

PROPOSAL 221 - 5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 61.116. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., 5 AAC 61.120. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area., and 5 AAC 61.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Prohibit harvest of king salmon in units 2, 3, 5, and 6, except Willow Creek, as follows:

Change general season of all streams currently (by regulation, not EO) open to king salmon harvest in units 2, 3, 5 and 6 to catch and release only, except Willow Creek which should remain open to harvest of marked hatchery produced chinook. Harvest of 1 chinook salmon per day and two per year is allowed on Sunday and Monday of the last two weekends of the season (these weekend only fisheries have changing dates) allowing for a small amount of harvest by regulation. This will also allow managers to monitor progress of the chinook run to ensure conservation.

When in-season monitoring shows a harvestable surplus open these streams to more liberal harvest regulations by emergency order, and allow catch and release fishing midweek after the 3rd weekend in June (by allowing catch and release fishing, not only is the high quality experience provided by recent emergency orders maintained, but poaching can be reduced by having more conservation minded eyes on the river, it would also allow fishing for trout and other species).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Susitna River Chinook Salmon.

Recent low performance of chinook salmon returns to the Susitna River drainage has prompted emergency orders closing units 2, 3, 5 and 6 to harvest of chinook salmon. This has created excellent opportunities for different user groups to have outstanding opportunity for a mostly uncrowded sport fishing experience. The Parks Highway streams have become a world class catch and release fishery for those who prefer a quieter fishing experience. By codifying these changes in regulation it will bring stability to this sector of fishermen, and allow for better trip planning, better planning for local businesses and guides to meet the needs of this user group.

If nothing changes, managers will have to continue to use emergency orders to close the fishery to harvest, and fishing opportunities will be lost by all user groups.

Other solutions:

Closing the Susitna Drainage to fishing: This would allow no fishing and is undesirable.

Closing units 2, 3, 5, and 6 to harvest: This would allow no consumptive uses of the fishery, even though some systems have harvestable surpluses, and hatchery produced fish.

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