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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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

LOWER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING SEWARD, ALASKA

December 1–4, 2026

Regional Information Report No. 5J26-08

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, December 1–4, 2026, in Seward. 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)	
centimeter	cm
deciliter	dL
gram	g
hectare	ha
kilogram	kg
kilometer	km
liter	L
meter	m
milliliter	mL
millimeter	mm

Weights and measures (English)	
cubic feet per second	ft^3/s
foot	ft
gallon	gal
inch	in
mile	mi
nautical mile	nmi
ounce	oz
pound	lb
quart	qt
yard	yd

Time and temperature	
day	d
degrees Celsius	°C
degrees Fahrenheit	°F
degrees kelvin	K
hour	h
minute	min
second	s

Physics and chemistry	
all atomic symbols	
alternating current	AC
ampere	A
calorie	cal
direct current	DC
hertz	Hz
horsepower	hp
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH
parts per million	ppm
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰
volts	V
watts	W

General	
Alaska Administrative Code	AAC
all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.
all commonly accepted professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.
at	@
compass directions:	
east	E
north	N
south	S
west	W
copyright	©
corporate suffixes:	
Company	Co.
Corporation	Corp.
Incorporated	Inc.
Limited	Ltd.
District of Columbia	D.C.
et alii (and others)	et al.
et cetera (and so forth)	etc.
exempli gratia (for example)	e.g.
Federal Information Code	FIC
id est (that is)	i.e.
latitude or longitude	lat or long
monetary symbols (U.S.)	$, ¢
months (tables and figures): first three letters	Jan,...,Dec
registered trademark	®
trademark	™
United States (adjective)	U.S.
United States of America (noun)	USA
U.S.C.	United States Code
U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)

Acronyms	
Acceptable Biological Catch	ABC
Alaska Board of Fisheries	board
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	department /ADF&G
Amount Necessary for Subsistence	ANS
Alaska Wildlife Troopers	AWT
Biological Escapement Goal	BEG
Central Gulf of Alaska	CGOA
Coded Wire Tag	CWT
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission	CFEC
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association	CIAA
Customary and Traditional	C&T
Department of Natural Resources	DNR
Demersal Shelf Rockfish	DSR
Emergency Order	EO
Guideline Harvest Level	GHL
Gulf of Alaska	GOA
Global Positioning System	GPS
Individual Fishing Quota	IFQ
Local Area Management Plan	LAMP
Lower Cook Inlet	LCI
Mean Low Water	MLW
Mean Lower Low Water	MLLW
No Data	ND
National Marine Fisheries Service	NMFS
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA
Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon	NDFL
North Pacific Fishery Management Council	NPFMC
Optimum Escapement Goal	OEG
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish	PSR
Prince William Sound	PWS
Prior Notice of Landing	PNOL
Private Nonprofit Salmon Hatchery	PNP
River Mile	RM
Special Harvest Area	SHA
Sustainable Escapement Goal	SEG
Trail Lakes Hatchery	TLH
Upper Cook Inlet	UCI
Western Gulf of Alaska	WGOA

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LOWER COOK INLET FINFISH

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING SEWARD, ALAKSA

December 1–4, 2026

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

November 2026

ABSTRACT

This document contains Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, and subsistence regulatory proposals for Lower Cook Inlet finfish. These comments were prepared by the department for use at the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, December 1–4, 2026, in Seward. 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, regulatory proposals, fisheries, finfish, salmon, Pacific cod, herring, groundfish, rockfish, sablefish, management, management plan, subsistence, personal use, sport, guided sport, commercial fisheries

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Summary of department positions on regulatory proposals for Lower Cook Inlet Finfish; Seward, December 1–4, 2026.

Proposal No.	Department Position	Issue
1	N	Establish a priority for Alaska residents and other management provisions for the Lower Cook Inlet saltwater king salmon sport fishery
2	S	Amend the date for the June youth-only fishery in the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon
3	O	Exempt king salmon caught in the Nick Dudiak Homer Lagoon from the combined annual limit of 5 king salmon 20 inches or longer
4	O	Establish a large fish goal for Ninilchik River king salmon
5	O	Amend management provisions for the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery
6	O	Amend management provisions for the Ninilchik River king salmon fishery by expanding opportunity for hatchery king salmon and adding gear restrictions
7	O	Modify the king salmon annual limit in the Ninilchik River
8	O	Modify the king salmon bag and possession limits in the Ninilchik River
9	O	Extend the area open to hatchery king salmon and modify the bag and possession limits in the Ninilchik River
10	S	Extend the restrictions on bait and multiple hooks in Lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams until the end of July
11	O	Prohibit catch-and-release fishing for king salmon and the removal of king salmon from the water in Cook Inlet freshwater
12	O	Require recording of all harvested king salmon in the sport fishery, regardless of size
13	N	Establish the delegation of authority to restrict guided sport fishing during times of low king salmon abundance through emergency order
14	O	Create a management plan for the Anchor River, Stariski Creek, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River coho salmon sport fisheries
15	N	Establish paired management actions and harvest “benchmarks” for coho salmon between Upper Cook Inlet sport and commercial fisheries
16	N	Prohibit the use of helicopters to transport anglers in select streams within the Kenai Peninsula Area
17	S	Modify gear and dates in the Seward lagoon youth-only fishery
18	O	Modify the definition of bag limit for Southcentral saltwater sport fisheries
19	NA	Prohibit sport fishing derbies in fresh waters of Cook Inlet
20	N	Prohibit charter vessels from participating in sport fishing derbies
21	O	Require observers or electronic monitoring on charter vessels in Cook Inlet
22	O	Require logbooks for fishing guides in freshwaters of Upper Cook Inlet
23	O	Require freshwater sport fishing guide logbooks within Cook Inlet rivers
24	O	Establish a maximum size limit for king salmon and halibut in subsistence, sport, personal use, and commercial fisheries in lower Cook Inlet
25	S/N	Close waters to commercial fishing within one-half mile of Homer spit
26	N	Close waters to commercial fishing within one mile of Homer spit
27	O/N	Modify multiple subdistricts of the Southern District to create a one-mile corridor around Homer spit
28	S	Reduce size of the closed waters area at the terminus of McCarty Fjord at Delusion Lake
29	N	Create a minimum distance between commercial purse seines in Cook Inlet

-continued-

Proposal No.	Department Position	Issue
30	O/N	Repeal commercial beach seine as a legal gear type in the Cook Inlet Management Area
31	N	Amend the preamble of the Lower Cook Inlet Seine Fishery Management Plan
32	N	Establish enhanced salmon value allocation criteria for Cook Inlet commercial fisheries
33	N	Request for creation of a Cook Inlet management and salmon enhancement allocation plan
34	O	Amend multiple aspects of the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery Management Plan
35	O	Repeal the Port Graham Hatchery Salmon Hatchery Management Plan
36	O	Repeal the Bear Lake Special Harvest Area from the Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Hatchery Management Plan
37	N	Amend hatchery salmon management plans in Resurrection Bay
38	N	Amend multiple aspects of the Resurrection Bay Salmon Management Plan
39	S	Modify methods and means for herring
40	N	Establish pelagic rockfish harvest limits for Cook Inlet area commercial and sport fisheries
41	N	Modify the waters open to harvesting rockfish
42	O	Establish a pelagic rockfish guideline harvest level in the lower Cook Inlet
43	S	Modify language describing bag and possession limits for nonpelagic rockfish to align with new definitions of demersal shelf and slope rockfish species assemblages
44	N	Modify the season for the Cook Inlet Area directed pelagic rockfish jig fishery
45	S	Allow the use of deepwater release mechanisms for rockfish in mechanical jig and hand troll fisheries
46	N	Remove the 24-hour closure period between the Cook Inlet parallel and state-waters Pacific cod seasons
47	N	Establish a small vessel (under 26 feet) gear exemption during the Cook Inlet state-waters Pacific cod season
48	S	Add a 6-hour prior notice of landing requirement for the Cook Inlet Area state-waters Pacific cod fishery
49	S/N	Repeal the Cook Inlet sablefish trip limit
50	N	Add dinglebar troll as a legal gear type in Cook Inlet Area groundfish fisheries

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

PROPOSAL 1 – 5 AAC 58.057. Lower Cook Inlet summer saltwater king salmon sport fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Recreational Fisherman (CIRF), Pete Zimmerman.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a priority for Alaska residents and provide prioritized management provisions for the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) summer saltwater king salmon sport fishery when there are conservation concerns for Cook Inlet king salmon stocks or the guideline harvest level (GHL) is expected to be achieved or exceeded.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Lower Cook Inlet summer saltwater king salmon sport fishery management plan* (5 AAC 58.057) includes all Cook Inlet salt waters south of the latitude of Bluff Point (59°40.00'N; Figure 1-1). This plan is effective April 1 through August 31 and has a GHL of 8,500 king salmon. The king salmon bag and possession limit is two per day, any size. King salmon 20 inches or greater in length harvested in this fishery are included in the Cook Inlet annual limit of five. Captain and crew may retain king salmon when guiding.

There are two positive customary and traditional use (C&T) findings for salmon in the Lower Cook Inlet Management Area outside the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area (5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(A-B)). In the Port Graham, Koyuktolik, Port Chatham, and Windy Bay Subdistricts, the board has found that 4,800–7,200 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (d)). In the areas around Seldovia defined in 5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(B), the board has found that 100–350 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (g)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would expand the department's delegation of authority to implement management actions by emergency order for the LCI summer saltwater king salmon sport fishery. It would establish a prioritized list of management actions to be implemented if a reduction in harvest is warranted either for conservation concerns or to avoid exceeding the GHL. The prescribed management actions would be implemented in sequence, with restrictions applying first to nonresidents, followed by guided anglers, reduced size limits, and finally resident harvest restrictions.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet salt waters support a diversity of year-round king salmon sport fishing opportunities and are currently structured into three boat-based fisheries that are outlined into individual management plans. From September through March, king salmon sport fishing in all of Cook Inlet salt waters is managed with the *Cook Inlet Winter Saltwater King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.060) and a GHL of 5,500 king salmon. During the summer period (April through August), when local Cook Inlet stocks are present, king salmon sport fisheries are managed with the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Saltwater King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.055; GHL of 8,000 king salmon) and the *Lower Cook Inlet summer saltwater king salmon sport fishery* (5 AAC 58.057; GHL of 8,500 king salmon), which was established by the board at the 2023 LCI Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting.

In combination with freshwater king salmon sport fishing restrictions, Upper Cook Inlet salt waters have been restricted or closed by emergency order in 15 of the last 18 years, but no restrictions were made to the Lower Cook Inlet summer fishery until 2023. These decisions were based on

genetic mixed-stock analyses of the sport king salmon harvest in Cook Inlet saltwater fisheries from 2014 through 2018. The results found that although Cook Inlet stocks were prevalent in the harvest in the Upper Cook Inlet summer fishery, on average 3% of the king salmon harvest in the LCI summer fishery were Cook Inlet stocks. Given the continued poor escapement trends of Cook Inlet king salmon, the department issued annual emergency orders from 2023 through 2026 to reduce the king salmon bag and possession limits from 2 fish to 1 fish for all sport anglers in the LCI summer fishery.

From 2002 through 2013, the king salmon harvest in the LCI summer sport fishery averaged 4,400 fish, which was about 37% of the total king salmon harvest in Cook Inlet salt waters. From 2014 through 2022, king salmon harvest in this fishery increased to an average annual harvest of 7,964 fish. Prior to the implementation of the GHL in 2024, the harvest exceeded 8,500 fish in 2016, 2017, and 2021 (Figure 1-2). From 2023 through 2025, the king salmon harvest in this fishery declined to an average of 6,282 fish. Through these periods, the average percentage of king salmon harvested by guided anglers increased from 49% to 63%. In most years, guided non-residents harvest more king salmon than other users, and in the most recent years, they harvested 55% of the total harvest (Figure 1-2).

The board established a resident priority for king salmon saltwater fisheries in Kodiak and Southeast Alaska. The *Kodiak Area Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 64.060) directs the board to consider more restrictive management actions during the regular Kodiak board cycle if the GHL has been exceeded and includes direction for a resident priority. The *Southeast Alaska King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 47.055) prescribes management provisions based on king salmon allocation available to the sport fishery and includes priority harvest opportunity for Alaska residents within state waters. At the 2025 Southeast and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish meeting, the board adopted a proposal to align resident priority sport fishing regulations with the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) by applying resident priority regulations in state waters (generally 0–3 nautical miles from shore) and defaulting to the nonresident regulations for all anglers in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ, 3–200 nautical miles from shore).

From 2015 to 2025, an average of 12% of the guided harvest in the LCI summer fishery occurred in the EEZ, with annual values ranging from about 1.5% to 24% years. No data are available on the amount of nonguided harvest occurring in the EEZ, but it most likely mimics the guided harvest. Guided resident harvest in the Lower Cook Inlet summer fishery has remained stable and has averaged 7.5% of the total harvest since 2014.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. When management actions are necessary, the department has issued emergency orders that apply to all sport fish anglers regardless of residency. If this proposal is adopted, the department recommends maintaining consistency with the MSA by either prioritizing resident harvest opportunity in state waters only, or by using a guided/nonguided regulation structure in all LCI waters. Due to the harvest occurring in the EEZ in the LCI summer fishery, implementing management measures with restrictions to the guided sector in lieu of restrictions to nonresidents would be the least disruptive to the current fishery. This proposal adds regulatory complexity by establishing differential management measures according to residency and whether anglers are

guided or unguided in a portion of Cook Inlet. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

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.

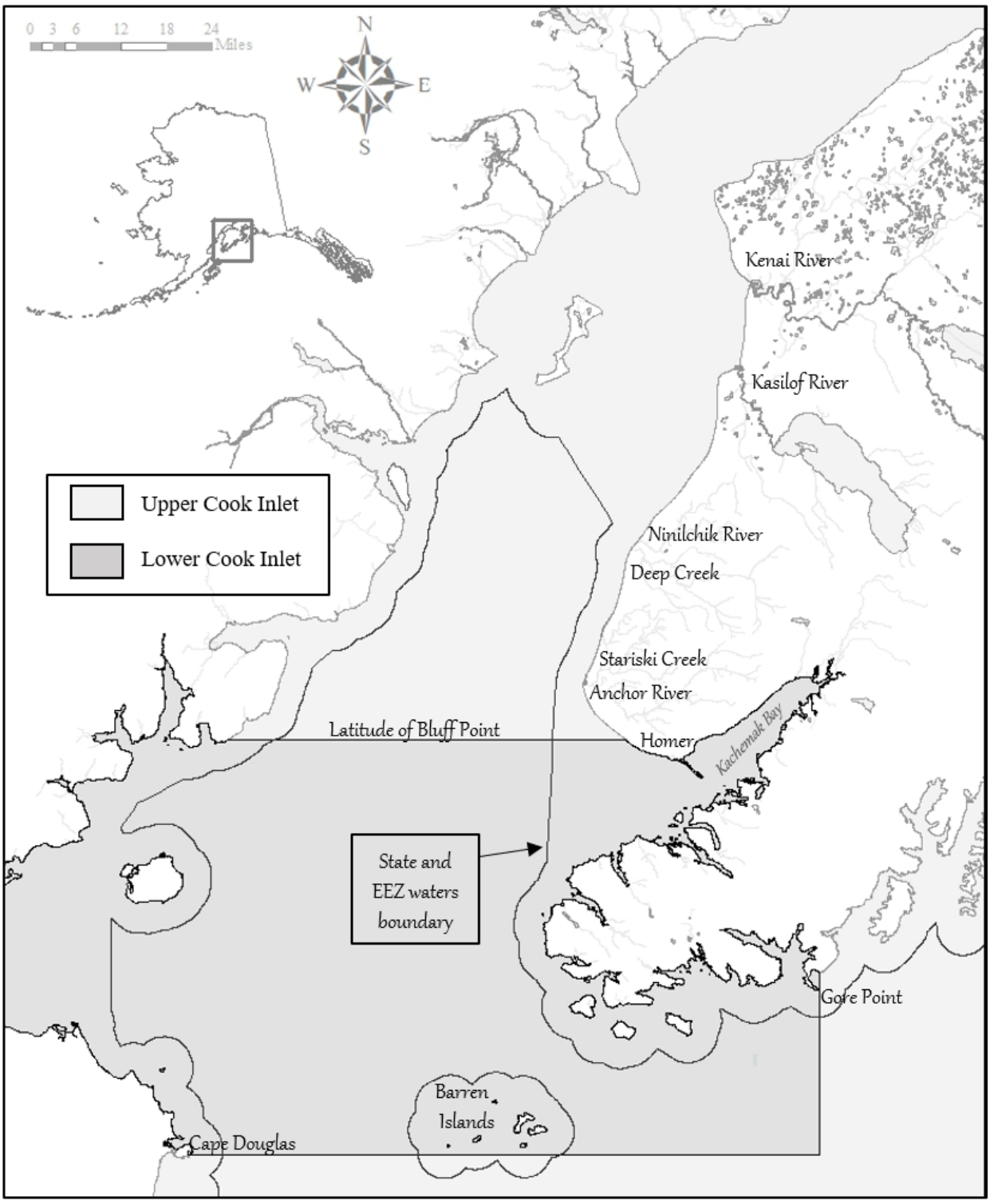


Figure 1-1.–Map of Lower and Upper Cook Inlet salt waters associated with king salmon sport fishing regulations including the *Lower Cook Inlet Summer Saltwater King Salmon Management Plan*.

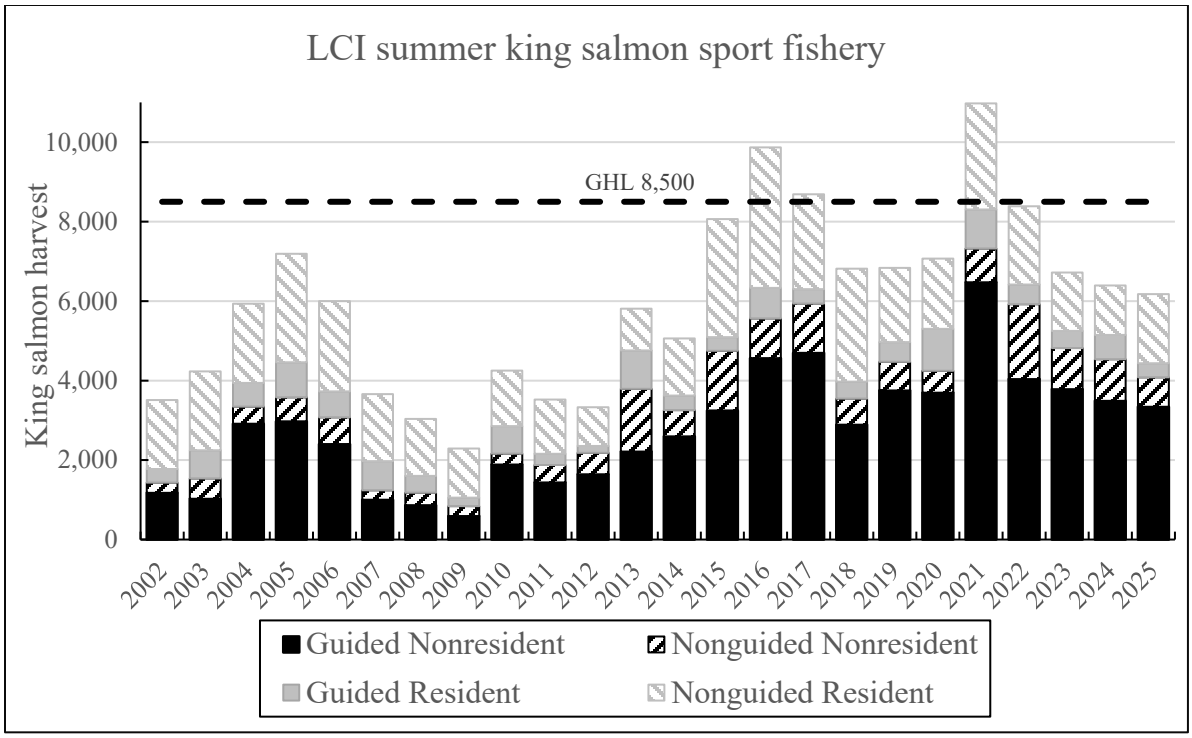


Figure 1-2.–King salmon harvest in the Lower Cook Inlet king salmon sport fishery by residency and sector, 2002–2025.

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would move the youth-only fishery in the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (NDFL) from the first Saturday in June to the second Saturday in June.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? A portion of the NDFL is reserved for youth 15 years of age and younger on the first Saturday in June to fish for king (Chinook) salmon and on the first Saturday in August to fish for coho salmon.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide opportunity for more king salmon to accumulate in the lagoon prior to the youth fishery. It may increase youth anglers' catch and harvest of king salmon from the NDFL.

BACKGROUND: The Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon is an accessible terminal saltwater fishery location on Homer Spit that is stocked annually with king and coho salmon. In recent years, the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) has estimated king salmon harvests of approximately 700 fish annually. The board established provisions for youth-only fisheries at the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon in 2004. During these fisheries, a portion of the NDFL is reserved for only youth anglers aged 15 and under for the entire day. Corresponding with the days of the regulatory youth-only fishery, department staff host a youth-only fishing event to assist young anglers and provide fishing gear.

The run timing of king salmon to the NDFL has progressed later in recent years, similar to the later run timing observed in the nearby lower Kenai Peninsula streams. Less than 20% of the run to the NDFL now occurs by the first Saturday in June.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Moving the youth-only fishery to the second Saturday in June will most likely provide better opportunity for youth anglers to catch king salmon. There are no biological concerns with increased harvest at this terminal fishery location.

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 3 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

PROPOSED BY: Rob Boyer.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would exempt king salmon harvested in the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (NDFL) from the Cook Inlet annual limit of 5 king salmon 20 inches or greater in length.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The daily bag and possession limit is two king salmon of any size. King salmon 20 inches or greater in length harvested from the NDFL are included in the Cook Inlet annual limit of 5 king salmon between April 1 and August 31 and must be recorded on a harvest record. This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would increase harvest opportunity for sport anglers fishing within NDFL by removing the annual limit. This is expected to increase effort within the NDFL due to less restrictive regulations than neighboring king salmon sport fisheries. This would create a unique exemption to the annual limit established for king salmon in Cook Inlet.

BACKGROUND: The NDFL is an easily accessible terminal saltwater fishery location on Homer Spit that is stocked annually with king and coho salmon. The current annual stocking goals are 315,000 king and 120,000 coho salmon smolts. In recent years, the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) has estimated king salmon harvests of approximately 700 fish annually. During years in which there is a large buildup of king salmon that would not be harvested by other methods, the department typically opens the NDFL to snagging in late June or early July. It is unknown how many anglers would harvest greater than 5 Cook Inlet king salmon annually. Hatchery-produced king salmon returning to NDFL have been included in the Cook Inlet annual limit since this location was first stocked in the 1980s.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The existing annual limit provides adequate harvest opportunity for hatchery-produced king salmon returning to the NDFL and is consistent across Cook Inlet.

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 4 – 5 AAC 56.130. Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan.

PROPOSED BY: Francis Estalilla.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a large fish (28 inches or greater in length) optimal escapement goal (OEG) for Ninilchik River king salmon. It would also establish guidelines in regulation for the contribution of hatchery-origin king salmon permitted to contribute to the spawning escapement by specifying that hatchery-origin females may spawn as long as the proportion of natural influence (PNI) is maintained at 0.7 or greater.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Ninilchik River king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 900–1,600 natural-origin fish of all sizes. The management of the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery is outlined in the *Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan* (5 AAC 56.130), and management provisions are prescribed in 5 AAC 56.122. This plan specifies that the Ninilchik River fishery is closed to the retention of natural-origin fish unless the run is projected to achieve both the SEG and broodstock collection goal.

Unless superseded through emergency order (EO), sport fishing for king salmon in the Ninilchik River is open from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream on the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday of Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and from June 16 through July 15; the bag and possession limit is 2 hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length and 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches; naturally-produced king salmon may not be retained; only one single hook, or single-hook artificial lure, including bait may be used; a person who takes and retains two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from the Ninilchik River may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, or the Anchor River for the rest of that day. Harvested king salmon 20 inches or greater in size count toward the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would establish a large fish optimal escapement goal for Ninilchik River king salmon which may include contributions from hatchery-origin king salmon up to the identified threshold. The proposer does not state a desired OEG range and many potential effects will depend on what range the board may set. The sport fishery would continue to be managed to provide opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon and only provide opportunity for natural-origin king salmon when the newly established OEG and broodstock goals are expected to be met. If the OEG included contributions by hatchery-origin king salmon, the OEG may be achieved more frequently than the natural-origin SEG depending on the OEG range established. Establishing a large fish (greater than 28 inches in length) OEG would exclude fish less than 28 inches, which are predominately male. Establishing a PNI of 0.70 or greater is slightly more conservative than the department's current guidelines for a PNI of 0.67 or greater, which may reduce the number of hatchery-origin fish spawning in stream.

