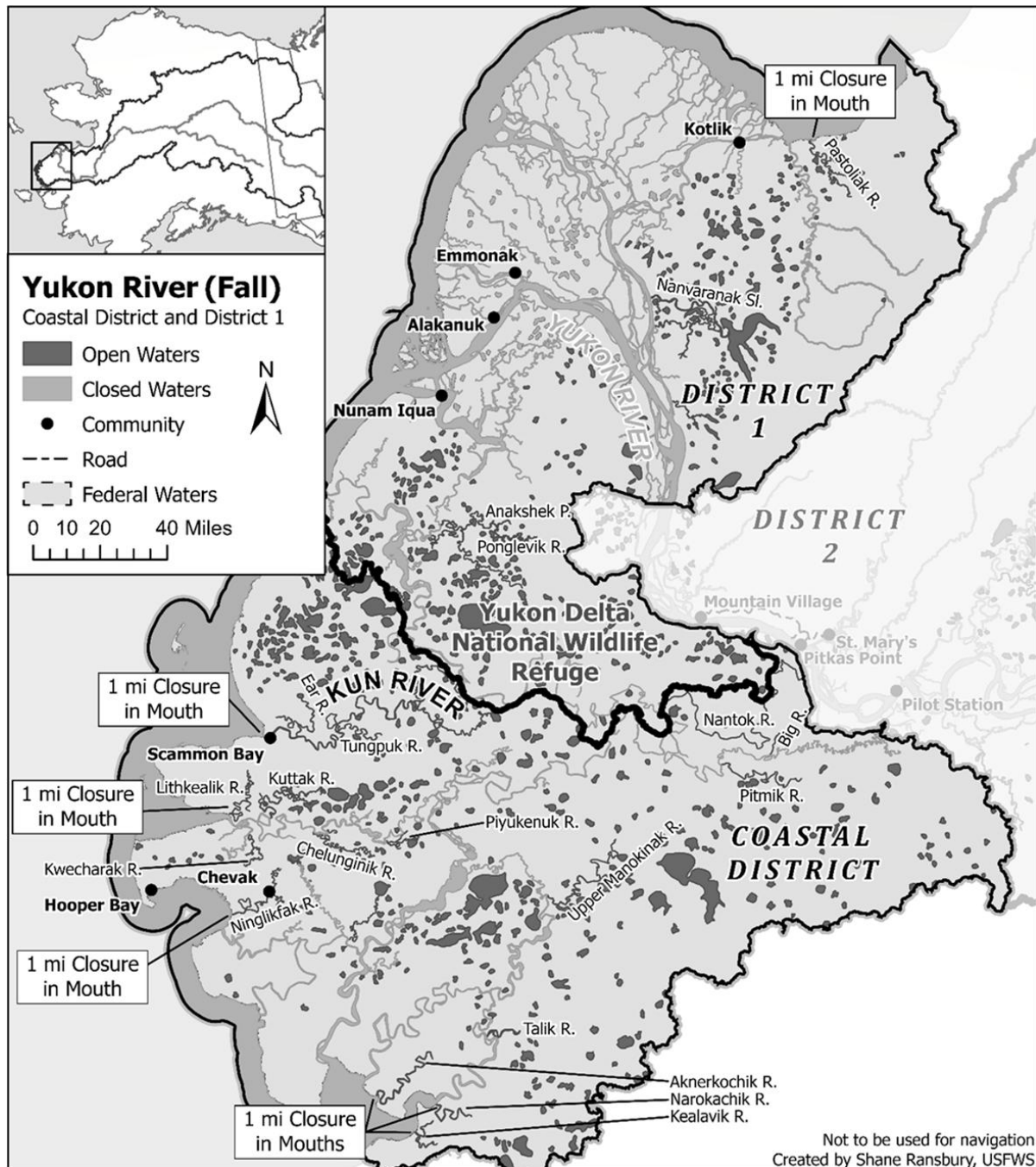


Figure 17-1.—Coastal District and District 1 expanded whitefish opportunity map showing designated open areas for 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets targeting whitefish and other nonsalmon species, including Nanvaranak (Hamilton) Slough.

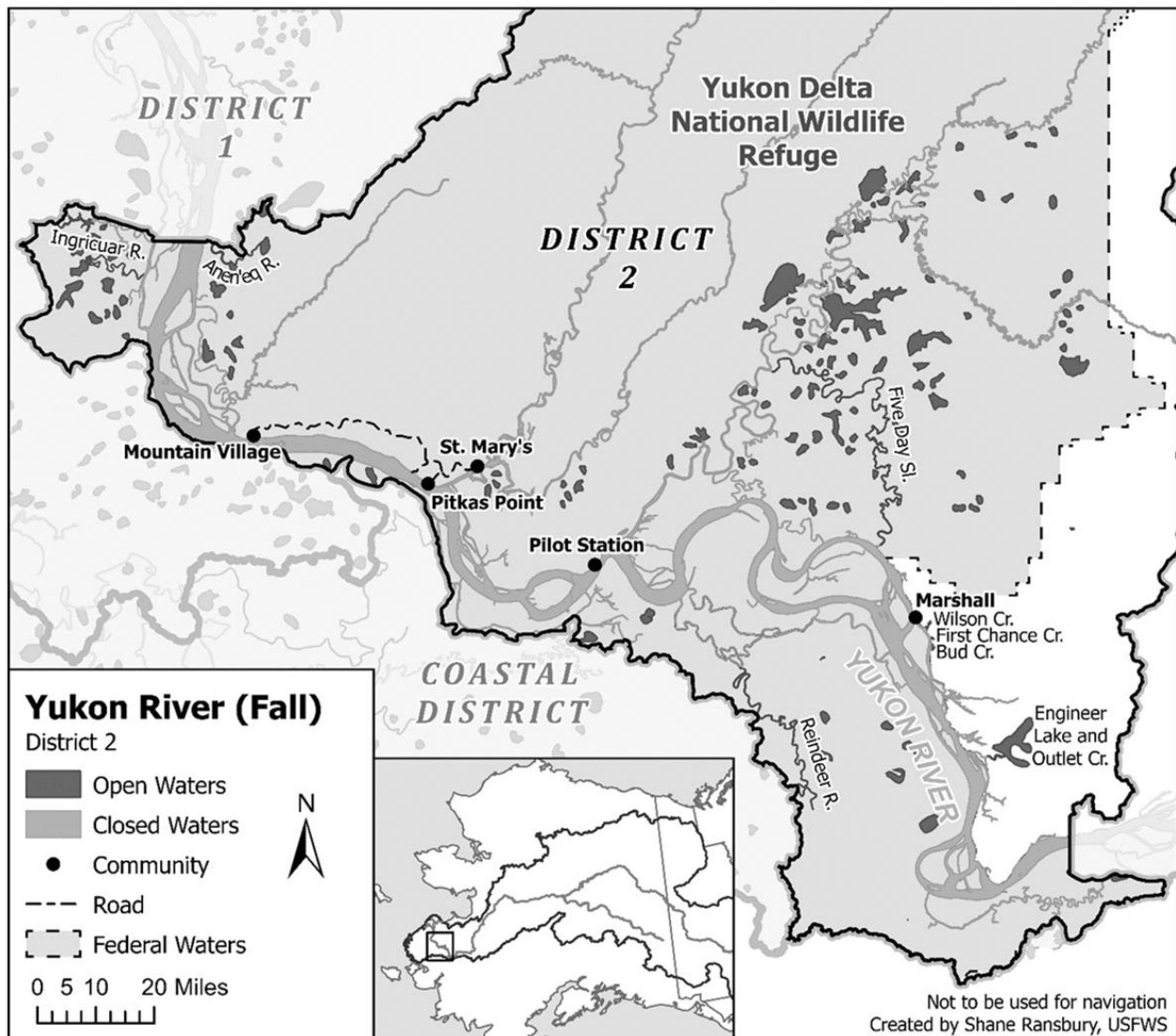


Figure 17-2.—District 2 expanded whitefish opportunity map showing designated open areas for 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets targeting whitefish and other nonsalmon species, including the Anen'eq River (Unuk River) and the Ingri'cuar River.

PROPOSAL 18 – 5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Tony Hollis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate the provision of the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan to reduce the sport daily bag and possession limit when subsistence harvest is 750 or more northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice. Additionally, the open season for sport fishing would be changed from June 1 through October 14 to April 15 through October 14.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the lakes and all flowing waters of the Minto Flats, northern pike fishing is open June 1 through October 14 with a bag and possession limit of 5, only 1 of which may be 30 inches or longer. Additionally, in the Chatanika River upstream of the confluence with Goldstream Creek, only single hooks may be used. If the subsistence harvest of northern pike in the CHA is 750 or more fish before ice-out, there is a bag and possession limit reduction of northern pike from 5 to 2 fish, only 1 of which may be 30 inches or longer.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The department would not have to issue an annual emergency order to reduce the sport fish bag limit when the CHA subsistence fishery harvest is 750 or more fish, and anglers would be able to fish approximately 2-3 additional weekends after ice out. The harvest of northern pike would increase by a small amount, likely less than 100 fish and would be composed of fish less than 30 inches in length.

BACKGROUND: The Minto Flats area is popular for northern pike subsistence and sport fishing (Figure 18-1). These fisheries are managed under the *Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plans* (5 AAC 01.244 for subsistence and 5 AAC 74.044 for sport fish), which direct the department to: 1) manage stocks consistent with the sustained yield principle, 2) provide reasonable opportunity for the subsistence fishery, and 3) provide sport fishing opportunity. These plans include annual harvest thresholds with corresponding regulatory actions to ensure that the overall exploitation rate of northern pike in Minto Flats does not exceed 20% by all users (Table 18-1).

The sport fishery occurs throughout Minto Flats with most of the effort concentrated within the Minto Lakes and the Chatanika River. This region of Minto Flats has remote cabins distributed throughout, is accessible via Murphy Dome Road, and is where guided fishing occurs. The entire Tolovana Drainage, which includes Minto Lake and the Chatanika River is closed to sport fishing for northern pike from October 15 through May 30.

To participate in the Tolovana Drainage (i.e., Minto Flats) subsistence fishery, households must obtain a subsistence harvest permit from the department. The season is open year-round, with no limits, gillnets may be used from April 15 through October 14 and only hook and line gear may be used when fishing through the ice. Additional provisions for the winter CHA subsistence fishery include: weekly reporting; single hook only; a bag limit of 10 northern pike, 2 of which may be 30 inches or longer; a possession limit of 20 northern pike, 4 of which may be 30 inches or longer; and a 1-mile closed area upstream of Goldstream Creek on the Chatanika River. If the CHA northern pike harvest is projected to exceed 1,500 fish between January 1 and ice-out, the CHA will be closed by emergency order, although the remainder of Minto Flats remains open for subsistence fishing.

The CHA occurs within the largest overwintering area for northern pike in the Tolovana Drainage. Based on radiotelemetry, approximately 50% of all northern pike over 24 inches overwinter in this relatively small section of river upstream of Goldstream Creek. The CHA itself extends from 1 mile upstream of Goldstream Creek to the boundary of the Fairbanks nonsubsistence area, approximately 15 river miles. More than 99% of Tolovana Drainage subsistence permit holders fish in the CHA during winter, the majority of whom reside in Fairbanks.

To ensure the combined exploitation rate from all fisheries remains below 20%, periodic assessments of northern pike in designated index areas are conducted. Exploitation is evaluated for fish 24 inches and greater in length, as fish of this size account for 98% of the subsistence harvest. Between 2008 and 2025, the abundance and size of northern pike in the Minto Lakes have increased significantly, and total exploitation has remained sustainable, ranging from 9–23% for fish over 24 inches in length (Tables 18-1 and 18-2). Sport harvests and effort have declined over time with a recent 5-year average of 406 northern pike (Table 18-1). Subsistence participation in the CHA has increased but appears to have stabilized with an average of 352 permits issued annually since 2020 (Table 18-1).

To examine the potential impact of a regulatory change, sport fish harvest data were compared between years that had a 5 fish bag limit and those that had a 2 fish bag limit. Between 2013 and 2024, subsistence harvests exceeded 750 fish in the CHA during 6 years, and the bag limit was reduced to 2 fish. When the bag limit was 5 fish, the average sport harvest was 436 fish, and when the bag limit was 2 fish, the average sport harvest was 405 fish.

Regardless of bag limit, the limit for fish 30 inches or longer remains at 1 fish. Most fish 30 inches or longer are female and this regulation is intended to protect these larger fish, which are biologically, reproductively, and recreationally valuable. In contrast, smaller, immature fish (commonly referred to as “hammer handles”) experience higher natural mortality rates and can sustain a higher level of harvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Based on the current sport fish harvest trends, removing the trigger and adding 2 to 3 weeks of fishing (between ice-out and May 31) will result in a small increase in harvest of likely less than 100 primarily smaller northern pike. The proposed dates would reduce regulatory complexity to align with subsistence gillnet dates. These changes would be sustainable, provide more opportunity to anglers, reduce the number of annual emergency orders, and simplify regulations. To meet the board’s statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted (also see subsistence regulatory review below).

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? Only partially. Fewer than 5% of the northern pike stocks in the Minto Flats likely migrate through the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area (5 AAC 99.015(a)(4)).

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that freshwater fish species, including sheefish, whitefishes, lamprey, burbot, sucker, Arctic grayling, northern pike, and chars are associated with customary and traditional uses in the Yukon Area (5 AAC 01.236(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? In 1997, in a formal administrative board finding, which has yet to be adopted into regulation, the board found that 133,000–2,850,000 pounds of freshwater fishes, other than salmon, is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Yukon Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 18-1.—Subsistence and sport harvest summary for northern pike in Minto Flats Complex^a, 1993–2024.

Year	Subsistence Permits Issued	CHA Subsistence Harvest ^b	CHA Released	Minto Flats Subsistence Harvest	Total Subsistence Harvest ^c	Sport Angler Days	Total Sport Harvest	Total Harvest by All Users
1993	31	—	—	—	767	—	3,420	4,187
1994	48	—	—	—	1,193	—	9,489	10,682
1995	57	—	—	—	1,088	—	4,480	5,568
1996	74	—	—	—	1,916	7,990	2,716	4,632
1997	88	—	—	—	1,344	7,655	1,246	2,590
1998	70	—	—	—	431	3,768	772	1,203
1999	54	—	—	—	400	7,064	1,098	1,498
2000	34	—	—	—	352	4,212	390	742
2001	50	—	—	—	277	2,454	654	931
2002	32	—	—	—	521	4,815	650	1,171
2003	119	—	—	—	966	4,555	1,248	2,214
2004	99	—	—	—	393	4,650	1,390	1,783
2005	80	—	—	—	386	5,047	2,052	2,438
2006	101	—	—	—	865	4,050	1,204	2,069
2007	118	—	—	—	1,837 ^d	5,656	1,809 ^e	3,646
2008	147	—	—	—	1,363	2,840	386 ^e	1,749
2009	113	—	—	—	563	4,892	873	1,436
2010	96	—	—	—	125	3,327	609	734
2011	70	27	—	83	110	3,090	422	532
2012	73	243	—	282	525	4,036	412	937
2013	77	154	—	77	231	3,406	382	613
2014	106	377	—	101	478	4,261	597	1,075
2015	120	516	—	249	765	2,229	372	1,137
2016	201	855	—	165	1,020	2,911	196 ^e	1,216
2017	93	21	—	116	137	5,450	589	726
2018	175	832	696	208	1,040	2,324	390	1,430
2019	245	937	1,404	696	1,633	2,480	770 ^e	2,403
2020	329	965	1,265	1,040	2,005	1,538	286	2,291
2021	425	1,538 ^d	1,908	1,554	3,092	2,262	257 ^e	3,349
2022	349	1,419 ^d	1,037	1,880	3,292	2,557	300 ^e	3,599
2023	346	1,199	1,454	648	1,847	1,418	419 ^e	2,266
2024	309	1,600 ^d	2,853	798	2,398	1,010	487 ^e	3,713
2019– 2023 Avg.	339	1,212	1,414	795	2,374	2,051	406	2,782

Note: En dash = no data, CHA = Chatanika Harvest Area.

^a Minto Flats Complex includes Minto Flats lakes and flowing waters, Tolovana River drainage, and the Lower Chatanika River.

^b Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) fishing location has been documented on permits since 2011.

^c Includes harvest in CHA and Minto Flats Complex before 2011.

^d Subsistence fishery closed because 1,500 fish harvest threshold was met or projected to be met in the winter CHA subsistence fishery.

^e Sport fishing restricted because 750 fish harvest threshold was met in the winter CHA subsistence fishery.

Table 18-2.—Estimated northern pike abundance in the Minto Lakes Study Area during 1996–2018 and within the Chatanika River Harvest Area in 2018 and 2025.

Year	Area	$\geq 400\text{mm}$ (~16 in) ^a		$\geq 600\text{mm}$ (~24 in)		$\geq 720\text{ mm}$ (~30 in)	
		Abundance	SE	Abundance	SE	Abundance	SE
1996	MLSA-B	23,850	7,799	7,616	883	—	—
1997	—	16,547	1,754	3,251	174	672	48
2000	MLSA-B	—	—	5,331	1,152	—	—
2003	MLSA-B	25,227	4,529	7,683	2,347	1,405	288
2008 ^a	MLSA-A ^b	16,045	3,132	2,219	397	958	362
	MLSA-B	9,854	1,701	2,092	448	635	635
2018	CHA	—	—	14,675	1,631	3,207	549
	MLSA-A	—	—	11,443	1,651	—	—
2025	CHA	-	-	15,779	2,580	3,456	1,020

Sources: Roach 1997, 1998; Scanlon 2001, 2006; Joy 2009; Albert and Tyers 2020.

Note: SE = standard error, MLSA = Minto Lakes Study Area, en dash = no data.

^a Estimated abundance of northern pike 400–600 mm fork length are biased, and the magnitude of this is unknown.

^b In 2008, the geographical size of the study area was expanded and is referred to as “Area A”. “Area B” is the same study area that was used during 1996–2003.

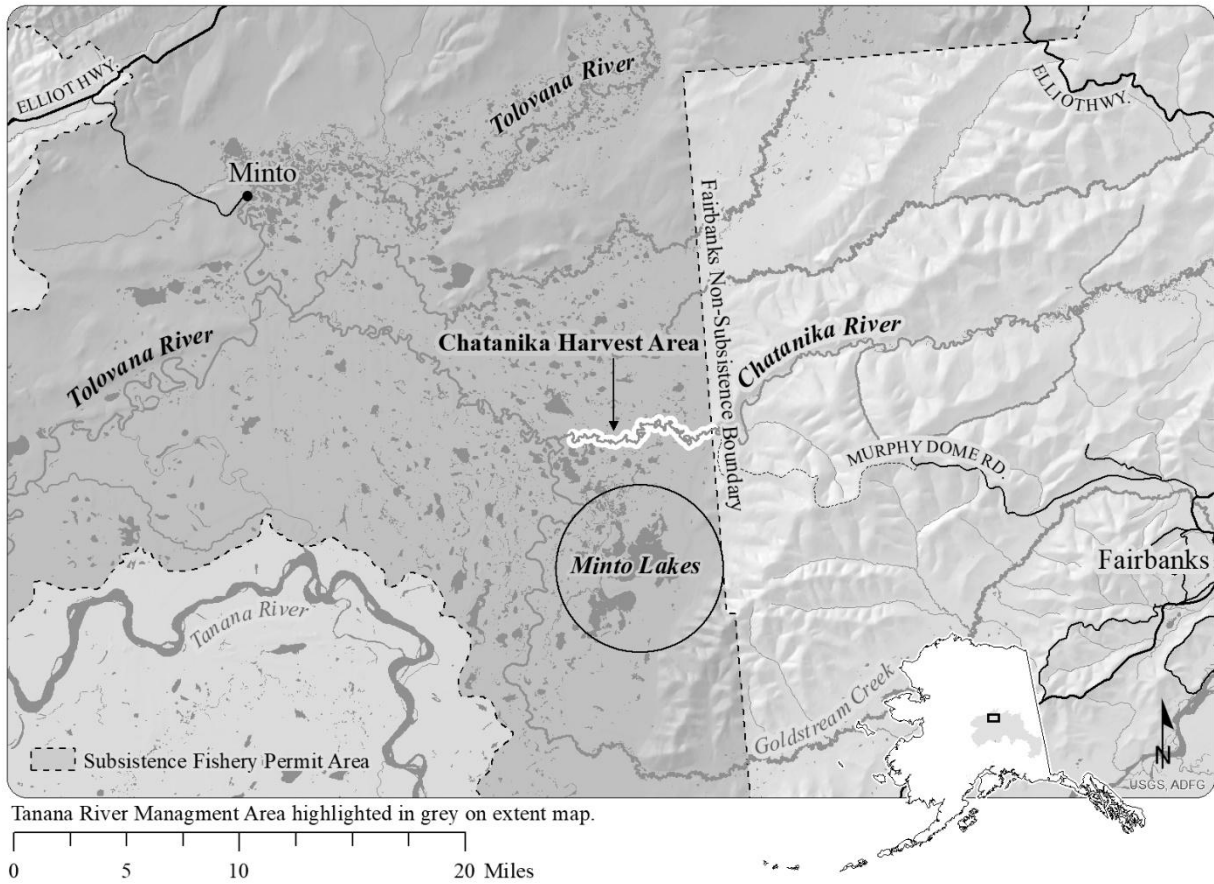


Figure 18-1.—Map of subsistence fishery permit area in Minto Flats Complex. Minto Flats Complex includes Minto Flats lakes and flowing waters, Tolovana River drainage, and the Lower Chatanika River.