BACKGROUND: The Ninilchik River king salmon supplementation program enhances sport fishing opportunities while also contributing to the number of naturally spawning king salmon. Each year, smolt produced from natural-origin Ninilchik River broodstock are stocked back into the system. All hatchery-origin smolt are marked with an adipose fin clip, allowing them to be distinguished from natural-origin fish in the fishery, during escapement monitoring, and throughout broodstock collection. This integrated hatchery approach prioritizes achieving the natural-origin escapement goal, sustains a mark-select sport fishery in the Ninilchik River, provides the natural-origin broodstock needed for ongoing smolt production, and supplies hatchery-origin king salmon smolt for terminal saltwater fisheries in Kachemak Bay. Currently, the sport fishery is managed to achieve the natural-origin SEG while providing fishing opportunity for hatchery-origin fish. Hatchery-origin king salmon contribute to the spawning escapement but are not counted toward the natural-origin escapement goal.

There are no hatchery facilities on the Ninilchik River and instead an inriver holding area is created for king salmon broodstock collection using two fixed-picket weirs. This occurs at river mile 4.8, which is a road-accessible location (Figure 4-1). Natural-origin broodstock are used to stock the Ninilchik River whereas hatchery-origin broodstock are collected to stock the terminal fisheries in Kachemak Bay (Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon on Homer Spit and the Seldovia slough). Excess hatchery-origin fish are also culled at this location. To achieve the current stocking level of 150,000 smolt annually in the Ninilchik River, approximately 35 pairs of natural-origin fish are needed. To achieve the current stocking level of 420,000 smolt in the Kachemak Bay terminal fisheries annually, approximately 105 pairs of hatchery-origin fish are needed. In recent years when the SEG was not likely to be achieved, the natural-origin stocking goal was reduced to maximize the natural–origin escapement. Collection of broodstock occurs on site and then gametes are taken to the William Jack Sport Fish Hatchery in Anchorage to be reared to smolt. Stocking occurs in June of the following year at age-0 smolt.

To minimize potential adverse effects of the hatchery-origin supplementation program on the Ninilchik River king salmon stock, the department has established internal guidelines designed to protect and maintain the integrity of the natural population. These guidelines establish thresholds for the PNI on the wild stock using two metrics: 1) the proportion of natural-origin fish used in the broodstock (pNOB) and 2) the proportion of hatchery-origin spawners in the spawning escapement (pHOS). The recommended PNI value should remain at 0.67 or greater, which means the genetics of an integrated stock, such as Ninilchik River king salmon, would be mostly (two-thirds or more) influenced by wild genetics. A PNI of 0.67 is the generally accepted guideline for integrated king salmon systems outside of Alaska in the Pacific Northwest. For programs like the Ninilchik River that use 100% natural-origin broodstock, the escapement needs to be less than 50% hatchery-origin fish for the PNI to be at or above 0.67. Despite structuring the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery to maximize the harvest of hatchery-origin fish and attempts to cull as many hatchery-origin fish as possible during broodstock sorting, the PNI values have been below the recommended value of 0.67 since 2020. This has primarily occurred because an average of 20% of the hatchery-origin fish spawn between the river mile 2 weir and the broodstock collection weir. Additional efforts have been made in the last 3 years to cull small (<20 inches) hatchery-origin males during biological sampling surveys between the two weirs. Starting in 2027, excess hatchery-origin fish will be physically removed from the escapement at the river mile 2 weir

throughout the run. This will allow culling of small hatchery-origin males and provide more control over the proportion of hatchery-origin king salmon in the escapement.

Based on Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) estimates, the hatchery-origin return to the Ninilchik River has supported an annual average harvest of 500 king salmon since 2020. At the current stocking levels, the king salmon harvest in terminal fisheries in Kachemak Bay has averaged approximately 1,000 fish since 2020.

The management of the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery has evolved over time. Liberalizations have occurred, through emergency order (EO) and the board process, to maximize the harvest of hatchery-origin king salmon. Restrictions or closures by EO have been used to achieve the SEG and broodstock collection goals. In 2023, the board adopted the *Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan* (5 AAC 56.130), which provided direction to manage the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery. The plan closes the harvest of natural-origin fish until the run is projected to be greater than the number of fish needed to achieve the SEG and the natural–origin broodstock collection goal. The plan also provides the commissioner the authority to further liberalize or restrict the hatchery-origin king salmon sport fishery to provide more harvest opportunity or to achieve the SEG and broodstock collection goals.

The current status of the Ninilchik River stock has resulted in competing goals amongst management objectives: 1) achieving the SEG, 2) maximizing the harvest of hatchery-origin fish in the Ninilchik River sport fishery, 3) collecting natural-origin broodstock for Ninilchik River stocking, 4) collecting hatchery-origin broodstock for the Kachemak Bay terminal fisheries, and 5) minimizing the hatchery-origin influence. The department has used preseason and inseason emergency orders to conserve natural-origin king salmon and manage the fishery to achieve both natural origin and hatchery-origin broodstock goals. This has included prohibiting the use of bait, reducing the hatchery-origin bag and possession limits, and shortening or closing the season (Table 4-1). As a result of these management actions, the harvest of hatchery-origin fish has been reduced, and the number of hatchery-origin fish that need to be culled from escapement has increased.

Ninilchik River king salmon data collection has been refined over time to provide the information necessary to manage the sport fishery and assess the supplementation program. Currently, escapement monitoring occurs at river mile 2 (Figure 4-1) just above the sport fishery area and uses underwater video to fully enumerate the natural-origin and hatchery-origin run upstream from the fishery. The daily counts are also enumerated by total length size categories of small (<20 inches), medium (≥20 inches and <28 inches), and large (≥28 inches) fish for both components of the king salmon run. These counts provide timely inseason data to project run size to manage the sport fishery and anticipate broodstock collection. Because natural-origin and hatchery-origin broodstock are collected after the fish are counted, the final escapements are calculated by subtracting all the fish used for broodstock from the weir count. Biological compositions (age, sex, and length) are also collected annually for both natural-origin and hatchery-origin runs through weekly beach seine surveys. These data provide the female proportion of the run inseason, which helps inform managers if the run is sufficient to make broodstock collection goals.

The Ninilchik River king salmon SEG has been refined over time as collection of escapement data has improved. The current goal was implemented in 2024 and is based on the escapement of all natural-origin fish counted at the video weir at river mile 2. To establish this goal, fish were counted at both the river mile 2 location and the broodstock weir for several years to expand the historical counts at the broodstock weir to the river mile 2 weir because a portion of the run spawns between the weirs (Figure 4-1). From 1999 through 2021, the Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon stock only missed the SEG in one year (2009). In recent years, the SEG has not been achieved in four of the last five years (Figure 4-2). The hatchery-origin contribution to the escapement has fluctuated based on stocking level, fishery regulations, and the number of fish culled annually. In the last 5 years, on average 57% of the escapement has been hatchery-origin fish. From 1999 through 2017, approximately 41% of the annual natural-origin king salmon escapement were ocean age-1 and -2 fish. These age classes are synonymous with the size class of under 28 inches. Since 2018, the percentage of these fish in the escapement has increased to approximately 56% on average. The percentage of the natural-origin escapement that was female during these two periods decreased from 36% to 28% on average.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon have met the criteria for designation as a stock of management concern. An action plan will be presented at the Lower Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting, where the board may consider establishing an OEG or recovery goal, along with objectives and delisting criteria for removing the stock of management concern designation.

The department does not support limiting hatchery-origin contributions to the spawning escapement to only females. Best practices in the management of hatchery-integrated stocks calls for inclusion of both male and female hatchery-origin fish. Under the *Policy for the management of sustainable salmon fisheries* (5 AAC 39.222) and the *Policy for statewide salmon escapement goals* (5 AAC 39.223), the board may establish an OEG as long as it is sustainable.

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.

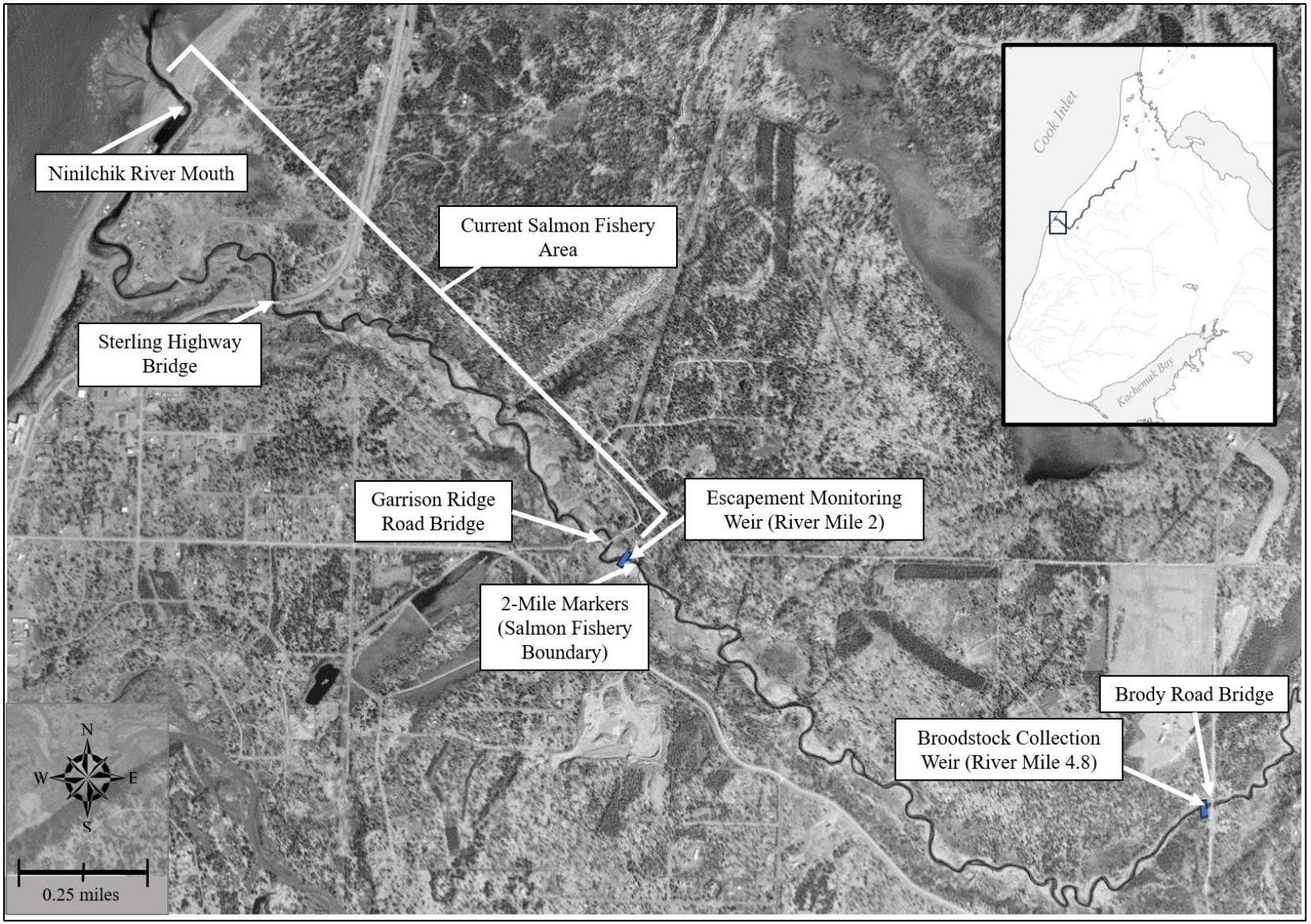


Figure 4-1.–Map of the Ninilchik River sport fishery area, and escapement and broodstock monitoring weirs.

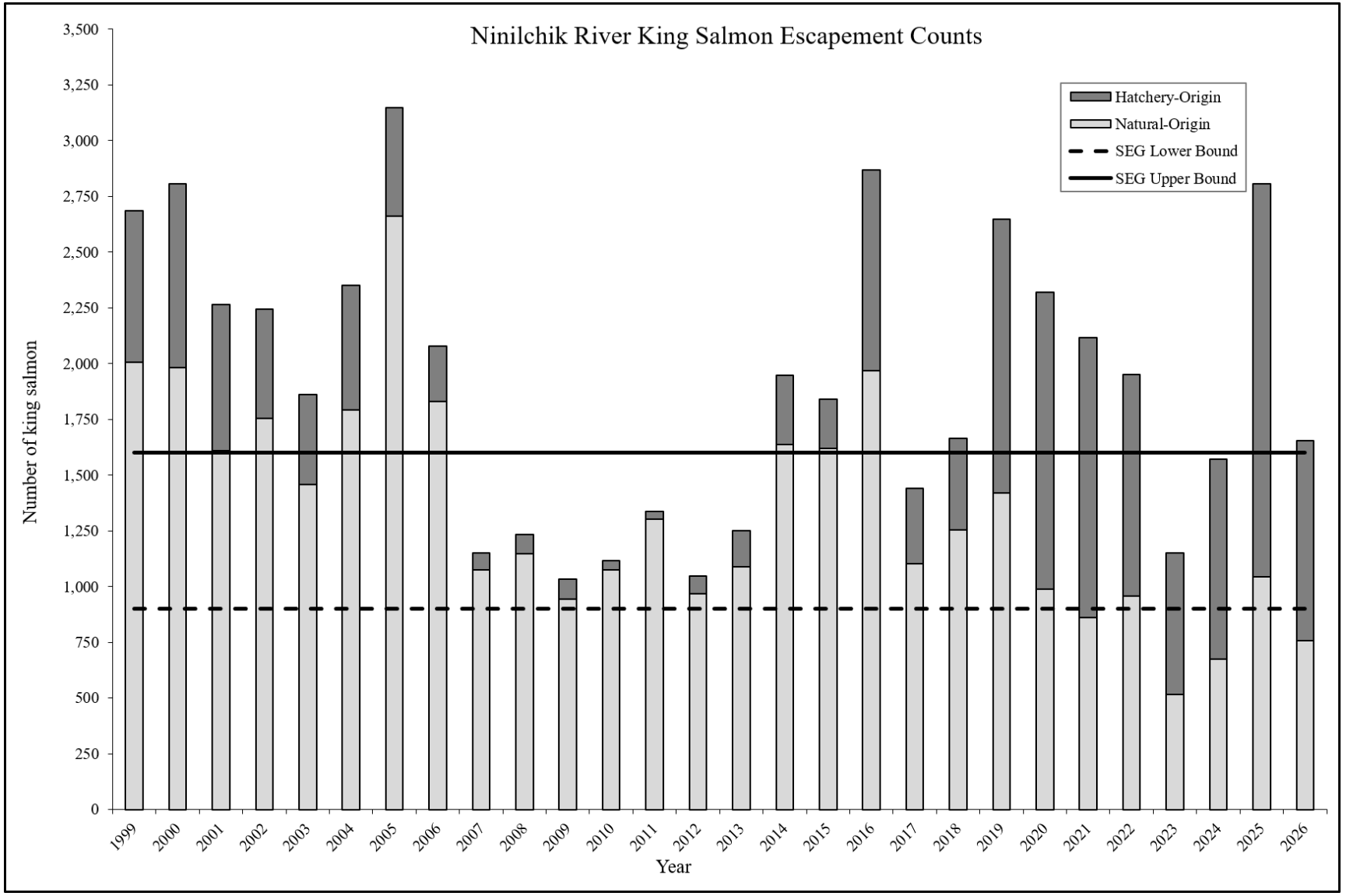


Figure 4-2.–Ninilchik River natural-origin and hatchery-origin king salmon escapement counts with the current natural-origin SEG, 1999–2026.

PROPOSAL 5 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area and 5 AAC 56.130. Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan.

PROPOSED BY: Will Lee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify guidance for the management of the Ninilchik River king salmon fishery and suggests the department should avoid prohibiting the use of bait and should maximize fishing opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The management of the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery is outlined in the *Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan* (5 AAC 56.130). This plan specifies that the fishery is closed to the retention of natural-origin fish unless the run is projected to achieve the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) and broodstock collection goals. The plan also provides the commissioner the authority to further liberalize or restrict the hatchery-origin king salmon sport fishery to provide more harvest opportunity or achieve the SEG and broodstock collection goals. The area open during the king salmon sport fishery is the lower 2 miles of the river on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday of Memorial Day weekend, the following two weekends, and from June 16 through October 31. The area upstream of the 2-mile marker is closed year-round to salmon fishing and is closed to all other fishing from November 1 through July 31. In May through July 15, gear is restricted to single-hook and bait is allowed.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal is ambiguous with no clearly defined effect. This action could reduce the department's ability to manage the fishery inseason to achieve the SEG and broodstock goals.

BACKGROUND: For additional background on the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery, see staff comments on Proposal 4.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to limiting emergency order authority to adjust season dates, bag limits, and restrictions on bait to manage the complex objectives of achieving the natural–origin SEG, meeting broodstock goals, and providing harvest opportunity of hatchery-origin fish. Prohibiting the use of bait has been used by the department to reduce incidental hooking mortality on natural-origin king salmon while providing harvest opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon. Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon have met the criteria for stock of concern status, and an action plan will be presented at the LCI BOF meeting

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 6 – 5 AAC 56.130. Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan.

PROPOSED BY: James Stubbs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit the department from closing the hatchery-origin king salmon fishery in the Ninilchik River to achieve the natural-origin sustainable escapement goal (SEG). It would also increase the area open to sport fishing and prohibit the use of bait in the hatchery-origin only king salmon fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The management of the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery is outlined in the *Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management* plan (5 AAC 56.130). This plan specifies that the fishery is closed to the retention of natural-origin fish unless the run is projected to achieve the SEG and broodstock collection goals. The plan also provides the commissioner the authority to further liberalize or restrict the hatchery king salmon sport fishery to provide more harvest opportunity or achieve the SEG and broodstock collection goals. The area open during the king salmon sport fishery is the lower two miles of the river. The area upstream of the 2-mile marker is closed year-round to salmon fishing and is closed to all other fishing from November 1 through July 31. In May through July 15, gear is restricted to single-hook and bait is allowed.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide more consistent sport fishing opportunities for hatchery-origin king salmon and may reduce the hatchery-origin contribution to escapement. It would also reduce the department's ability to manage the fishery inseason to achieve the SEG, which may result in missing the SEG more frequently. Prohibiting the use of bait would most likely reduce the harvest of hatchery-origin king salmon and reduce the incidental catch of natural-origin king salmon.

BACKGROUND: For additional background on the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery, see staff comments on Proposal 4.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it reduces management flexibility to restrict the hatchery-origin king salmon sport fishery to achieve the SEG in years of poor natural-origin runs. The department has used its authority as outlined in the management plan and closed the hatchery-origin only fishery in recent years to achieve the SEG. Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon have met the criteria for stock of concern status, and an action plan will be presented at the LCI BOF meeting.

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 7 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: James Stubbs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Ninilchik River hatchery-origin king salmon between 20 inches and 28 inches in length would not count towards the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Ninilchik River, the daily bag and possession limit is 2 hatchery-origin king salmon 20 inches or greater in length and 10 fish less than 20 inches in length. No retention of natural-origin king salmon is allowed. King salmon greater than or equal to 20 inches in length harvested from Cook Inlet fresh and saltwaters between April 1 and August 31 count towards the Cook Inlet annual limit except for Kenai River king salmon less than 28 inches in length harvested between January 1 and June 30.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would increase harvest opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon between 20 inches and 28 inches in length. This could increase the incidental catch of natural-origin king salmon with increased fishing pressure targeting hatchery-origin king salmon. This would increase regulation complexity because king salmon greater than or equal to 20 inches harvested in almost all other Cook Inlet waters count towards the annual limit. It would reduce the number of hatchery-origin king salmon less than 28 inches that escape the fishery area and are excess to broodstock needs. It may increase the harvest of king salmon in other fisheries in which the Cook Inlet annual limit does apply.

BACKGROUND: In recent years, hatchery-origin fish have composed 57% of the escapement on average, and the majority of those hatchery-origin fish have been ocean age-1 and -2 fish, which are primarily males less than 28 inches in length (Figure 7-1). Currently, king salmon under 20 inches in length do not count toward the Cook Inlet annual limit. On average over the last 5 years, there have been approximately 500 ocean-age-2 hatchery king salmon (20 inches to <28 inches) that have escaped the fishery annually. During these years, the department has culled or used for broodstock approximately 280 of these fish annually whereas the remainder stayed in the escapement. These small hatchery fish are often released by anglers. The Cook Inlet annual limit has applied to Ninilchik River king salmon since the mid-1970s.

For additional background on the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery and supplementation program, see staff comments on Proposal 4.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Although it would expand harvest opportunities for 20-inch to 28-inch hatchery-origin king salmon, it may increase incidental mortality of natural-origin king salmon as fishing effort increases. This proposal would

increase regulatory complexity by creating 3 separate size-based regulation categories for anglers and an exception to the Cook Inlet annual limit. The department has emergency order authority to adjust limits when a surplus of hatchery-origin king salmon is present in the Ninilchik River. Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon have met the criteria for stock of concern status, and an action plan will be presented at the LCI BOF meeting.

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.

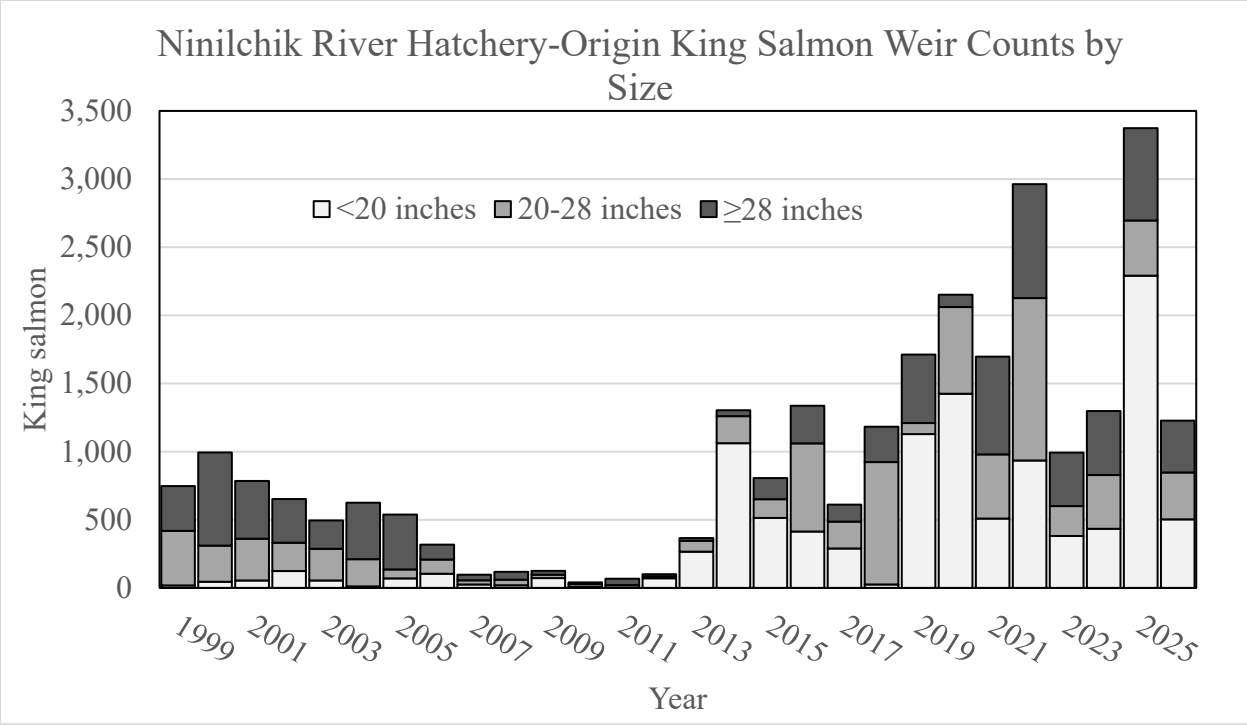


Figure 7-1.–Ninilchik River hatchery-origin king salmon weir counts by total length size category, 1999–2026.

PROPOSAL 8 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: James Stubbs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the daily bag and possession limits for king salmon in the Ninilchik River to two hatchery-origin king salmon 20 inches or greater but less than 28 inches in length, one hatchery-origin king salmon 28 inches or greater in length, and 10 hatchery-origin or natural-origin king salmon less than 20 inches in length.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the Ninilchik River, the daily bag and possession limit of hatchery-origin king salmon is 2 fish 20 inches or greater in length and 10 less than 20 inches in length. No retention of natural-origin king salmon is allowed.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would increase the harvest opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon between 20 inches and 28 inches in length in the Ninilchik River. It would increase the harvest of hatchery-origin king salmon and the incidental catch of natural-origin king salmon by an unknown amount. Allowing natural-origin king salmon less than 20 inches in length to be harvested would reduce the number of natural-origin king salmon available to meet the sustainable escapement goal (SEG). It would reduce the number of hatchery-origin king salmon less than 28 inches that escape the fishery area and are excess to broodstock needs.