PROPOSAL 19 – 5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate the provision of the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan to reduce the sport daily bag and possession limit when subsistence harvest is 750 or more northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice. Additionally, the open season for sport fishing would be changed from June 1 through October 14 to May 1 through October 14.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the lakes and all flowing waters of the Minto Flats, northern pike fishing is open June 1 through October 14 with a bag and possession limit of 5, only 1 of which may be 30 inches or longer, and in the Chatanika River upstream of the confluence with Goldstream Creek, only single hooks may be used. If the subsistence harvest of northern pike in the CHA is 750 or more fish before ice-out, there is a bag and possession limit reduction of northern pike from 5 to 2 fish, only 1 of which may be 30 inches or longer.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The department would not have to issue an annual emergency order to reduce the sport fish bag limit when the CHA subsistence fishery harvest is 750 or more fish, and anglers would be able to fish approximately 2-3 additional weekends after ice out. The harvest of northern pike would increase by a small amount, likely less than 100 fish and would be composed of fish less than 30 inches in length.

BACKGROUND: The Minto Flats area is popular for northern pike subsistence and sport fishing (Figure 18-1). These fisheries are managed under the *Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plans* (5 AAC 01.244 for subsistence and 5 AAC 74.044 for sport fish), which direct the department to: 1) manage stocks consistent with the sustained yield principle, 2) provide reasonable opportunity for the subsistence fishery, and 3) provide sport fishing opportunity. These plans include annual harvest thresholds with corresponding regulatory actions to ensure that the overall exploitation rate of northern pike in Minto Flats does not exceed 20% by all users (Table 18-1).

The sport fishery occurs throughout Minto Flats with most of the effort concentrated within the Minto Lakes and the Chatanika River. This region of Minto Flats has remote cabins distributed throughout, is accessible via Murphy Dome Road, and is where guided fishing occurs. The entire Tolovana Drainage, which includes Minto Lake and the Chatanika River is closed to sport fishing for northern pike from October 15 through May 30.

To participate in the Tolovana Drainage (i.e., Minto Flats) subsistence fishery, households must obtain a subsistence harvest permit from the department. The season is open year-round, with no limits, gillnets may be used from April 15 through October 14 and only hook and line gear may be used when fishing through the ice. Additional provisions for the winter CHA subsistence fishery include: weekly reporting; single hook only; a bag limit of 10 northern pike, 2 of which may be 30 inches or longer; a possession limit of 20 northern pike, 4 of which may be 30 inches or longer; and a 1-mile closed area upstream of Goldstream Creek on the Chatanika River. If the CHA northern pike harvest is projected to exceed 1,500 fish between January 1 and ice-out, the CHA will be closed by emergency order, although the remainder of Minto Flats remains open for subsistence fishing.

The CHA occurs within the largest overwintering area for northern pike in the Tolovana Drainage. Based on radiotelemetry, approximately 50% of all northern pike over 24 inches overwinter in this relatively small section of river upstream of Goldstream Creek. The CHA itself extends from 1 mile upstream of Goldstream Creek to the boundary of the Fairbanks nonsubsistence area, approximately 15 river miles. More than 99% of Tolovana Drainage subsistence permit holders fish in the CHA during winter, the majority of whom reside in Fairbanks. Most fishing occurs during weekends between late February and early April.

To ensure the combined exploitation rate from all fisheries remains below 20%, periodic assessments of northern pike in designated index areas are conducted. Exploitation is evaluated for fish 24 inches and greater in length, as these represent over 98% of the subsistence harvest. Between 2008 and 2025, the abundance and size of northern pike in the Minto Lakes have increased significantly, and total exploitation has remained sustainable, ranging from 9–23% for fish over 24 inches in length (Tables 18-1 and 18-2). Sport harvests and effort have declined over time with a recent 5-year average of 406 northern pike (Table 18-1). Subsistence participation in the CHA has increased but appears to have stabilized with an average of 352 permits issued annually since 2020 (Table 18-1).

To examine the potential impact of a regulatory change, sport fish harvest data were compared between years that had a 5 fish bag limit and those that had a 2 fish bag limit. Between 2013 and 2024, subsistence harvests exceeded 750 fish in the CHA during 6 years, and the bag limit was reduced to 2 fish. When the bag limit was 5 fish, the average sport harvest was 436 fish, and when the bag limit was 2 fish, the average sport harvest was 405 fish.

Regardless of bag limit, the limit for fish 30 inches or longer remains at 1 fish. Most fish 30 inches or longer are female and this regulation is intended to protect these larger fish, which are biologically, reproductively, and recreationally valuable. In contrast, smaller, immature fish (commonly referred to as “hammer handles”) experience higher natural mortality rates and can sustain a higher level of harvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Based on the current sport fish harvest trends, removing the trigger and adding 2 to 3 weeks of fishing (between ice-out and May 31) will result in a small increase in harvest of likely less than 100 primarily smaller northern pike. These changes would likely be sustainable, provide more opportunity to anglers, and reduce the number of annual emergency orders. However, the proposed dates would not align with subsistence gillnet dates. To meet the board’s statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted (also see subsistence regulatory review below).

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? Only partially. Fewer than 5% of the northern pike stocks in the Minto Flats likely migrate through the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area (5 AAC 99.015(a)(4)).
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that freshwater fish species, including sheefish, whitefishes, lamprey, burbot, sucker, Arctic

grayling, northern pike, and chars are associated with customary and traditional uses in the Yukon Area (5 AAC 01.236(a)(2)).

- 3 Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? In 1997 in a formal administrative board finding, which has yet to be adopted into regulation, the board found that 133,000–2,850,000 pounds of freshwater fishes, other than salmon, is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Yukon Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 19-1.—Subsistence and sport harvest summary for northern pike in Minto Flats Complex ^a, 1993–2024.

Year	Subsistence Permits Issued	CHA Subsistence Harvest ^b	CHA Released	Minto Flats Subsistence Harvest	Total Subsistence Harvest ^c	Sport Angler Days	Total Sport Harvest	Total Harvest by All Users
1993	31	—	—	—	767	—	3,420	4,187
1994	48	—	—	—	1,193	—	9,489	10,682
1995	57	—	—	—	1,088	—	4,480	5,568
1996	74	—	—	—	1,916	7,990	2,716	4,632
1997	88	—	—	—	1,344	7,655	1,246	2,590
1998	70	—	—	—	431	3,768	772	1,203
1999	54	—	—	—	400	7,064	1,098	1,498
2000	34	—	—	—	352	4,212	390	742
2001	50	—	—	—	277	2,454	654	931
2002	32	—	—	—	521	4,815	650	1,171
2003	119	—	—	—	966	4,555	1,248	2,214
2004	99	—	—	—	393	4,650	1,390	1,783
2005	80	—	—	—	386	5,047	2,052	2,438
2006	101	—	—	—	865	4,050	1,204	2,069
2007	118	—	—	—	1,837 ^d	5,656	1,809 ^e	3,646
2008	147	—	—	—	1,363	2,840	386 ^e	1,749
2009	113	—	—	—	563	4,892	873	1,436
2010	96	—	—	—	125	3,327	609	734
2011	70	27	—	83	110	3,090	422	532
2012	73	243	—	282	525	4,036	412	937
2013	77	154	—	77	231	3,406	382	613
2014	106	377	—	101	478	4,261	597	1,075
2015	120	516	—	249	765	2,229	372	1,137
2016	201	855	—	165	1,020	2,911	196 ^e	1,216
2017	93	21	—	116	137	5,450	589	726
2018	175	832	696	208	1,040	2,324	390	1,430
2019	245	937	1,404	696	1,633	2,480	770 ^e	2,403
2020	329	965	1,265	1,040	2,005	1,538	286	2,291
2021	425	1,538 ^d	1,908	1,554	3,092	2,262	257 ^e	3,349
2022	349	1,419 ^d	1,037	1,880	3,292	2,557	300 ^e	3,599
2023	346	1,199	1,454	648	1,847	1,418	419 ^e	2,266
2024	309	1,600 ^d	2,853	798	2,398	1,010	487 ^e	3,713
2019– 2023 Avg.	339	1,212	1,414	795	2,374	2,051	406	2,782

Note: En dash = no data, CHA = Chatanika Harvest Area.

^a Minto Flats Complex includes Minto Flats lakes and flowing waters, Tolovana River drainage, and the Lower Chatanika River.

^b Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) fishing location has been documented on permits since 2011.

^c Includes harvest in CHA and Minto Flats Complex before 2011.

^d Subsistence fishery closed because 1,500 fish harvest threshold was met or projected to be met in the winter CHA subsistence fishery.

^e Sport fishing restricted because 750 fish harvest threshold was met in the winter CHA subsistence fishery.

Table 19-2.—Estimated northern pike abundance in the Minto Lakes Study Area during 1996–2018 and within the Chatanika River Harvest Area in 2018 and 2025.

Year	Area	$\geq 400\text{mm}$ (~16 in) ^a		$\geq 600\text{mm}$ (~24 in)		$\geq 720\text{ mm}$ (~30 in)	
		Abundance	SE	Abundance	SE	Abundance	SE
1996	MLSA-B	23,850	7,799	7,616	883	—	—
1997	—	16,547	1,754	3,251	174	672	48
2000	MLSA-B	—	—	5,331	1,152	—	—
2003	MLSA-B	25,227	4,529	7,683	2,347	1,405	288
2008 ^a	MLSA-A ^b	16,045	3,132	2,219	397	958	362
	MLSA-B	9,854	1,701	2,092	448	635	635
2018	CHA	—	—	14,675	1,631	3,207	549
	MLSA-A	—	—	11,443	1,651	—	—
2025	CHA	-	-	15,779	2,580	3,456	1,020

Sources: Roach 1997, 1998; Scanlon 2001, 2006; Joy 2009; Albert and Tyers 2020.

Note: SE = standard error, MLSA = Minto Lakes Study Area, en dash = no data.

^a Estimated abundance of northern pike 400–600 mm fork length are biased, and the magnitude of this is unknown.

^b In 2008, the geographical size of the study area was expanded and is referred to as “Area A”. “Area B” is the same study area that was used during 1996–2003.

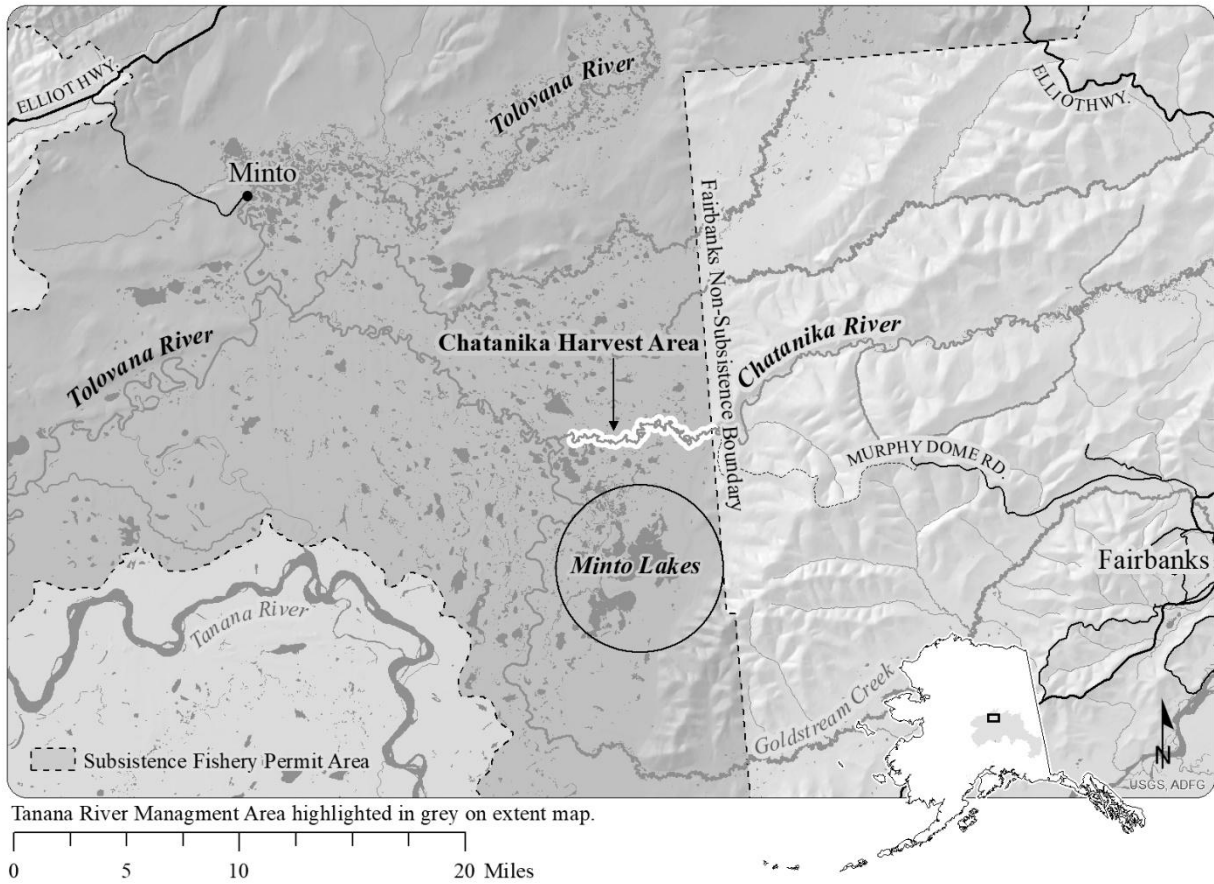


Figure 19-1.—Map of subsistence fishery permit area in Minto Flats Complex. Minto Flats Complex includes Minto Flats lakes and flowing waters, Tolovana River drainage, and the Lower Chatanika River.

PROPOSAL 20 – 5 AAC 74.044. Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Chuck Derrick.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the provision of the Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plan to reduce the sport daily bag and possession limit when subsistence harvest is 750 or more northern pike in the Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) during the period from January 1 until these waters are free of ice to only include waters of the Chatanika River drainage upstream of and including Goldstream Creek.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the lakes and all flowing waters of the Minto Flats, northern pike fishing is open June 1 through October 14 with a bag and possession limit of 5, only 1 of which may be 30 inches or longer, and in the Chatanika River upstream of confluence with Goldstream Creek, only single hooks may be used. If the subsistence harvest of northern pike in the CHA is 750 or more fish before ice-out, there is a bag and possession limit reduction of northern pike from 5 to 2 fish, only one of which may be 30 inches or longer.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The harvest of northern pike would increase, likely by less than 100 fish, and would be composed of primarily fish less than 30 inches in length, and regulatory complexity would increase because of the geographic specificity.

BACKGROUND: The Minto Flats area is popular for northern pike subsistence and sport fishing (Figure 18-1). These fisheries are managed under the *Minto Flats Northern Pike Management Plans* (5 AAC 01.244 for subsistence and 5 AAC 74.044 for sport fish), which direct the department to: 1) manage stocks consistent with the sustained yield principle, 2) provide reasonable opportunity for the subsistence fishery, and 3) provide sport fishing opportunity. These plans include annual harvest thresholds with corresponding regulatory actions to ensure that the overall exploitation rate of northern pike in Minto Flats does not exceed 20% by all users (Table 20-1).

The sport fishery occurs throughout Minto Flats with most of the effort concentrated within the Minto Lakes and the Chatanika River. This region of Minto Flats has remote cabins distributed throughout, is accessible via Murphy Dome Road, and is where guided fishing occurs. The entire Tolovana Drainage, which includes Minto Lake and the Chatanika River is closed to sport fishing for northern pike from October 15 through May 30.

To participate in the Tolovana Drainage (i.e., Minto Flats) subsistence fishery, households must obtain an ADF&G subsistence harvest permit. The season is open year-round, with no limits, gillnets may be used from April 15 through October 14 and only hook and line gear may be used when fishing through the ice. Additional provisions for the winter CHA subsistence fishery include: weekly reporting; single hook only; a bag limit of 10 northern pike, 2 of which may be 30 inches or longer; a possession limit of 20 northern pike, 4 of which may be 30 inches or greater in length; and a 1-mile closed area upstream of Goldstream Creek on the Chatanika River. If the CHA northern pike harvest is projected to exceed 1,500 fish between January 1 and ice-out, the CHA will be closed by emergency order, although the remainder of Minto Flats remains open for subsistence fishing.

The CHA occurs within the largest overwintering area for northern pike within the Tolovana Drainage. Based on radiotelemetry, approximately 50% of all northern pike over 24 inches overwinter in this relatively small section of river upstream of Goldstream Creek. The CHA itself

extends from 1 mile upstream of Goldstream Creek to the boundary of the Fairbanks nonsubsistence area, approximately 15 river miles. More than 99% of Tolovana Drainage subsistence permit holders fish in the CHA during winter, the majority of whom reside in Fairbanks. Most fishing effort occurs during weekends between late February and early April.

To ensure the combined exploitation rate from all fisheries remains below 20%, periodic assessments of northern pike in designated index areas are conducted. Exploitation is evaluated for fish 24 inches and greater in length, as these represent over 98% of the subsistence harvest. Between 2008 and 2025, the abundance and size of northern pike in the Minto Lakes have increased significantly, and total exploitation has remained sustainable, ranging from 9–23% for fish over 24 inches in length (Tables 20-1 and 20-2). Sport harvests and effort have declined over time with a recent 5-year average of 406 northern pike (Table 20-1). Subsistence participation in the CHA has increased but appears to have stabilized with an average of 352 permits issued annually since 2020 (Table 20-1).

To examine the potential impact of a regulatory change, sport fish harvest data were compared between years that had a 5 fish bag limit and those that had a 2 fish bag limit. Between 2013 and 2024, subsistence harvests exceeded 750 fish in the CHA and the bag limit was reduced to 2 fish during 6 years. When the bag limit was 5 fish, the average sport harvest was 436 fish, and when the bag limit was 2 fish, the average sport harvest was 405 fish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal as written because it unnecessarily increases regulatory complexity in the sport fishery. To meet the board’s statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted (also see subsistence regulatory review below).

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? Only partially. Fewer than 5% of the northern pike stocks in the Minto Flats likely migrate through the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area (5 AAC 99.015(a)(4)).
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that freshwater fish species, including sheefish, whitefishes, lamprey, burbot, sucker, Arctic grayling, northern pike, and chars are associated with customary and traditional uses in the Yukon Area (5 AAC 01.236(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? In 1997 in a formal administrative board finding, which has yet to be adopted into regulation, the board found that 133,000–2,850,000 pounds of freshwater fishes, other than salmon, is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Yukon Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 20-1.—Subsistence and sport harvest summary for northern pike in Minto Flats Complex^a, 1993–2024.

Year	Subsistence Permits Issued	CHA Subsistence Harvest ^b	CHA Released	Minto Flats Subsistence Harvest	Total Subsistence Harvest ^c	Sport Angler Days	Total Sport Harvest	Total Harvest by All Users
1993	31	—	—	—	767	—	3,420	4,187
1994	48	—	—	—	1,193	—	9,489	10,682
1995	57	—	—	—	1,088	—	4,480	5,568
1996	74	—	—	—	1,916	7,990	2,716	4,632
1997	88	—	—	—	1,344	7,655	1,246	2,590
1998	70	—	—	—	431	3,768	772	1,203
1999	54	—	—	—	400	7,064	1,098	1,498
2000	34	—	—	—	352	4,212	390	742
2001	50	—	—	—	277	2,454	654	931
2002	32	—	—	—	521	4,815	650	1,171
2003	119	—	—	—	966	4,555	1,248	2,214
2004	99	—	—	—	393	4,650	1,390	1,783
2005	80	—	—	—	386	5,047	2,052	2,438
2006	101	—	—	—	865	4,050	1,204	2,069
2007	118	—	—	—	1,837 ^d	5,656	1,809 ^e	3,646
2008	147	—	—	—	1,363	2,840	386 ^e	1,749
2009	113	—	—	—	563	4,892	873	1,436
2010	96	—	—	—	125	3,327	609	734
2011	70	27	—	83	110	3,090	422	532
2012	73	243	—	282	525	4,036	412	937
2013	77	154	—	77	231	3,406	382	613
2014	106	377	—	101	478	4,261	597	1,075
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2016	201	855	—	165	1,020	2,911	196 ^e	1,216
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2021	425	1,538 ^d	1,908	1,554	3,092	2,262	257 ^e	3,349
2022	349	1,419 ^d	1,037	1,880	3,292	2,557	300 ^e	3,599
2023	346	1,199	1,454	648	1,847	1,418	419 ^e	2,266
2024	309	1,600 ^d	2,853	798	2,398	1,010	487 ^e	3,713
2019– 2023 Avg.	339	1,212	1,414	795	2,374	2,051	406	2,782

Note: En dash = no data, CHA = Chatanika Harvest Area.

^a Minto Flats Complex includes Minto Flats lakes and flowing waters, Tolovana River drainage, and the Lower Chatanika River.

^b Chatanika Harvest Area (CHA) fishing location has been documented on permits since 2011.

^c Includes harvest in CHA and Minto Flats Complex before 2011.

^d Subsistence fishery closed because 1,500 fish harvest threshold was met or projected to be met in the winter CHA subsistence fishery.

^e Sport fishing restricted because 750 fish harvest threshold was met in the winter CHA subsistence fishery.

Table 20-2.—Estimated northern pike abundance in the Minto Lakes Study Area during 1996–2018 and within the Chatanika River Harvest Area in 2018 and 2025.

Year	Area	$\geq 400\text{mm}$ (~16 in) ^a		$\geq 600\text{mm}$ (~24 in)		$\geq 720\text{ mm}$ (~30 in)	
		Abundance	SE	Abundance	SE	Abundance	SE
1996	MLSA-B	23,850	7,799	7,616	883	—	—
1997	—	16,547	1,754	3,251	174	672	48
2000	MLSA-B	—	—	5,331	1,152	—	—
2003	MLSA-B	25,227	4,529	7,683	2,347	1,405	288
2008 ^a	MLSA-A ^b	16,045	3,132	2,219	397	958	362
	MLSA-B	9,854	1,701	2,092	448	635	635
2018	CHA	—	—	14,675	1,631	3,207	549
	MLSA-A	—	—	11,443	1,651	—	—
2025	CHA	-	-	15,779	2,580	3,456	1,020

Sources: Roach 1997, 1998; Scanlon 2001, 2006; Joy 2009; Albert and Tyers 2020.

Note: SE = standard error, MLSA = Minto Lakes Study Area, en dash = no data.

^a Estimated abundance of northern pike 400–600 mm fork length are biased, and the magnitude of this is unknown.

^b In 2008, the geographical size of the study area was expanded and is referred to as “Area A”. “Area B” is the same study area that was used during 1996–2003.

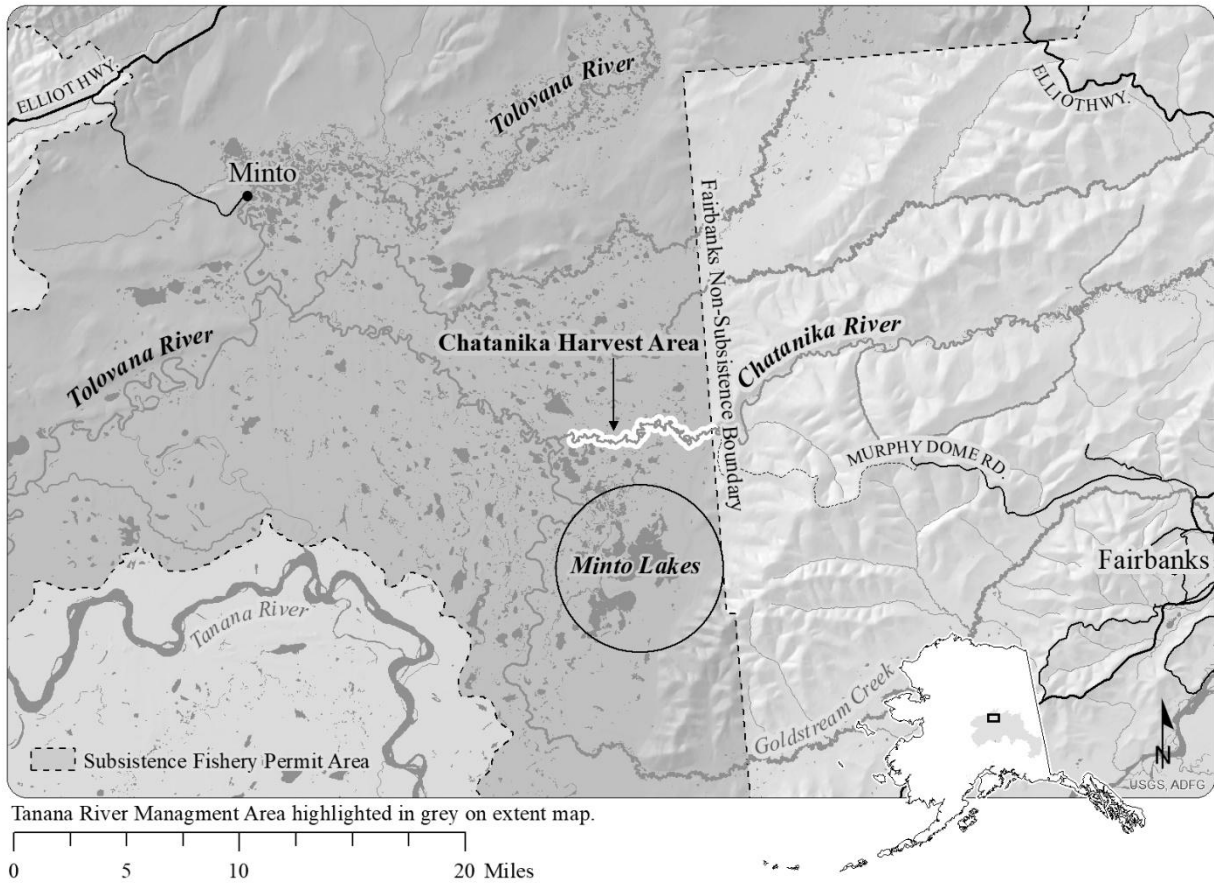


Figure 20-1.—Map of subsistence fishery permit area in Minto Flats Complex. Minto Flats Complex includes Minto Flats lakes and flowing waters, Tolovana River drainage, and the Lower Chatanika River.

PROPOSAL 21 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike and prohibit the use of bait and barbed hooks in Harding Lake.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Harding Lake, the sport fishery for northern pike is currently closed year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers would have the opportunity to fish for northern pike in Harding Lake. Mortality of northern pike would likely increase due to catch-and-release mortality. Requiring barbless hooks could reduce angler efficiency by some unmeasurable degree for all species. Prohibiting the use of bait would effectively eliminate set line fishing for burbot and reduce angler efficiency when fishing for all species, particularly during the winter. Additionally, regulatory complexity would increase.

BACKGROUND: Harding Lake is the largest road-accessible lake in the Tanana River drainage and is within a nonsubsistence area (Figure 21-1). It has a surface area of 2,500 acres, a maximum depth of 140 ft, and a shoreline length of 8.9 mi. This popular recreational area has a state campground and public boat launch, is mostly surrounded by private dwellings, and is stocked with lake trout and Arctic char. Historically, Harding Lake provided the only major roadside sport fishery for northern pike within the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Region and estimated northern pike harvest peaked in the late 1980s (Figure 21-2).

The northern pike fishery in Harding Lake was closed in 2000, due to a large decline in population size. Abundance decreased from an estimated 2,479 (SE = 307) fish ≥ 18 inches in 1993 to 531 (SE = 54) fish in 2000 (Figure 21-2). This decline was partly attributed to harvest, but primarily due to dropping water levels and drying of the littoral spawning and rearing habitat. In 2007, a water diversion structure was constructed with the goal of raising and maintaining an average water elevation of 717 feet to help restore spawning and rearing habitat. By 2012, the abundance of northern pike (567, SE=47) had not increased despite the fishery being closed for 12 years.

Since 2014, increased annual precipitation has helped raise water levels approximately 2 to 3.5 feet, which increased the available spawning and rearing habitat by up to 262 acres and measurably improved recruitment (Figures 21-3 and 21-4). The northern pike population ≥ 18 inches in length has consequently increased (Figure 21-2). The latest estimate of abundance in 2025 was 915 (SE=90) fish.

During the last 25 years, the fishery closure has not influenced the population size of northern pike, and the number of northern pike continued to be impacted by lake water level, which determines the amount of spawning and rearing habitat available in any given year. When water levels remain nearly constant over several years, the northern pike population then reaches a new carrying capacity or equilibrium.

Hooking mortality is generally low (<5%) for northern pike in modern catch-and-release studies and is driven far more by hooking location and bleeding than by barbed hooks. The use of bait may increase the probability of lethal hook placement and mortality. A department handling study (interior Alaska, 1998) focused on post-capture treatment; it did not detect mortality specific to barbed hooks for northern pike but identified handling and air exposure as the primary risks.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal as written. The department supports providing additional sustainable sport fishing opportunity. The 25-year closure of the northern pike fishery in Harding Lake did not increase abundance to levels sufficient to support harvest in the sport fishery. In the absence of harvest, lake level is the primary driver of abundance because it affects the availability of spawning and rearing habitat. Lake level will continue to fluctuate based on environmental conditions. Due to the popularity of Harding Lake, harvest would not likely be sustainable. Allowing catch-and-release fishing with incidental hooking mortality would be sustainable and would provide additional fishing opportunity with or without bait. The addition of a barbless hook requirement increases regulatory complexity and unnecessarily impacts sport fishing efficiency in the absence of a known measurable biological benefit. There are currently no barbless hook sport fishing regulations in Alaska, and there are no research findings that indicate barbless hooks reduce hooking mortality of northern pike. The department encourages anglers to use best practices when handling and releasing all sport caught fish.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

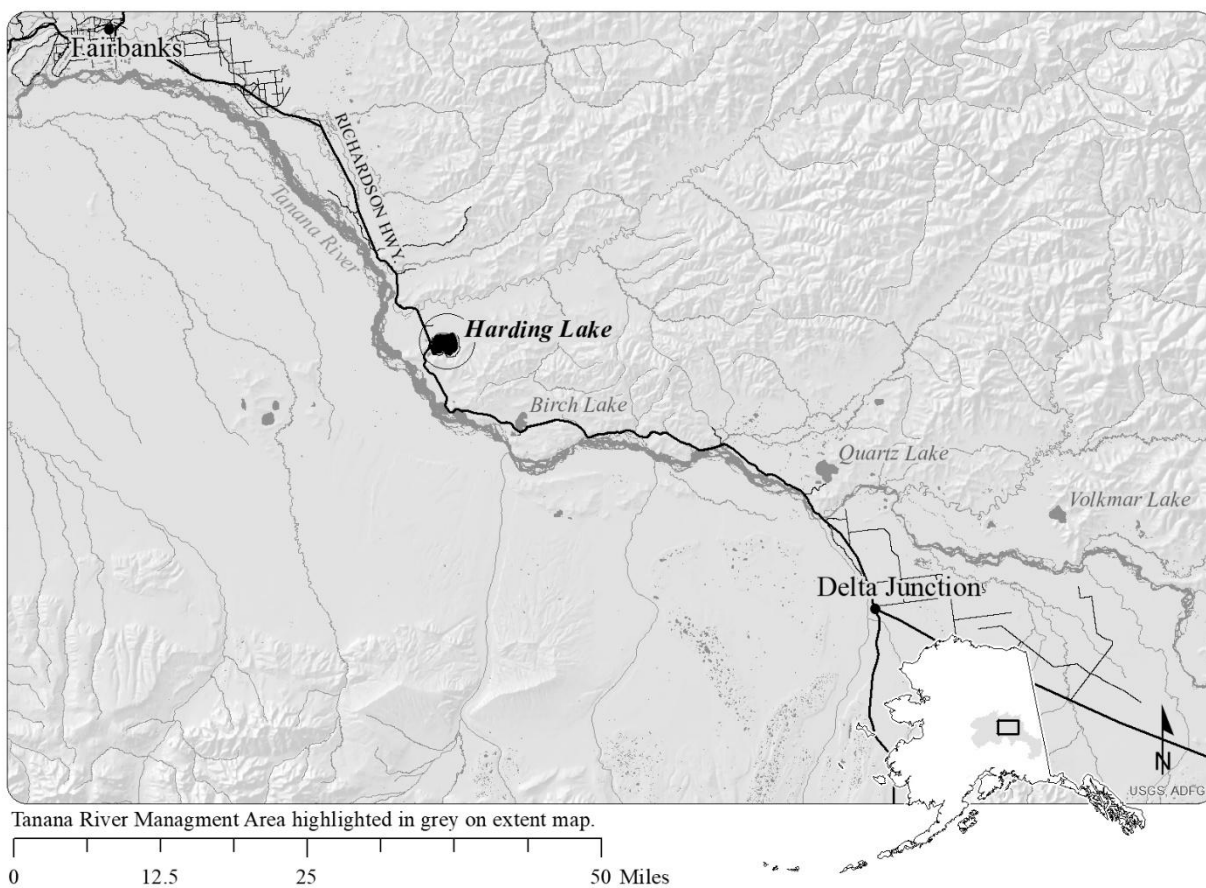


Figure 21-1.—Location of Harding Lake.

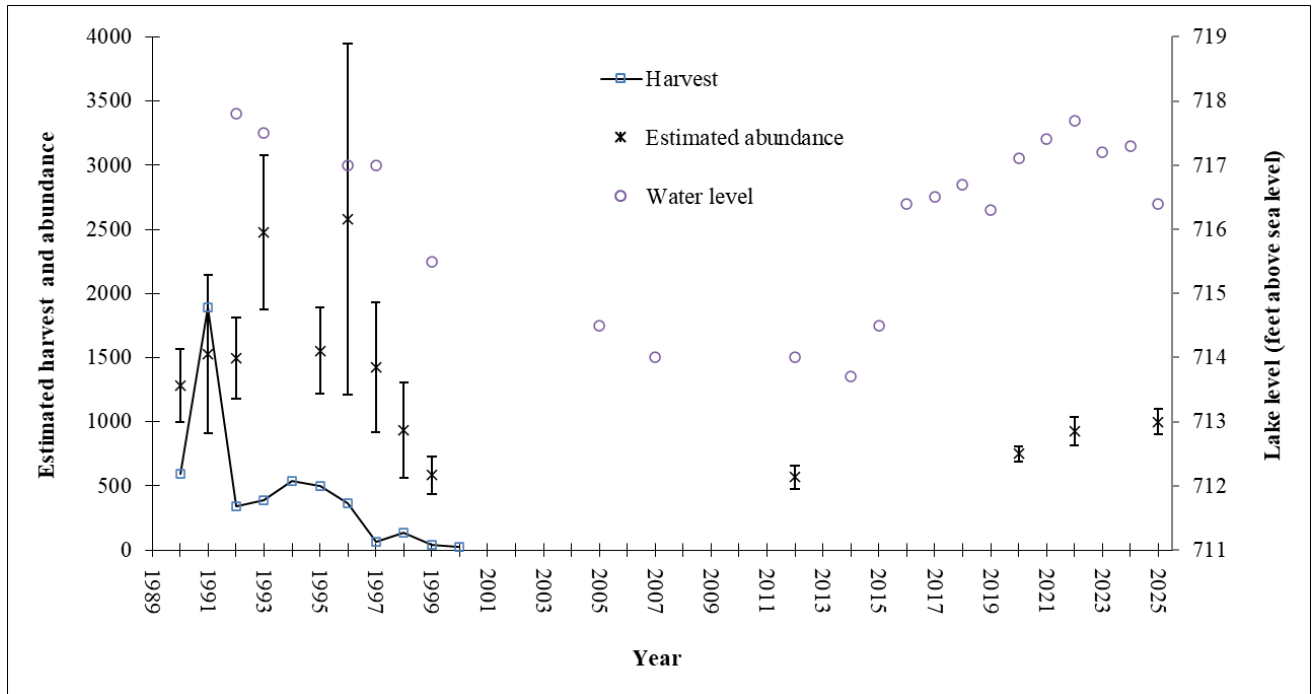


Figure 21-2.—Estimated abundance of northern pike ≥ 18 in, estimated harvest, and water elevation in Harding Lake.

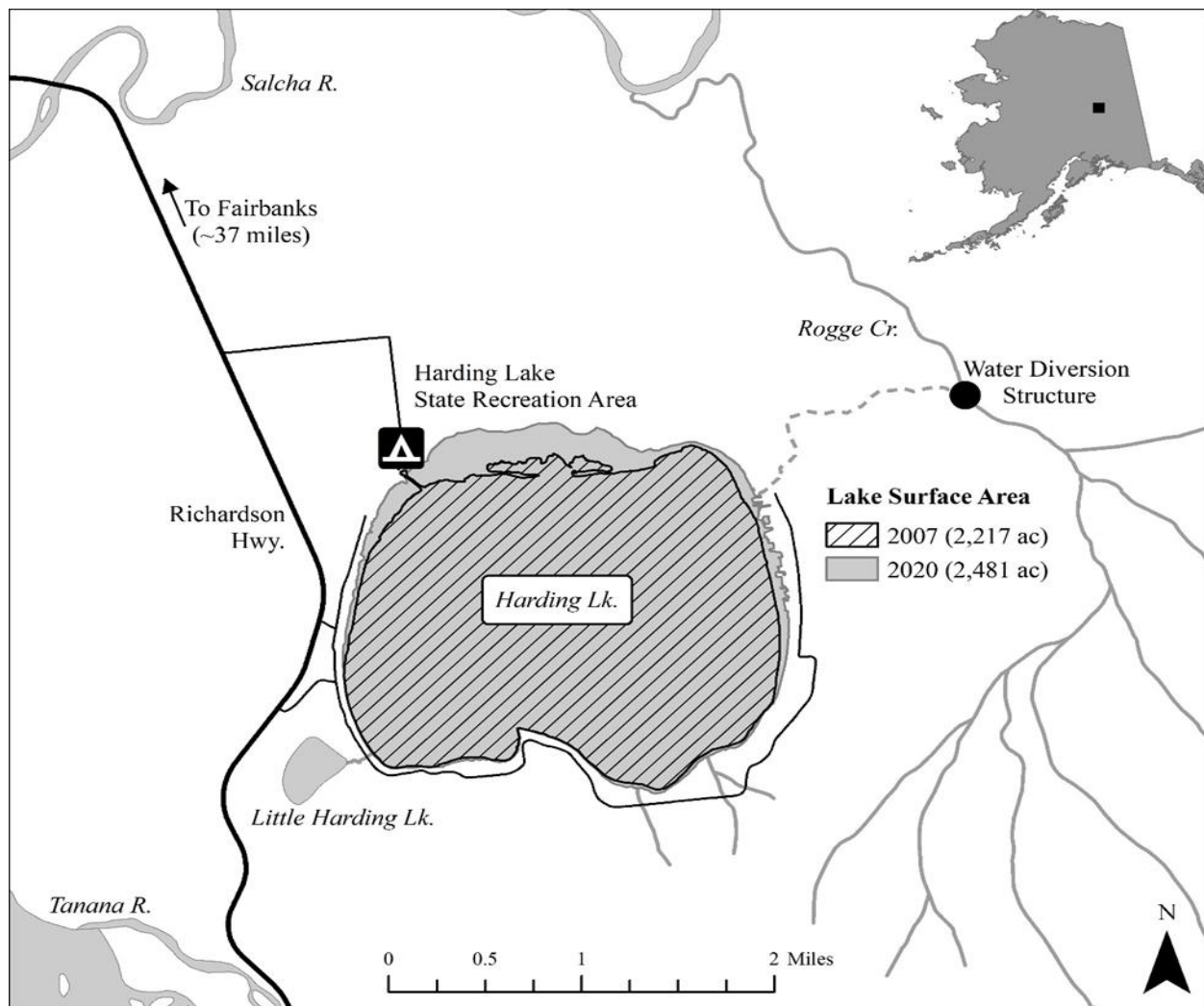


Figure 21-3.—Harding Lake and changes in lake surface area.