BACKGROUND: In recent years, hatchery-origin fish have composed 57% of the total escapement in the Ninilchik River on average and the majority of those hatchery-origin fish have been ocean age-1 and -2 fish, which are primarily males less than 28 inches in length (Figure 7-1). On average, this has equated to approximately 800 hatchery-origin fish less than 28 inches in length. In addition to hatchery-origin fish less than 28 inches in the escapement, approximately 600 hatchery fish of that size have been culled at the broodstock collection weir annually. These small hatchery fish are often released by anglers in the sport fishery.

On the Kasilof River, sport fishing regulations are structured to allow harvest of both hatchery-origin and naturally produced king salmon less than 20 inches because the natural-origin stock is assessed with an SEG based on ocean age-2+ natural-origin fish.

For additional background on the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery and supplementation program, see staff comments on Proposal 4.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not support allowing the retention of natural-origin king salmon under 20 inches when they are included in the natural-origin SEG. The department has emergency order authority to adjust bag and annual limits or modify size restrictions when a surplus of hatchery-origin king salmon is

present in the Ninilchik River. Although it would expand harvest opportunities for hatchery-origin king salmon, this proposal adds regulatory complexity by creating three separate size-based regulation categories for anglers. Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon have met the criteria for stock of concern status, and an action plan will be presented at the LCI board meeting.

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 9 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: James Stubbs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would expand the area open to fishing in the Ninilchik River for hatchery-origin king salmon to include approximately 2.8 additional miles upstream of the area currently open to salmon fishing from June 16 through July 15. It would also modify the daily bag and possession limits for king salmon to two hatchery-origin king salmon greater than or equal to 20 inches and less than 28 inches, one hatchery-origin king salmon greater than or equal to 28 inches, and 10 hatchery or natural-origin king salmon less than 20 inches in length.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? From June 16 through July 15, the Ninilchik River sport fishery is open seven days per week from the mouth upstream to a regulatory marker two miles upstream but in 2026, a preseason emergency order (EO) was issued to reduce the season to two, 3-day weekend periods. The daily bag and possession limit for hatchery-origin king salmon is two fish 20 inches or greater in length and 10 fish less than 20 inches in length. No retention of natural-origin king salmon is allowed. All waters upstream of the 2-mile marker are closed to sport fishing until August 1 and closed to salmon fishing year-round.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would provide additional harvest opportunity for king salmon by expanding the area open to fishing. This proposal would increase the harvest opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon 20 inches to 28 inches in length and reduce the culling of excess hatchery-origin fish at the broodstock weir. It would increase the harvest of hatchery-origin king salmon and the incidental catch of natural-origin king salmon by an unknown amount. Allowing natural-origin king salmon less than 20 inches in length to be harvested would reduce the number of natural-origin king salmon available to meet the sustainable escapement goal (SEG).

BACKGROUND: The Ninilchik River salmon sport fishery occurs downstream of the 2-mile marker, which is near the Garrison Ridge Road bridge and the escapement monitoring weir (Figure 4-1). Upstream of the escapement monitoring weir, there is an approximately 2.8-mile stretch of stream before the broodstock collection weir. The percentage of king salmon that reach the broodstock collection weir varies annually but averages 80%, with the remainder spawning in the area between the two weirs. The run timing to the broodstock collection weir also varies annually depending on available holding water in that section and water levels. The percentage of king salmon that reach the broodstock collection weir annually, as well as the timing of their arrival to the broodstock weir, has influenced the number of king salmon that are collected for broodstock, as well as the number of excess hatchery-origin fish culled at the broodstock weir, and ultimately the number of hatchery-origin fish that contribute to the spawning escapement.

Salmon fishing has been restricted to the lower two miles of the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams since the mid-1970s to protect salmon spawning. The upstream section of the river opens August 1 through October 31 to fishing for steelhead and Dolly Varden. No salmon fishing is allowed, and gear is restricted to single-hook artificial lures. Access to the section of stream between the 2-mile marker and the broodstock weir is limited to Brody Road Bridge, Garrison Ridge Road Bridge, or private property (Figure 4-1).

For additional background on the Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery and supplementation program, see Proposal 4.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Starting in 2027, excess hatchery-origin fish will be physically removed from the escapement at the river mile 2 weir throughout the run. Allowing the harvest of natural-origin king salmon 20 inches or less in length would remove fish that count toward the SEG. The increased harvest opportunity and expanded fishing area would increase the incidental catch and hooking mortality of natural-origin king salmon by a small but unknown amount. Ninilchik River natural-origin king salmon have met the criteria for stock of concern status, and an action plan will be presented at the LCI meeting.

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 10 – 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would extend the prohibition on bait and multiple hooks in the Anchor River and Deep and Stariski Creeks to include the second half of July.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In the lower sections of the Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Stariski Creek, bait and multiple hooks are allowed during the dates open to king salmon fishing in May and June and from July 16 through August 31. Gear is restricted to single-hook artificial lures July 1through July 15 and September 1 through October 31, although in recent years preseason emergency orders (EOs) have been issued to restrict the use of bait for a longer duration. This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce the incidental catch of king salmon during the last two weeks in July. Anglers would not be able to use bait or multiple hooks to target Dolly Varden during the last two weeks in July, but it is not likely there would be a significant change in effort or Dolly Varden catch.

BACKGROUND: In the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams, EOs have been issued to extend sport fishing gear restrictions to add further protection for king salmon in years when conservation measures were needed. The exception to this approach in the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams is the Ninilchik River, which provides harvest opportunity for hatchery-origin king salmon. In that fishery, gear is restricted to one single hook, but bait may be used through July 15. Most anglers do not use bait and practice catch-and-release fishing when targeting Dolly Varden in July. Anglers commonly use bait to target coho salmon in August.

In recent years, king salmon run timing has progressed later than it was historically. Since 2016, approximately 20% of the Anchor River king salmon run has been counted after July 16 (Figure 10-1). In 2025 and 2026, the department issued EOs restricting the use of bait and multiple hooks until August 1 to reduce incidental king salmon catch while fishing for other species in the second half of July. In most years, the peak of the Dolly Varden run is in July, and less than 1% of the coho salmon run has entered these streams prior to August.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Restricting the use of bait and multiple hooks in the second half of July will reduce incidental hooking of king salmon while targeting other species and is not likely to reduce overall effort or Dolly Varden catch. Sport anglers primarily use bait to target coho salmon in these streams during August and would not be affected by this regulation change.

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.

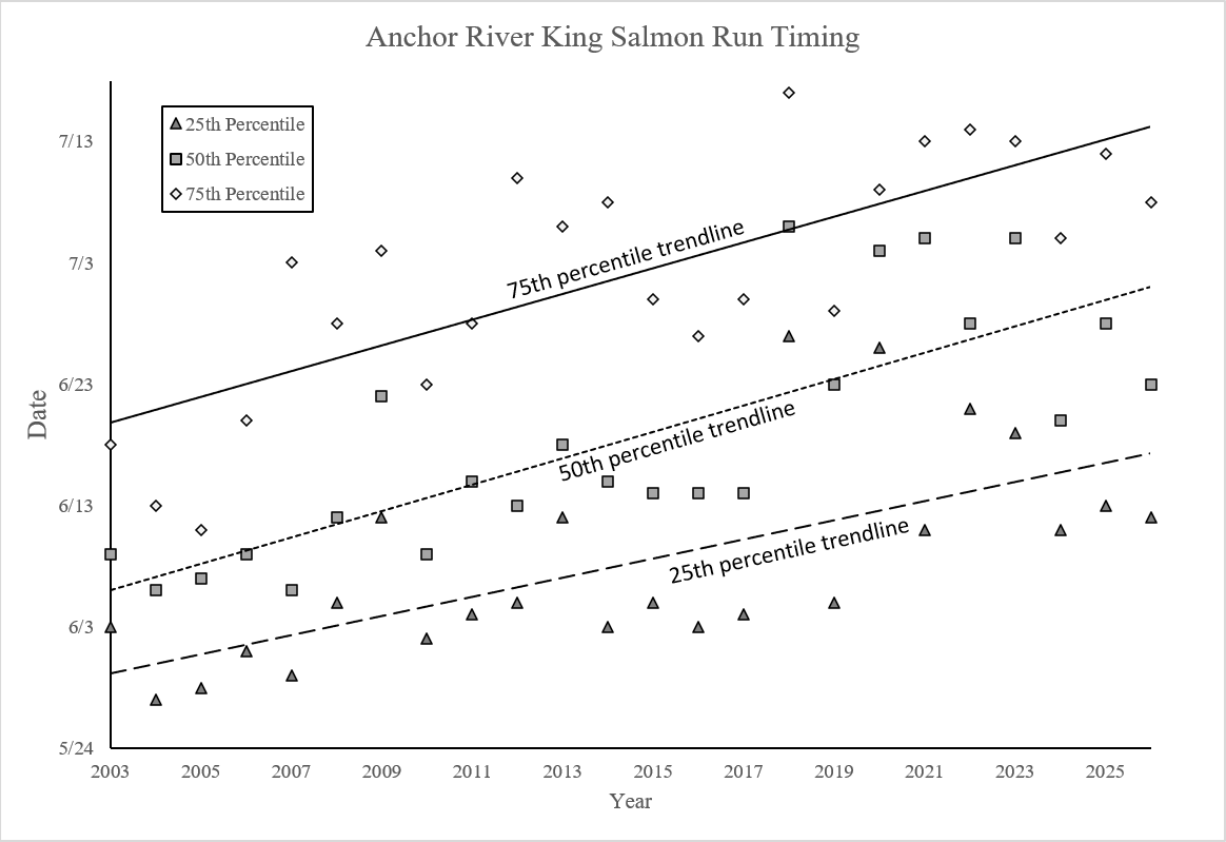


Figure 10-1. King salmon run timing in the Anchor River, 2003–2026.

PROPOSAL 11 – 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area and 5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area. and 5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area and 5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area and 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area and 5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would prohibit intentionally targeting king salmon, including catch-and-release, when retention of king salmon is closed in Cook Inlet freshwater drainages. It would also require that any king salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other species remain in the water and must be released immediately.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The department may close king salmon fishing, or establish a catch-and-release fishery, through emergency order (EO). Several different management plans and stock of concern action plans direct the management of king salmon within Cook Inlet and may prescribe a catch-and-release fishery at specific abundance levels.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Catch-and-release fisheries would be removed as a management tool and king salmon sport fisheries in the freshwaters of Cook Inlet would either be closed or open to harvest. The number of EOs is not expected to change as the department will continue to issue EOs to implement management actions. This would deny opportunity to sport anglers when the abundance of king salmon would be adequate for catch-and-release fishing but not enough for a harvest fishery.

BACKGROUND: King salmon stocks within Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of poor productivity, and management actions have been implemented across fisheries to conserve king salmon. When sport fishing for king salmon has been closed by EO, the department has included language that incidentally caught king salmon must be released immediately and removal from the water is prohibited. In 2026, preseason EOs were issued to close sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing, in the majority of freshwaters within Cook Inlet. The exception to these closures occurred in areas where hatchery-origin king salmon return. In the Ninilchik and Kasilof Rivers where hatchery-origin and natural-origin king salmon are intermixed, the retention of natural-origin king salmon was prohibited whereas hatchery-origin king salmon could be retained. In 2024 and 2026, in accordance with the *Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 56.130) an EO was issued

to open a catch-and-release fishery for king salmon in the Anchor River after returns indicated the sustainable escapement goal range of 3,200–6,400 fish would be achieved.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Removing the ability to implement a catch-and-release fishery reduces available management tools and eliminates the ability to provide fishing opportunity when harvest opportunity is not sustainable. In areas where hatchery-origin and natural-origin king salmon are intermixed, a mark-select fishery would not be able to occur unless the natural-origin stock could support harvest. The board will hear this proposal and related public testimony at both the LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting.

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 12 – 5 AAC 56.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area and 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area and 5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area and 5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area and 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area and 5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Dyer VanDevere.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require recording of all harvested king salmon in the sport fishery within the Cook Inlet Area, regardless of size.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Anglers are not universally required to record and report king salmon harvest in Southcentral Alaska. Logbooks, which record harvest and effort by guided anglers fishing in saltwater, are required to be completed by charter businesses and guides. Anglers must record king salmon harvest information on their fishing license or a nontransferable harvest record card when the Cook Inlet king salmon annual limit applies. In Cook Inlet, king salmon harvested in the winter fishery and king salmon 20 inches or less in length do not apply toward the Cook Inlet king salmon annual limit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The information collected may allow more detailed and accurate harvest estimates but may not provide more timely information because harvest permits are typically required to be submitted at the end of the season.

BACKGROUND: The department collects sport fish effort and harvest information through 4 primary sources: 1) the Alaska Sport Fishing Survey, commonly called the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS), 2) the Statewide Saltwater Charter Logbook Program, 3) site-specific creel sampling programs, and 4) harvest permits (e.g., shrimp in Prince William Sound). Although statewide programs such as the SWHS collect information on a broad scale, which is especially useful for evaluating trends, site-specific creel surveys and harvest permits provide more detailed information but require more resources to implement and often create additional burden on the angler. When harvesting a species with an annual limit, anglers are required to record their harvest on their fishing license or a nontransferable harvest record, but this requirement is used for enforcement purposes and is not submitted to the department.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department already has the authority to implement a harvest recording program for king salmon in Cook Inlet.

The board lacks the statutory authority to instruct the department on the expenditure or allocation of funds. The department is currently undergoing an effort to modernize the SWHS with the objective to increase response rates, incorporate a means for digital reporting, and provide more accurate and timely information. The revised SWHS is expected to be implemented in 2028. The department is evaluating the potential to require a harvest permit for king salmon in Southcentral Alaska.

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 would result in additional cost to the department to implement a harvest record and reporting program.

PROPOSAL 13 – 5 AAC 56.XXX New section and 5 AAC 57.XXX New section and 5 AAC 58.XXX New section and 5 AAC 59.XXX New section and 5 AAC 60.XXX New section and 5 AAC 61.XXX New section and 5 AAC 62.XXX New section.

PROPOSED BY: Erik Anderson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allow the department to use emergency order (EO) authority to restrict guided anglers in Cook Inlet freshwaters during times of low king salmon abundance.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The department may use EO authority to modify limits, methods and means, and season dates for the king salmon sport fishery in Cook Inlet. Management actions are applied to all sport anglers, and the department does not have the delegation of authority to take action specifically for guided anglers.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The department would have delegated authority to specifically restrict guided anglers. However, because most freshwater king salmon fisheries within Cook Inlet are currently closed to all sport fishing, this delegation of authority is unlikely to result in additional restrictions to guided sport fishing at this time.

BACKGROUND: EO authority is described in AS 16.05.060 and 5 AAC 75.003. In select sport fisheries the board has provided the department with an additional delegation of authority to implement management actions for a specific segment of the sport fishery, such as nonresident anglers or guided anglers. When developing an expanded delegation of authority, the board typically provides guidance on the use of that authority which could disproportionally impact guided fishing.

The board has established additional restrictions on guided fishing in specific fisheries and locations within Cook Inlet including prohibiting guides from fishing while clients are onboard, prohibiting guided fishing on select days of the week, establishing a limit on the number of persons on a guided vessel, and prohibiting guided fishing from a vessel.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. If this proposal is adopted the department requests additional guidance on the use of this expanded authority.

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 for the department.

PROPOSAL 14 – 5 AAC 56.XXX New section.

PROPOSED BY: Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a management plan for the Anchor River, Stariski Creek, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River coho salmon sport fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon sport fisheries in the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams are managed under general provisions for the Kenai Peninsula Area. For salmon other than king salmon 16 inches or greater in length, the bag and possession limits are three fish of which only two may be coho salmon. During the coho salmon run, the use of bait is allowed July 16 through August 31. Salmon may only be harvested in the lower two-mile sections of these streams and these streams are closed to all sport fishing from November 1 through late May. There are no management plans for any coho salmon stocks in Lower Cook Inlet. This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for coho salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would direct the department to manage the coho salmon sport fisheries in the lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams preseason or inseason based on the anticipated escapement in the Anchor River. In years coho salmon escapement is projected to be less than 4,000 fish, it provides provisions to reduce the harvest by reducing the bag and possession limits from two and to one fish and restricting gear to single-hook artificial lures. This would reduce harvest opportunity by an unknown amount. It may also shift effort to other Kenai Peninsula sport fisheries with more liberal limits and gear regulations that do not currently have any coho salmon stock assessment.

BACKGROUND: The lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams include the Anchor and Ninilchik Rivers, and Deep and Stariski Creeks, all of which support popular coho salmon fisheries. The Sterling Highway crosses the lower reaches of these streams, and access is well-developed to reach the 2-mile sections open to salmon fishing.

Historically, the roadside streams supported robust annual coho salmon fisheries and have had very few regulatory changes over time. In 1997, the daily bag and possession limit was restricted from three to one fish per day but was later rescinded when the numbers of coho salmon increased. In 1999, to protect coho salmon stocks after low runs throughout Cook Inlet, the board reduced the bag and possession limits for coho salmon for all Cook Inlet freshwaters from three to two fish. In 2024, all Kenai Peninsula freshwaters excluding the Kenai River were restricted based on the Anchor River escapement count, poor escapements in Northern Cook Inlet streams, and other fishery indicators. In 2024, the bag and possession limits were reduced from two to one fish, the use of bait was prohibited, and gear was restricted to single-hook artificial lures. From the late 1970s through the 2000s, the annual coho salmon harvests for all 4 streams combined averaged approximately 5,500 fish annually with approximately 81% from the Anchor River.

Coho salmon escapement has been monitored in the Anchor River periodically since the late 1980s and annually since 2020 (Table 14-1). The historical escapements ranged from less than 2,000 fish up to 20,000 fish and averaged approximately 7,500 fish. Freshwater harvest rates in these

historical years averaged approximately 35%. Since 2020, the annual run size has averaged approximately 3,900 fish. The average freshwater harvest rate has declined to an average of 17% in recent years, likely due to lower effort and, to a lesser extent, smaller runs. Like other Cook Inlet stocks, coho salmon run timing in the Anchor River can be highly variable and influenced by water conditions. Generally, the first 25% of the run occurs by mid-August and the mid-point of the run occurs in the last week in August. In 2025 and 2026, the department also conducted sport harvest surveys on the Anchor River to assess the percentage of the harvest that occurs upstream of the weir. In both years, 95% of the harvest occurred downstream of the weir.

The department has recently adopted a sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 2,300 to 4,800 coho salmon for Anchor River coho salmon. Of the 19 years of escapement data for this stock, the SEG would not have been met in three years (2011, 2020, and 2024) and would have exceeded the upper end of the range six times (Table14-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The Anchor River inseason projection is unlikely to be reliable until mid- to late August. Given that coho salmon run timing can be highly variable, it can create uncertainty in projecting run strength until later in the run. The preferred approach is to continue to allow the department to consider all sources of data and to use emergency order authority to take inseason management action when coho salmon returns to selected streams or the greater Cook Inlet area appears to be weak. Additionally, the 4,000 coho salmon management trigger identified in the proposed management plan is past the midpoint of the SEG and may be overly restrictive.

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.

Table 14-1.–Anchor River coho salmon escapement, freshwater harvest, total run, and freshwater harvest rate, 1987–2026.

	Coho salmon			
Year	Escapement	Harvest	Total run	Freshwater harvest rate
1987	2,409	2,010	4,419	0.45
1988	2,805	2,219	5,024	0.44
1989	20,187	2,635	22,822	0.12
1992	4,596	2,267	6,863	0.33
2004	5,728	4,383	10,111	0.43
2005[a]	20,188	5,314	25,502	0.21
2006[a]	24,832	3,920	28,752	0.14
2007	8,226	3,962	12,188	0.33
2008	5,951	4,790	10,741	0.45
2009	2,692	3,882	6,574	0.59
2010	6,014	2,863	8,877	0.32
2011	1,866	808	2,674	0.30
2020	2,272	1,498	3,770	0.40
2021	3,801	742	4,543	0.16
2022	3,312	356	3,668	0.10
2023[a]	3,233	259	3,492	0.07
2024	2,132	401	2,533	0.16
2025	4,412	711	5,123	0.14
2026[b]	6,040	[c]	[c]	[c]
Average 1987–1992	7,499	2,283	9,782	0.34
Average 2004–2011	9,437	2,405	13,177	0.35
Average 2020–2026	3,600	661	3,855	0.17

[a] Escapement counts expanded to total run due to incomplete monitoring.

[b] Preliminary.

[c] Not yet available.

PROPOSAL 15 – 5 AAC 21.XXX New section.

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a new management plan with expanded delegation of authority to manage the coho salmon sport fishery in Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) and establish a harvest threshold that is paired to commercial harvest in Cook Inlet.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Coho salmon bag and possession limits are specified in regulation, and the department uses emergency order (EO) to modify limits, season dates, and methods and means in response to coho salmon abundance.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for coho salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal references a "commercial coho salmon benchmark," but this is not defined. If a harvest limit was established for the sport harvest of coho salmon, the department would use EO authority to manage the sport fisheries to achieve but not exceed that limit. The effect on sport opportunity will be dependent on the "benchmark" established. This proposal would expand the delegation of authority to include the ability for the department to limit the number of guided trips by EO. This proposal may limit the department's ability to manage for specific stocks with escapement goals.

BACKGROUND: In recent years, coho salmon have not met escapement goals for the Little Susitna River and Deshka River. The department has issued EOs to restrict coho salmon sport fisheries in the Little Susitna and Susitna watersheds and occasionally other areas within Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) in 4 of the last 5 years. EOs in the sport fishery have reduced the bag limit, prohibited the use of bait, or prohibited retention of coho salmon. The Little Susitna River has met the criteria for a stock of concern, and a draft action plan will be presented at the UCI Board of Fisheries meeting. There are 13 management plans that govern commercial fisheries in UCI, several of which contain existing paired management provisions between commercial fisheries and other user groups. The *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.353), the Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan (5 AAC21.382), and the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.358) are the most influential towards the management of the commercial coho salmon harvest within Cook Inlet.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. If adopted, a "commercial coho salmon benchmark" would need to be developed. The department would need further guidance from the board to define the conditions when a limit on the number of guided angler trips would be implemented. If adopted, the department recommends excluding terminal areas where hatchery-origin coho salmon will be retuning or have been stocked in landlocked lakes.

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 16 – 5 AAC 56.122 Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: James Stubbs.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit the use of helicopters to transport anglers to lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams (Anchor River, Stariski Creek, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no restrictions on the use of helicopters for sport fishing on lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This may reduce sport fishing effort and catch of steelhead and Dolly Varden by an unknown amount. Anglers accessing fishing locations via helicopter may shift their effort towards other more remote locations in Cook Inlet with steelhead, such as Kamishak Bay streams. The potential for user conflicts would be reduced for those anglers who value a traditional access method.

BACKGROUND: Helicopters are used by anglers to reach the upper sections of lower Kenai Peninsula streams. These sections are open from August 1 through October 31, and anglers primarily use helicopter transport to target steelhead. These stream sections are closed year-round to salmon fishing. Helicopter use is most prevalent at Deep Creek and the Ninilchik River, where public land access is limited and upstream sections have no road access. Anglers also access these sections by foot, using the stream channel below ordinary high water or with permission from landowners.

The steelhead sport fishery on lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams has been conservatively managed due to limited stock assessments, small run sizes, and the popularity of the fishery. The retention of steelhead has been prohibited since 1990. The season is short due to fall run timing and the sport fishing closure for all species from November 1 through late May the following year. From 1990 to 2020, the annual steelhead catch estimate for all lower Kenai Peninsula roadside streams was 5,250. In recent years (2021–2025), the annual average catch was approximately 1,550 fish. Some of the decline in catch estimates can be attributed to smaller steelhead run sizes, an overall decline in sport fishing effort on lower Kenai Peninsula streams, and to a poor response rate to the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS).

Steelhead have been monitored periodically on lower Kenai Peninsula streams, primarily on the Anchor River. Previous Anchor River weir locations and fall storms that compromised the weir prevented full counts in almost all years. However, the Anchor River weir was relocated in 2024 to a downstream location that allows for full enumeration of the fall steelhead run when funding allows operation through October. The complete 2024 Anchor River steelhead count of 1,389, along with other partial monitoring efforts and spring kelt counts on the Anchor and Ninilchik Rivers, indicate that run sizes in these rivers vary from a few hundred to a few thousand fish.

Helicopters are used throughout Alaska by sport anglers to access difficult to reach locations. Over time, the board has both prohibited and repealed prohibitions on the use of helicopters to transport

sport anglers and sport-caught fish statewide and in specific drainages. Currently, the use of helicopters to transport anglers and sport-caught fish is prohibited in the Kvichak and Alagnak River drainages in Bristol Bay. Some remote locations within Cook Inlet where anglers use helicopters for access include tributaries of Kamishak Bay in West Cook Inlet and Talachulitna River and Lake Creek in the Susitna River drainage.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department is neutral on allocative or social considerations involving different modes of access to the fishery. From a biological and management perspective the proposed restrictions are not necessary for the conservation or sustainability of the fishery.