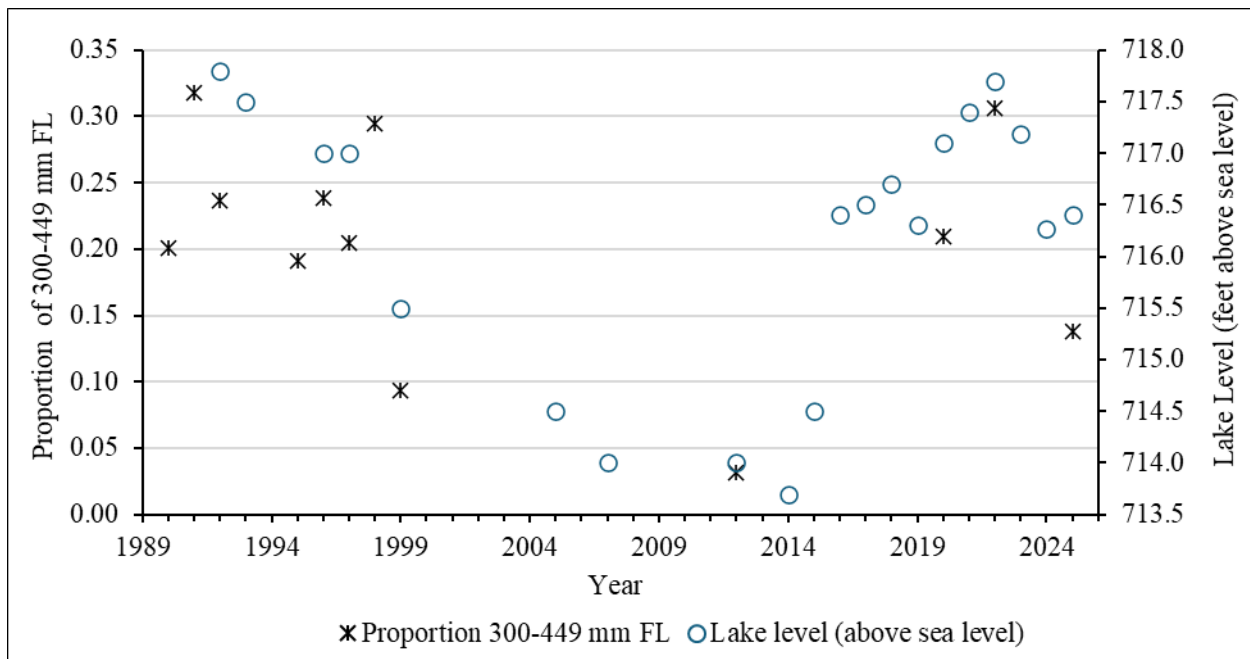


Figure 21-4.—Proportion of sampled northern pike 300–449 mm FL and lake level (feet above sea level) by year at Harding Lake, 1990–2025.

PROPOSAL 22 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Tony Hollis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow a catch-and-release fishery for northern pike in Harding Lake.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Harding Lake, the sport fishery for northern pike is currently closed year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers would have the opportunity to fish for northern pike in Harding Lake. Fish mortality would likely increase due to potential catch-and-release mortality.

BACKGROUND: Harding Lake is the largest road-accessible lake in the Tanana River drainage and is within a nonsubsistence area (Figure 22-1) with a surface area of 2,500 acres, a maximum depth of 140 ft, and a shoreline length of 8.9 mi. It is a popular recreational area, has a state campground and public boat launch, is mostly surrounded by private dwellings, and is stocked with lake trout and Arctic char. Historically, Harding Lake provided the only major roadside sport fishery for northern pike within the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Region and estimated northern pike harvest peaked in the late 1980s (Figure 22-2).

In 2000, the northern pike fishery in Harding Lake was closed, due to a large decline in population size, which decreased from an estimated abundance of 2,479 (SE = 307) fish ≥ 18 in 1993 to 531 (SE = 54) fish in 2000 (Figure 22-2). This decline was partly attributed to harvest, but primarily due to dropping water levels and drying of the littoral spawning and rearing habitat. In 2007, a water diversion structure was constructed with a goal of raising and maintaining an average water elevation of 717 feet to help restore spawning and rearing habitat. By 2012, the abundance of northern pike (567, SE=47) had not increased despite the fishery being closed for 12 years.

Since 2014, increased annual precipitation has helped raise the water level ~2 to 3.5 feet and that has increased the available spawning and rearing habitat by up to 106 hectares (Figure 22-3). The northern pike population ≥ 18 inches has consequently increased (Figures 21-3 and 21-4). The latest estimate of abundance in 2025 was 915 (SE=90) fish.

During the last 25 years, the fishery closure has not influenced the population size of northern pike, but rather the number of northern pike has been impacted by lake water level, which determines the amount spawning and rearing habitat available any given year. When water levels remain nearly constant over several years, the northern pike population then reaches a new carrying capacity or equilibrium.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. A 25-year closure of the northern pike fishery in Harding Lake did not increase abundance to levels sufficient to support harvest in the sport fishery. In the absence of harvest, lake level is the primary driver of abundance because it affects the availability of spawning and rearing habitat, and the lake level will continue to fluctuate based primarily on weather. Due to the popularity of Harding Lake, harvest would not likely be sustainable. Allowing catch-and-release fishing will be sustainable, even during low water levels, and will provide additional fishing opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

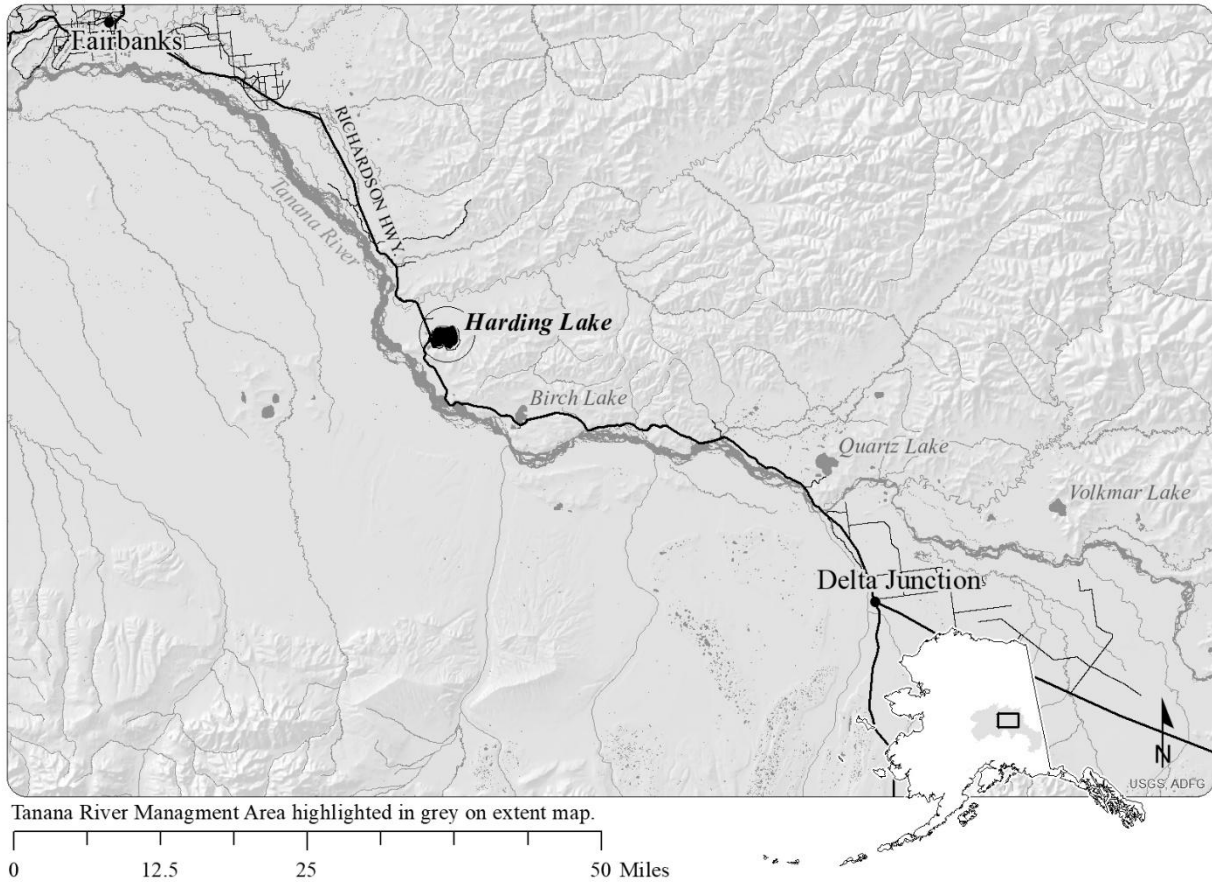


Figure 22-1.—Location of Harding Lake.

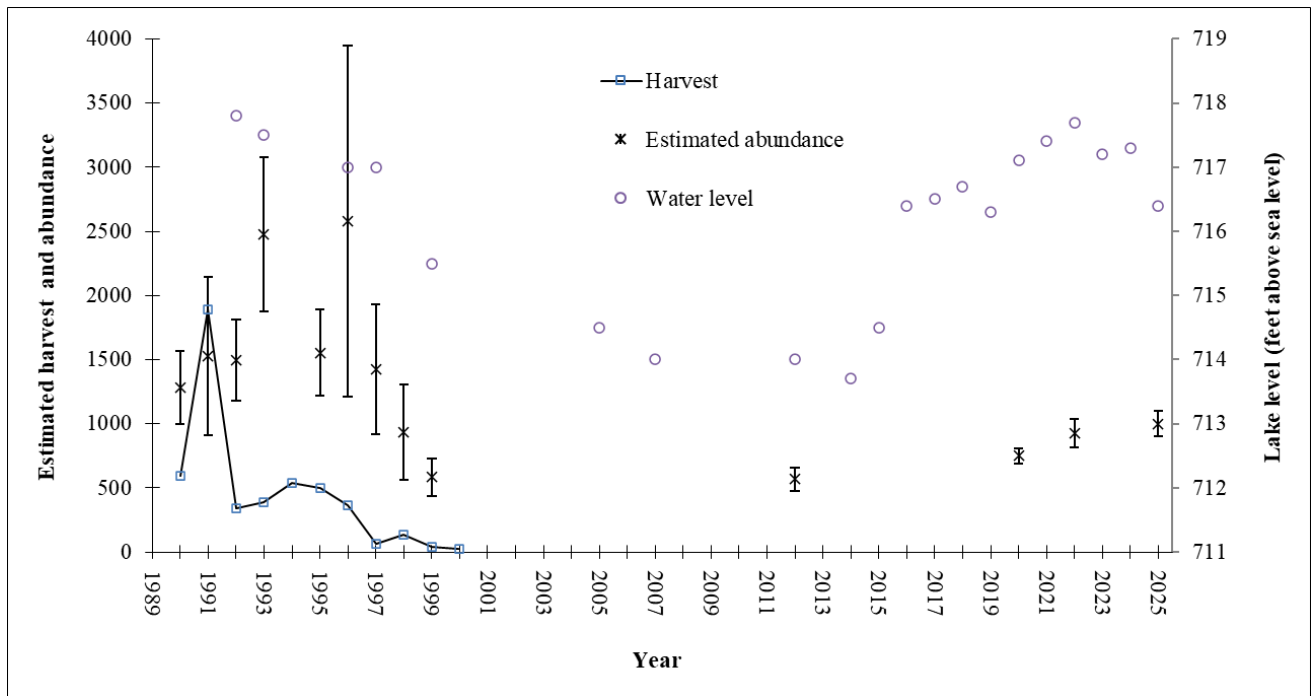


Figure 22-2.—Estimated abundance of northern pike ≥ 18 in, estimated harvest, and water elevation in Harding Lake.

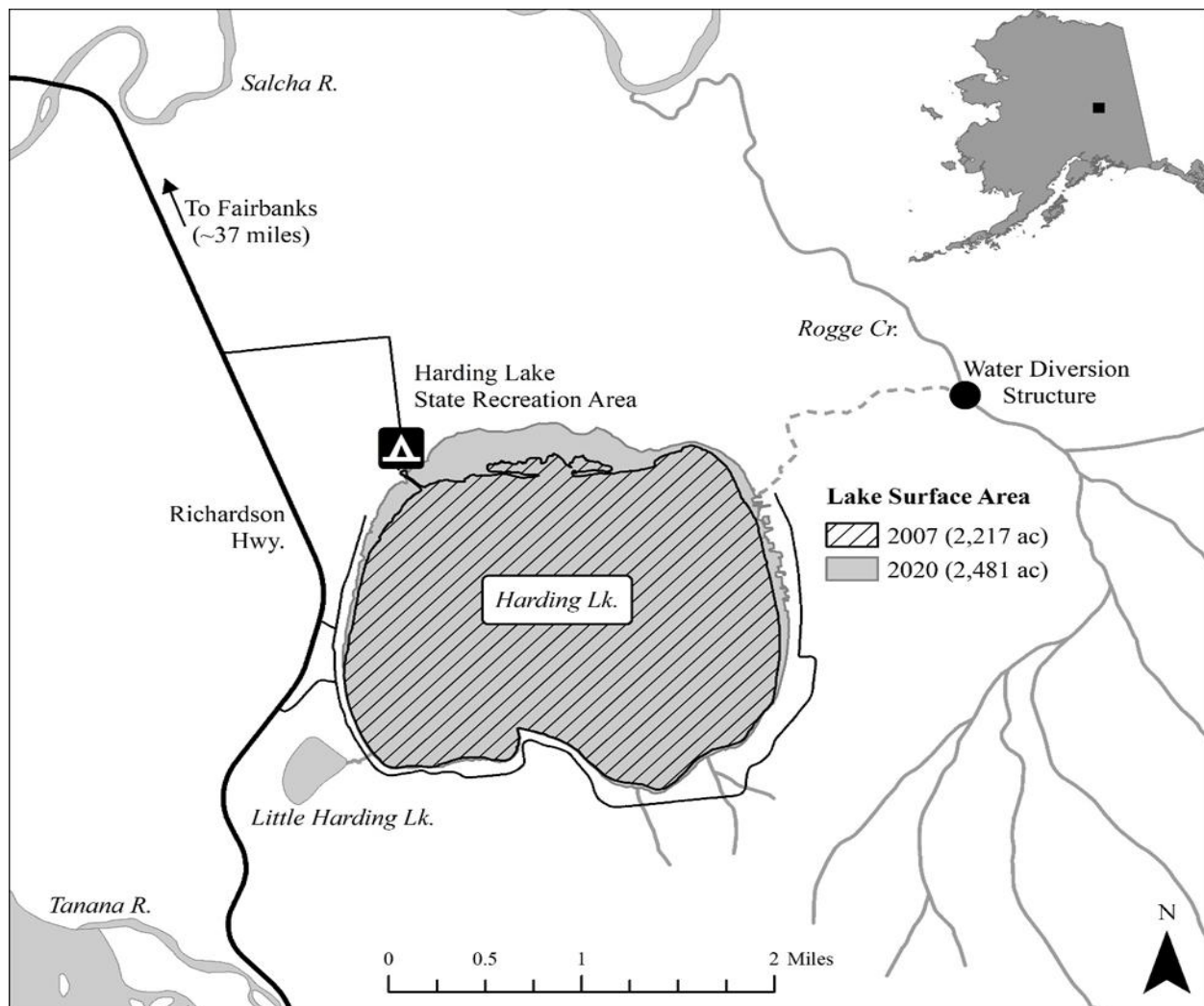


Figure 22-3.—Harding Lake and changes in lake surface area.

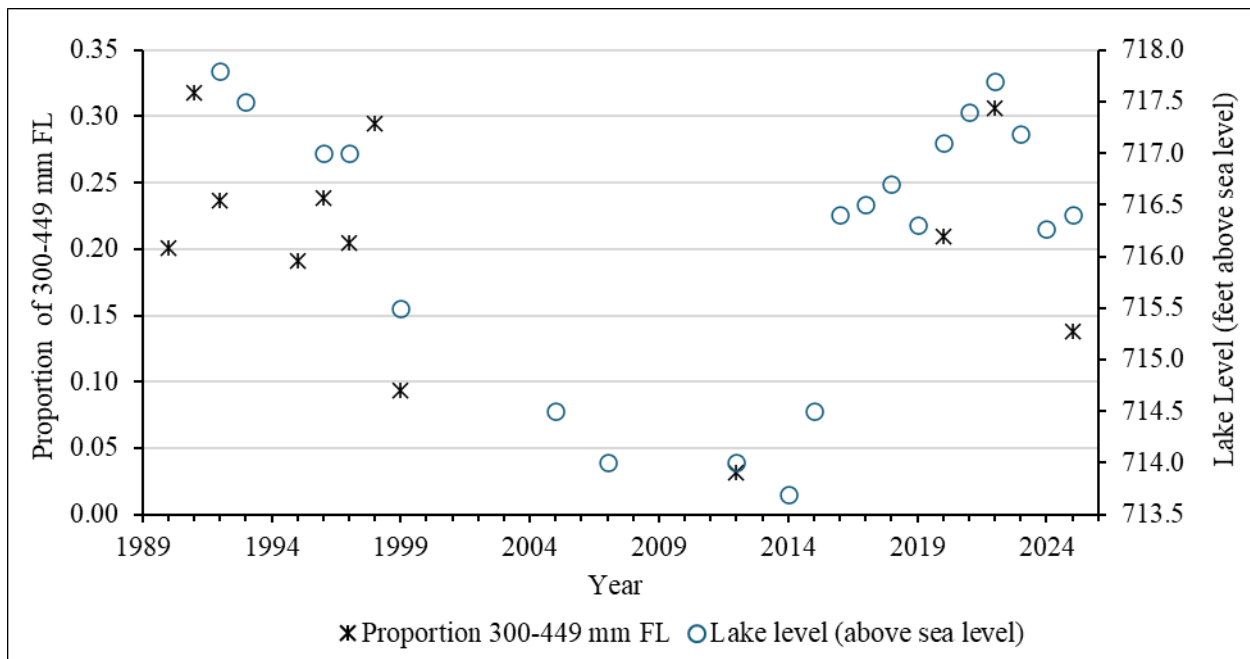


Figure 22-4.—Proportion of sampled northern pike 300–449 mm FL and lake level (feet above sea level) by year at Harding Lake, 1990–2025.

PROPOSAL 23 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the bag and possession limit for northern pike in Volkmar Lake to match the general regulations of 5 fish of which only 1 fish may be 30 inches or longer.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The season is open year-round, with a daily bag and possession limit of 2 fish, of which only 1 may be 30 inches or longer.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers would have the opportunity to harvest 3 additional northern pike less than 30 inches in length per day. The harvest of northern pike less than 30 inches in length will increase but will remain at a sustainable level.

BACKGROUND: Volkmar Lake is a remote lake with several recreational cabins located 16 air miles to the northeast of Delta Junction and is within a nonsubsistence area. Access is only by float/ski plane, or snow machines along a 24-mile winter trail to the lake (Figure 23-1). All the sport fishing effort in Volkmar Lake is directed at northern pike because of the absence of other species. The lake supports low levels of fishing effort due to its remoteness, but for 15 years Volkmar Lake has been managed using a restrictive bag, possession, and size limit.

The management objective for Volkmar Lake northern pike is to maintain a minimum abundance of 2,000 northern pike greater than 18 inches in length. In 2009, the abundance was estimated to be 4,017 northern pike greater than 18 inches in length. In 2010 with the increase in abundance and decrease in fishing effort, the board increased the bag and possession limit from 1 fish any size to 2 fish of which only 1 fish may be 30 inches or longer. During the last 15 years, the number of respondents to the Statewide Harvest Survey has averaged less than 2 respondents annually, nullifying estimation of angler effort, harvest, and catch. However, the low number of respondents also indicates low levels of fishing effort in Volkmar Lake.

The general background bag and possession limit for northern pike in the Tanana River Area is 5 fish, of which only 1 may be 30 inches or greater in length. Most fish 30 inches or longer are female. The intention of this regulation is to afford protection to larger females because they are desired by anglers, and because of their biological and reproductive importance to the stock. Smaller immature fish have a significantly higher natural mortality rate and can therefore sustain greater harvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Due to the remoteness of the lake, sport fishing effort will remain low, and any additional harvest will target only smaller northern pike rather than mature females. Changing the regulations for northern pike to general regulations for the Tanana River Area will be sustainable, simplify regulations, and provide additional fishing opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

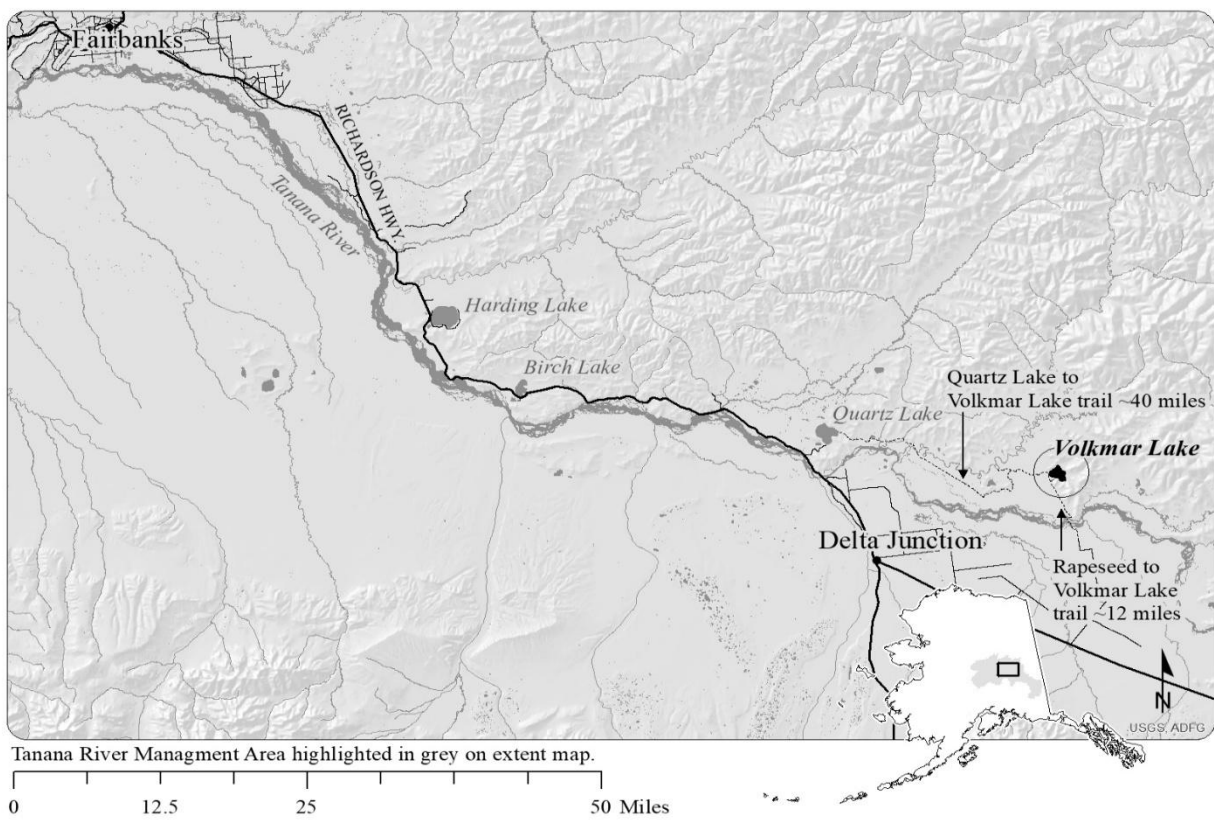


Figure 23-1.—Location of Volkmar Lake.

PROPOSAL 24 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate the youth-only fishery for Arctic grayling that occurs during 4 weekends (8 days) in June and July.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? For Arctic grayling in the lower Chena River and its tributaries downstream of the Chena River Dam, catch-and-release fishing only from April 1 through May 31, and a bag and possession limit of 1 Arctic grayling from June 1 through March 31. There is a youth-only fishery during the last 2 weekends of June and first 2 weekends of July when only anglers 15 years of age or younger may fish for Arctic grayling. Upstream of the Moose Creek Dam, catch-and-release regulations apply year-round.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers over the age of 15 would have opportunity to fish for Arctic grayling in the Chena River during 4 additional summer weekends and it would reduce regulatory complexity.

BACKGROUND: The Chena River drainage supports a popular Arctic grayling sport fishery because of its proximity to Fairbanks with harvests averaging as high as 30,000 during the early 1980s with effort and catch declining since then (Figure 24-1). Harvest restrictions were adopted in 1983 when bag limits were reduced from 10 to 5 fish. By 1992, only catch-and-release fishing was allowed, and the regulation has remained in effect other than a special youth-only Arctic grayling fishery that began in 2019. In 2023, the regulation for the lower Chena River was modified to allow the harvest of 1 fish by all anglers during June 1—March 31, except during 4 weekends when Arctic grayling fishing is closed, including catch-and-release, to all anglers 16 years and older.

The youth-only Arctic grayling fishery was retained in 2023 because it was deemed an opportunity to encourage more youth participation in fishing by both the department and the board of fisheries. Since 2023, there have been concerns raised by anglers that the youth-only fishery excludes the parents from fishing for Arctic grayling with their children and that the participation rate was low. To evaluate participation in the youth-only fishery, a survey of anglers was conducted in the lower 46 miles of the Chena River and Badger Slough during each youth-only weekend in the summer of 2025. It was found that the lower Chena River was very lightly fished, and most anglers were older than age 15 who were targeting species other than Arctic grayling. Across all 8 surveys, only 1 youth angler was specifically fishing for Arctic grayling, and no more than 2 anglers under 16 years of age were observed on any given day.

Fishing effort in the lower Chena River has been declining. Statewide Harvest Survey estimates of fishing effort (all species combined) averaged 20,510 angler-days in the lower 46 miles of the Chena River during 1999–2003, but the most recent 5-year average for 2019–2023 was only 3,769 angler-days. Harvest has been allowed since 2019 and averaged 209 Arctic grayling. The most recent abundance estimate of Arctic grayling greater than 12 inches in length within index area was 24,896 (SE 1,518), resulting in an exploitation rate of less than 1%. The Chena River is a closed system relative to Arctic grayling, based on radiotelemetry, with no evidence of immigration or emigration. Within the drainage, fish migrate to the lower portions in spring for spawning and migrations to upriver over summering areas are nearly complete by mid-June.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department supports opportunities for youth anglers, however, surveys of this fishery in 2025 demonstrated that public utilization of the youth-only fishery is very low. During the summer, the density of Arctic grayling anglers is generally low and there are no documented crowding issues. Allowing all anglers to fish for Arctic grayling during these times would provide additional sport fishing opportunity and encourage more families and friends to participate in the fishery because anglers of all ages could fish together. This change would be sustainable, simplify Arctic grayling regulations, and provide additional sport fishing opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

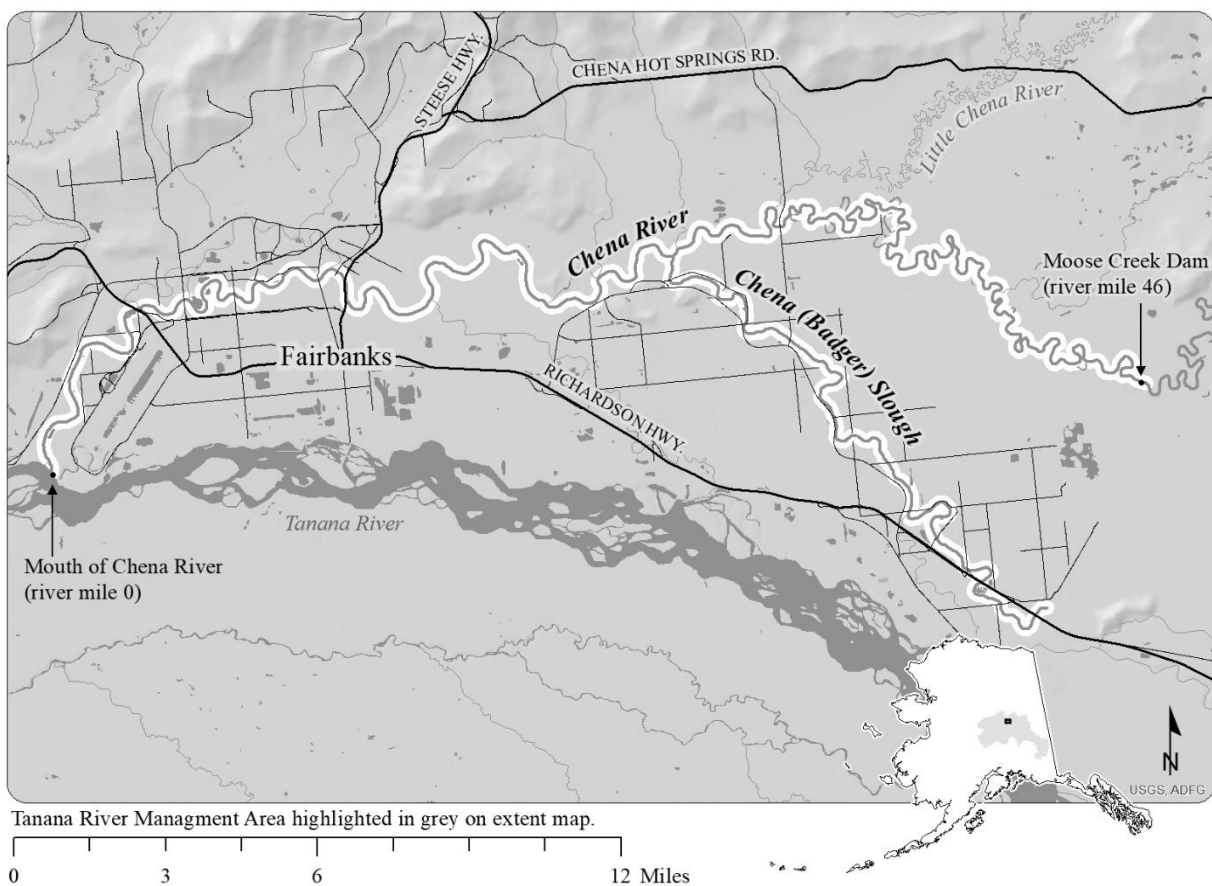


Figure 24-1.—Location of the Chena River youth Arctic grayling fishery, which extends 46 river miles from Moose Creek Dam to the Tanana River and includes Chena Slough.

PROPOSAL 25 – 5 AAC 74.035. Ice house registration.

PROPOSED BY: Tony Hollis.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal would repeal the registration requirement for ice houses that are not removed from the ice daily in the Tanana River Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From October 1 through April 30, a person using an ice house that is not removed from the ice daily is required to register the ice house with, and receive a permit from, the department for that year. A registered ice house must display the permit numbers at least 12 inches high and 1 inch wide on one side and on the roof of the ice house in a color that contrasts with the color of the ice house. An ice house must be removed from the ice by April 30, however, the department may designate other conditions on the permit, including other time and area restrictions for the ice house.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Permit holders would no longer have to mark their ice houses, including “pop ups”, with 12-inch letters, notify the department when they move their ice houses, nor remove their structures by April 30. Enforcement would not be able to identify owners of ice houses left on the ice during break-up. The department would not have the administrative burden of issuing permits and tracking ice houses.

BACKGROUND: In the Tanana River Drainage, the registration of ice houses not removed from the ice daily has been required since 1969. The only other management area statewide with the same requirement is the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area, which enacted the regulation in 2003 (5 AAC 52.025). The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has their own registration system for 7 lakes within the borough.

If an ice house is left on the ice overnight, anglers must have registered their ice house with the department prior. The registration information includes the angler’s name and address, as well as a list of additional locations where the ice house may be placed. Anglers do not have online access to the department registration system, and therefore, they must contact the department during regular business hours to register an ice house or to report a change in location. Alaska Wildlife Troopers must also contact the department during business hours to obtain information about any registered ice house.

In the early 2000s, the first pop-up portable, hub-style, fabric shelters began to be used by anglers, and this style of ice house has become more popular than traditional wooden construction ice houses that are typically sledded on and off the ice. During the early 2000s, a little over 100 ice houses were registered each year, but half as many have been registered annually in recent years. The ice houses that are registered are primarily of wooden construction, and compliance with registering pop-up ice houses is believed to be low.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The registration of ice houses does not inform fishery management and is an unnecessary burden for the department and public. Abandoned ice houses are not a problem. During the last 25 years only 1 unregistered ice house is known to have remained on the ice after April 30, which subsequently sank.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 26 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify regulations for Arctic grayling in the Shaw Creek drainage and the Tanana River within a 2-mile radius of the Shaw Creek mouth to match the general daily bag and possession limit of 5 Arctic grayling.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Shaw Creek drainage and in the Tanana River within a 2-mile radius of its confluence with Shaw Creek, sport fishing is open year-round for Arctic grayling, except from April 1 through May 31, when fishing is restricted to catch-and-release. In the Shaw Creek drainage upstream of the Richardson Highway bridge, only 1 unbaited single hook, artificial lure may be used. In Shaw Creek downstream of the Richardson Highway bridge and in the Tanana River and its tributaries within a 2-mile radius of Shaw Creek, bait may be used only on single hooks with a gap size larger than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Harvest opportunity would increase for anglers and harvest of Arctic grayling would likely increase because a more liberal bag and possession limit of 5 Arctic grayling would apply year-round.

BACKGROUND: Shaw Creek is a small stream, located 32 km northwest of Delta Junction (Figure 26-1), is accessed from the Richardson Highway near its terminus at the Tanana River, and is within a nonsubsistence area. It is an important spawning and rearing stream for Arctic grayling. Up to 6,000 adult Arctic grayling have been estimated to spawn in the creek in May before departing to spend the summer in at least 6 other Tanana River tributary streams, such as the popular Delta Clearwater River.

During the 1980s, the Shaw Creek and Tanana River confluence area was a popular roadside fishery targeting congregating Arctic grayling that staged there prior to ascending Shaw Creek to spawn. Creel surveys estimated harvests that ranged from 4,343 fish in 1981 to 270 fish in 1986. In 1987, the current regulations were implemented due to potential conservation concerns and the area is now managed under the special management approach of the *Tanana River Area Wild Arctic Grayling Management Plan* (5 AAC 74.055).

The Shaw Creek Arctic grayling fishery has changed significantly since the 1980s. Public access has diminished because the Tanana River channel has diverted away from the highway and the confluence is now situated in the middle of the Tanana River gravel plain. Angler effort for all species has declined from 2,195 angler days in 1984 to 270 in 1999, and during the last 10 years the survey has averaged only 2 respondents. This trend is consistent with all Arctic grayling fisheries in the Tanana Management Area where effort has been trending down, and more notably, anglers harvest far fewer Arctic grayling compared to the 1980s and 1990s.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Current regulations are unnecessarily restrictive given the very low levels of fishing effort and catch. Changing this special regulation for Arctic grayling to general regulations for the Tanana River Area will allow sustainable harvests, simplify regulations, and provide additional fishing opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

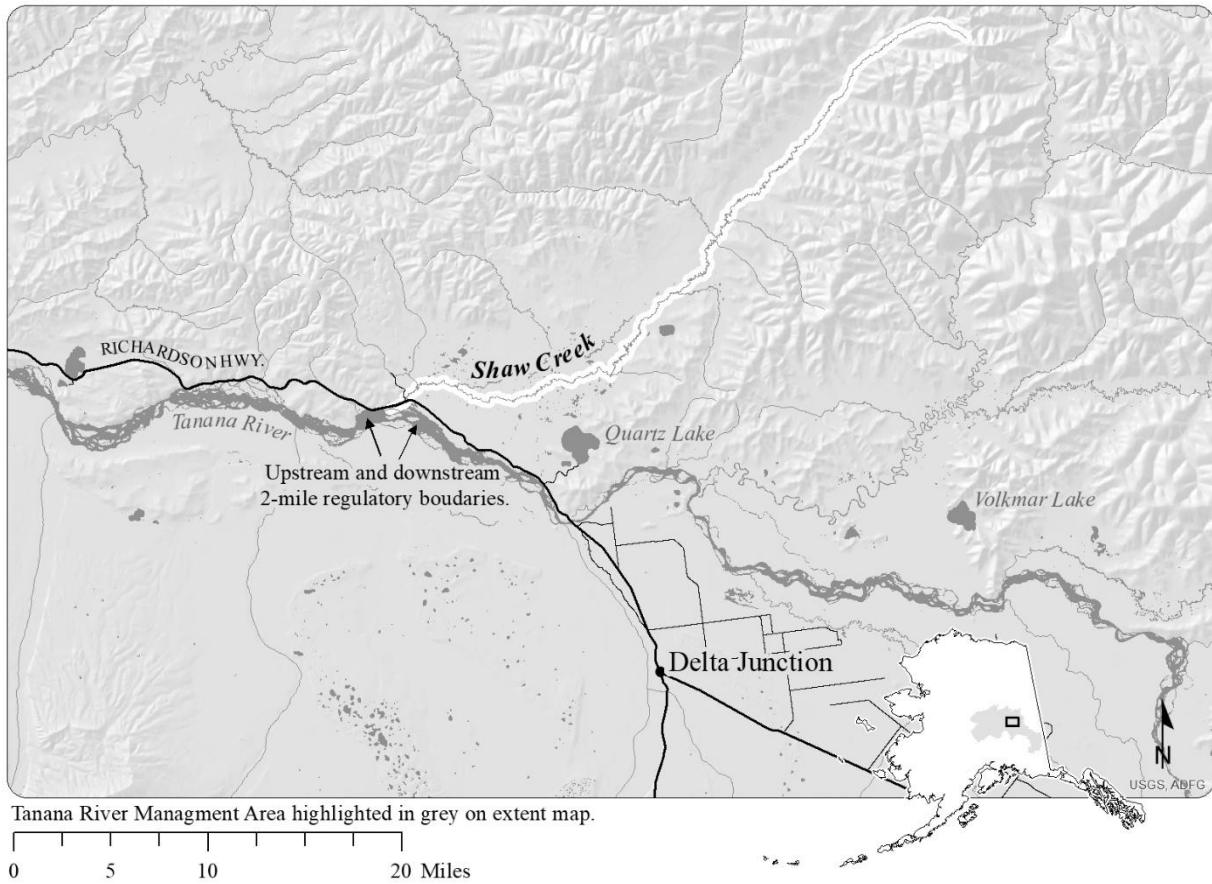


Figure 26-1.—Shaw Creek drainage and the upstream and downstream 2-mile regulatory boundaries along the Tanana River.

PROPOSAL 27 – 5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify management of Rainbow Lake, which is a stocked water, and increase the daily bag and possession in Rainbow Lake for all stocked finfish species combined from 5 to 10, of which only 1 may be 18 inches or greater in length.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Rainbow Lake, the daily bag and possession limit for all finfish species combined is 5 fish, of which only 1 may be 18 inches or greater.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would shift management from the conservative approach to the regional approach (see below) and increase harvest opportunity in Rainbow Lake by allowing anglers to keep 10 fish, of which only one fish may be 18 inches or greater in length.