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 17 – 5 AAC 56.122 Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

PROPOSED BY: Seward Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would extend the dates for the youth-only king salmon fishery by 28 days and the youth-only coho salmon fishery by 23 days in the Seward Lagoon and Outfall stream. Additionally, it would close all sport fishing from July 3 through July 5 and only allow the use of a single hook in the Seward Lagoon and Outfall stream.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The designated youth sport fishery occurs June 17–30 for king salmon and August 25–September 7 for coho salmon, unless modified by emergency order (EO). A single hook, or a single-hook, artificial lure, with bait may be used in this fishery and snagging is not allowed. The bag and possession limit is 2 fish and after taking a bag limit, a person may not sport fish in the Seward Lagoon or waters draining out of Seward Lagoon that day. Outside of the youth-only fishery, no sport fishing is allowed in the Seward Lagoon and Outfall stream.

This proposal is for an area within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would allow more fishing opportunity in the youth-only fishery and clarify that only one hook with a single point may be used. This could increase the harvest of coho salmon annually in the Seward Lagoon youth-only fishery.

BACKGROUND: The board adopted the youth-only fishery into regulation in 2007. The youth-only fishery dates were changed by the board in 2019 to allow more harvest opportunity and allow the department EO authority to adjust the dates when warranted. This change was due to observations that the timing of king and coho salmon was trending later than when the youth-only fishery was originally put in place. Salmon are stocked in the Seward Lagoon to provide harvest opportunity, and this is a terminal harvest area where fish are typically not used for broodstock. The exception was in 2024 when coho salmon returns were low at Bear Creek, and Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, in conjunction with ADF&G, collected broodstock from the lagoon. From 2022 to 2026, excluding 2024, the king and coho salmon seasons were extended by EO (Table 17–1). Harvest data are not available due to low responses in the Statewide Harvest Survey.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** providing additional opportunity for youth anglers and providing clarification on hook regulations.

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.

Table 17-1.–Youth-only fishery emergency order end dates for king and coho salmon, 2022–2026.

Year	King salmon extension end date	Coho salmon extension end date
2022	July 13	September 30
2023	July 16	October 1
2024	July 31	no extension
2025	July 31	September 30
2026	July 31	October 5

PROPOSAL 18 – 5 AAC 58.022 Waters; seasons; bag; possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

PROPOSED BY: Clay Duda, Homer Charter Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a new definition of bag limit for Cook Inlet saltwaters by changing the ownership of fish from the individual that originally hooked the fish to the person holding the fishing rod at the time of landing the fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, bag limit is defined in statewide sport fishing definition (5 AAC 75.995(a)(4)) as the "maximum legal take of fish per person per day, in the area in which the person is fishing, even if part or all the fish are immediately preserved; a fish when landed and not immediately released becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it."

There are two positive customary and traditional use (C&T) findings for salmon in the Lower Cook Inlet Management Area outside the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistance Area (5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(A-B)). In the Port Graham, Koyuktolik, Port Chatham, and Windy Bay Subdistricts, the board has found that 4,800–7,200 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (d)). In the areas around Seldovia defined in 5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(B), the board has found that 100–350 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (g)). Portions of this proposal fall within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area, where there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers would be able to receive physical assistance when hooking or reeling in a fish and still harvest the fish as part of their bag limit. Anglers fishing in groups are more likely to achieve their maximum bag and possession limit because multiple anglers may fish but then hand off a hooked fish to another angler even after their own bag limit has been reached. The increase in harvest may require more restrictive regulations in saltwater sport fisheries to achieve management objectives.

BACKGROUND: Anglers commonly assist other anglers by baiting hooks, reeling in fish, operating a landing net, and other tasks such as casting. Harvest in sport fishing regulations applies to the bag limit of the individual who originally hooked the fish. Alaska residents who are blind, 65 years of age or older, are physically disabled, or who are developmentally disabled may be eligible for a proxy fishing permit which would allow another angler to fish independently for that individual or provide all forms of assistance including hooking the fish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Individual bag, possession, and annual limits are used as a management tool to control harvest in the sport fishery. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

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 19 – 5 AAC 56.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area and 5 AAC 57.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area and 5 AAC 59.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Anchorage Bowl Drainages Area and 5 AAC 60.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area and 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area and 5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Chelsa Johnson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit organized sport-fishing derbies in the fresh waters of Cook Inlet.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The department does not have the authority to prohibit a sport fishing derby from occurring but manages sport fishing regulations and considers the effort and harvest that may occur as a result of a derby. Fishing derbies are defined in AS 16.05.940 (13) as a contest in which prizes are awarded for catching fish.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? There would be no effect if this proposal is adopted because the board does not have the authority to permit or prohibit fishing derbies.

BACKGROUND: Derbies in Cook Inlet vary greatly and may occur in salt or freshwater as well as waters that are stocked and unstocked. Fishing derbies may be youth-only events or open to all anglers. Derbies are not required to register or receive authorization from the department unless applying for a permit for the sale of sport-caught fish obtained during a derby, under the authority of AS 16.05.662. Sport-fishing derbies are required to comply with gaming regulations under the authority of the Department of Revenue.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends **NO ACTION** on this proposal. The board may indirectly regulate derbies through time, area, methods and means, and bag and possession limits. The department defers to the Department of Law for comments on the board's authority to specifically restrict fishing derbies beyond time, area, methods and means, and bag and possession limits.

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 20 – 5 AAC 56.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area and 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area and 5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area.

PROPOSED BY: Jordan Stover.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would prohibit charter vessels from participating in a sport fishing derby in Lower Cook Inlet.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? No regulations prohibit charter vessels from participating in sport fishing derbies.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Anglers would not be able to hire a charter to participate in a fishing derby. Effort, catch, and harvest in derbies may decrease. This would also prohibit charter operators from using their registered charter vessels to participate in derbies when not guiding.

BACKGROUND: Individual derbies may establish their own rules for participation in a derby, including prohibiting charter vessels from entering, but must comply with sport fishing regulations. The department does not have the authority to prohibit a sport fishing derby from occurring but does consider the effort and harvest that may occur as a result of a derby. Anglers who do not have access to a vessel may choose to hire a charter vessel to participate in a sport fishing derby.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal but does not have biological concerns with charter vessels participating in fishing derbies. The board does not have the authority to regulate sport fishing derbies but does have the authority to regulate activities of sport fishing guides and services.

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 21 – 5 AAC 75.076. Sport fishing guide and operating reporting requirements.

PROPOSED BY: Jordan Stover.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require all charter vessels in the Lower Cook Inlet area to be registered in an observer program or participate in electronic monitoring.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All sport fishing businesses and guides are required to register with ADF&G each season and display vessel decals. Charter logbooks are required for guided sport fisheries occurring in saltwater but are not required in freshwater sport fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow the department to verify the catch and harvest data reported from charter vessels but would not necessarily improve harvest data.

BACKGROUND: A variety of sizes and configurations of charter vessels operate in Lower Cook Inlet ranging from small inflatables and drift boats to large marine vessels. In Southcentral Alaska, approximately 1,300 charter vessels are active in freshwater and approximately 400 in saltwater.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. This would create additional cost for the department to implement an observer program and/or electronic monitoring with little benefit for fisheries management. Department staff and the Alaska Wildlife Troopers regularly conduct enforcement activities to verify that saltwater charter operators are completing logbooks correctly. The board lacks the statutory authority to instruct the department on the expenditure or allocation of funds. The department is opposed to creating this unique exception to the sport fishing operator requirements for the Lower Cook Inlet area.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost for a sport fishing business to host an observer or purchase electronic monitoring equipment. Approval of this proposal would result in an additional cost to the department to implement an observer program and/or electronic monitoring.

PROPOSAL 22 – 5 AAC 75.076. Sport fishing guide and operating reporting requirements.

PROPOSED BY: Jordan Stover.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require sport fishing guides operating in Lower Cook Inlet freshwater to report their freshwater harvest using an electronic logbook.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All sport fishing businesses and guides are required to register with ADF&G each season and display vessel decals. Charter logbooks are required for guided sport fisheries occurring in saltwater but are not required in freshwater sport fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Implementing a mandatory freshwater charter logbook program in Lower Cook Inlet would increase reporting requirements and associated administrative costs for guides and the department but would provide harvest and effort data occurring in the guided freshwater fishery.

BACKGROUND: In May 2004, the Alaska legislature adopted House Bill 452, which established statewide licensing requirements for sport fishing guide business owners and sport fishing guides. The bill was created to establish professional standards and included the requirement to pay a license fee. The bill included a sunset clause and was allowed to sunset in 2014. Although the guide licensing statutes expired in 2014, eliminating license fees and certain qualification requirements, the obligation for guides to complete freshwater and saltwater logbooks remained in regulation.

In 2016, the legislature reinstated licensing for saltwater guides, and the board subsequently adopted regulatory actions (Proposals 277 in 2016 and 175 in 2018) that maintained both freshwater and saltwater guide registration and logbook requirements during this period. However, in 2019, ADF&G discontinued the freshwater logbook program because the authorization to collect fees was allowed to sunset at the end of 2018. Effective May 2019, freshwater guides were no longer required to obtain or submit logbooks, though registration and vessel documentation requirements continued. The saltwater logbook program remained in place due to its importance for the Pacific Salmon Treaty and federal management obligations.

In anticipation of the program's discontinuation, the board delegated authority to the commissioner (board policy 2019-294-FB) to amend registration and logbook regulations consistent with program funding constraints. This action provided the regulatory mechanism for removing freshwater logbook requirements while retaining the saltwater component.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department is currently undergoing an effort to modernize the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) with the objective of increasing response rates, incorporating a means for digital reporting, and providing more accurate and timely information. The revised SWHS is expected to be implemented in 2028. The department is also evaluating whether to implement mandatory harvest reporting for king

salmon in Southcentral Alaska. The board lacks the statutory authority to instruct the department on the expenditure or allocation of funds.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost because sport fishing businesses or guides may need to purchase devices used for electronic reporting (smartphone or tablet). Approval of this proposal would result in an additional cost to the department to implement a freshwater logbook program.

PROPOSAL 23 – 5 AAC 75.076. Sport fishing guide and operating reporting requirements.

PROPOSED BY: Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require freshwater sport fishing guides in Upper Cook Inlet rivers to report sport harvest using an electronic logbook.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All freshwater sport fishing businesses and guides are required to register with ADF&G each season and display vessel decals. Charter logbooks are required in guided saltwater sport fisheries but are not required in freshwater sport fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?
Implementing a mandatory freshwater guide logbook program in Cook Inlet would increase reporting requirements and associated administrative costs for guides and the department but would provide inseason harvest and effort data occurring in the guided fishery.

BACKGROUND: See additional background provided in staff comments on Proposal 22.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department is currently undergoing an effort to modernize the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) with the objective of increasing response rates, incorporating a means for digital reporting, and providing more accurate and timely information. The department is also evaluating whether to implement a mandatory freshwater harvest report for king salmon in Southcentral Alaska. The board lacks the statutory authority to instruct the department on the expenditure or allocation of funds.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in an additional direct cost as sport fishing businesses or guides may need to purchase devices used for electronic reporting (smartphone or tablet). Approval of this proposal would result in an additional cost to the department to implement a freshwater logbook program.

PROPOSAL 24 – 5 AAC 01.595. Subsistence bag, possession, and size limits and 5 AAC 56.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area and 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area and 5 AAC 62.120 General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the West Cook Inlet Area and 5 AAC 77.525 Personal use salmon fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Jordan Stover.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a maximum size limit for king salmon and halibut harvested in the subsistence, sport, personal use, and commercial fisheries within the Lower Cook Inlet area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is no maximum size limit established for king salmon retained in subsistence, personal use, commercial, or sport fisheries in Lower Cook Inlet. King salmon in the Cook Inlet area are managed in accordance with various management plans and stock of concern action plans.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Pacific halibut are managed under an international multi-agency framework, and the board does not have the independent authority to change the size limit for halibut. Establishing a maximum king salmon size limit across all fisheries would conserve large king salmon, however release mortality varies across gear types. Harvest of king salmon under the maximum size limit may increase.

BACKGROUND: King salmon stocks within Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of poor productivity and management actions have been implemented across fisheries to conserve king salmon. Subsistence fisheries in Seldovia and Port Graham allow retention of king salmon using set gillnets. The personal use fishery in Kachemak Bay allows retention of king salmon in the set gillnet coho salmon fishery. Sport fisheries for king salmon occur in a portion of Cook Inlet saltwater. Nearly all king salmon freshwater sport fisheries are currently closed to retention of king salmon except for those areas where hatchery-origin king salmon are returning. King salmon harvested in purse seine and set gillnet fisheries while targeting other salmon species may be retained for home pack or sold during open periods.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. King salmon conservation in Lower Cook Inlet is addressed through existing management plans and stock of concern action plans that include size-based harvest measures that are tailored to the biological and stock-specific needs of individual river systems. Establishing a single maximum size limit for king salmon across all subsistence, personal use, sport, and commercial fisheries in Lower Cook Inlet would be overly broad and fail to recognize varying release mortality across gear types and the stock composition of specific fisheries. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

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 non-subsistence area? Yes, portions of Lower Cook Inlet fall within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3).

2. Is the stock customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence? Yes. The board has made a positive customary and traditional use finding for salmon in the Port Graham, Koyuktolik, Port Chatham, and Windy Bay Subdistricts (5 AAC01.566(a)(1)) and Seldovia area (5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(B).

3. Can a portion of the stock be harvested consistent with sustained yield? Yes.

4. What amount is reasonably necessary for subsistence uses? In the Port Graham, Koyuktolik, Port Chatham, and Windy Bay Subdistricts, the board has found that 4,800–7,200 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (d)). In the areas around Seldovia defined in 5 AAC 01.566 (a)(1)(B), the board has found that 100–350 salmon are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (g)).

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 use? This is a board determination.

PROPOSAL 25 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Brewer.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Waters within one-half mile of Homer Spit would be closed to commercial fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Waters southeast of the terminus of Homer Spit and within the Halibut Cove or China Poot Subdistricts are open to commercial salmon harvest using emergency order authority. Waters of the Northshore Subdistrict are closed by regulation to commercial salmon harvest (5 AAC 21.350). Waters on the southwest side of Homer Spit are outside of defined subdistricts and closed to commercial salmon harvest (Figure 25-1).

This area falls within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would close waters in the China Poot and Halibut Cove Subdistricts within one-half mile of the tip of Homer Spit also referred to as Coal Point. Salmon harvest in the purse seine fishery could be reduced by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: In July 2026, waters within a 1-mile square centered on Coal Point (lat 59°36.00' N, long 151°24.50' W) were closed to commercial salmon harvest by emergency order (EO; Figure 25-2). In previous years, waters in this area had not been closed. Prior to this closure in 2026, several commercial purse seine permit holders had been harvesting salmon in that specific area near Coal Point in the waters of the Halibut Cove and China Poot Subdistricts. The intent of opening these subdistricts is to harvest hatchery-produced salmon returning to release sites at China Poot, Hazel Lakes, and Tutka Lagoon. A significant portion of the salmon harvested near the end of Homer Spit were most likely not returning to those hatchery release sites. The *Lower Cook Inlet Seine Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.369) specifies that seine harvest effort be directed on Lower Cook Inlet stocks while acknowledging that some interception of Upper Cook Inlet stocks will occur. Salmon harvested in the closed waters area created using emergency order authority on July 1 were not likely to return to hatchery release sites in either the China Poot or Halibut Cove subdistricts and are also not likely to return to other anadromous systems in those areas or other streams or rivers in Lower Cook Inlet.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** establishing closed waters within one-half mile of Coal Point. The *Lower Cook Inlet Seine Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.369) directs the department to manage the seine fleet so that fishing effort is directed on Lower Cook Inlet stocks while recognizing that some interception of Upper Cook Inlet stocks will occur. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal.

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.

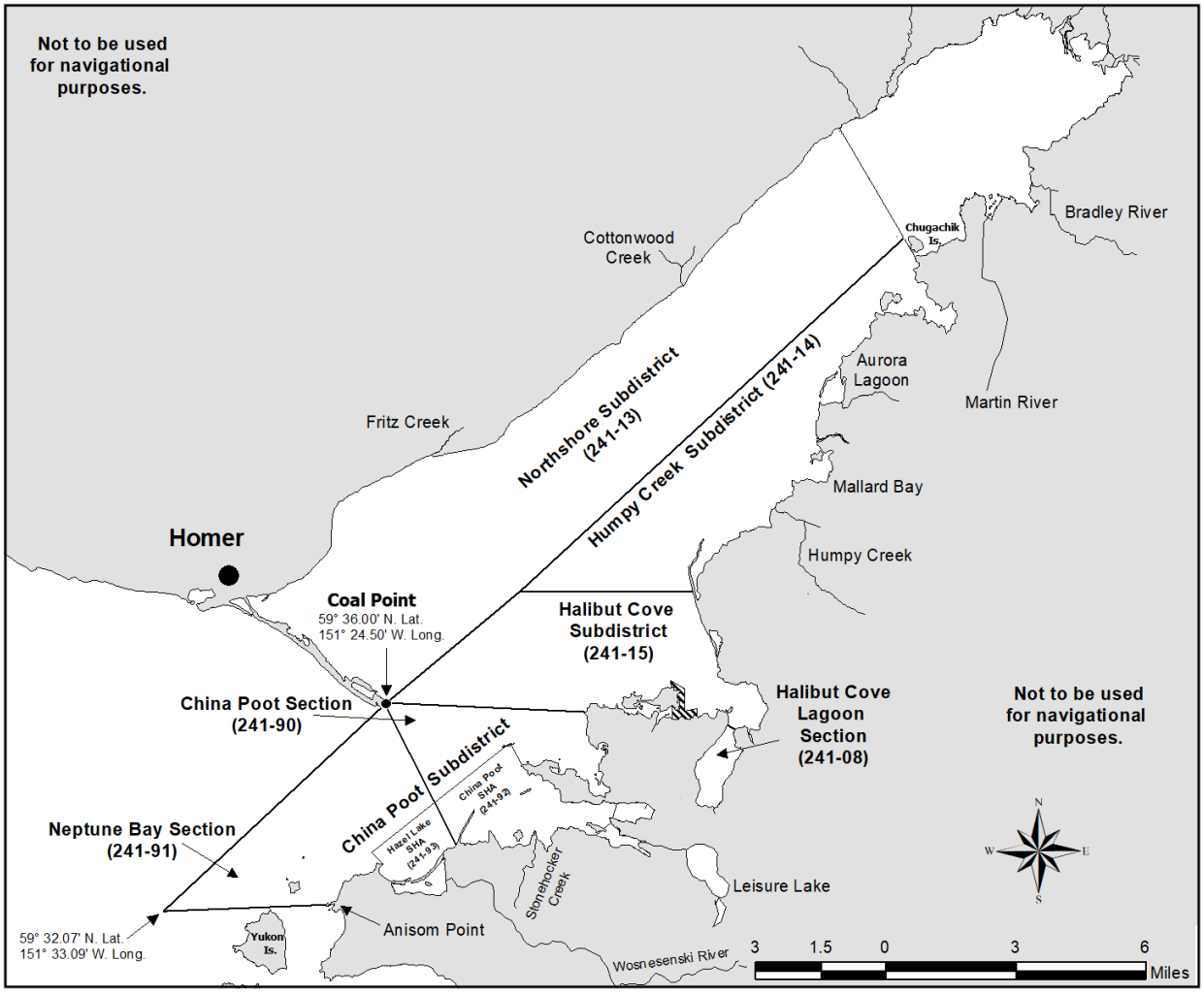


Figure 25-1. Current Northshore, Humpy Creek, Halibut Cove, and China Poot Subdistricts.

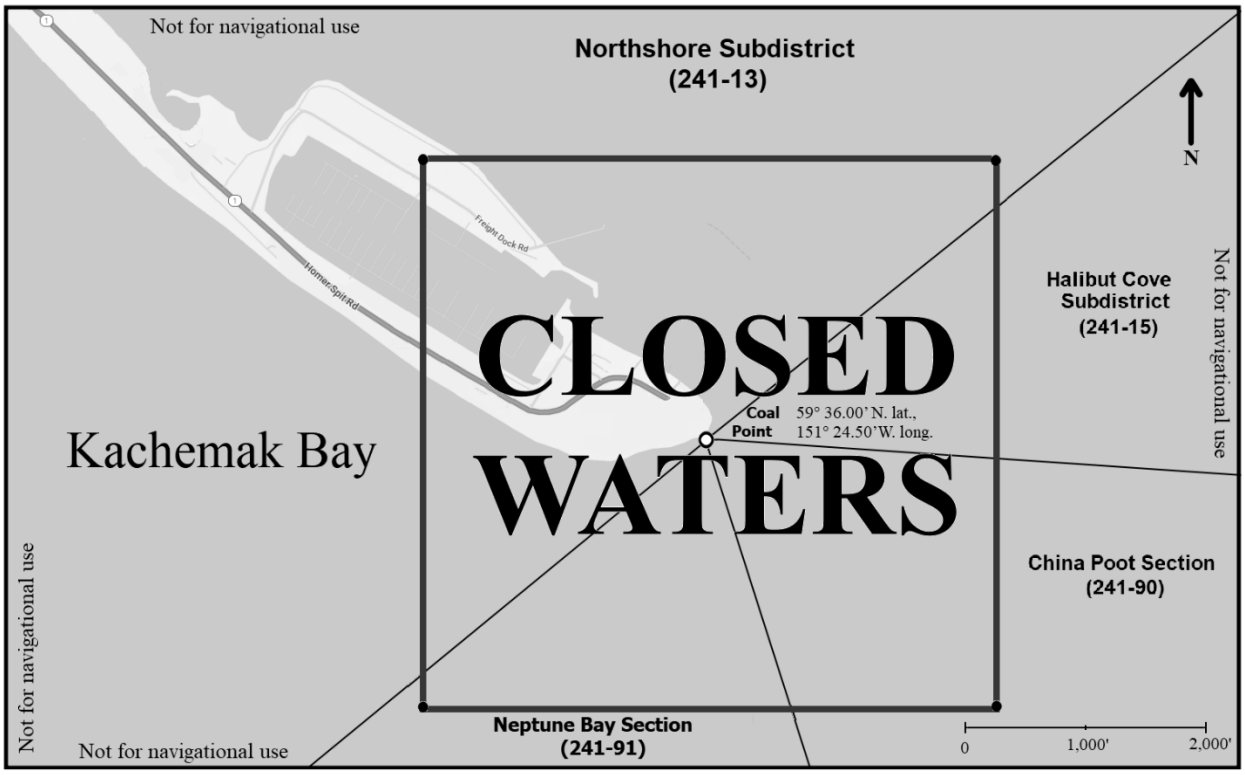


Figure 25-2. Waters closed by emergency order on July 1, 2026. Sides of the box are a minimum of one-half mile from Coal Point.

PROPOSAL 26 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.

PROPOSED BY: Ken Bingamen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Waters within one mile of Homer Spit would close to commercial fishing.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Waters southeast of the terminus of Homer Spit within the Halibut Cove or China Poot Subdistricts are opened to commercial salmon harvest using emergency order (EO) authority. Waters of the Northshore Subdistrict are closed to commercial salmon harvest by regulation (5 AAC 21.350). Waters on the southwest side of Homer Spit that are outside of defined subdistricts are closed to commercial salmon harvest (Figure 25-1).

This area falls within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would close waters in the China Poot and Halibut Cove Subdistricts within one mile of the tip of Homer Spit. Salmon harvest in the purse seine fishery could be reduced by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: In July 2026, waters within a one-mile square centered on Coal Point (lat 59°36.00' N, long 151°24.50' W) were closed to commercial salmon harvest (Figure 25-1). In previous years, waters in this area had never been closed. Prior to this closure in 2026, several commercial purse seine permit holders had been harvesting salmon in that specific area near Coal Point in the waters of the Halibut Cove and China Poot Subdistricts. The intent of opening these subdistricts is to harvest hatchery-produced salmon returning to release sites at China Poot, Hazel Lakes, and Tutka Lagoon. A significant portion of the salmon harvested near the end of Homer Spit was likely not returning to those hatchery release sites. The *Lower Cook Inlet Seine Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.369) specifies that seine harvest effort be directed on Lower Cook Inlet stocks while acknowledging that some interception of Upper Cook Inlet stocks will occur. Salmon harvested in the closed waters area created using emergency order (EO) authority on July 1 (Figure 25-2) were not likely to return to hatchery release sites in either the China Poot or Halibut Cove Subdistricts and are also not likely to return to other anadromous systems in those areas or other streams or rivers in Lower Cook Inlet.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Although the department supports closed waters in this area, the one-half mile of closed waters proposed in Proposal 25 would be adequate to direct commercial seine harvest on Lower Cook Inlet stocks.

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 27 – 5 AAC 21.200. Fishing districts, subdistricts, and sections.