BACKGROUND: In 2004, the *Tanana River Area Stocked Waters Management plan* (5 AAC 74.044) was adopted and provided for several management approaches, including the special management approach for trophy lakes, such as Rainbow Lake. The intent of this approach is to create a fishery with a high probability of catching a trophy fish, and for Rainbow Lake, the regulations were therefore set at a bag and possession limit of only 1 fish 18 inches or greater in length. In 2013, the management approach for Rainbow Lake was changed from special to conservative. The intent of the conservative approach is to provide a reasonable expectation to catch a daily bag limit with a reasonable chance of catching bag limit and a fish 18 inches or greater. If a lake is sufficiently productive, a bag limit of 5 fish is expected to reduce exploitation and allow sufficient time for stocked fish to survive and grow to 18 inches or greater in length.

Rainbow Lake is 86.5 acres in size, is classified as a “remote” stocked lake in the upper Tanana Valley about 12.5 air miles northwest of Delta Junction and is within a nonsubsistence area (Figure 27-1). Anglers access Rainbow Lake by float plane during the open-water months and by snowmachine after freeze-up. All lakes stocked with rainbow trout within the Tanana River Management Area are managed under the regional approach, except for Rainbow Lake. Under the regional management approach, stocked waters will be managed to provide a reasonable expectation of high catch rates and harvesting a daily bag limit. This approach eliminates the expectation of catching fish 18 inches or greater in length and is an appropriate management approach for lakes that are not productive enough to consistently produce fish 18 inches or greater in length.

Based on sampling in 2018 and 2025, rainbow trout are not growing to 18 inches in length and not meeting expectations of the conservative management approach. Fishing effort and harvests in Rainbow Lake cannot be estimated because there are too few responses (e.g. 0-2 respondents annually since 2005) to the Statewide Harvest Survey, but the low response rate is an indication that this remote lake is lightly fished. Harvests may be insufficient to decrease competition and promote growth despite reductions in stocking densities, and the lake is not productive enough to grow 18-inch rainbow trout. Additionally, the lake water level has been steadily decreasing and may also be affecting lake productivity.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The conservative management approach for Rainbow Lake has been ineffective at promoting growth

of rainbow trout and providing a reasonable expectation of catching rainbow trout greater than 18 inches. Changing the management approach from conservative to regional will be sustainable, simplify regulations, and provide additional sport fishing opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

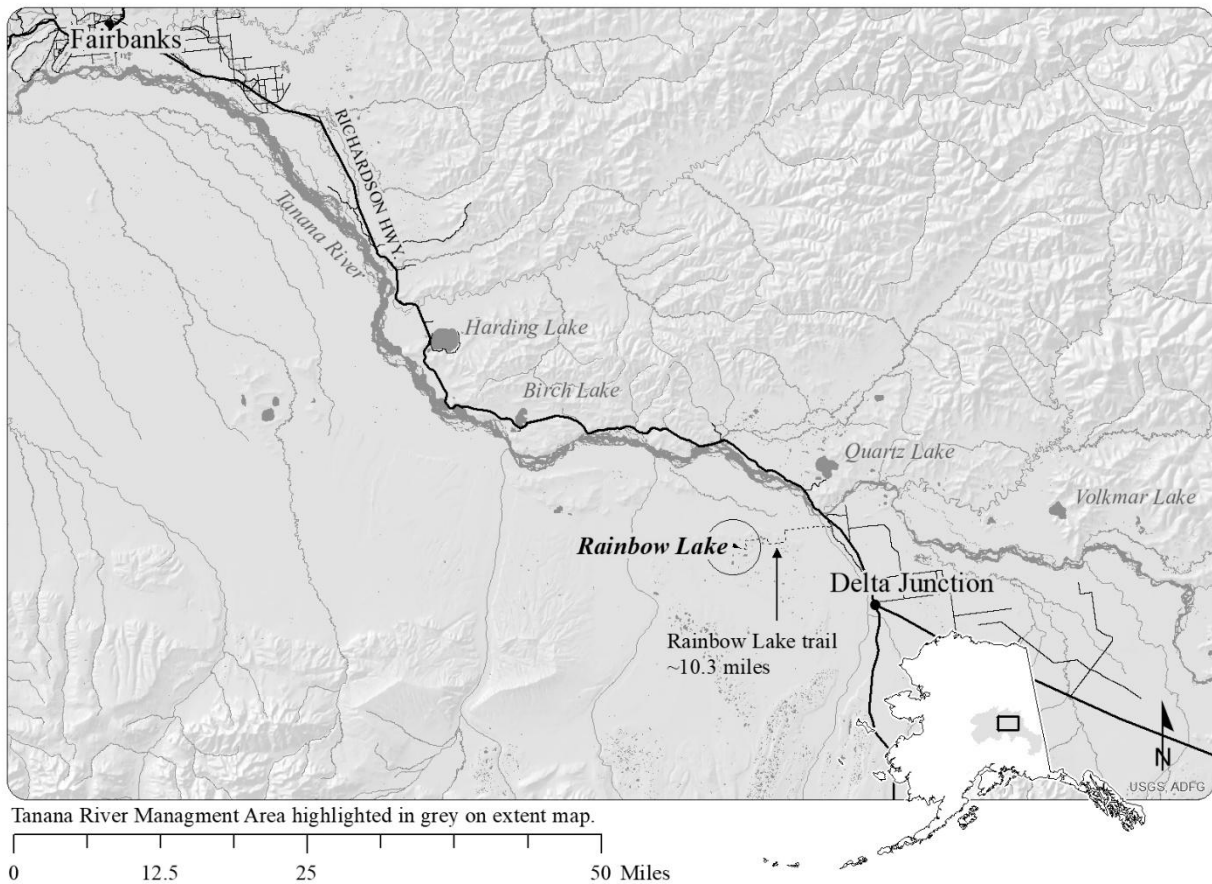


Figure 27-1.—Location of Rainbow Lake.

PROPOSAL 28 – 5 AAC 01.170. Lawful gear and gear specifications.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish beach seine specifications for subsistence fisheries in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence District. Those specifications would be as follows; beach seines may not exceed 150 fathoms in length, 100 meshes in depth, 3 ½ inches stretched mesh, and may not be constructed of monofilament web.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, there are no specifications for the composition of a beach seine in the subsistence fishing regulations. However, in the commercial fishery for Subdistricts 5 and 6, during times of conservation of king salmon, a commercial beach seine fishery may be prosecuted to target chum and pink salmon with non-retention of king salmon. In the commercial fishery, beach seine nets may not exceed 150 fathoms in length, 100 meshes in depth, 4 ½ inches stretched mesh, and may not be constructed of monofilament web.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? By having beach seine specifications, it will prevent the use of beach seines with mesh larger than 3 ½ inches, which may lead to unintentional mortality of a species the department is attempting to conserve.

BACKGROUND: In 2013, the board adopted regulations that gave the department emergency order authority to close specific areas in Norton Sound/Port Clarence to gillnet subsistence fishing when there is a conservation concern for a specific species of salmon and immediately reopen the subsistence fishery to beach seines with the non-retention and immediate release of the species for which there is a conservation concern. The department has utilized this tool on several occasions to provide subsistence opportunity on more abundant salmon species. Because beach seine specifications are not defined in regulation, fishers can currently use nets of any mesh size, length, or depth, when beach seining for salmon. Consequently, some nets may catch species of conservation concern.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery if new gear needs to be acquired to comply with the regulation. Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 29 – 5 AAC 01.180. Subsistence fishing permits; annual limits for salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Brandon Ahmasuk.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish an annual household limit of 25 sockeye salmon for the Sinuk River subsistence fishery in Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, subsistence fishing requires a Nome Subdistrict subsistence permit to participate and there is no annual household limit on the harvest of sockeye salmon in the Sinuk River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would not significantly change the nature of the fishery, including harvest, and may allow management to be more liberal with opportunity when forecasts indicate low abundance.

BACKGROUND: The Sinuk River was included in systems required to have a subsistence registration permit to subsistence fish in 1968. This permit was required for systems that crossed the Seward Peninsula road system in Subdistrict 1 and included the Snake, Nome, and Solomon Rivers. In Subdistrict 1, which included the Sinuk River, subsistence salmon fishing was operated from 2001 through 2005 under Tier II regulation. Since 1997, an average of 22 households per year have reported subsistence harvests from the Sinuk River with a maximum of 55 permits fished in 2015. No sockeye salmon harvest was reported from 1997 to 2003 and the average harvest was 3 sockeye per household from 2004–2014. Harvest has increased in recent years averaging 6 sockeye salmon per household since 2015.

Glacier Lake, a tributary of the Sinuk River where sockeye salmon spawn, has an escapement goal of 800–1,600 sockeye salmon based on annual aerial surveys. Escapement has averaged 1,287 sockeye salmon since 1978 and the escapement goal was met in 12 of the last 20 years (Table 29-1). Glacier Lake is one of the northernmost sockeye salmon runs and is a relatively small run that is likely limited by habitat availability in the lake.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal due to no known biological concerns. Currently, average subsistence sockeye salmon harvest, as measured through permits, is well below the proposed household limits; however, there are years where a few individuals have harvested over the proposed 25 sockeye salmon annual household limit. The amount of harvest taken does not appear to be tied to overall abundance. This proposal would result in reduced subsistence opportunity by creating an annual household limit for sockeye salmon in a fishery where no limit was previously imposed. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 29-1.—Aerial survey counts of sockeye salmon for Glacier Lake, 2000–2025.

Year	Sockeye	Escapement Goal		Goal Met Y/N
		Lower	Upper	
2000	1,446	800	1,600	Y
2001	2,020	800	1,600	Y
2002	320	800	1,600	N
2003	865	800	1,600	Y
2004	970	800	1,600	Y
2005	3,730	800	1,600	Y
2006	5,810	800	1,600	Y
2007	1,430	800	1,600	Y
2008	540	800	1,600	N
2009	169	800	1,600	N
2010	154	800	1,600	N
2011	—	800	1,600	—
2012	—	800	1,600	—
2013	1,365	800	1,600	Y
2014	2,330	800	1,600	Y
2015	1,819	800	1,600	Y
2016	1,582	800	1,600	Y
2017	4,250	800	1,600	Y
2018	1,570	800	1,600	Y
2019	5,100	800	1,600	Y
2020	943	800	1,600	Y
2021	—	800	1,600	—
2022	—	800	1,600	—
2023	200	800	1,600	N
2024	799	800	1,600	N
2025	960	800	1,600	Y

Note: En dash (—) indicates survey was not flown or conditions were poor.

PROPOSAL 30 – 5 AAC 01.175. Waters closed to subsistence fishing

PROPOSED BY: Brandon Ahmasuk

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would move the subsistence net fishing closed waters boundary in the Sinuk River from the confluence of Boulder Creek, approximately 7 miles downstream, to Camp Creek.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, waters above a regulatory marker placed at the confluence of Boulder Creek are closed to subsistence salmon fishing, except for fishing with hook and line attached to a rod or pole.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would increase the area closed to subsistence net fishing within the Sinuk River. This would place fishing sites commonly utilized by some subsistence net fishermen into the area closed to subsistence net fishing.

BACKGROUND: Currently, the Sinuk River is closed to subsistence net fishing above the confluence of Boulder Creek, approximately 3 miles downstream from the bridge on the Nome-Teller Road (Figure 30-1). Prior to 2013, the upstream boundary for waters open to subsistence net fishing on the Sinuk River was located at a marker approximately two miles from the mouth of the Sinuk River. In 2013, the board moved the boundary upstream approximately 10 miles to the confluence of Boulder Creek. This improved access for subsistence net fishermen on the Sinuk River by decreasing the distance needed to travel by boat to open subsistence net fishing areas as the Sinuk River can be perilous due to much of the river being relatively shallow with large rocks that are navigational hazards. Additionally, accessing the Sinuk River at its mouth requires boaters to travel approximately 25 miles from Nome, through a portion of Norton Sound where seas can be unpredictable. The location of the current upstream boundary was chosen because it is below spawning areas and areas where salmon tend to hold and mill making them susceptible to overharvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. There are no biological concerns with the current placement of the upstream boundary of the subsistence net fishing area. Adoption of this proposal may decrease subsistence opportunity by closing areas currently open to subsistence fishing, including areas that are commonly used by subsistence fishers to fish with nets. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

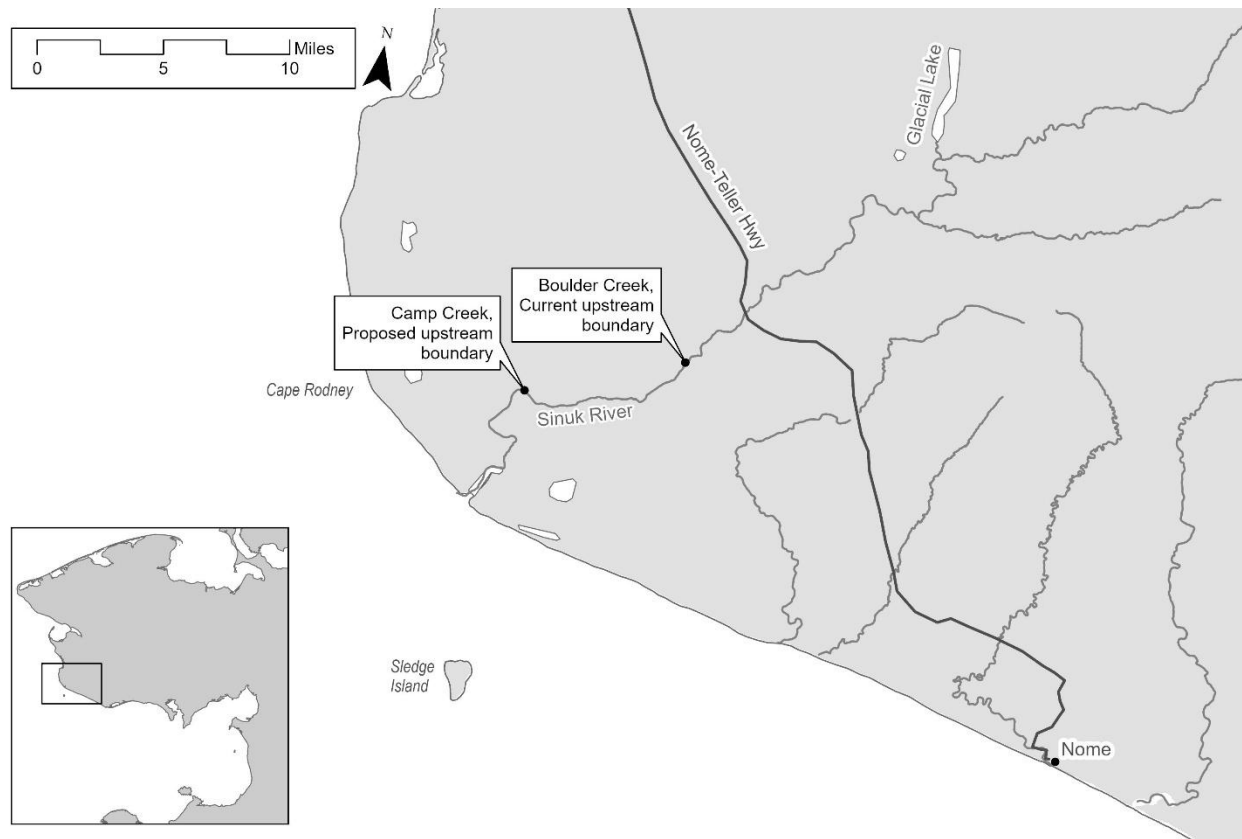


Figure 30-1.–Current and proposed Sinuk River subsistence net fishing boundaries.

PROPOSAL 31 – 5 AAC 01.175. Waters closed to subsistence fishing.

PROPOSED BY: The Northern Norton Sound F&G Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would move the subsistence net fishing closed waters boundary in the Sinuk River from the confluence of Boulder Creek, approximately 7 miles downstream to Camp Creek.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, waters above a regulatory marker placed at the confluence of Boulder Creek are closed to subsistence net fishing. Subsistence fishing with hook and line attached to a rod or pole is allowed upstream of this line.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would increase the area closed to subsistence net fishing within the Sinuk River. This would place fishing sites commonly utilized by some subsistence net fishermen into the area closed to subsistence net fishing.

BACKGROUND: Currently, the Sinuk River is closed to subsistence net fishing above the confluence of Boulder Creek, approximately 3 miles downstream from the bridge on the Nome-Teller Road (Figure 31-1). Prior to 2013, the upstream boundary for waters open to subsistence net fishing on the Sinuk River was located at a marker approximately two miles from the mouth of the Sinuk River. In 2013, the board moved the boundary upstream approximately 10 miles to the confluence of Boulder Creek. This improved access for subsistence net fishermen on the Sinuk River by decreasing the distance needed to travel by boat to open subsistence net fishing areas as the Sinuk River can be perilous due to much of the river being relatively shallow with large rocks that are navigational hazards. Additionally, accessing the Sinuk River at its mouth requires boaters to travel approximately 25 miles from Nome, through a portion of Norton Sound where seas can be unpredictable. The location of the current upstream boundary was chosen because it is below spawning areas and areas where salmon tend to hold and mill making them susceptible to overharvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. There are no biological concerns with the current placement of the upstream boundary of the subsistence net fishing area. Adoption of this proposal may decrease subsistence opportunity by closing areas currently open to subsistence fishing, including areas that are commonly used by subsistence fishers to fish with nets. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

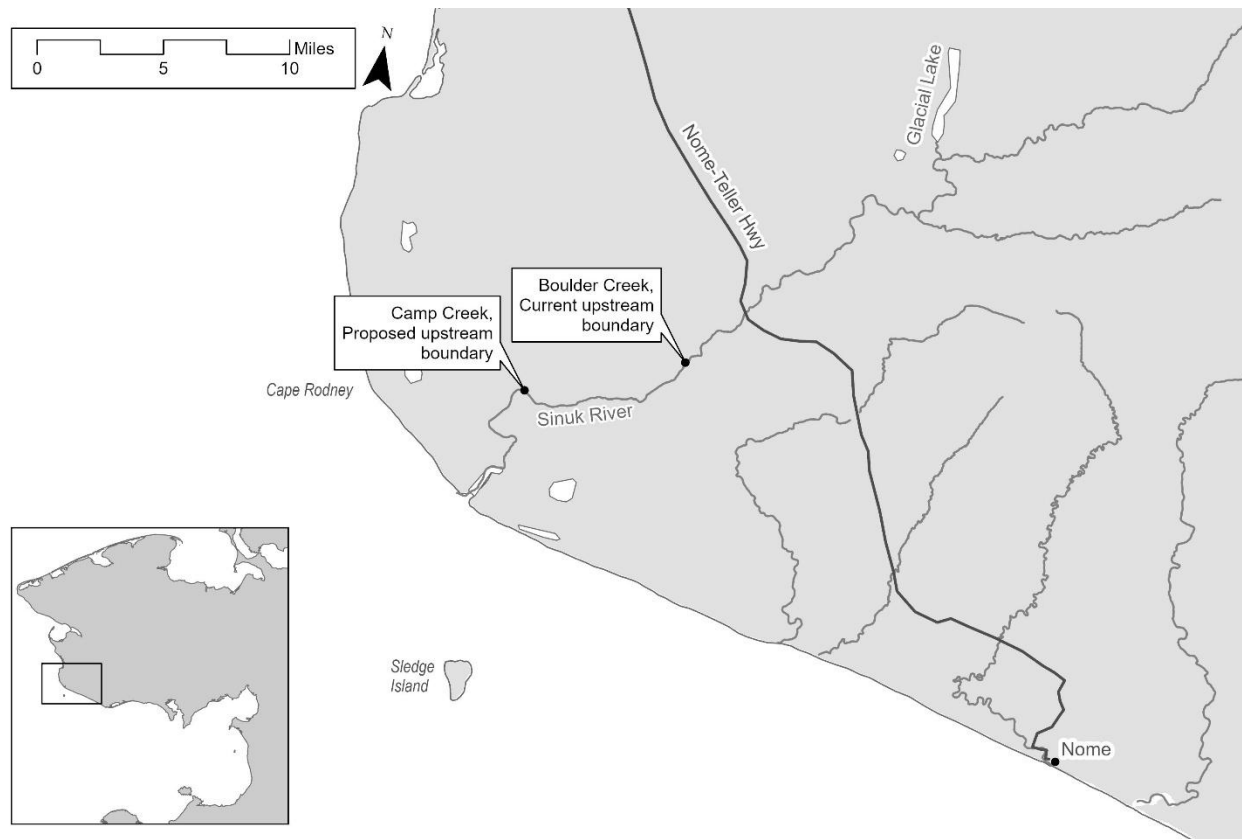


Figure 31-1.—Current and proposed Sinuk River subsistence net fishing boundaries.