PROPOSED BY: Wes Humbyrd.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Shift the northern boundaries of the Humpy Creek, Halibut Cove, and China Poot Subdistricts south so that they occur along a line from the northern tip of Yukon Island to a point near the northwest tip of Chugachik Island and open the expanded area of the Northshore Subdistrict to commercial hand purse seine (Figure 27-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under current regulation, the Northshore Subdistrict is closed to commercial salmon harvest (5 AAC 21.350(d)(8)). The boundary of the Northshore Subdistrict, as well as the Halibut Cove, China Poot, and Humpy Creek subdistricts is a line from a point near the northwest tip of Chugachik Island to Coal Point at the tip of Homer Spit, to a point approximately 1 mile west of Anisom Point (Figure 27-1). Hand purse seine is defined in 5 AAC 39.105(d)(5) as, "…a floating net designed to surround fish and which can be closed at the bottom by pursing the lead line; pursing may only be done by hand power, and a free-running line through one or more rings attached to the lead line is not allowed;" whereas a purse seine is defined in (4) of this section as "…a floating net designed to surround fish and which can be closed at the bottom by means of a free-running line through one or more rings attached to the lead line."

This area falls within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would close the waters near Homer Spit to commercial purse seine fishing and open waters of the expanded Northshore Subdistrict to commercial harvest using only hand purse seine. This proposal does not define a northern boundary for the section of the Northshore Subdistrict that extends westwards beyond the tip of Homer Spit. The area opened within the current Northshore Subdistrict has no significant returns of salmon other than those released by ADF&G in the Nick Dudiak fishing lagoon and paid for with federal Dingell-Johnson funding.

BACKGROUND: The Northshore Subdistrict has been closed (5 AAC 21.350(d)(8)) to commercial salmon harvest since 1981. The area on the western side of Homer Spit outside of other subdistricts that would be included in this area has also remained closed as there are no anadromous systems within it. All catch within this area to the west of Homer Spit would be intercepted salmon travelling to other districts.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department is **OPPOSED** to changing these subdistrict boundaries as proposed. The department has the ability to reduce interception of nonlocal stocks through emergency order authority, which includes adjusting fishing area. This proposal would also allow commercial fishing in areas that are currently closed to commercial salmon harvest.

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.

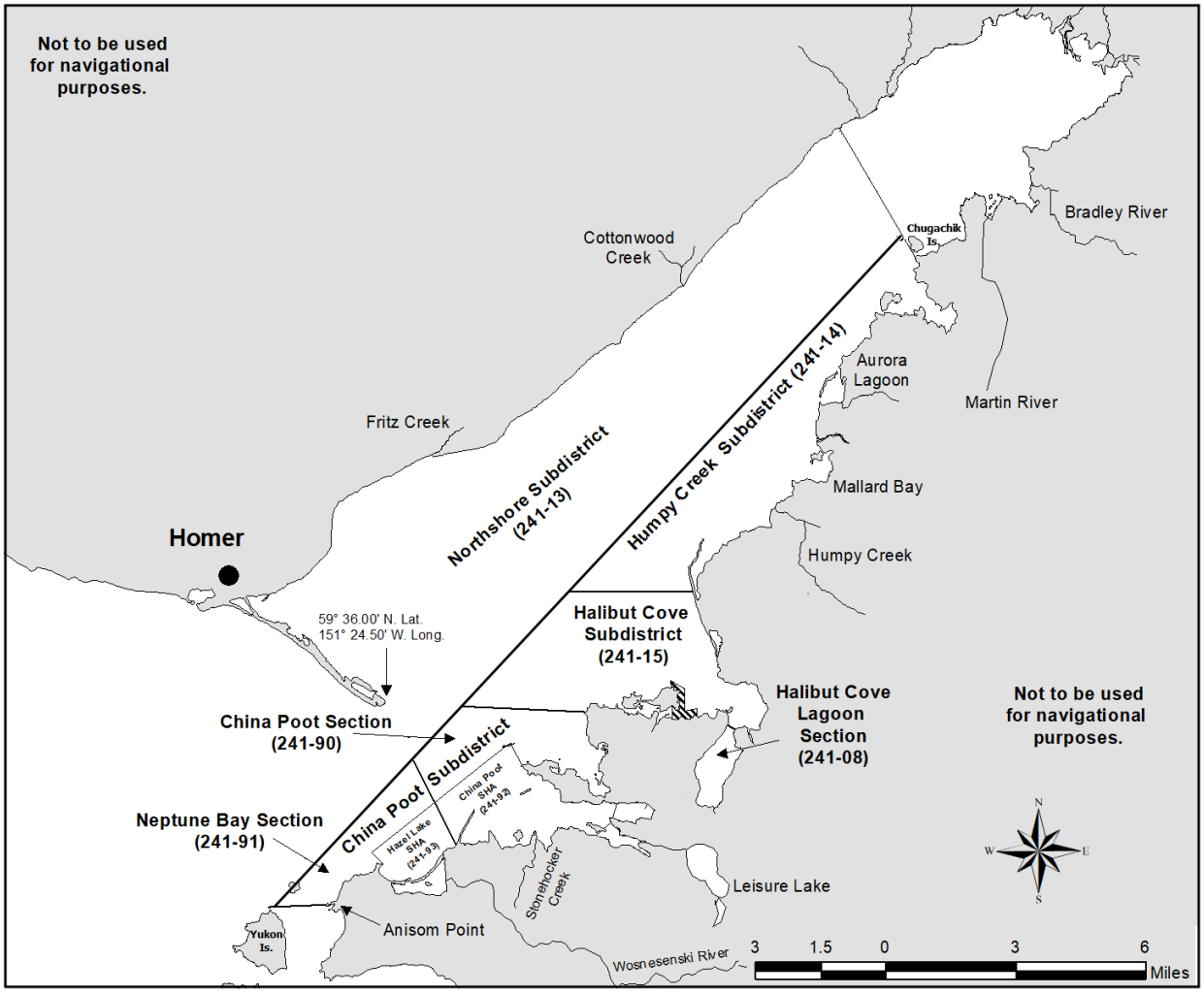


Figure 27-1 Proposed Northshore, Humpy Creek, Halibut Cove, and China Poot Subdistricts.

PROPOSAL 28 – 5 AAC 21.350. Closed waters.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reduce closed waters area at the head of McCarty Fjord to those waters offshore of the Delusion Lake outflow (Figure 28-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulation closes the northern 8 miles of the East Nuka Subdistrict to commercial fishing.

This area falls within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The area open to commercial fishing would be increased under general regulation. This would eliminate the need for the department to issue an emergency order to open the proposed area, which is outside of boundary that is approximately 500 yards from the stream mouth of Delusion Lake.

BACKGROUND: Since the retreat of glacial ice from Delusion Lake, sockeye and pink salmon have colonized this newly available spawning area. In recent years, the abundance of sockeye salmon has increased annually. This area has been opened using emergency order authority when fish abundance warranted additional area for commercial fishing opportunity. There are no other significant anadromous streams in this area of this actively glaciated fjord.

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

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.

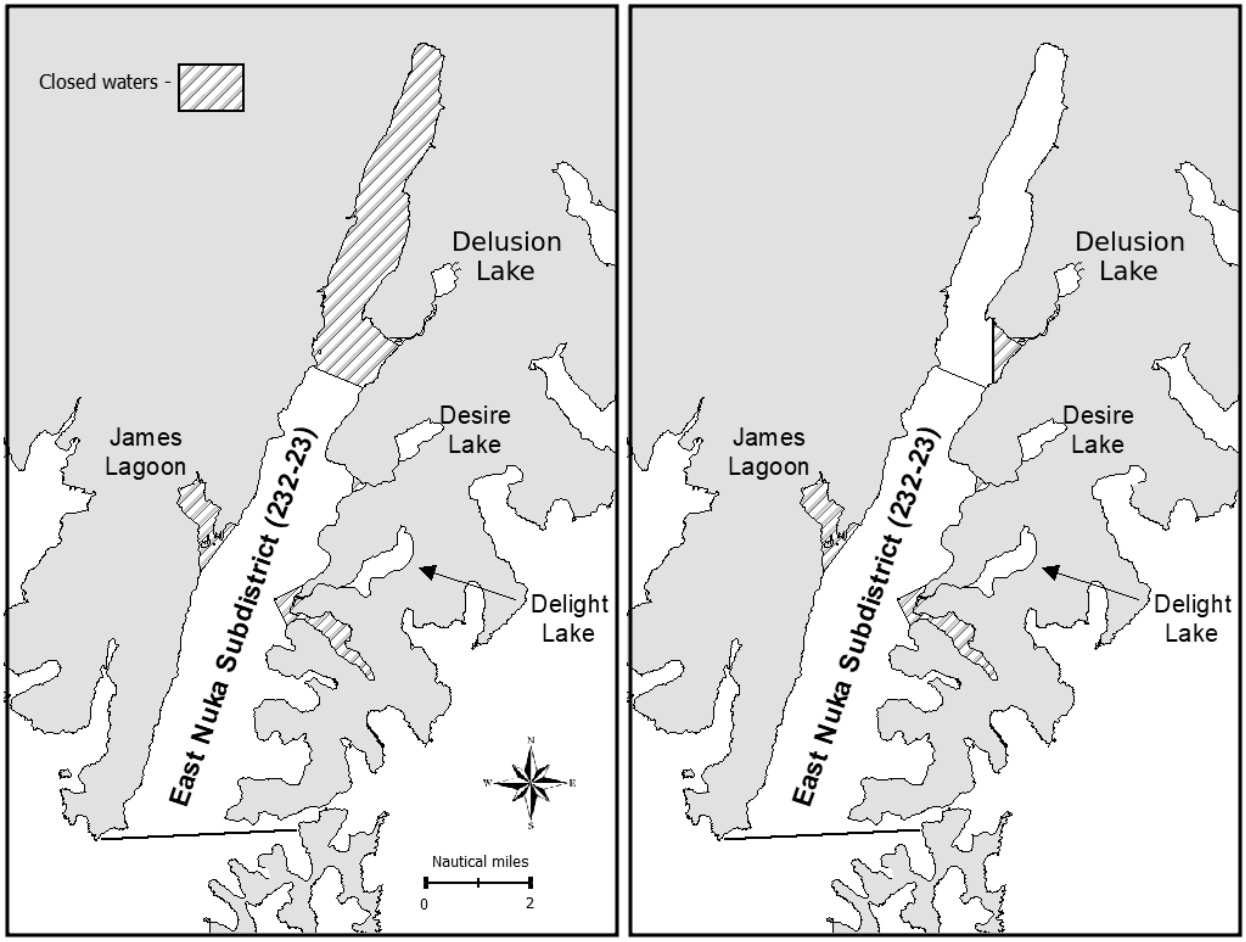


Figure 28-01 Waters of McCarty Fjord (East Nuka Subdistrict) showing existing (left) and proposed (right) closed waters areas.

PROPOSAL 29 – 5 AAC 21. 335. Minimum distance between units of gear.

PROPOSED BY: Wes Humbyrd.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the distance that commercial purse seine gear may be operated from a commercial set gillnet to 600 feet within Lower Cook Inlet.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Lower Cook Inlet, current regulation allows operation of purse seine gear within 300 feet laterally of deployed set gillnets and allows seine gear to fish up to the offshore terminus of a deployed set gillnet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would restrict the area where purse seine gear may be operated when in the vicinity of active set gillnets.

BACKGROUND: The current regulation specifying a 300 ft minimum distance between seine and set gillnets has been in effect since 1984. The only area where seines and set gillnets have operated concurrently in recent years is the Southern District in Lower Cook Inlet. Purse seine gear in Upper Cook Inlet is permitted only in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict where purse seines may not be operated within 600 feet of a drift or set gillnet. The Chinitna Bay Subdistrict has not been opened for seine gear since 1988. Currently there are approximately 15 to 20 active commercial seine permits in Lower Cook Inlet, and a similar number of active commercial gillnet permits, that harvest salmon in the Southern District (Table 29-1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The department is not aware of concerns from permit holders over gear conflicts.

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.

Table 29-1.–Numbers of permit holders reporting deliveries in subdistricts of the Southern District where both set gillnet and purse seine gear are legal to harvest salmon commercially, 2015–2026.

	Halibut Cove Subdistrict		Port Graham Subdistrict		Seldovia Bay Subdistrict		Tutka Bay Subdistrict	
Year	Purse seine	Set gillnet	Purse seine	Set gillnet	Purse seine	Set gillnet	Purse seine	Set gillnet
2015	9	7	4	–	<3	4	13	12
2016	10	5	<3	–	<3	3	12	11
2017	8	6	5	–	–	5	14	9
2018	5	4	18	<3	–	<3	20	8
2019	10	3	–	–	–	5	11	10
2020	3	3	3	–	<3	<3	11	9
2021	<3	4	–	–	–	3	14	7
2022	<3	3	–	–	–	3	<3	8
2023	3	3	–	–	–	<3	9	6
2024	<3	3	–	–	–	4	7	9
2025	8	<3	–	–	–	3	4	7
2026	11	3	–	–	–	<3	10	6

Note: An en dash means there were no deliveries.

PROPOSAL 30 – 5 AAC 21.330. Types of legal gear. and 5 AAC 21.382 Kenai River Late-run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Erik Anderson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Prohibit beach seine as a legal gear type for commercial fisheries in the Cook Inlet Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Beach seines may be used in Lower Cook Inlet commercial fisheries in the Southern, Kamishak Bay, Outer, and Eastern Districts by emergency order (5 AAC 21.330). In Upper Cook Inlet commercial fisheries, beach seines may be used in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict by emergency order and in the Upper Subdistrict as prescribed in the *Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan* (5 AAC 21.330, 5 AAC 21.382). A beach seine is defined as a floating net designed to surround fish which is set from and hauled to the beach (5 AAC 39,105(6)).

The *Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan* allows for commercial beach seine fishing to take place by S04H permit holders registered in the Upper Subdistrict when the king salmon recovery goal of 14,250 fish is forecasted or projected to be met. Beach seine may then be allowed for two 12-hour periods per week by emergency order from June 20 through July 31. Seines may not be greater than 70 fathoms in length and 110 meshes in depth and must be operated from stationary running lines. King and coho salmon may not be retained and must be reported on a fish ticket when released.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would have minimal to no effect in Lower Cook Inlet Management Area and the Chinitna Bay subdistrict because this gear type is not actively fished nor is the department aware of any interest in a fishery occurring. In the Upper Subdistrict, this would require amendment of current regulation that authorizes beach seines as a legal type and would possibly inhibit future efforts to develop the beach seine fishery.

BACKGROUND: Prior to the introduction of power purse seine gear over 40 years ago, hand purse seines and beach seines were used to harvest salmon commercially in Lower Cook Inlet. This gear type has been used successfully to harvest pink salmon in the Humpy Creek area in Kachemak Bay occasionally in recent decades. Commercial seine fishing has not been opened in the Chinitna Bay Subdistrict of Upper Cook Inlet since the 1980s. This subdistrict is currently fished with set and drift gillnet gear primarily targeting chum and coho salmon in August. There has been no interest in opening a beach seine fishery in the subdistrict in many years.

Beach seine was established in regulation as an alternative gear type in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet commercial fishery following Board of Fisheries action in May of 2026 as part of the *Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan*. While in ADF&G regulation as a fishery, subsequent action by the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission resulted in failure to authorize the alternative gear for SO4H permits, the department has no means to open the fishery as there would be no eligible permit holders to participate.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** such a broad restriction in commercial fishing gear without an identifiable conservation benefit. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the

allocative aspects of this proposal. This proposal will be heard and public testimony will be taken at both the LCI and UCI meetings and deliberated at the UCI meeting.

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 31 – 5 AAC 21.369. Lower Cook Inlet Seine Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Wes Humbyrd.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Restrict access to the Northshore Subdistrict by commercial purse seine permit holders unless hand purse seine gear is used.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Northshore Subdistrict is closed to all commercial salmon harvest (5 AAC 21.350(d)(8)) and has been closed since 1981 (Figure 25-1). Hand purse seine is defined in 5 AAC 39.105(d)(5) as, "…a floating net designed to surround fish and which can be closed at the bottom by pursing the lead line; pursing may only be done by hand power, and a free-running line through one or more rings attached to the lead line is not allowed;" whereas a." A purse seine is defined in (4) of this section as, "…a floating net designed to surround fish and which can be closed at the bottom by means of a free-running line through one or more rings attached to the lead line."

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would allow commercial salmon harvest in the Northshore Subdistrict using hand purse seines. This may increase the commercial harvest of king or coho salmon released into the Nick Dudiak fishing lagoon. Both species are stocked for sport fishing opportunity and paid for with federal Dingell-Johnson funding.

BACKGROUND: The Northshore Subdistrict has been closed to commercial salmon harvest since 1981. There are few anadromous systems in this subdistrict that support relatively small salmon populations that are not sufficient to sustain directed commercial fishing effort.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department has concerns with allowing directed commercial opportunity in this area, which is a migratory path for other salmon stocks that would be primarily for sport fishery use while there are no commercially viable salmon stocks to target.

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 32 – 5 AAC 21. XXX. New section.

PROPOSED BY: Wes Humbyrd.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Create a Cook Inlet enhanced salmon allocation plan that would assign 20% of the value of those stocks to the set gillnet fleet, 30% to the drift gillnet fleet, and 50% to the purse seine fleet.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is no allocation plan in place for sockeye and pink salmon returning to hatchery release sites in Lower Cook Inlet. Outside of hatchery subdistricts and hatchery special harvest areas (SHAs), harvests are managed based on escapement levels to anadromous streams in subdistricts. Within hatchery subdistricts and SHAs the harvest of enhanced stocks are managed in consultation with the hatchery operator to achieve broodstock and cost recovery goals. There are no gear specific allocation guidelines or criteria.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal as written does not provide details regarding its implementation. If this proposal is adopted, methods of allowing the drift gillnet fleet to harvest hatchery-produced salmon in Lower Cook Inlet would need to be determined. In addition, the set gillnet fleet does not currently have access to all release sites in a manner that would provide them with the leverage to reliably conduct harvests at the specified level. In general, this proposal would most likely decrease the proportion of hatchery produced salmon that are harvested by the purse seine fleet.

BACKGROUND: Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association has five active salmon release sites and salmon returns to those locations are available to common property fisheries. Harvest is allowed by commercial fishing permit holders at the completion of brood and cost recovery harvest, but those returns are also intercepted outside of SHAs. Currently drift gillnet is not a legal gear type in Lower Cook Inlet. There is no inseason mixed stock analysis of sockeye and pink salmon intercepted outside of SHAs. Postseason assessments of otoliths collected during the summer fishery has shown significant levels of marked sockeye and pink salmon in both the purse seine and set gillnet fisheries. Results of these collections showed that from 2018 to 2022, contributions to the set gillnet harvest were 13,555 sockeye (14% of the set gillnet harvest) and 55,070 pink salmon (49.8% of the set gillnet harvest). Contributions to the Southern District purse seine harvest during this period were 226,657 sockeye (67.5% of the purse seine harvest) and 399,588 pink salmon (59.8%of the purse seine harvest; Otis et al. 2026[1]).

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

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.

[1] Otis, E. O., J. A. Bacon, and T. J. Blackmon. 2026. Hatchery contributions of pink and sockeye salmon to commercial harvests in the Southern District, Lower Cook Inlet, 2018–2022. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 26-06, Anchorage.

PROPOSAL 33 – 5 AAC 21. XXX. New section.

PROPOSED BY: Pioneer Alaskan Fisheries

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Task the Cook Inlet Regional Planning Team (RPT) with developing an allocation plan for returning hatchery produced salmon.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The provisions of 5 AAC 40.300 through 5 AAC 40.370 govern the structure and function of RPTs. RPTs have four main functions: 1) develop regional comprehensive salmon plans, including provisions for both public and private nonprofit (PNP) hatchery systems; 2) review PNP salmon hatchery applications; 3) review and make a recommendation for PNP hatchery permit alteration requests; and 4) if the commissioner is considering revocation of a PNP hatchery permit, review and advise on PNP permit revocation. In Southeast Alaska, the RPT has the added responsibility to annually review the status of the enhanced salmon allocation plan and make recommendations to the commissioner on production changes to comply with the regional plan.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal affects both Lower Cook Inlet and Upper Cook Inlet management areas. Effects on harvest and opportunity could vary greatly pending what type of allocation was applied. Not all gear types are currently legal in both management areas.

BACKGROUND: Precise and defensible estimation of hatchery composition in the commercial harvest has just begun in recent years in Lower Cook Inlet. A recent publication has shown significant levels of marked sockeye and pink salmon in both the purse seine and set gillnet fisheries. Results of these collections showed that from 2018 to 2022, contributions to the set gillnet harvest were 13,555 sockeye (14.0% of the set gillnet harvest) and 55,070 pink salmon (49.8% of the set gillnet harvest). Contributions to the Southern District purse seine harvest during this period were 226,657 sockeye (67.5% of the purse seine harvest) and 399,588 pink salmon (59.8% of the purse seine harvest; Otis et al. 2026[2]).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. The board does not have administrative authority to direct the work of RPTs.

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.

[2] Otis, E. O., J. A. Bacon, and T. J. Blackmon. 2026. Hatchery contributions of pink and sockeye salmon to commercial harvests in the Southern District, Lower Cook Inlet, 2018–2022. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 26-06, Anchorage.

PROPOSAL 34 – 5 AAC 21. 372. Tutka Bay Lagoon Salmon Hatchery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Pioneer Alaskan Fisheries

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Repeal special harvest areas that have not been utilized in the recent decade. Additionally, this would require that one half of all produced fish are harvestable in common property fisheries and require the monitoring of otolith-marked fish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Tutka Bay Lagoon Salmon Hatchery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.372) identifies three special harvest areas (SHAs). These are the Tutka Bay Lagoon SHA, the Paint River SHA, and the Halibut Cove Lagoon SHA. Current regulations do not direct the hatchery operator to assure that half of all produced fish are harvestable in common property fisheries. The only guidelines regarding hatchery harvest are that the hatchery operator work with the department to assure that broodstock and cost recovery goals are met through management actions within hatchery subdistricts and SHAs.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? All three SHAs have had hatchery releases in the past decade. Pink salmon were released in the Paint River SHA in 2018, king salmon were released in the Halibut Cove Lagoon SHA prior to 2018, and releases of pink and sockeye salmon in the Tutka Bay Lagoon SHA continue to occur annually. Therefore, none of these areas would be repealed from regulation. If adopted as written, this proposal would require language specifying that half of the returning hatchery fish be "harvestable" by the common property fishery and that a monitoring plan be in place that would monitor marked otoliths. Language in this proposal uses the word "harvestable" and not "harvested", therefore it might be interpreted that the plan only requires providing the opportunity to harvest half of all produced fish. Currently there is no program in place to sample and read marked otoliths in-season due to a lack of funding. However, this may not be required if there is no requirement that one half of returning fish actually be harvested. All that may be required is the opportunity to harvest those fish.

BACKGROUND: The Paint River SHA is the area that contains the Paint River fish ladder. This structure is the site of ongoing monitoring and maintenance. In recent years there have been some returns of salmon to this river system via the ladder as well as releases of salmon above the ladder. The most recent release into the Paint River occurred in 2018. Halibut Cove has been the site of hatchery releases since the late 1970s with the most recent king salmon release occurring in 2017. The Tutka Bay Lagoon SHA has been the site of annual sockeye and pink salmon releases for the past decade. In recent years both cost recovery and common property harvests of pink salmon produced at the Tutka hatchery have had increasingly low returns (Table 34-1).

The department monitors otolith marking via the LCI commercial catch sampling program. Otoliths collected from the commercial fishery are not used for inseason management and are analyzed postseason.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal given that the three SHAs identified in the *Tutka Bay Lagoon Salmon Hatchery Management Plan* (5AAC 21.372) have had salmon releases in the recent decade. If adopted as written, this proposal would require language specifying that half of the returning hatchery fish be harvestable by the common property fishery,

which is inconsistent with the Alaska legislature's intent for designated hatchery SHAs. In Alaska Statute 16.10.450, 16.10.455, and 16.10.480, the legislature established cost-recovery fisheries within an SHA to cover the PNP operator's budgeted operating expenses, debt service, and facility maintenance before those fish can be reallocated to other uses. The Alaska Board of Fisheries does not have fiscal or administrative authority to direct the department's use of funds or implementation of monitoring programs.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal could result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery if the hatchery operator is required to operate an otolith monitoring program. Approval of this proposal could result in a direct cost to the department to facilitate additional otolith sampling and analysis.

Table 34-1.–Tutka Subdistrict commercial common property seine and set gillnet pink salmon harvests, cost recovery and brood harvests in numbers of fish, 2015–2026.

	Commercial common property harvests		Hatchery harvests	
Year	Purse seine	Set gillnet	Cost recovery	Brood
2015	95,525	16,432	2,087,024	165,008
2016	34,160	17,243	25,305	127,771
2017	262,081	7,165	110,152	267,913
2018	155,819	31,721	939,967	176,550
2019	5,514	3,312	179,639	95,476
2020	115,468	18,894	635,184	134,595
2021	33,981	987	303,169	117,511
2022	3,088	3,627	49,896	17,949
2023	534,495	3,577	1,905,381	65,856
2024	158	642	8,141	3,556
2025	269	245	23,693	19,793
2026	683	870	3,460	9,000

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 21. 377. Port Graham Salmon Hatchery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Pioneer Alaskan Fisheries.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Repeal the *Port Graham Hatchery Salmon Management Plan*.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Port Graham Hatchery Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.377) defines the special harvest area associated with the hatchery as well as the general regulatory structure associated with this facility. There is no language in this section that would preclude or impact any common property fishery that may occur in the Port Graham Subdistrict. This includes subsistence, commercial, personal use, and sport fisheries.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would have no impact on any common property fishery in Port Graham.

BACKGROUND: The *Port Graham Hatchery Salmon Management Plan* was approved by the Alaska Board of Fisheries at the December 2013 meeting. This plan is similar to the Tutka Bay and Trail Lakes hatchery management plans in that it defines hatchery special harvest areas (SHAs) for that facility and defines periods of time for those areas when hatchery harvest may occur as well as the gear type that may be used for those harvests. The management plans also articulate the guiding principles for those facilities and how the hatchery operator and department will manage the hatcheries and the salmon that are produced. Specifically, the *Port Graham Salmon Hatchery Management Plan* defines that facility's SHA and directs the commissioner to manage sport fisheries in accordance with 5 AAC 56 through 62, and 5 AAC 75 and allows the commissioner to liberalize or restrict sport fishing opportunity based on achievement of broodstock goals. This facility produced salmon from 1991 to 2007 when it was under the ownership of the Port Graham Village Native Association. In 2014, operation of this facility was transferred to the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA). They produced pink salmon at this facility from 2015 through 2023. Production ended in 2023 due to poor returns and infrastructure problems including inadequate water supply. CIAA has indicated that they are actively seeking to sell this facility and have no intention of reopening it.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal. The Port Graham Hatchery may be reopened at some point. The *Port Graham Salmon Hatchery Management Plan* has no restrictive effects on any common property fisheries.

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 36 – 5 AAC 21. 373. Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Hatchery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Marguerita Buchanan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Repeal language in the *Trail Lakes Salmon Hatchery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.373) that defines the Bear Lake Special Harvest Area (SHA).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Bear Lake Special Harvest Area (SHA) are the waters of Resurrection Bay north of Caines Head and includes portions of freshwater at the head of the bay (Figure 36-1).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?
This regulation would require SHAs not already designated in the hatchery permit to be established by emergency order.

BACKGROUND: Hatchery returns have been weak in recent years with below anticipated levels of cost recovery salmon harvested and commercial common property harvests. Late returning fish that are in excess to brood or wild stock escapement needs are donated to the public (Table 36-1).

Hatchery SHAs can be created or modified using commissioner's authority. This is done either using an emergency order, or through the hatchery permit. The primary advantage of having the SHAs codified in regulation is that they can be easily referenced and reviewed by the public and stakeholders.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal and supports having SHAs defined in regulations as they are also defined in the management plan for this hatchery.

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.

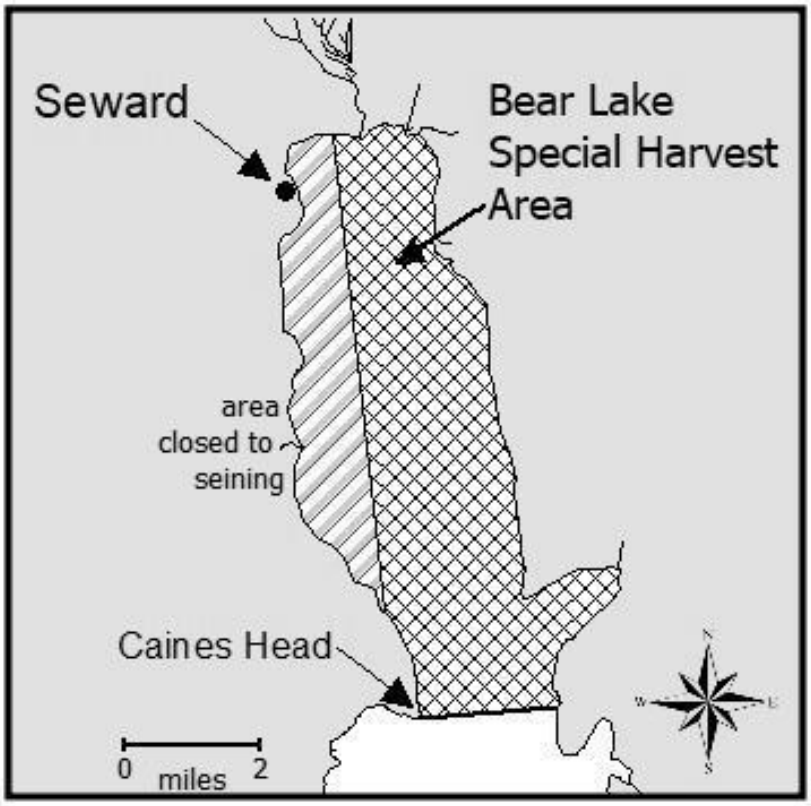


Figure 36-1.–Resurrection Bay showing the Bear Lake special harvest area and waters closed to commercial salmon seining.

Table 36-1.–Resurrection Bay, Bear Lake special harvest area (SHA) sockeye salmon harvest in numbers of fish, 2000–2026.

Year	Commercial harvest	Cost recovery	Donated
2000	19,145	31,216	13,690
2001	2,629	3,837	7,343
2002	13,447	1,940	789
2003	7,341	2,713	298
2004	16,645	0	0
2005	19,028	36,352	1,302
2006	27,793	33,871	784
2007	15,407	8,186	271
2008	57,060	32,835	201
2009	0	136,687	782
2010	0	21,267	465
2011	56,111	150,436	211
2012	0	83,609	254
2013	0	43,443	1,129
2014	5,306	126,071	1,641
2015	4,633	92,776	2,062
2016	2,505	102,776	1,484
2017	0	25,914	3,034
2018	22,310	158,427	2,924
2019	4,307	124,100	863
2020	1,833	62,414	99
2021	2,872	52,437	2,556
2022	0	79,639	2,918
2023	226	87,039	3,539
2024	0	40,028	1,051
2025	0	10,934	1,762
2026	0	32,603	737

PROPOSAL 37 – 5 AAC 21. 373. Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Hatchery Management Plan.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Require that the Trail Lakes Hatchery harvest no more than 25% of the actual return, with the remaining 75% are harvested in the common property fisheries. In addition, "sockeye salmon" would be added to the list of species managed for recreational use, and natural salmon escapement into Bear Lake would be prioritized over commercial harvest.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Hatchery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.373) contains no language that directs harvest of hatchery returns other than to provide for a common property fishery and to achieve hatchery broodstock and cost recovery goals as set by the hatchery operator and approved by the department.

The commercial fishery may be opened for seine gear as follows:
(1) Bear Lake Special Harvest Area, from 6:00 a.m. May 15 until 6:00 p.m. October 31 using weirs, purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines;
(2) China Poot and Hazel Lake Special Harvest Area, from 6:00 a.m. June 1 until 6:00 p.m. July 31 using purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines;
(3) Tutka Bay Lagoon Special Harvest Area, from 6:00 a.m. June 1 until 6:00 p.m. September 15 using purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines;
(4) Kirschner Lake Special Harvest Area, from 6:00 a.m. June 1 until 6:00 p.m. August 15 using purse seines, hand purse seines, and beach seines.

In the Trail Lakes Hatchery Salmon Hatchery Management Plan, unless specified, the regulations only apply to commercial fisheries (5 AAC 21.001). Subsistence, personal use and sport fishing regulations affecting commercial fishing vessels or affecting any other commercial fishing activities are set out in the subsistence regulations in 5 AAC 01 and 5 AAC 77 and sport fishing regulations in 5 AAC 56 through 5 AAC 62 and 5 AAC 75.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The hatchery operator would be limited to no more than 25% of the actual return for cost recovery. If adopted, this proposal would impact the future production of salmon due to financial constraints if cost recovery is significantly reduced. In addition, "sockeye salmon" would be added to the list of salmon that are prioritized for recreational use. Natural escapement of all salmon species into Bear Lake would be prioritized. This may involve modifying how salmon currently pass through the weir into Bear Lake and allowing salmon species other than coho and sockeye salmon into the lake.

BACKGROUND: The current Bear Creek weir is a concrete dam approximately one-half mile downstream of Bear Lake. On one side of the dam is a concrete passage that leads to a submerged basket that migrating salmon enter and then are hoisted into a building where salmon are sorted. There is no fish ladder or passage by which other salmon and trout may enter Bear Lake other than by this method. In past years salmon have been sorted with only coho and sockeye salmon passed into Bear Lake. The weir is in operation from late May to mid-October (Figure 37-1). In recent years the total run of enhanced sockeye salmon to Resurrection Bay has been diminished. Commercial common property fishing periods begin in mid-June. Recently there has been limited

participation in the commercial fishery. Since 2015, the cost recovery goal for Resurrection Bay returns has only been met once in 2018 (Table 36-1). The sustainable escapement goal (SEG) for sockeye salmon (700–8,300) has been consistently exceeded for more than a decade, these are primarily hatchery origin fish. Similarly, the 300 fish escapement target for coho salmon has also been consistently achieved in recent years.

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

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 37-1.–Bear Creek weir showing passage into mechanical lift on right.

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 21. 376. Resurrection Bay Salmon Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would modify the *Resurrection Bay Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.376*) by establishing priority use of sockeye salmon for commercial fisheries and acknowledging cost recovery in the management plan. It would also direct the department to manage the sport fishery in a manner that would not interfere with the cost recovery and commercial activity from May 15 through July 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Regulations do not reference cost recovery harvest as a priority above other users and describe chum and pink salmon as being commercially targeted. In addition, the current plan stipulates that pink and chum salmon harvest will be managed for commercial use in a manner that does not interfere in time or area with recreational fisheries. King and coho salmon are designated to be managed primarily for the sport fishery.

In the Resurrection Bay Management Plan, unless specified, the regulations only apply to commercial fisheries (5 AAC 21.001). Sport fishing regulations are set out in 5 AAC 56 through 5 AAC 62 and 5 AAC 75. This proposal is for an area that is within the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings for salmon in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Restricting sport fisheries during the sockeye salmon run will most likely increase the number of fish at the Bear Creek weir available for brood and cost recovery harvest. This may result in more frequent commercial fishing opportunity. If the area available to the sport fishery was reduced to not interfere with commercial and cost recovery fisheries, this may increase crowding issues and reduce harvest in the sport fishery.

BACKGROUND: Significant coho salmon releases in Bear Lake date back over 60 years, and sockeye salmon releases date back close to 40 years, which have enabled the cost recovery, commercial, and sport fisheries in Resurrection Bay for sockeye and coho salmon. Fisheries reports published during the middle of the last century mentioned few if any commercial harvests from the Resurrection Bay area. Prior to the mid-nineties salmon production for common property fisheries was paid for with state revenue funding, which then transitioned into cost recovery and commercial landings tax funds. User group conflict has been a long-standing issue near the head of Resurrection Bay because hatchery, commercial, and sport users utilize the same area to pursue sockeye salmon. The *Resurrection Bay Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.376) primarily outlines species-specific priorities by user group and provides guidance to the department for managing these stocks. In recent years, to reduce conflict between sport users and cost recovery, the cost recovery vessels avoid fishing within 100 feet of shore from 7:00 a,m. to 10:00 p.m. in the northeast corner of Resurrection Bay near Seward Ships Drydock.

Commercial fisheries are managed to achieve escapement, brood collection, and cost recovery goals. The commercial fisheries are closed until those goals are met, or until harvest levels in the saltwater cost recovery fishery cannot support continued prosecution of the cost recovery fishery.

Cost recovery goals are established annually by CIAA and encompass multiple recovery locations. Commercial opportunity has been low in recent years (Table 36-1).

Sport fishery harvest of sockeye salmon has increased in the North Gulf Coast sport fish management area over the last decade with the largest increase coming from the shore fishery at the head of Resurrection Bay, which targets sockeye salmon returning to Bear Creek from mid-May to mid-July (Table 38-1). The sport fishery is managed to achieve escapement and brood stock collection goals at the Bear Creek weir.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. If adopted the department requests additional clarity for the management of sport fisheries in this area, specifically what form of management action to execute during cost recovery or active commercial fisheries.

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.

Table 38-1.–Sockeye salmon sport harvest in the North Gulf Coast sport fish management area, 2005–2024.

Year	Boat	Shore	Total
2005	2,768	2,692	5,460
2006	2,953	2,024	4,977
2007	3,780	1,981	5,761
2008	2,553	3,179	5,732
2009	2,693	7,926	10,619
2010	1,367	3,582	4,949
2011	2,241	7,351	9,592
2012	1,756	3,837	5,593
2013	3,277	3,176	6,453
2014	2,852	3,061	5,913
2015	3,129	3,990	7,119
2016	2,816	10,105	12,921
2017	3,991	8,877	12,868
2018	5,508	11,414	16,922
2019	3,901	23,412	27,313
2020	4,179	13,180	17,359
2021	5,770	28,691	34,461
2022	5,820	37,979	43,799
2023	6,547	12,786	19,333
2024	2,307	11,888	14,195
Average 2016–2024	4,538	17,592	22,130

PROPOSAL 39 – 5 AAC 77.531. Personal use herring fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Qutekcak Native Tribe

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow the personal use harvest of herring roe on kelp.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Regulations do not allow for the harvest of any kelp during the herring spawn after April 30 in the Anchorage-MatSu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area (NSA). Currently the only gear by which herring may be taken is gillnets, cast nets, and dipnets. This proposal is for an area that is within the NSA as defined in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3). Therefore, there are no customary and traditional use findings in this area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Allow the harvest of herring roe on kelp using a hand-held unpowered cutting device. This proposal is similar in content and scope to Proposal 30 which was submitted to the Alaska Board of Fisheries in 2023 and allowed the subsistence harvest of herring roe on kelp in Area H outside of the Anchorage non-subsistence area.

BACKGROUND: Herring roe on kelp is a traditional Alaskan food in coastal areas. Both the herring roe and the kelp that it is deposited on are collected by participants in this fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. In recent years department staff have received inquiries from the public regarding the harvest of herring spawn on kelp. Current personal use regulations for this area do not specifically mention the harvest of herring spawn that is deposited on kelp.

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 40 – 5 AAC 28.365 Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan and 5 AAC 58.022 Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area. (or 5 AAC 58.XXX New Section).

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of 250,000 lb of pelagic rockfish in the Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area (Cook Inlet; Area H) and would allocate 70% to the sport fishery and 30% to the commercial fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In all waters of Cook Inlet, the rockfish sport fishery bag and possession limits are three per day and six in possession, of which only one per day and two in possession may be a nonpelagic rockfish. The department has issued emergency orders (EOs) in the last 2 seasons to reduce the pelagic rockfish bag limit to two per day and four in possession and prohibit retention of yelloweye rockfish between April 1 and June 30.

The *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.365) directs the management of the commercial fishery and sets a 150,000 lb guideline harvest level (GHL) for total harvest of all rockfish species combined. Commercial trip limits are 1,000 lb for the Cook Inlet District and 4,000 lb for the North Gulf District within a 5-day period for all rockfish species combined. The directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) commercial jig fishery season opens on July 1 and closes on December 31 or by EO. Rockfish harvest in the directed PSR jig fishery accrues to the rockfish GHL for all species combined. Registration, logbooks, and prior notice of landing are required for the directed PSR jig fishery.

The board has made a positive customary and traditional use (C & T) finding for bottomfish in those portions of the Cook Inlet Area that are outside the boundaries of the nonsubsistence area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3) and found that 750–1,350 rockfish are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would reduce pelagic rockfish harvest and set a TAH in Cook Inlet that is 22% below the 2025 combined sport and commercial harvest. The proposed 70% allocation for sport fisheries would reduce sport harvest for pelagic rockfish by 40%. The proposed 30% allocation for commercial fisheries would allow commercial harvest of pelagic rockfish to occur at historical levels. The allocation would reduce commercial harvest opportunity for pelagic rockfish by an unknown amount because the current 150,000 lb commercial rockfish GHL includes all rockfish species. Current commercial pelagic rockfish harvest is 40% of the proposed commercial allocation.

Harvest of black rockfish, the pelagic rockfish species for which the department has the most concern, would be reduced by 25% for sport and commercial fisheries combined from the 2025 harvest estimate. The proposed allocation would be a reduction of 44% when compared to sport harvest of black rockfish in 2025. The proposed allocation would allow commercial harvest of pelagic rockfish to occur at historical levels. The allocation would reduce commercial harvest opportunity for black rockfish by an unknown amount because the current 150,000 lb commercial

rockfish GHL includes all rockfish species. Current commercial black rockfish harvest is 38% of the proposed commercial allocation.

This would establish an annual harvest target for sport fish management of pelagic rockfish and would require more conservative management actions implemented through EOs to reduce the sport harvest of pelagic rockfish. Reductions in sport opportunity for pelagic rockfish may shift effort towards other species or shift effort to other saltwater areas with more pelagic rockfish harvest opportunities.

BACKGROUND: Pelagic rockfish are harvested by sport, commercial, and subsistence fisheries in the Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area, which encompasses the Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) and North Gulf Coast (NGC) sport fish management areas (Figure 40-1). The Cook Inlet commercial fisheries management area boundaries match those of the Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area sport fish management area. In the LCI area, rockfish are found primarily nearshore along Bluff Point, and from the Seldovia area to outside of Cook Inlet along the Gulf of Alaska coast to Gore Point, and in the Barren Islands. Pelagic rockfish compose most of the harvest within LCI. In the NGC area, pelagic rockfish are widely distributed along the nearshore from Gore Point to Cape Fairfield, with the greatest portion of harvest occurring in Resurrection Bay and nearby Chiswell Islands. Like the LCI area, pelagic rockfish are the dominant assemblage harvested in the NGC area. There are no rockfish sport fishery management plans, but the *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* outlines regulations for commercial fisheries and has a 150,000 lb GHL for all rockfish species combined.

Sport Fishery

Rockfish sport fishery bag and possession limits in LCI and NGC management areas were established in 1989 at five rockfish per day and ten in possession. In 1995, the provision was added that only 1 rockfish per day, and two in possession, could be nonpelagic. In 2008, the bag and possession limit in the NGC (which includes Resurrection Bay) was reduced to four rockfish per day and eight in possession. In 2020, the mandatory use of a deepwater release mechanism was implemented statewide. The department currently uses the following to enumerate and assess the amount of rockfish harvested in the sport fishery: 1) annual guided and unguided harvest estimated by the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS), 2) guided effort and harvest by individual anglers and by statistical area as reported in charter logbooks, 3) species or assemblage harvest compositions through dockside port sampling, and 4) age, length, and sex compositions of the harvest estimated through dockside port sampling.

Historically, pelagic rockfish in LCI sport fisheries were primarily caught incidentally when trolling for salmon and fishing for other groundfish on the outer coast. Whereas in the neighboring NGC management area, pelagic rockfish have been consistently caught while sport fishing for other groundfish, primarily Pacific halibut. In LCI, average sport harvest of pelagic rockfish from 2006 to 2013 was approximately 14,000 pelagic rockfish whereas in the NGC management area, average harvest was approximately 28,000 pelagic rockfish (Table 40-1). In 2014, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council implemented the halibut Catch Sharing Program (CSP) that allocated Pacific halibut between commercial and guided sport fisheries and included annual preseason management measures to keep the guided sport fishery within its allocation. As a result, guided sport effort began shifting toward other species, such as rockfish, and pelagic rockfish

harvest increased substantially. Following the implementation of the CSP, over the next 5 years, pelagic rockfish harvest increased by about 25% in NGC and doubled in LCI, totaling an average harvest of 65,000 pelagic rockfish. The increasing trend in harvest of pelagic rockfish continued from 2019 to 2022, and the average pelagic rockfish harvest climbed to an average of over 98,000 pelagic rockfish between the 2 sportfish management areas combined with a harvest estimate in 2022 of 117,000 pelagic rockfish (Table 40-1). Pelagic harvest by guided anglers was approximately 56% of the total pelagic rockfish harvest from 2006 to 2013 and increased to nearly 79% from 2023 to 2025 (Table 40-1 and Figure 40-2). This proposal would establish the sport harvest limit of pelagic rockfish at a level similar to the harvest estimated prior to the implementation of CSP in 2014 (2006–2013 average).

Following record high sport harvests in 2021 and 2022 and preliminary stock assessment data in 2023, the department issued an EO to reduce the rockfish bag and possession limits to three per day and six in possession for both LCI and NGC waters. Also in 2023, the board adopted a proposal reducing the rockfish bag and possession limits to three per day and six in possession. Although the pelagic rockfish harvest was reduced by approximately 25% from 2022 to 2023, increasing effort necessitated further restrictions in 2025 and 2026, and the bag limit for pelagic rockfish was reduced to two. This reduced the total harvest between the two management areas to approximately 72,000 pelagic rockfish in 2025. The majority (85%) of the pelagic rockfish harvest is black rockfish. In recent years (2023–2025), it is estimated that the sport fishery harvested 91% of the total black rockfish harvest (sport and commercial fisheries combined) in the LCI and NGC sport fish management areas combined.

Commercial fishery

The *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.365) was adopted in 1993. In 1996, due to a combination of high directed harvest and high bycatch harvest, the board adopted a 150,000 lb overall GHL for directed and bycatch fisheries combined, which remains in effect today. In 1998, the directed rockfish fishery season was moved later in the year to July 1, and in 2004 the directed fishery was limited to PSR harvest.

Since 1998, PSR harvest ranged from a low of 11,677 lb in 2012 to a high of 83,223 pounds in 2016 (Table 40-2). Harvest was low from 2007 to 2014, averaging 20,933 lb from eight vessels. A three-year period of higher commercial effort began in 2015, with harvest averaging 73,149 lb for that time period from 14 vessels. Effort gradually declined through 2022, with harvest averaging 22,757 lb from 2018 to 2022 from nine vessels. Pelagic rockfish harvest increased slightly in recent years, averaging 29,764 lb annually from 2023 to 2025 from six vessels, approximately 7,000 lb higher annually than from the 2018 to 2022 period. Most participants in the directed PSR jig fishery live on the Kenai Peninsula and market their catch directly to businesses or individuals, fetching a higher price than processors pay at the dock.

Commercial pelagic rockfish harvest in Cook Inlet is mostly black rockfish with some dark and dusky rockfish. The proportion of black rockfish ranged from a low of 76% in 2019 to a high of 98% in 2024 (Table 40-3). Black rockfish harvest ranged from a high of 70,311 lb in 2015 to a low of 11,056 lb in 2022. Black rockfish harvest averaged 29,342 lb during 2023 to 2025, most recently. Commercial black rockfish harvest composed only 14% of the total black rockfish

harvest (sport and commercial combined) in Cook Inlet from 2014 to 2022 and only 9% from 2023 to 2025.

Black Rockfish Stock Assessment
The Statewide Rockfish Initiative, established in 2017, initiated a formal stock assessment catch-at-age model for black rockfish in these management areas. To assess the black rockfish stock in these areas, harvest had to be reconstructed from a variety of data sources, including the sport SWHS, charter logbooks, commercial fish tickets, and port sampling data. The model incorporates variables such as reconstructed harvests, age, length, and sex compositions, and growth characteristics but does not include any fishery independent survey data. Due to the complexity of these types of assessments, the model was not finalized and published until February 2026. This model indicates a gradual decline in black rockfish since the early 2000s, driven by sustained low recruitment but buffered by an exceptionally strong 2013 year-class. Spawning biomass is estimated at 54% of unfished levels with confidence intervals ranging from 31 to 76%, which places the stock above its provisional target of 40% of unfished biomass. However, according to the model, fishing intensity has exceeded a sustainable level every year since 2013. The model suggests that black rockfish harvest should be reduced by 30%.

To further address increases in black rockfish harvest in Cook Inlet, the department initiated a black rockfish hydroacoustic survey in 2019, and it has been conducted every other year at two locations in the NGC sport fish management area: Nuka Bank and Chiswell Islands. This fishery-independent hydroacoustic survey was developed to assess the black rockfish stock in the NGC sport management area. This type of survey, which can be used to estimate the abundance of pelagic rockfish, has been used successfully in the Kodiak area for over a decade to set harvest limits for black rockfish. The preliminary abundance and biomass estimates from the NGC survey provide an opportunity to estimate fishing exploitation rate, as well as guide the development of an alternative stock assessment using a random effects model (REMA). Results from this analysis suggest that black rockfish at Nuka Bank, where the directed commercial PSR jig fishery primarily occurs, were fished at a sustainable rate from 2019 to 2025, except in 2024. Results from this analysis suggest that black rockfish harvest at the Chiswell Islands, one of the areas with high sport fishing effort, was sustainable in two of seven years (2019 and 2025). A contributing factor in the sustainable level of harvest at the Chiswell Islands in 2025 was likely the most restrictive EO to date, which resulted in lower harvest of pelagic rockfish. The REMA model can only be applied to the two areas surveyed, which do not encompass the full distribution of black rockfish harvest in the NGC and may not reflect the remaining areas not currently surveyed.

The department is currently examining ways to expand black rockfish assessments, including expansion of the hydroacoustic survey, a black rockfish tagging study, and adjustments to the charter logbook to include the option of black rockfish as a specific data entry field.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. Current assessment information indicates that the total removals of pelagic rockfish should be reduced. The department will continue to use EO authority to conservatively manage rockfish.

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.