PROPOSAL 32 – 5 AAC 01.160. Fishing seasons and periods.

PROPOSED BY: Nicole Braem.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would rescind the subsistence gillnet fishing schedule for Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District in marine waters West of Cape Nome.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, from June 15 through August 15 subsistence net fishing in the marine waters of Subdistrict 1 west of Cape Nome is open on a weekly schedule from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays through 6:00 p.m. Mondays.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this would increase subsistence gillnet opportunity and eliminate closure windows which have been implemented to allow for escapement.

BACKGROUND: Subsistence permits were first required in the Norton Sound District in 1968 for the following Subdistrict 1 rivers accessible by the road system: Sinuk, Snake, Nome, and Solomon rivers. This requirement was expanded to include all waters of subdistrict 1 in 1975. Continued low abundance trends in Subdistrict 1 caused the department to shift management focus from commercial to subsistence fishing, to reduce sport fish bag and possession limits, and to implement an annual household subsistence limit of 20 chums and 20 coho salmon in 1984. By 1987 commercial fishing was nearly eliminated due to low chum and pink salmon abundance and sport fish bag and possession limits for chum and coho salmon were further reduced. Through the late 1980s and into the 1990s additional reductions in subsistence and sport fish limits, gear restrictions, and closures of areas to subsistence and sport fisheries were implemented in response to low abundances of chum and pink salmon. By 1999, continued poor runs prompted the board to impose a Tier II subsistence fishery in Subdistrict 1; only 20 permits were issued. Additionally, the area was restricted to marine waters east of Cape Nome, and all other subsistence, sport, and commercial salmon fisheries were closed including those for coho salmon. The following year, Tier II subsistence permits were reduced to 10 households; however, a beach seine pink salmon subsistence fishery was allowed because of improved pink runs that year.

Salmon abundance began to improve, and in 2006, Subdistrict 1 was open for subsistence fishing after June 15. This was the first year since 1990 that Subdistrict 1 was not closed to subsistence salmon fishing after June 15. From 2006 to 2013, subsistence fishing in the marine waters of Subdistrict 1 was allowed 3 days per week from June 15 through July 25, then 5 days per week through August 15. In 2013, the current subsistence fishing schedule was implemented: 5 days per week, from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday to 6:00 p.m. Monday, between June 15 and August 15, in the marine waters of Subdistrict 1 east of Cape Nome. West of Cape Nome, marine waters were open continuously after June 15, unless modified by emergency order.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Currently the department has emergency order authority to modify subsistence fishing schedules in marine waters of Subdistrict 1. Adoption of this proposal would result in increased subsistence opportunity by allowing subsistence fishing outside of the current schedule.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area and 3,430 - 5,716 chum salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in Subdistrict 1 of the Norton Sound District. (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)(2)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 33 – 5 AAC 01.172. Limitations on subsistence fishing gear.

PROPOSED BY: Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit the retention of king salmon by subsistence users when using beach seine gear in the Pilgrim River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current annual household subsistence limit for king salmon in the Pilgrim River is 3 fish. Fishers may use either a gillnet, beach seine, fish wheel, or hook and line attached to a rod or pole while subsistence fishing for salmon in the Pilgrim River.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would restrict one gear type from retaining king salmon. Harvest of king salmon may decrease. This may cause enforcement issues if more than one group of subsistence users use different gear types and share and mix harvest.

BACKGROUND: Escapement monitoring on the Pilgrim River began in 1996 with the use of a counting tower. The project shifted to a resistance board weir starting in 2003. Enumeration of king salmon began in 1997. Abundance of king salmon has varied greatly since that time with 1,016 king salmon counted in 2003 and 6 king salmon recorded in 1999, with the most recent 10 years averaging 65 king salmon.

Subsistence permits to harvest salmon in the Pilgrim River have been required since 1964 and king salmon harvests have been small. The Pilgrim River subsistence harvest of king salmon has averaged 12 fish per year since 1997 with the largest harvest occurring in 2004 when 57 king salmon were harvested.

King salmon migrating to the Pilgrim River must transit through the Port Clarence District prior to arriving at the river mouth. Subsistence harvest of king salmon in the Port Clarence District, not including Pilgrim River, has averaged 73 fish per year since 1997, which is 6 times the subsistence harvest in the Pilgrim River. The largest subsistence harvest for king salmon in the Port Clarence District, not including the Pilgrim River, was 221 fish in 2004, the lowest was 8 fish in 2023, and has averaged 17 fish in the most recent 5-years.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it allocates harvest between gear types and shifts the conservation burden between user groups. Adoption of this proposal may reduce subsistence opportunity by prohibiting retention of king salmon caught in beach seines in the Pilgrim River. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 34 – 5 AAC 01.180. Subsistence fishing permits; annual limits for salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the Pilgrim River subsistence permit annual household limit to one king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, the subsistence annual household limit for king salmon is 3 fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would likely have little effect on the harvest and escapement of king salmon in the Pilgrim River because the reported annual average harvest is minimal.

BACKGROUND: Escapement monitoring on the Pilgrim River began in 1996 with the use of a counting tower. The project shifted to a resistance board starting in 2003. Enumeration of king salmon began in 1997. Since then, abundance of king salmon has varied greatly; 1,016 king salmon were counted in 2003, 6 king salmon recorded in 1999, with an average of 65 king salmon during the most recent 10 years. Currently there is no established escapement goal for king salmon on the Pilgrim River.

Subsistence permits to harvest salmon in the Pilgrim River have been required since 1964 and king salmon harvest have been small. The Pilgrim River subsistence harvest of king salmon has averaged 12 fish per year since 1997 with the largest harvest occurring in 2004 when 57 king salmon were harvested. The number of Pilgrim River subsistence permits fished has varied greatly and, since 1997, has ranged from a low of 1 in 1998, to a high of 322 in 2020, and averaged 154 for the most recent 10-year period.

King salmon bound for the Pilgrim River must transit through the Port Clarence District prior to arriving at the river mouth. Subsistence harvest of king salmon in the Port Clarence District, not including Pilgrim River, has averaged 73 fish per year since 1997, which is 6 times the subsistence harvest in the Pilgrim River. The largest subsistence harvest for king salmon in the Port Clarence District, not including the Pilgrim River, was 221 fish in 2004 and the lowest was 8 fish in 2023 and has averaged 17 king salmon in the most recent 5-year span.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Average annual subsistence harvest of king salmon in the Pilgrim River is less than one fish per issued household permit. Adoption of this proposal would reduce subsistence opportunity and increase the burden of conservation born by subsistence users. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 01.172. Limitations on subsistence fishing gear

PROPOSED BY: Nicole Braem

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove the requirement for subsistence users fishing with hook and line attached to a rod or pole to follow sport fish daily bag and possession limits while fishing for salmon in northern Norton Sound.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Subsistence users are allowed to use hook and line attached to a rod or pole to harvest their annual household limit of salmon in all waters flowing into Northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald point. However, they are required to adhere to sport fish methods and means, along with the daily bag and possession limits while using that gear type.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Removing the daily bag and possession limits from subsistence users fishing with hook and line attached to a rod or pole would allow retention of salmon up to annual household limits in all waters flowing into Northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald Point. This includes areas closed to subsistence net fishing where salmon may be susceptible to overharvest.

BACKGROUND: Hook and line attached to a rod or pole has been a legal gear type for subsistence salmon fishing in waters flowing into the Northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald Point since 2001. In Nome Subdistrict 1, subsistence harvest of salmon using this method was initially restricted to areas also open to subsistence net fishing. Users were required to obtain subsistence permits and adhere to annual subsistence salmon harvest limits, with no daily bag limit or other restrictions. Waters closed to subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 1 of Norton Sound includes areas where salmon mill, hold, or spawn and are susceptible to overharvest.

Sport fishing is allowed in all fresh waters of Nome Subdistrict 1 under sport fish regulations, including areas open to subsistence harvest, with a daily bag and possession limit of one king salmon 20 inches or larger; 3 chum, coho, or sockeye salmon, and 10 pink salmon. Historically, the differences in the area, methods, and harvest limits between the subsistence and sport fishery caused confusion amongst users. The subsistence permit area was expanded to Norton Sound Subdistricts 2 and 3 in 2004, where no annual subsistence salmon harvest limits exist, and hook and line was used in these areas without bag and possession limits. At that time regulations did not prohibit snagging because subsistence users were not required to adhere to sport fish methods and means.

In 2007 the board clarified regulations by allowing subsistence fishing with hook and line attached to a rod or pole in all waters flowing into the Northern Norton Sound from Cape Prince of Wales to Bald Point, including areas closed to subsistence net fishing. The board required subsistence harvesters using this method to follow the area's sport fish regulations, including methods and means and daily bag and possession limits.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it would allow increased daily harvest with hook and line attached to a rod or pole in the subsistence fishery in areas that are closed to subsistence net fishing. These closed areas are easily accessible from the road system and are recognized as areas where salmon either stage or spawn and can be susceptible to overharvest.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 36 – 5 AAC 04.395. Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Mitchell Wisniewski - Unalakleet River Lodge.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow for catch and release sport fishing for king salmon when the subsistence fishery is closed to the retention of king salmon in the marine waters of Subdistrict 5 and 6 or in the Unalakleet River Drainage.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sport fishing for king salmon in the Unalakleet River drainage and marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 is regulated based on tiered criteria. When the department projects king salmon escapement to be greater than the mid-point of the escapement goal range the sport fish annual limit of king salmon, greater than 20 inches in length, is increased to 4 fish. When marine waters of Subdistrict 5 and 6 are open to subsistence fishing for two 48-hour periods and the Unalakleet River is open for two 36-hour periods without a gillnet mesh size restriction to conserve king salmon, the sport fish bag and possession limit is 2 king salmon, only one of which may be 20 inches or greater in length, with an annual limit of 2 king salmon 20 inches or greater in length. When the marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 are restricted to gillnets with mesh size of 6 inches or less in the subsistence fishery, the annual sport fish bag and possession limit is reduced to one king salmon. When marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 subsistence fishery is restricted to less than two 48-hour periods, the sport fishery is reduced to only catch-and-release king salmon fishing. Lastly, the department closes the sport fishery for king salmon if either subsistence fishery is closed: 1) the marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6 or 2) the Unalakleet River Drainage.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, catch-and-release fishing for king salmon may be allowed when the department closes the subsistence fishery to the retention of king salmon within the Unalakleet River drainage or marine waters of Subdistricts 5 and 6. Incidental mortality of king salmon from catch-and-release sport fishing would increase.

BACKGROUND: King salmon returns in Unalakleet Subdistrict 6 of the Norton Sound District have experienced prolonged periods of diminished returns since the 1990s. An escapement goal of 1,200-2,600 king salmon was established on the North River, a tributary on the Unalakleet River, in 2005. This goal has only been met in 7 of the last 20 years and Unalakleet River king salmon are currently classified as a stock of yield concern. Directed king salmon commercial fisheries have not occurred in Subdistrict 6 since 2005 and can only be opened when the mid-point of the goal is projected to be met. All commercial harvest of king salmon in Subdistrict 6 since 2005 has been as incidental harvest when targeting other salmon species with mesh size restrictions in place after July 1. Additionally, when the midpoint of the escapement goal is not projected to be met, commercial sales of any incidentally harvested king salmon are restricted, however fishermen may retain incidentally caught king salmon from their commercial catch for personal use. `

The *Subdistrict 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan*, which was last updated by the board in 2016, describes actions to be taken by the department for managing commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in a tiered structure based on pre-season forecasts and inseason abundance estimates as described above.

Current management practices use the pre-season forecast to determine if a harvestable surplus is available for commercial, sport, or subsistence harvest early in the run in June, then switches to

using inseason escapement monitoring information when it becomes available. Pre-season forecasts have not allowed for a directed king salmon fishery and only limited subsistence fishing in marine waters in some years. When reliable escapement estimates and projections are available, the department adjusts management actions to liberalize or restrict king salmon harvest based on that information.

In years when the department projects king salmon will not meet the lower end of the escapement goal the department closes king salmon fishing in marine and fresh waters and opens subsistence fishing with beach seines only in fresh waters with non-retention of king salmon to allow for harvest of other more abundant salmon species.

Generally, the department relaxes fishing restrictions aimed at conserving king salmon based on historic run timing. Usually by July 15 most king salmon are through the marine waters of Subdistrict 6 and any incidental harvest after that time is minimal. The department relaxes restrictions to fishing time and gear in a manner that follows the natural migration timing of the salmon with relaxing of marine water restrictions followed by relaxing freshwater restrictions 10 to 14 days later to protect the tail end of the king salmon run from harvest if needed.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This may allow for discrete fishing opportunities (catch and release only) on king salmon by sport anglers when subsistence fisheries are closed because of a biological concern for the species. Additionally, incidental catch and release mortality of king salmon would increase from this fishing opportunity. The department could still close any directed fishing for king salmon, if there is a conservation concern at any time. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 37 – 5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.

PROPOSED BY: Norton Sound Economic Development Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close the Pilgrim River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The bag and possession limit for king salmon in the Pilgrim River drainage is 1 fish, 20 inches or greater in length. In Salmon Lake, its tributaries, and the Pilgrim River 300 feet downstream from the lake outlet, salmon fishing is closed.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? King salmon sport fishing opportunity and king salmon harvest in the Pilgrim River drainage would be eliminated. Escapement of king salmon may increase by a small amount.

BACKGROUND: The Pilgrim River parallels the Kougarok Road for approximately 19 miles, extending from Salmon Lake at mile 36 to the bridge at mile 65, about 40 miles north of Nome. The Bureau of Land Management has a campground located at the outlet of Salmon Lake, and the river is floatable for roughly 25 river miles down to the bridge. Much of the sport fishing effort in the Pilgrim River drainage is directed toward other species such as Arctic grayling and northern pike. Historically, the king salmon run in the Pilgrim River has been very small, with an average escapement of 98 fish from 2005 through 2024. In addition, the Statewide Harvest Survey has no record of a king salmon being caught in the Pilgrim River sport fishery since 2003. Subsistence fishing opportunity for king salmon in the Pilgrim River exists in regulation with an annual household limit of 3 fish (5 AAC 01.180(g)(1)(A)).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. There are no directed fisheries, escapement goals, or management targets for king salmon in the Pilgrim River. The Pilgrim River lies at the edge of the species' range and does not produce a large, harvestable surplus of king salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 70.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish.

PROPOSED BY: Kawerak, Inc.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would increase the maximum allowable hook size for multiple hooks when fishing for salmon to a gap between point and shank of up to 19/32 inch in the Northwestern Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? A person may not fish for salmon in freshwaters of the Northwestern Management Area with multiple hooks with a gap between point and shank larger than ½ inch.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow anglers to fish for salmon with additional hook sizes that are included with many lures. Fishing for salmon using multiple hooks larger than ½ inch gap between point and shank may increase the instances of intentionally and unintentionally snagged salmon.

BACKGROUND: To reduce snagging of fish in freshwater statewide, the board determined that multiple hooks (e.g. treble hooks) can only be used when the gap is ½ inch or smaller between point and shank, however, single hooks larger than ½ inch are allowed when fishing for salmon and nonsalmon species. In the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim region, such as the Yukon, Tanana, and Northwestern Management Areas, general regulations allow multiple hooks with a gap between point and shank larger than ½ inch to be used for taking fish other than salmon. Some commercially available and commonly used lures include a multiple hook with a gap size larger than ½ inch (e.g. 19/32 in or a 2/0 hook).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This would increase regulatory complexity and the use of lures with multiple hooks with a gap size larger than 1/2 inch may increase the number of snagged salmon.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon in the Norton-Sound Port-Clarence Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.186(a)(2)).
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The Board found that 96,000-160,000 salmon is the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area (5 AAC 01.186(b)(1)).
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 39 – 5 AAC 5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.

PROPOSED BY: Seth Kantner and Aakatchaq Schaeffer

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would reduce the daily background bag and possession limit for sheefish from 10 fish with no size limit to 5 fish with no size limit in the Northwestern Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The background sport fishing bag and possession limit for sheefish in the Northwestern Management Area is 10 fish, with no size limit, year-round. In the Kobuk River drainage, upstream of the mouth of the Mauneluk River, the bag and possession limit for sheefish is 2 fish, with no size limit; and in the Selawik River drainage, upstream of the mouth of the Tagagawik River, the bag and possession limit for sheefish is 2 fish, with no size limit. Additionally, when a subsistence participant uses a hook and line attached to a rod or a pole during the open water period they must adhere to the sportfishing bag and possession limits of 10 per day. During winter when subsistence fishing through the ice in Hotham Inlet, there are no bag and possession limits when using a hook and line attached to a rod or a pole.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Sport harvest of sheefish in the Northwestern Management Area would decrease, with the most significant reductions occurring in the winter sport fisheries in Selawik Lake, Hotham Inlet, and the nearshore marine waters near Kotzebue. Open water subsistence harvest would also likely decrease, because participants using hook and line attached to a rod or pole must follow sport fishing bag and possession limits (5 AAC 70.011), except when fishing through the ice.

BACKGROUND: Prior to 1966, there were no harvest or size limits for sheefish in the sport fisheries of Northwest Alaska. That year, a daily bag and possession limit of 15 fish was implemented. In 1969, this limit was reduced to 10 fish. To protect spawning fish, the following special regulations were later adopted: in 1998, the daily bag and possession limit was reduced to 2 fish on the Kobuk River above the Mauneluk River, and in 2001, a similar regulation was established on the Selawik River above the Tagagawik River (Figure 39-1).

From 2014 to 2023, the average annual sport harvest of sheefish in northwest Alaska was 187 fish, with an average catch of 1,347 fish (Table 39-2). Statewide Harvest Survey data indicate that most sheefish caught in the sport fishery are released, suggesting that anglers value high catch rates more than harvest opportunities. There are no permits, harvest limits, or closed seasons for subsistence. Additionally, the lack of reporting requirements make participation and harvest levels difficult to quantify. The department conducts periodic household surveys in the Kotzebue region but does not survey users flying in from other regions. Sheefish harvests vary greatly by year, and by community. Table 39-1 shows the estimated subsistence harvest and use rates of sheefish for all surveyed communities in the Arctic-Kotzebue area

Sheefish harvested in Hotham Inlet and Selawik Lake are a mixed-stock comprised of the only 2 known spawning populations in the region, the Selawik and Kobuk River populations. In the Kobuk River, the estimated spawning abundance during 1995–1997 ranged from 32,511–43,036 fish and in 2018 an estimated 35,402 sheefish spawned in the Kobuk River. The abundance of spawning sheefish has been estimated in the Selawik River and the most recent estimate in 2016 was 32,943 sheefish. Recent studies have shown that approximately 30–40% of all mature sheefish spawn in consecutive years; couple this information with spawning abundance estimates and an

index could be derived. In other words, an annual outmigration of 25,000 post spawning sheefish would equate to a minimum of 62,500 to 83,000 mature sheefish in the population (Savereide and Huang 2016).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Data gaps relative to population sizes and annual subsistence harvests of sheefish complicate evaluation of sustainability. However, similar estimates of Kobuk River sheefish spawning abundance estimates obtained between 2018 and the mid 1990s provide evidence that intervening harvests have been sustainable. Sport fishing harvest is small relative to total harvest, and the department supports efforts to collect more complete harvest information to assess sustainability. When using a hook and line attached to a rod or a pole, this proposal will reduce subsistence harvest opportunity during the open water period because limits are linked to sport fishing regulations. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether subsistence regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted (also see subsistence regulatory review below).

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon, sheefish, char, and all other finfish in the salt and fresh waters of the Arctic-Kotzebue Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.136 (2))
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 39-1.–Harvest and use of sheefish by communities in the Kobuk and Selawik River drainages, 1986–2021.