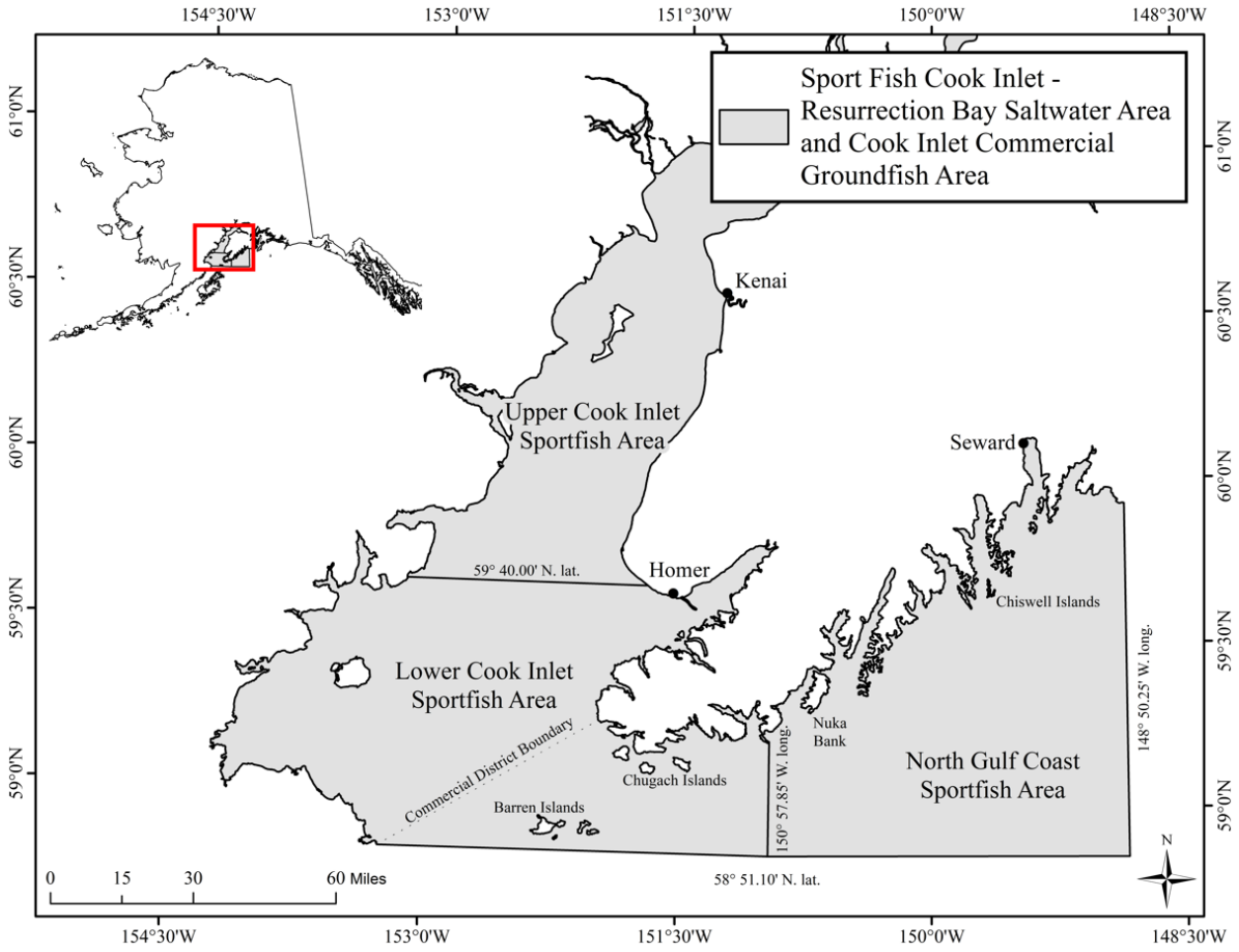


Figure 40-1.–The Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area by sport fish management areas and Cook Inlet Commercial Groundfish Area.

Table 40-1.–Pelagic rockfish sport harvest in numbers of fish, by management area and user group in Lower Cook Inlet and North Gulf Coast sport management areas, 2006–2025.

	Pelagic rockfish harvest								
	Lower Cook Inlet			North Gulf Coast			Total		
Year	Nonguided	Guided	Total	Nonguided	Guided	Total	Nonguided	Guided	Total
2006	3,152	4,236	7,388	15,733	13,907	29,640	18,885	18,143	37,028
2007	5,531	6,388	11,919	17,032	15,791	32,823	22,563	22,179	44,742
2008	4,071	5,921	9,992	16,805	17,017	33,822	20,877	22,938	43,815
2009	6,945	8,125	15,070	18,128	13,092	31,220	25,073	21,217	46,290
2010	7,826	9,774	17,600	12,956	14,353	27,309	20,782	24,127	44,909
2011	5,898	10,826	16,724	9,200	16,467	25,667	15,098	27,293	42,391
2012	5,505	10,883	16,388	6,256	15,352	21,608	11,761	26,235	37,996
2013	5,075	12,140	17,215	10,427	17,538	27,965	15,502	29,678	45,180
2014	6,437	14,405	20,842	12,258	21,909	34,167	18,695	36,314	55,009
2015	8,274	17,387	25,661	11,749	28,221	39,970	20,023	45,608	65,631
2016	8,710	22,395	31,105	11,418	36,155	47,573	20,127	58,550	78,677
2017	6,035	21,592	27,627	8,078	18,292	26,370	14,113	39,884	53,997
2018	13,050	25,587	38,637	7,289	28,255	35,544	20,338	53,842	74,180
2019	14,970	35,477	50,447	15,188	34,638	49,826	30,158	70,115	100,273
2020	9,161	22,774	31,935	6,653	23,523	30,176	15,814	46,297	62,111
2021	10,807	42,268	53,075	15,086	44,260	59,346	25,893	86,528	112,421
2022	15,106	41,228	56,334	13,504	47,771	61,275	28,610	88,999	117,609
2023	5,970	29,212	35,182	15,251	37,131	52,382	21,221	66,343	87,564
2024	3,018	30,008	33,026	10,331	37,691	48,022	13,350	67,699	81,049
2025	6,194	27,455	33,649	11,058	28,802	39,860	17,252	56,257	73,509
Average 2006–2013	5,501	8,537	14,037	13,317	15,440	28,757	18,818	23,976	42,794
Average 2014–2018	8,501	20,273	28,774	10,158	26,566	36,725	18,659	46,840	65,499
Average 2019–2022	12,511	35,437	47,948	12,608	37,548	50,156	25,119	72,985	98,103
Average 2023–2025	5,061	28,892	33,953	12,213	34,541	46,755	17,274	63,433	80,707

Table 40-2.–Cook Inlet commercial effort and pelagic rockfish harvest (lb) from directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) jig fishery, 2007–2025.

Year	Vessels	Landings	Harvest
2007	[a]	[a]	[a]
2008	[a]	[a]	[a]
2009	[a]	[a]	[a]
2010	10	17	22,130
2011	11	25	44,166
2012	5	11	11,677
2013	7	20	36,920
2014	12	22	38,629
2015	13	40	76,562
2016	19	54	83,223
2017	9	41	59,663
2018	13	39	33,313
2019	10	27	32,409
2020	10	29	20,002
2021	7	14	16,375
2022	7	15	11,688
2023	8	24	22,500
2024	6	24	39,148
2025	4	14	27,644
Average 2007–2017	9	22	35,174
Average 2018–2022	9	25	22,757
Average 2023–2025	6	21	29,764

Note: Totals and averages include confidential values when more than one confidential value contributes.

[a] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

Table 40-3.–Commercial pelagic rockfish harvest (lb) and percent black rockfish by sport fish management area and total Cook Inlet commercial management area, 2007–2025.

	Lower Cook Inlet		North Gulf Coast		Total Cook Inlet Area	
Year	Pelagic harvest (lbs)	Black rockfish (%)	Pelagic harvest (lbs)	Black rockfish (%)	Pelagic harvest (lbs)	Black rockfish (%)
2007	3,264	98	2,431	97	5,695	98
2008	5,959	100	250	70	6,209	99
2009	2,073	99	1,081	93	3,154	97
2010	6,193	96	16,650	99	22,843	98
2011	20,129	97	25,238	97	45,366	97
2012	3,342	99	9,446	94	12,788	95
2013	18,612	98	20,262	90	38,875	94
2014	7,085	91	32,169	94	39,254	94
2015	12,783	92	69,618	91	82,401	91
2016	11,405	83	78,507	84	89,913	84
2017	14,332	94	49,987	90	64,319	91
2018	13,010	95	22,579	87	35,589	90
2019	7,335	93	27,370	71	34,705	76
2020	6,531	90	13,739	93	20,270	92
2021	2,949	82	15,580	77	18,528	78
2022	1,855	71	11,162	96	13,017	93
2023	13,878	96	10,676	97	24,554	97
2024	1,320	88	39,828	99	41,148	98
2025	6,366	100	22,999	96	29,365	97
Average 2007–2017	9,562	95	27,785	91	37,347	94
Average 2018–2022	6,336	86	18,086	85	24,422	86
Average 2023–2025	7,188	95	24,501	97	31,689	97

Note: Harvest includes directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) jig fishery as well as pelagic rockfish harvested as bycatch to other directed groundfish fisheries.

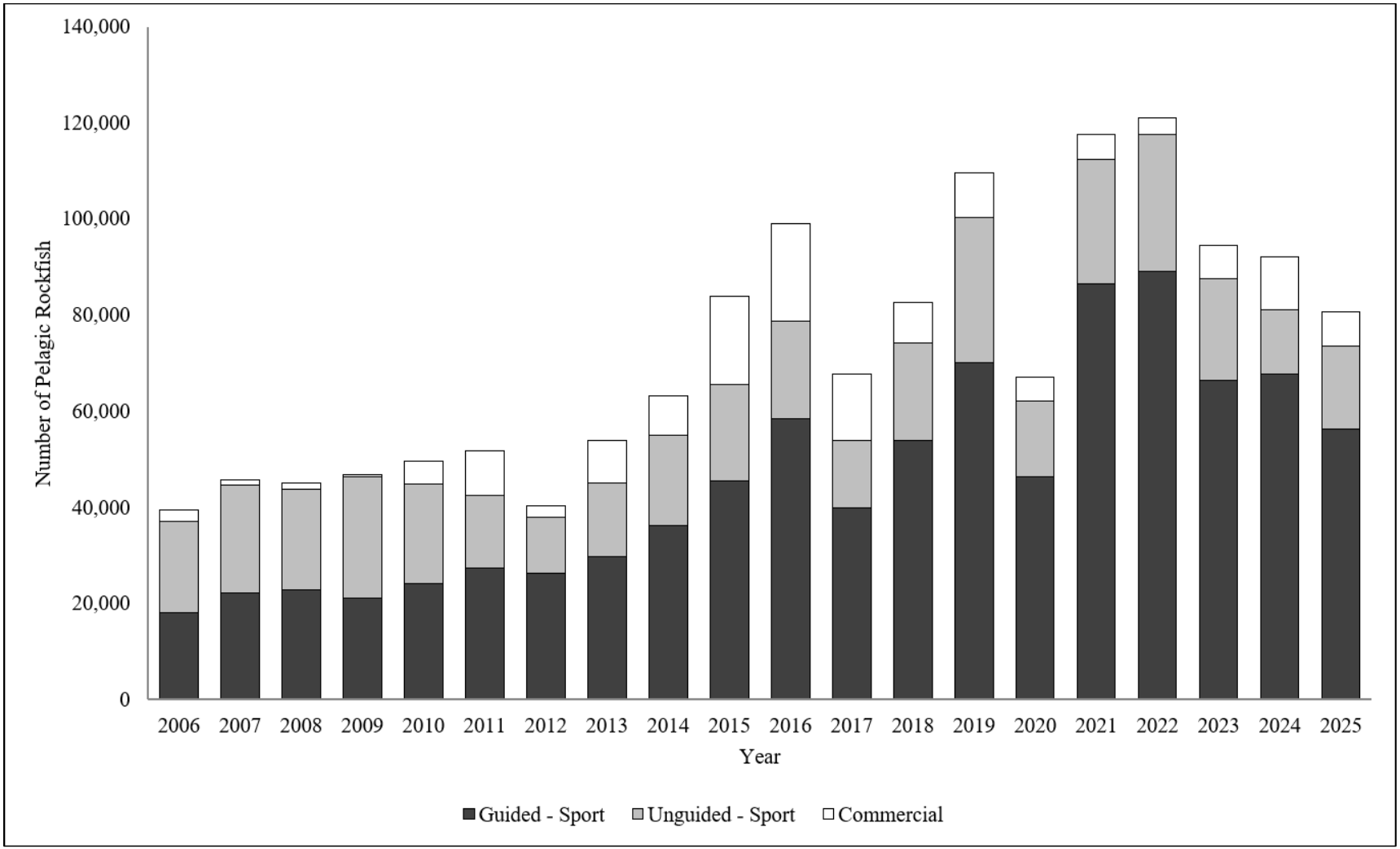


Figure 40-2.–Cook Inlet and North Gulf Coast pelagic shelf rockfish harvest by commercial and sport (guided and nonguided) sector, 2006–2025

PROPOSAL 41 – 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

PROPOSED BY: Corey Decook.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would prohibit the retention of rockfish for guided anglers within Cook Inlet north of the latitude and west of the longitude of the Elizabeth Island day marker (lat 59°08.8' N 151°52' 36.6" W; Figure 41-1) if further restrictions are needed for Cook Inlet rockfish.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In all waters of the Cook Inlet/Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area, the sport rockfish bag limit is three fish and six in possession, of which only one per day and two in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish. The department has issued emergency orders (EOs) in the last two years to stabilize the sport harvest of black and yelloweye rockfish. The rockfish bag limit was reduced seasonally (May through mid-September) from three rockfish, of which only one may be nonpelagic, to a bag limit of two pelagic rockfish and one nonpelagic rockfish. Additionally, the retention of yelloweye rockfish was prohibited through June 30.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Guided harvest and effort for rockfish would be eliminated in this area when further restrictions are required. Some charter vessel operators may move into surrounding waters outside of Cook Inlet.

BACKGROUND: Based on the charter logbook reports of the primary groundfish statistical area fished, the harvest of rockfish by guided anglers in this area has averaged 16,000 fish in the last five years, which is approximately 41% of the average total guided harvest (2021–2025). This estimate may not fully reflect the actual harvest because charter vessels often harvest rockfish across multiple statistical areas while targeting other species but report only the statistical area where the majority of groundfish and salmon effort occurred. For additional background on Cook Inlet rockfish, see Proposal 40.

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

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may increase the cost for charter operators required to travel longer distances for opportunity to harvest rockfish. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

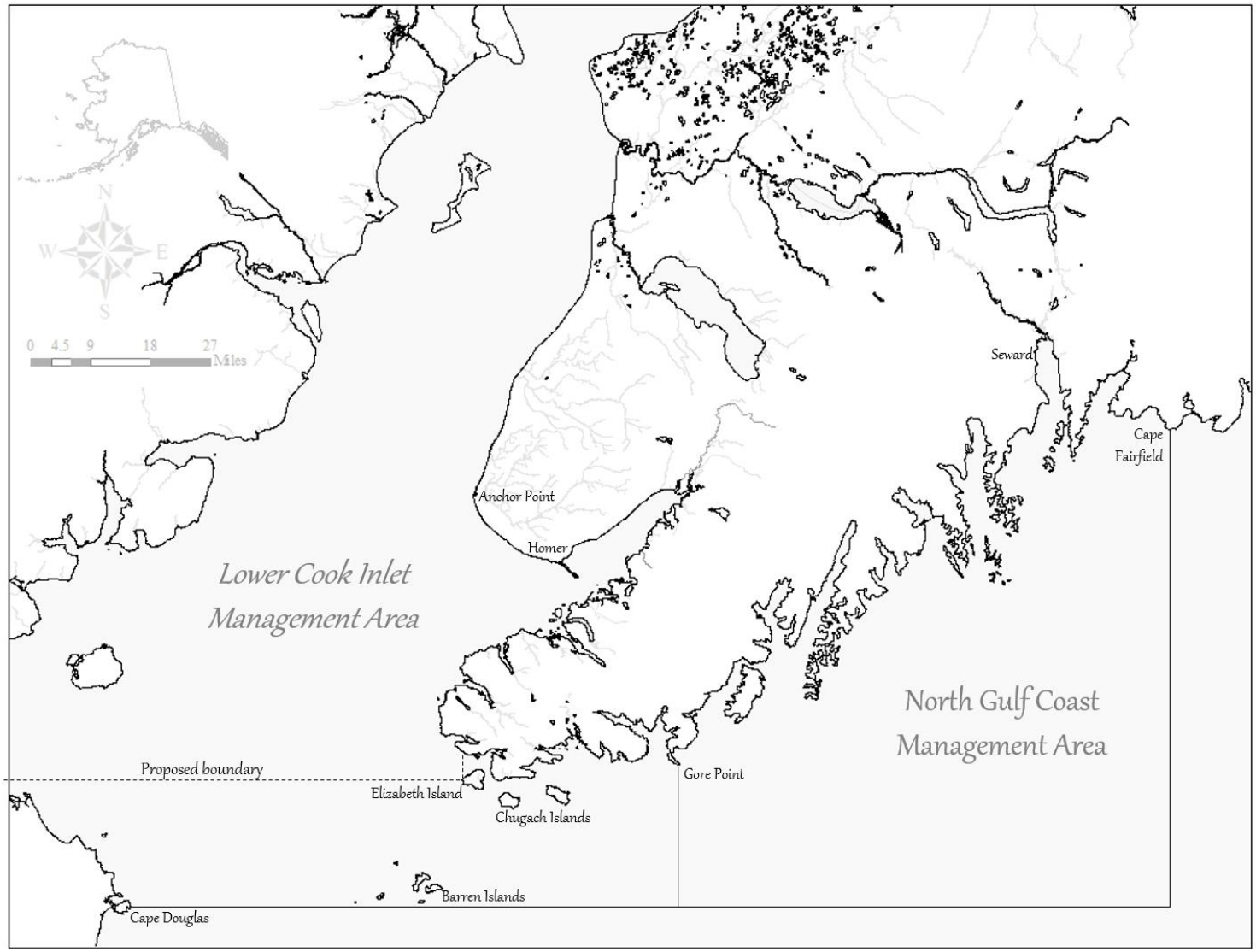


Figure 41-1.–Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Saltwater area with proposed boundary at Elizabeth Island day marker.

PROPOSAL 42 – 5 AAC 58.022. New Section.

PROPOSED BY: Grant Peel, Homer Charter Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 50,000 pelagic rockfish for the sport fishery in the lower Cook Inlet Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Lower Cook Inlet sport rockfish fishery is managed under general provisions with a bag limit of three fish and six in possession, of which only one per day and two in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish. The department has issued emergency orders (EOs) in each of the last two years to stabilize black and yelloweye rockfish harvest. The rockfish bag limit was reduced seasonally (May through mid-September) from three rockfish of which only one may be nonpelagic to two pelagic rockfish and one nonpelagic rockfish. Additionally, the retention of yelloweye rockfish was prohibited through June 30.

The board has made a positive customary and traditional use (C & T) finding for bottomfish in those portions of the Cook Inlet Area that are outside the boundaries of the nonsubsistence area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3) and found that 750–1,350 rockfish are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (5 AAC 01.566 (c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposed GHL would exceed the 2025 pelagic harvest by 34%, which, when combined with harvest from commercial and subsistence harvests, may not be sustainable. Creating a GHL for the Cook Inlet area and not the Resurrection Bay area may result in different regulations between these areas that are currently aligned.

BACKGROUND: The sport harvest of pelagic rockfish has averaged approximately 34,000 in the last three years (2023–2025) in the Lower Cook Inlet Area and accounts for 42% of the average sport pelagic rockfish harvest in the Cook Inlet–North Gulf Coast Area (Table 40-1). For additional background on Cook Inlet rockfish, see Proposal 40.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal because it will establish a GHL that may be biologically unsustainable. This may also increase regulatory complexity if regulations become misaligned between management areas. To meet the board's statutory responsibility to the subsistence law, it should consider whether regulations continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses if the proposal is adopted.

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 43 – 5 AAC 58.022. General provisions for season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would modify language describing bag and possession limits for nonpelagic rockfish in Cook Inlet–Resurrection Bay Saltwater area by replacing "nonpelagic" with "demersal shelf or slope." This change aligns with definitions of species assemblages used across the state.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Bag and possession limits for rockfish in the Cook Inlet—Resurrection Bay Saltwater area are defined for 2 rockfish species assemblages, pelagic and nonpelagic. Nonpelagic rockfish limits are 1 per day and 2 in possession.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? With this action, the nonpelagic species assemblage would be subdivided into demersal shelf and slope species assemblages. This would not change bag and possession limits, which means an angler would only be able to keep either a demersal shelf or a slope rockfish as part of their one fish bag limit.

BACKGROUND: The board addressed a proposal at the 2026 Statewide meeting modifying the statewide rockfish definitions used in the sport fishery (5 AAC 75.995(22)) to align the definitions of pelagic, slope, and demersal shelf rockfish species assemblages across the state.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Aligning rockfish species assemblage definitions would result in the use of consistent terminology and application of management.

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 44 – 5 AAC 28.365. Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Josh Wisniewski

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would move the opening date for the Cook Inlet directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) fishery forward by two months to May 1.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) fishery opens on July 1 and closes on December 31 or by emergency order (EO) if the Cook Inlet rockfish guideline harvest level (GHL) is achieved (5 AAC 28.310(d)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Extending the season could increase directed harvest of PSR species such as black rockfish by an unknown amount. Harvest of bycatch species such as yelloweye rockfish could also increase by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: The original *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* implemented in 1993 did not specify season dates. In 1998, the directed rockfish fishery season was moved later in the year to July 1 to align the fishery with the lingcod season due to similarities in gear and habitat requirements. In 2004, the directed fishery was limited to PSR rockfish harvest, and mandatory retention of all rockfish was implemented for groundfish and Pacific halibut fisheries in Cook Inlet. Season dates have not been adjusted since 2004.

Season dates can control harvest rates or protect spawning stocks, such as in the Cook Inlet lingcod fishery, which also opens on July 1 to protect nest-guarding males. Black rockfish in Alaska spawn in the winter months beginning in November and continuing through February. In Kodiak, where the largest commercial directed black rockfish fishery in Alaska takes place, the season is open year-round unless the GHL is achieved. Please refer to staff comments on Proposal 40 for further background on the Cook Inlet commercial directed PSR jig fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The department has conservation concerns for black rockfish in Cook Inlet but has the tools to manage inseason if the season length is extended.

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 45 – 5 AAC 28.365. Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the release of rockfish in Cook Inlet using approved deepwater release mechanisms (DRM) when participating in a commercial jig fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* specifies that a commercial fisheries entry commission (CFEC) permit holder participating in the directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) jig fishery must retain all rockfish (5 AAC 28.365(g)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Participants in Cook Inlet commercial jig fisheries would be permitted to release rockfish using a DRM. Rockfish harvest would decrease by an unknown but likely small amount depending on participant behavior in commercial jig fisheries. Rockfish discards would increase by an unknown amount, and because a DRM is not 100% effective, rockfish discard mortality would be estimated from fish tickets and logbooks. The species composition of rockfish released at sea would also be estimated from fish tickets and logbooks instead of from fish tickets and port sampling.

BACKGROUND: Please refer to staff comments on Proposal 40 for background information on rockfish harvest in directed jig fisheries in Cook Inlet. When utilized correctly, a DRM has been estimated to increase the survival rate of yelloweye rockfish to over 98% when released at depth with a DRM. Submergence success for yelloweye rockfish without a DRM is 22%. Survival rates after deepwater release during a department study in Prince William Sound indicated that for 5 other species (dark, dusky, silvergray, copper, and quillback rockfish), survival when released using a DRM ranged from 85% to 100%. In December 2024, the board adopted a regulation allowing deep-water release of rockfish in Prince William Sound commercial jig fisheries.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. The department has concerns about status of black and yelloweye rockfish stocks in Cook Inlet and supports efforts to reduce harvest of nontarget species. This would create consistent regulations between Cook Inlet and Prince William sound regulations for jig fisheries while enabling the release of nontarget species. Release mortality rates depend on participants following best practices.

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 46 – 5 AAC 28.367. Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Ivan Stonorov

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would repeal the 24-hour closure period between the Cook Inlet (CI) parallel and state-waters Pacific cod seasons and require that all groundfish on board a vessel be landed before participating in the CI state-waters Pacific cod season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan* requires a 24-hour closure period between the parallel and state-waters Pacific cod seasons (5 AAC 28.367(c)). Following the closure of a groundfish season to pot gear, groundfish pots must have bait containers removed and may be stored in the water if all doors are secured fully open (5 AAC 28.332(a)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would allow participants in the Cook Inlet Pacific cod pot fishery to leave pots baited between the parallel and state-waters seasons. Participants in the parallel Pacific cod season would be required to land all groundfish before participating in the state-waters season. An unknown amount of Pacific cod captured at the end of the parallel season could be harvested in the state-waters season.

BACKGROUND: Pacific cod fisheries in Cook Inlet are managed through the *Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.367), which encompasses parallel and state-waters seasons. During a parallel season, state waters open concurrently with a federal fishery in adjacent federal waters, with season length and harvest limits set by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Management of the parallel season is based on 3 gear sectors: longline-hook, pot, and jig. Each sector opens concurrently with the federal "A" season on January 1. State-waters Pacific cod seasons are opened after the conclusion of the initial parallel season. For pot and jig gear, the state-waters season opens 24 hours following the closure of the parallel fishery for that sector. Pot vessels are allocated 85% and jig vessels are allocated 15% of the state-waters guideline harvest level (GHL). There is no longline-hook state-waters Pacific cod season in Cook Inlet. It is common for pot vessels to participate in both the parallel and state-waters Pacific cod seasons; however, pots may not be baited during the 24-hour closure period.

Pacific cod harvested in Cook Inlet are landed primarily by vessels under 58 feet in length based in Homer and Seward. From 2023 to 2025, parallel season Pacific cod harvest averaged 1.6 million pounds (mlb) from 55 vessels in 132 landings and ranged from 1.4 mlb in 2024 to 1.9 mlb in 2025 (Table 46-1). The dominant gear type during the parallel season was longline-hook, with approximately 40% of harvest coming from pot gear and 1% from jig gear. State-waters season Pacific cod harvest during the same time frame ranged from 1.2 mlb in 2023 to 1.5 mlb in 2025, averaging 1.4 mlb annually from 15 vessels in 82 landings (Table 46-2). The dominant gear type in the state-waters season was pot gear, and the pot allocation was achieved each year from 2023 to 2025. The overall state-waters season Pacific cod harvest averaged 91% of the GHL, and the overall GHL was achieved in 2023, but not in 2024 and 2025.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Requiring delivery of parallel season Pacific cod before participating in the state-waters season is necessary to ensure harvest accrues to the harvest limit for each season.

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.

Table 46-1.–Cook Inlet Area parallel Pacific cod fishery annual effort and harvest by gear type, 2007–2025.

			Harvest (pounds)[a]				
Year	Vessels	Landings	Longline	Pot	Jig, hand troll	Other[b]	Total
2007	47	202	364,428	328,878	0	0	693,306
2008	52	161	267,991	145,473	0	0	413,464
2009	57	172	452,796	88,657	0	0	541,453
2010	50	124	197,795	228,429	[c]	0	426,223
2011	49	144	199,613	579,007	237	0	778,857
2012	51	216	1,018,217	957,217	[c]	0	1,975,434
2013	61	220	1,039,822	367,635	4,817	0	1,412,274
2014	50	156	678,901	348,900	32,260	[c]	1,060,060
2015	57	205	1,716,574	407,494	[c]	[c]	2,124,408
2016	70	266	990,491	1,123,120	48,379	[c]	2,161,990
2017	60	252	667,553	1,034,841	6,161	0	1,708,555
2018	40	107	484,260	259,669	[c]	0	743,929
2019	38	82	322,781	118,932	[c]	0	441,713
2020	25	35	8,169	0	[c]	0	8,169
2021	52	108	373,756	[c]	15,199	0	388,955
2022	54	141	935,280	[c]	52,311	0	987,591
2023	56	120	885,304	673,223	20,373	0	1,578,900
2024	50	118	1,275,345	[c]	[c]	0	1,441,985
2025	59	157	1,195,771	674,870	[c]	0	1,870,641
Average 1988–2017	76	296	983,545	624,927	9,033	76,457	1,693,962
Average 2018–2022	42	95	424,849	135,193	13,646	0	573,688
Average 2023–2025	55	132	1,118,807	[c]	15,722	0	1,630,509

Note: Totals and averages include confidential values when more than one confidential value contributes.

[a] Harvest includes Pacific cod bycatch to other groundfish fisheries.

[b] Other" includes trawl and gillnet gear.

[c] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

Table 46-2.–Cook Inlet Area state-waters Pacific cod fishery annual effort, guideline harvest level (GHL), and harvest by gear type, 2007–2025.

				Percent achieved			Harvest (pounds)		
Year	Vessels	Landings	GHL (pounds)	Pot allocation (%)	Jig allocation (%)	GHL (%)	Pot	Jig/Hand troll	Total[a]
2007	17	152	3,131,088	54	1	46	1,436,804	5,545	1,442,349
2008	16	234	3,133,403	89	3	76	2,379,085	14,456	2,393,541
2009	18	222	2,605,947	108	36	97	2,393,574	138,960	2,532,535
2010	15	148	4,054,466	89	[a]	76	3,074,871	[a]	3,074,871
2011	39	359	4,449,149	103	75	99	3,902,154	498,185	4,400,339
2012	39	292	4,707,420	101	27	90	4,043,548	192,847	4,236,395
2013	13	154	4,074,804	80	0	68	2,754,265	0	2,754,265
2014	9	121	4,389,955	81	0	69	3,018,318	0	3,018,318
2015	18	165	5,069,530	76	9	66	3,256,063	70,639	3,326,701
2016	21	145	4,076,788	83	9	72	2,869,970	55,673	2,925,643
2017	13	96	3,652,509	53	0	45	1,636,864	0	1,636,864
2018	9	47	671,142	98	[a]	83	558,828	[a]	558,828
2019	10	59	633,857	106	3	90	570,706	2,868	573,575
2020	7	36	454,513	105	[a]	89	404,109	[a]	404,109
2021	5	40	1,128,987	98	0	84	943,839	0	943,839
2022	7	40	1,632,964	99	0	84	1,377,474	0	1,377,474
2023	16	82	1,226,046	111	13	96	1,157,135	24,158	1,181,292
2024	12	80	1,702,244	100	12	87	1,446,627	30,771	1,477,398
2025	17	83	1,695,300	100	25	89	1,443,670	63,253	1,506,922
Average 1997–2017	23	234	3,156,709	85	26	68	2,038,605	133,431	2,172,035
Average 2018–2022	8	44	904,293	101	6	86	770,991	4,218	775,209
Average 2023–2025	15	82	1,541,197	104	17	91	1,349,144	39,394	1,388,537

Note: Totals and averages include confidential values when more than one confidential value contributes.

[a] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

PROPOSAL 47 – 5 AAC 28.367. Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Josh Wisniewski

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would establish a small vessel gear exemption during the Cook Inlet state-waters Pacific cod jig season. Vessels under 26 feet in overall length registered for the state-waters jig season would be permitted to operate any gear type legal for the state-waters Pacific cod season in Cook Inlet. The pot limit for vessels under 26 feet in length would be 30 pots.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan* specifies that a state-waters season shall open for jig and pot gear 24 hours after the closure of the initial federal season in the Central Gulf of Alaska Area for that gear type (5 AAC 28.367(c)). A vessel must register for either the jig or pot season; however, a vessel's gear registration may be changed to a different gear type at a later date (5 AAC 28.367(e)(2)(C)). In a groundfish fishery for which more than one type of gear is legal, a person may have only one type of legal gear on board the vessel at any one time (5 AAC 28.330(e)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The Cook Inlet state-waters jig quota would be made available to pot vessels under 26 feet in overall length and the jig quota could be achieved more frequently depending on harvest and effort.

BACKGROUND: The *Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan* was implemented in 1997 and established a state-waters season. From the establishment of the state-waters season in 1997 to 2002, pot and jig gear were each allocated 50% of the GHL. Beginning in 2003, pot gear was allocated 85% of the GHL and jig gear was allocated 15%. This allocation remains in effect. In years when the jig GHL is achieved, the jig allocation will increase by 5% the following calendar year up to a maximum of 25% and the pot allocation will decrease by a corresponding 5% the following calendar year to a minimum of 75%. The jig allocation has not been met in any year, and the step-up provision has never been implemented.

To participate in a state-waters Pacific cod season, vessels must register with ADF&G for the specific area and gear type. At any point during the state-waters season, a vessel may switch gear types within Cook Inlet by unregistering with ADF&G for their original gear type and re-registering under the new gear type. In the state-waters Pacific cod season, only one gear type may be on board a vessel at a time, except for mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear, which may be used at the same time. Also, no more than 60 groundfish pots and no more than 5 mechanical jigging machines are permitted in the state-waters season. Longlining of pots is not legal in any Cook Inlet Pacific cod seasons.

Harvest and effort in the Cook Inlet state-waters Pacific cod jig season are generally low and the jig allocation has never been achieved. From 1997 to 2012, jig harvest exceeded 100,000 pounds (lb) 8 times, averaging 190,000 lb annually (Table 46-2). From 2012 to 2022, jig harvest did not exceed 100,000 lb in any year, averaging 20,000 lb annually. From 2023 to 2025, jig harvest averaged 39,000 lb annually, or 2.5% of the 15% allocation. Effort was low in recent years,

averaging one vessel and one landing annually from 2018 to 2022 and 7 vessels and 27 landings from 2023 to 2025 (Table 47-1).
The Cook Inlet state-waters Pacific cod pot quota is fully utilized and has been achieved annually during the most recent 3-year period. The pot season is relatively short and occurs during the spring when weather may not be conducive to participation using vessels under 26 feet in length.

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

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.

Table 47-1.–Cook Inlet Area state-waters Pacific cod fishery annual effort for jig gear, 2007–2025.

Year	Vessels	Landings
1997	46	233
1998	29	123
1999	14	51
2000	5	12
2001	5	13
2002	6	15
2003	15	160
2004	18	120
2005	8	28
2006	[a]	[a]
2007	4	7
2008	3	7
2009	9	41
2010	[a]	[a]
2011	31	203
2012	27	137
2015	7	31
2016	7	19
2017	0	0
2018	[a]	[a]
2019	3	4
2020	[a]	[a]
2021	0	0
2022	0	0
2023	8	31
2024	6	29
2025	6	20
Average 1998–2017	12	60
Average 2018–2022	1	1
Average 2023–2025	7	27

Note: Totals and averages include confidential values when more than one confidential value contributes.

[a] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

PROPOSAL 48 – 5 AAC 28.367. Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would add a six-hour prior notice of landing requirement for the Cook Inlet commercial state-waters Pacific cod season. Participants would be required to notify the department at least six hours prior to landing and report the following information: 1) vessel name and ADF&G number; 2) date and location of landing; 3) estimated time of arrival; 4) name of fish buyer or processor; and 5) estimated number of pounds of Pacific cod on board the vessel.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan* specifies a registration requirement (5 AAC 28.367(e)(2)(C)) but no prior notice of landing requirement for vessels participating in the state-waters Pacific cod season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would provide notice for department staff to travel from Homer to other ports for sampling.

BACKGROUND: Groundfish port sampling for the ADF&G Central Region is coordinated out of Homer, but during the 2026 season, 36% of state-waters Pacific cod were landed in Seward. Staff often travel 4 hours from Homer to Seward to sample landings. Landings occur quickly, and the opportunity to sample landings can easily be missed without advance notice. Prior notice of landing is a well-established tool for other groundfish fisheries in Cook Inlet such as rockfish, lingcod, and sablefish.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Prior notice of landing for Pacific cod would result in higher productivity and efficiency for the Central Region management program.

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 49 – 5 AAC 28.360. Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Brady Strate

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would remove the 3,000-pound trip limit for the Cook Inlet commercial sablefish fishery.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The *Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan* specifies that an operator of a vessel participating in the Cook Inlet sablefish fishery may not land or have on board the vessel more than 3,000 pounds (round weight) of sablefish in any two consecutive days (5 AAC 28.360(c)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This could increase the harvest of Cook Inlet sablefish by an unknown amount.

BACKGROUND: The Cook Inlet sablefish fishery was historically a very productive, fast-paced fishery. This can be attributed to the fact that it is one of only two open-access sablefish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. The *Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan* was adopted by the board in 2004 and became effective in 2005. The management plan implemented a sablefish fishery-specific area registration, a 3,000-pound, two-day trip limit, and a July 15 season start date. The management plan was amended again in 2016 to include clarification of logbook requirements, require a six-hour prior notice of landing, and allow longlining of pots. In 2023, the season start date was changed to April 15 to allow for a longer season. The Cook Inlet sablefish fishery opens April 15 and closes December 31 unless closed by emergency order (EO). Registration is required and all legal groundfish gear in Cook Inlet is permitted. There is no pot limit in this fishery, however vessels are limited to no more than 15 pots per longline pot string.

The Cook Inlet sablefish guideline harvest level (GHL) is derived from longline-hook and trawl surveys conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). ADF&G calculates the Cook Inlet GHL by applying the relative change between the prior and current year of the NMFS Central GOA sablefish acceptable biological catch (ABC) to the previous year's GHL. The maximum harvest in this fishery occurred in 2001 with 133,435 lb from 21 vessels over a total of 32 landings (Table 49-1). The GHL was exceeded by an average of 59% each year from 1999 to 2003, despite a later July 15 season opening date implemented in 1998. Sablefish seasons were extremely short during this time, with the 2004 season closing after one day of fishing. The pace slowed, and harvest decreased with the implementation of the two-day, 3,000 lb trip limit in 2005, and harvest averaged 58,171 lb annually from 2005 to 2017. The GHL was exceeded in three years during that period: 2006, 2007, and 2010. Harvest and participation decreased beginning in 2013, averaging 41,670 lb from five vessels annually from 2013 to 2017 and 12,271 lb from three vessels annually from 2018 to 2022. During the most recent three-year period, sablefish harvest ranged from 0 lb from zero vessels in 2023 to 12,002 lb from four vessels in seven landings in 2025 (Table 49-1). Harvest in 2024 was confidential, and only one vessel participated. Most harvest from 2023 to 2025 was from longline-hook gear, except for a small amount harvested using longline-pot gear in 2025. The continued lack of effort in the open access Cook Inlet sablefish fishery is most likely due to a combination of the conservative trip limit, low price, long distance from ports to productive fishing grounds, and larger fish available to IFQ holders in offshore federal waters.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to remove the Cook Inlet sablefish trip limit but asks the board to provide the authority to set trip limits by emergency order if the pace of the fishery prevents management to the GHL. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative impacts that removal of the trip limit may have on vessels of various sizes.

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.

Table 49-1.–Cook Inlet Area commercial sablefish harvest and effort by gear type and guideline harvest level (GHL), 1998–2025.

					Harvest (pounds)				
Year	Vessels	Landings	GHL	% of GHL	Jig	Trawl, other	Longline	Pots	Total
1998	29	58	72,000	94	0	[a]	67,933	0	67,933
1999	23	40	63,400	116	[a]	[a]	73,671	0	73,695
2000	16	31	67,000	153	0	0	102,639	0	102,639
2001	21	32	67,000	199	0	0	133,435	0	133,435
2002	23	26	67,000	161	0	0	108,117	0	108,117
2003	14	14	75,000	163	0	0	122,098	0	122,098
2004	16	16	87,000	95	0	0	82,563	0	82,563
2005	10	37	86,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2006	15	40	76,000	113	0	0	85,928	0	85,928
2007	9	35	74,000	102	0	0	75,586	0	75,586
2008	10	41	66,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2009	13	66	60,000	92	0	0	55,263	0	55,263
2010	8	43	53,700	104	0	0	55,871	0	55,871
2011	10	39	56,473	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2012	12	49	69,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2013	7	43	66,000	64	0	0	42,235	0	42,235
2014	5	28	56,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2015	3	33	55,500	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2016	5	34	48,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2017	5	34	54,000	68	0	0	[a]	[a]	36,972
2018	6	19	62,000	40	0	0	24,749	[a]	24,749
2019	2	12	62,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2020	0	0	77,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
2021	2	12	77,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2022	3	4	119,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2023	0	0	118,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
2024	1	1	105,000	[a]	0	0	[a]	0	[a]
2025	4	7	116,000	10	0	0	[a]	[a]	12,002
Average 1998–2017	13	37	65,954	109	0	333	72,316	0	72,668
Average 2018–2022	3	9	79,400	18	0	0	12,270	[a]	12,271
Average 2023–2025	2	3	113,000	[a]	0	0	4,035	[a]	[a]

Note: Totals and averages include confidential values when more than one confidential value contributes.

[a] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

PROPOSAL 50 – 5 AAC 28.330. Lawful Gear for Cook Inlet.

PROPOSED BY: Josh Wisniewski

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a definition for dinglebar troll gear and include it as a legal gear type in Cook Inlet groundfish fisheries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Lawful gear in Cook Inlet groundfish fisheries is currently restricted to pelagic trawls, hand troll gear, longlines, pots, or mechanical jigging machines. Legal gear is further restricted for directed fisheries including pelagic rockfish, lingcod, and Pacific cod. Dinglebar troll gear is not defined in regulation for Cook Inlet.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This would create a definition for dinglebar troll gear in Cook Inlet groundfish fisheries. Gear restrictions for directed lingcod and pelagic rockfish fisheries would be changed to include dinglebar troll gear. Additionally, dinglebar troll gear could be used to target sablefish and Pacific halibut. Harvest of these species could increase by a small but unknown amount. Dinglebar troll would not be a legal gear type for targeting Pacific cod.

BACKGROUND: Statewide regulations restrict legal gear types for groundfish to longline-hook, pelagic trawl, hand troll, seine, mechanical jigging machine, dinglebar troll, and pots (5 AAC 25.050); legal gear for groundfish in Cook Inlet is further restricted to longline-hook, pelagic trawl, mechanical jigging, hand troll, longline-pot, and single pot gear (5 AAC 28.330). Cook Inlet fishery management plans further restrict legal gear, and only one gear type may be aboard a vessel at a time, except for mechanical jig and hand troll (5 AAC 28.330).

In Cook Inlet, before operating a vessel in a directed fishery for lingcod, pelagic shelf rockfish, Pacific cod, and sablefish, the vessel operator or authorized agent must obtain a fishery-specific registration for that vessel (5AAC 28.306 (b)). Groundfish fisheries in Cook Inlet are managed to a guideline harvest level (GHL) set preseason, and groundfish harvests are monitored in season through ADF&G fish tickets. Additionally, vessels are required to notify ADF&G six hours prior to landing for each directed trip for lingcod, pelagic shelf rockfish, and sablefish. State-managed groundfish fisheries that could be affected by dinglebar troll gear becoming a legal gear type in Cook Inlet include lingcod, pelagic rockfish, and sablefish.

The State of Alaska manages lingcod in state and federal waters (0–200 nmi). In the directed Cook Inlet fishery, lingcod may only be taken with mechanical jig and hand troll gear (5 AAC 28.330 (g)); however, lingcod may be harvested as bycatch up to the bycatch allowance with gear types legal in Cook Inlet state waters. There is no lingcod management plan specified in regulation; therefore, ADF&G sets and announces GHLs annually by EO. The GHL has been set at 52,500 lb since 2002. Lingcod may be taken only from July 1 through December 31, and an emergency order (EO) is issued closing lingcod harvest if the GHL is achieved prior to the regulatory season closing. In recent years, lingcod harvest has primarily been as bycatch in federal waters in the Pacific halibut longline fishery. Lingcod harvest during the recent 3-year period averaged 13,609 lb annually, ranging from 7,440 lb in 2025 to 22,973 lb in 2024 (Table 50-1). The 52,500 lb GHL for lingcod has not been achieved since 2020 when 52,429 lb were harvested.

Rockfish in Cook Inlet are managed through the *Cook Inlet Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.365). The management plan outlines a 150,000 lb overall GHL for directed and bycatch fisheries combined. Rockfish bycatch occurs throughout the calendar year from January 1 to December 31. The directed pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) fishery is open July 1 through December 31. In the directed fishery, rockfish may only be taken with mechanical jig and hand troll gear. Rockfish bycatch occurs in Cook Inlet primarily with longline-hook gear, though some occurs with mechanical jig and single pot gear. Commercial rockfish harvest in Cook Inlet has remained stable in recent years, averaging 53,522 lb annually from 2023 to 2025 for the directed fishery and bycatch harvest combined (Table 50-2). Rockfish harvest in the directed PSR jig fishery averaged 29,764 lb annually during the most recent three-year period (Table 50-2). For more background on commercial rockfish harvest in Cook Inlet see staff comments on Proposal 42.

Sablefish in Cook Inlet are managed through the *Cook Inlet Sablefish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.360). The Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery is open April 15 through December 31 unless closed earlier by EO. In the directed fishery, all legal gear types for Cook Inlet may be used to target sablefish. During the most recent three-year period, sablefish harvest ranged from 0 lb from zero vessels in 2023 to 12,002 lb from four vessels in seven landings in 2025 (Table 49-1). Harvest in 2024 was confidential, and only one vessel participated. For more background on the commercial sablefish fishery in Cook Inlet see staff comments on Proposal 49.

Dinglebar troll is a legal gear type in Southeast Alaska and Prince William Sound groundfish fisheries. In Southeast, dinglebar troll gear may be used to take lingcod, demersal and pelagic shelf rockfish, shortspine thornyhead rockfish, and Pacific cod. Most directed Southeast lingcod harvest occurs with dinglebar troll gear. While allowable for other species mentioned above, it is not the primary gear type for directed harvest. Additionally, in 2025, dinglebar troll gear in Southeast was further defined to clarify that only a single line may be operated at one time (5AAC 28.130(h)(2)). The statewide regulatory language was noted to be too vague for enforcement of fishing multiple lines, and the amended language serves to clarify the intention of this regulation. While dinglebar troll gear is legal in Prince William Sound, it is not used to take groundfish, and harvest with this gear type has remained zero.

Similar to Cook Inlet, legal gear for directed black rockfish fisheries in Kodiak, Chignik, South Alaska Peninsula, and Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands is restricted to mechanical jig and hand troll gear. Dinglebar troll is not a legal gear type for other directed sablefish fisheries throughout the state.

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

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.

Table 50-1.–Cook Inlet Area commercial lingcod effort and harvest, directed and bycatch fisheries combined, from state waters and federal waters, 2007–2025.

	Total harvest (pounds)		
Year	State waters	Federal waters	Total
2007	32,695	14,385	47,080
2008	36,781	7,251	44,032
2009	13,116	6,064	19,180
2010	17,312	4,655	21,966
2011	7,306	3,136	10,442
2012	5,617	3,878	9,494
2013	9,868	2,142	12,010
2014	8,833	1,388	10,221
2015	3,494	3,248	6,742
2016	20,776	2,616	23,393
2017	43,663	2,359	46,023
2018	40,442	11,755	52,196
2019	48,701	3,725	52,426
2020	50,780	1,648	52,429
2021	15,372	2,828	18,200
2022	42,326	4,922	47,249
2023	2,982	7,431	10,413
2024	8,797	14,176	22,973
2025	1,920	5,520	7,440
Average 2007–2017	18,133	4,647	22,780
Average 2018–2022	39,524	4,976	44,500
Average 2023–2025	4,566	9,042	13,609

Table 50-2.–Cook Inlet Area commercial rockfish harvest from directed Pelagic Shelf Rockfish (PSR) fishery and as bycatch to directed groundfish fisheries by gear type, including black and dark rockfish from federal waters, 2007–2025.

					Directed PSR[b] (lb)	Bycatch (lb)			
Year	Vessels	Landings	GHL	% Achieved	Jig	Jig	Longline	Pot	Total
2007	45	118	150,000	17%	[a]	[a]	18,365	0	25,394
2008	49	114	150,000	20%	[a]	[a]	20,302	0	29,968
2009	57	137	150,000	19%	[a]	1,563	26,723	0	28,287
2010	52	112	150,000	35%	22,130	1,760	28,725	0	52,615
2011	50	121	150,000	46%	44,166	2,628	21,687	a	68,480
2012	51	143	150,000	31%	11,677	1,399	33,711	0	46,787
2013	57	171	150,000	47%	36,920	2,560	31,280	0	70,759
2014	56	131	150,000	41%	38,629	3,476	18,709	[a]	60,813
2015	55	213	150,000	94%	76,562	4,774	59,265	[a]	140,602
2016	75	228	150,000	96%	83,223	15,367	45,751	[a]	144,341
2017	57	179	150,000	78%	59,663	15,481	41,590	16	116,750
2018	49	107	150,000	39%	33,313	11,034	14,746	[a]	59,093
2019	37	95	150,000	44%	32,409	13,196	20,554	0	66,159
2020	33	74	150,000	26%	20,002	8,735	10,716	[a]	39,453
2021	58	116	150,000	35%	16,375	3,417	32,173	[a]	51,965
2022	60	135	150,000	32%	11,688	5,461	31,417	[a]	48,565
2023	54	119	150,000	31%	22,500	2,563	21,239	0	46,302
2024	56	136	150,000	41%	39,148	4,003	18,943	0	62,094
2025	56	136	150,000	35%	27,644	1,144	23,293	88	52,169
Average 2007–2017	55	152	150,000	48%	35,174	4,970	31,464	31	71,639
Average 2018–2022	47	105	150,000	35%	22,757	8,369	21,921	37	53,084
Average 2023–2025	55	130	150,000	36%	29,764	2,570	21,159	29	53,522

Note: Totals and averages include confidential values when more than one confidential value contributes.

[a] Confidential data due to limited number of participants.

[b] Directed PSR harvest only includes pelagic rockfish. Bycatch from PSR fishery reported under bycatch columns.