Year	Community	Estimate Harvest		Per Capita pounds	Percentage of households				
		Pounds	Number		Using	Attempting	Harvesting	Giving	Receiving
1986	Kotzebue	130,580	23,742	48.7	76%	45%	43%	33%	50%
1991	Kotzebue	426,642	77,571	116.9	85%	60%	60%	47%	50%
2002	Shungnak	11,111	2,020	44.6	84%	65%	65%	33%	55%
2006	Kiana	7,140	1,298	18.6	64%	55%	53%	0%	0%
2006	Selawik	35,903	5,129	46.7	0%	0%	53%	0%	0%
2011	Selawik	68,958	6,190	80.5	77%	64%	57%	46%	45%
2012	Ambler	12,875	1,156	45.6	81%	62%	57%	43%	51%
2012	Kobuk	11,833	1,062	72	90%	73%	73%	43%	53%
2012	Noorvik	67,197	6,032	114.8	78%	49%	47%	31%	52%
2012	Shungnak	17,334	1,556	63.1	83%	57%	57%	48%	61%
2014	Kotzebue	95,270	17,322	31.9	84%	57%	52%	44%	55%
2021	Kiana	13,365	1,200	35.5	95%	64%	62%	64%	69%

Source ADF&G Division of Subsistence Community Subsistence Information System, accessed 2025.

Table 39-2.–Sport fish harvest and catch of sheefish from Northwest Alaska, 2004–2023.

Year	Marine Waters/Other Rivers		Kobuk River		Selawik River		Total	
	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch
2010	288	650	86	1,910	221	368	595	2,928
2011	128	192	257	455	0	0	385	647
2012	54	54	50	205	0	0	104	259
2013	30	30	188	539	0	0	218	569
2014	93	232	151	982	0	0	244	1,214
2015	42	1,015	93	176	0	0	135	1,191
2016	417	545	48	1,219	202	269	667	2,033
2017	0	0	46	158	0	0	46	158
2018	148	446	150	978	0	8	298	1,432
2019	0	0	55	414	0	0	55	414
2020	251	528	0	302	0	0	251	830
2021	0	0	31	2,528	0	0	31	2,528
2022	0	0	76	3,001	0	0	76	3,010
2023	0	0	65	658	0	0	65	658
2024	54	794	0	0	0	0	54	794
2014–2023 Average	95	277	72	1,043	20	28	187	1,347
2019–2023 Average	50	106	45	1,382	0	2	96	1,488

Source: Alaska Sport Fishing Survey database [Internet]. 1996–. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (cited July 10, 2025). Available from: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/sportfishingsurvey/>. Although data are presented for all years, data in bold result from fewer than 12 respondents and are subject to high variance and as presented only indicate that sport fishing occurred in these waters.

PROPOSAL 40 – 5 AAC 01.130. Subsistence fishing permits.

PROPOSED BY: Seth Kanter and Aakatchaq Schaeffer

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require a sheefish subsistence permit for fishing through the ice in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, no subsistence permit is required in the Arctic-Kotzebue area. Gillnets used to take sheefish for subsistence may not be more than 50 fathoms in aggregate length or 12 meshes in depth, nor have a mesh size larger than 7 inches. The department has not restricted timing, area, or quantity of subsistence sheefish harvest.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would require all subsistence users fishing through the ice to have a permit to harvest sheefish in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area. Harvest data obtained through this permit would help the department better understand effort and harvest trends of sheefish in the area, which would allow the department to analyze potential abundance trends based on catch data and aid in the management of this fishery.

BACKGROUND: Sheefish are a long-lived, slow maturing species, which makes them more susceptible to overharvest. They are an important subsistence resource for residents of Northwest Alaska. Cost and vast area make it challenging to estimate annual harvests. Household surveys have been sporadic and survey coverage has varied but subsistence surveys were conducted each year between 1991–2004 and 2012–2014. The most comprehensive annual sheefish subsistence survey occurred in 2014 when 866 households were contacted with an estimated catch of nearly 32,000 sheefish from the villages of Ambler, Buckland, Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, Noorvik, Shungnak, Selawik, and Kotzebue resulting in an average of 37 sheefish harvested per household. Harvest rates have varied in the years when surveys were conducted with 66 sheefish per household reported in 1992 and 12 reported in 1998. Overall, harvest has averaged 32 sheefish per household for the years subsistence surveys were conducted.

In 1987, the board adopted a regulation limiting the size of gillnets used to take sheefish for subsistence to not more than 50 fathoms in aggregate length or 12 meshes in depth, or have a mesh size larger than 7 inches. This regulation was intended to conserve the larger spawners.

Subsistence harvest data collected by permits is considered reliable high-quality data useful for gauging species abundance and refining management of the fishery. A permit program would add additional burden to subsistence users and require time and resources from department staff, as well as enforcement assistance from the Department of Public Safety.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as written, but **SUPPORTS** developing a subsistence permit for Subdistrict 1 of the Kotzebue District to better understand subsistence sheefish harvest in that subdistrict. Currently, there is minimal harvest or abundance information available for sheefish in the area. Residents have indicated that harvest and effort for sheefish have been increasing in recent years because of an influx of users from outside the area fishing for sheefish through the ice. Harvest and effort data will aid the department in managing the population sustainably.

COST ANALYSIS:

Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal will result in additional staff time to issue,

collect, enter harvest reports from the permits. Additional staff time would be needed for public outreach, which would include: Advisory Announcements, attending additional user group meetings, and advertising the subsistence permit requirement.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon, sheefish, char, and all other finfish in the salt and fresh waters of the Arctic-Kotzebue Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.136 (2))
- 3 Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount necessary for subsistence uses of sheefish in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 41 – 5 AAC 01.120. Lawful gear and gear specifications and 5AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.

PROPOSED BY: Wilhelm Wiese.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add bow and arrow as a legal subsistence gear type in the Arctic-Kotzebue area for nonsalmon species and eliminate the closed season in the Noatak River sport fishery for northern pike.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Bow and arrow are not included in the legal gear types allowed for harvest of nonsalmon species in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area for subsistence. Sport fish regulations for the Northwestern Area allow bow and arrow as a legal gear type for the harvest of suckers and burbot, year-round, and for the harvest of northern pike and whitefish, except sheefish, from September 1 through April 30 with a daily bag and possession limit of 10 northern pike.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted as written, this would allow subsistence users to use bow and arrow to harvest all nonsalmon species, including sheefish. The increase in northern pike harvested with bow and arrow would be sustainable because participation would likely be very low and harvest would still be limited to the daily bag limit of 10 fish.

BACKGROUND: Northern pike occur in streams throughout Northwestern Alaska. No stock assessment to estimate abundance has occurred, but there are currently no abundance concerns. The importance as a subsistence and sport fish resource in the region varies by area. According to surveys conducted by ADF&G, most subsistence use of northern pike in the region occurs in the villages of Selawik and Noorvik. Statewide sport fish harvest survey indicates that the annual sport harvest of northern pike is minimal and mainly occurs on the Noatak River in most years. The statewide sport fish harvest survey is not able to determine harvest by gear type and the number of fish taken with bow and arrow in Northwest Alaska is unknown.

Typically, allowable subsistence gear types are those used in traditional harvest methods. Bow and arrow has not been previously documented as a traditional harvest method for nonsalmon species in Northwest Alaska. Sport fish regulations currently allow for bow and arrow harvest of northern pike during an open season between September 1 to April 30, although the original reason for the shortened season in regulation is unclear. Generally, sport fishery management has no concern with the use of bow and arrow as a harvest method unless there are length requirements for fish retention as this method would not allow live release of an illegal fish. Since there are no length requirements for northern pike in Northwest Alaska, this concern is moot.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the aspect of this proposal that eliminates the closed season for bow and arrow sport fish harvest on the Noatak River because there are no biological concerns. The department **OPPOSES** adding bow and arrow as a legal subsistence gear type in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area because, as written, the proposal is exceptionally broad with regard to the harvest and area included for other nonsalmon species, such as sheefish and Arctic char, which may be negatively impacted.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon, sheefish, char, and all other finfish in the salt and fresh waters of the Arctic-Kotzebue Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.136 (2))
- 3 Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount necessary for subsistence uses of nonsalmon species in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 42 – 5 AAC 01.125. Waters closed to subsistence fishing and 5 AAC 03.350. Closed waters.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would close marine waters of Subdistrict 1 in the Kotzebue District to subsistence and commercial fishing adjacent to the runway in Kotzebue.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, there are no closed waters for subsistence users in the Kotzebue District. Commercial fishing is closed in Subdistrict 2 and all waters of the Noatak River north of the ADF&G regulatory markers and buoys located at the mouth of the river.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this would reduce subsistence and commercial fishing opportunity in the waters adjacent to the runway in Kotzebue.

BACKGROUND: The end of the airstrip for the Kotzebue airport nearly reaches the waters of Kotzebue Sound. Concerns have been raised about fishing activity attracting birds that may be struck by arriving and departing aircraft creating a safety hazard in the area. Since 2014, the department has closed the area adjacent to the seaward end of the runway to subsistence and commercial fishing to address these concerns.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Since 2014, these waters have been closed by emergency order to address flight safety concerns.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon, sheefish, char, and all other finfish in the salt and fresh waters of the Arctic-Kotzebue Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.136 (2))
3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount necessary for subsistence uses of salmon in the Kotzebue Area. Additionally, the board has not determined an amount necessary for subsistence uses of nonsalmon species in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 43 – 5 AAC 03.610. FISHING SEASONS

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would eliminate commercial fishing for sheefish in the Kotzebue District.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The commercial sheefish fishing season in the Kotzebue District opens on October 1 and closes by emergency order with a 25,000-pound quota. Gear is restricted to set gillnets no more than 50 fathoms in aggregate, 12 meshes in depth, 7 inches or less mesh size, and nets may not obstruct one-half or more of the width of any waterway.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this would eliminate the commercial fishery for sheefish in the Kotzebue District.

BACKGROUND: Sheefish are distributed throughout nearshore estuarine waters of Kotzebue Sound, and the largest spawning stocks and harvests are in the Kobuk–Selawik River drainages and Hotham Inlet. Although sheefish are capable of consecutive spawning, most spawn every 2–3 years with slow maturation rates of 5–7 years for males and 7–11 for females, which increases the time required to restore depleted populations. Sheefish have high fecundity with large females carrying over 400,000 eggs. Populations are subject to sporadic recruitment events due to environmental conditions. If adequate spawner abundance is maintained, intermittent years of good recruitment can ensure healthy populations through years of less favorable conditions. After breakup in the Kotzebue Sound area, adult sheefish migrate upriver and spawning occurs upstream from the village of Kobuk on the Kobuk River with the greatest concentration observed between the Mauneluk and Beaver rivers. After spawning in late September and early October, sheefish disperse downstream to overwintering areas within Hotham Inlet/Selawik Lake (Figure 43-1).

Concerns of overharvesting sheefish by commercial and subsistence fisheries led the board to set an annual commercial harvest quota of 25,000 pounds in 1980. Subsistence harvests have remained unrestricted. Commercial fishing primarily occurs through the ice in Hotham Inlet, near Kotzebue, using gillnets from 5.5-inch to 7-inch stretched mesh. The lack of markets and the decreased need for sheefish as food for dog teams limits commercial activity. Since 1990, the reported harvest and effort in the winter commercial fishery peaked in 1991 with a harvest of 8,224 pounds, and since then, harvests have generally been less than 1,250 pounds (Table 43-1). Sheefish incidentally caught in the commercial salmon fishery can be sold in years when there is market interest; incidental harvest of sheefish has been minimal.

Summer and fall subsistence fishing for sheefish occurs along Kobuk and Selawik rivers from June through October with gillnets, beach seines, and hook and line. In winter and spring, fishers harvest sheefish with hand jigs and gillnets set under the ice in Hotham Inlet and Selawik Lake, and in nearshore waters. The department does not restrict timing, area, or quantity of subsistence sheefish harvest. Household subsistence surveys have been limited and sporadic and were last conducted in various Kotzebue area villages from 1991 to 2004 and from 2012 to 2014. Because villages and number of households surveyed varied widely between years, harvest per household is an appropriate indicator of subsistence harvest trends. The most comprehensive subsistence harvest survey occurred in 2014 and included harvest estimates from Noatak and Kobuk River villages and Kotzebue and averaged 37 sheefish per household (Table 43-2).

Kotzebue District sheefish are regarded as one of Alaska's premier freshwater sport fish, primarily due to their large size. Due to access and cost, the level of sport fishing effort remains low and in the last 10 years has averaged under 500 sheefish harvested annually.

Historically, aerial surveys were conducted on key sheefish spawning areas incidental to the effort of enumerating salmon. This incomplete escapement and catch data provided insufficient information to assess the population status of sheefish in the Kotzebue District. Spawning population sizes estimated from mark-recaptures of sheefish in the upper Kobuk River were 32,300 in 1995, 43,000 in 1996, and 26,800 in 1997. Selawik River's spawning population estimates were 5,200 and 5,300 for 1995 and 1996, respectively. Tag recoveries showed that these stocks mixed in Hotham Inlet winter habitats but maintained fidelity to their spawning areas.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

SUBSISTENCE REGULATION REVIEW:

1. Is this stock in a nonsubsistence area? No.
2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes: the board determined that salmon, sheefish, char, and all other finfish in the salt and fresh waters of the Arctic-Kotzebue Area are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence (5 AAC 01.136 (2))
- 3 Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.
- 4 What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence use? The board has not determined an amount necessary for subsistence uses of nonsalmon species in the Arctic-Kotzebue Area.
5. Do the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.
6. Is it necessary to reduce or eliminate other uses to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses? This is a board determination.

Table 43-1.–Kotzebue District winter commercial sheefish harvest statistics, 1990–2024.

Year ^b	Number of fishermen	Number of fish	Pounds ^a		Price per pound (\$)	Estimated value (\$)
			Total	Average		
1990	6	687	5,617	8.2	^c	^c
1991	5	852	8,224	9.7	0.50	4,112
1992	3	289	2,850	9.9	0.65	1,853
1993	1	210 ^d	1,700	8.1	0.50	850
1994 ^e						
1995	1	226	2,240	9.9	0.50	1,120
1996	2	308	3,002	9.7	0.44	1,321
1997 ^e						
1998	1	254	2,400	9.4	0.43	1,032
1999–2000 ^e						
2001	1	19	200	10.5	1.00	200
2002	4	30	300	10.0	1.00	300
2003	1	122	1,250	10.2	0.56	700
2004	1	37	474	12.8	1.91	905
2005	3	242	3,744	15.5	1.20	4,493
2006–2010 ^e						
2011	1	Confidential Information			2.09	^f
2012–2014 ^e						
2015	2	Confidential Information			1.02	^f
2016	2	Confidential Information			1.25	^f
2017	1	Confidential Information			1.00	^f
2018	2	Confidential Information			0.94	^f
2019–2022 ^e						
2023	3	141	2,027	14.4	1.36	2,757
2024	1	Confidential Information				

^a Data are not exact; in some instances, total catch poundage was determined from average weight and catch data.

Similarly, various price per pound figures were determined from price per fish and average weight data.

^b Season was from October 1 to September 30. Year indicated would be the year the commercial season ended.

For example, the year 1990 would represent October 1, 1989 to September 30, 1990.

^c Data unavailable or incomplete.

^d Number of fish is not always reported. Estimates were based on average weight from reported sales that documented the number of fish.

^e No reported commercial catches.

^f Less than 3 fishermen; data confidential under Alaska Statute 16.05.815. Prior to 2005, confidentiality was waived by permit holders.

Table 43-2.—Kotzebue District reported subsistence harvests of sheefish, 1991–2014.

Year ^a	Number of households interviewed	Reported harvest	Average catch per household
1991	40	2,180	55
1992	43	2,821	66
1993	46	2,441	53
1994	171	3,181	19
1995 ^b	314	9,465	30
1996 ^b	389	6,953	18
1997 ^b	338	9,805	29
1998 ^b	435	5,350	12
1999 ^b	191	8,256	43
2000 ^b	237	7,446	31
2001 ^b	363	3,838	11
2002	101	3,882	38
2003	488	7,823 ^c	16
2004 ^d	440	10,163	23
2012 ^d	360	11,694	32
2013 ^{d,e}	618	22,116	36
2014 ^f	866	31,909	37

Note: Subsistence surveys were not conducted 2005–2011 and after 2014.

^a Due to limited survey effort during many years, total catch and effort should be regarded as minimum numbers only and are not comparable year to year.

^b Subsistence sheefish harvests are from villages on Kobuk River.

^c Includes 10 fish reported from commercial salmon fishery and used for subsistence.

^d Subsistence surveys were not conducted in the town of Kotzebue.

^e Villages surveyed were Ambler, Buckland, Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, Noorvik, Shungnak, and Selawik.

^f Villages surveyed were Ambler, Buckland, Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, Noorvik, Shungnak, Selawik, and Kotzebue.

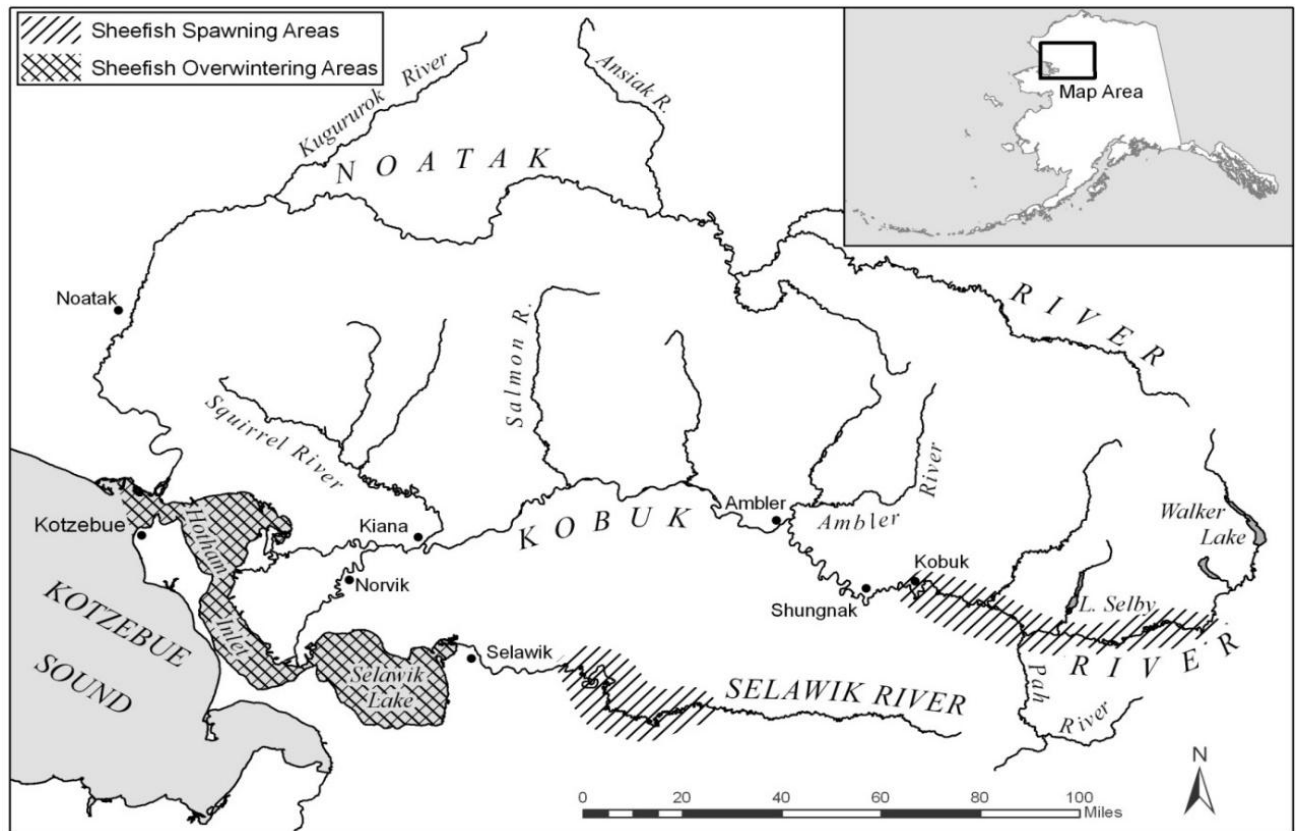


Figure 43-1. Sheefish spawning and overwintering areas for populations available for commercial harvest in the Kotzebue Region.