

PROPOSAL 99 – 5 AAC 21.365. Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan. Amend management plan to remove all restrictions and manage the commercial set gillnet fishery to harvest surplus Kasilof River sockeye salmon, as follows:

5 AAC 21.365. Kasilof River Salmon Management Plan (a) This management plan governs the harvest of Kasilof River salmon excess to spawning escapement needs. It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries that Kasilof River salmon be harvested in the fisheries that have historically harvested them, including the methods, means, times, and locations of those fisheries. Openings in the areas historically fished must be consistent with escapement objectives for upper Cook Inlet salmon and with the Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 21.363).

...

(c) The commercial set gillnet fishery in the Kasilof Section shall be managed as follows:

(1) fishing will be opened as described in 5 AAC 21.310(b)(2) for regular weekly fishing periods, as specified in 5 AAC 21.320;

...

(3) beginning July 8, in the set gillnet fishery in the Kasilof Section, the commissioner may, by emergency order, limit fishing during the regular weekly periods and any extra fishing periods to those waters within one-half mile of shore, if the set gillnet fishery in the Kenai and East Forelands Sections are not open for the fishing period

(d) The personal use fishery will be managed as specified in 5 AAC 77.540(b) and (c).

(f) After July 24 the commissioner may, by emergency order, open the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area (KRSHA) to the taking of salmon by gillnets when it is projected that the Kasilof River sockeye salmon escapement will exceed 365,000 fish. It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries (board) that the KRSHA should rarely, if ever, be opened under this subsection and only for conservation reasons. Before the commissioner opens the KRSHA, it is the board's intent that additional fishing time be allowed in the remainder of the Kasilof Section. The Kasilof River Special Harvest Area is defined as those waters within one and one-half miles of the navigational light located on the south bank of the Kasilof River, excluding waters of the Kasilof River upstream of ADF&G regulatory markers located near the terminus of the river and waters open to set gillnetting under 5 AAC 21.330(b)(3)(C)(ii) and (iii). The following apply within the special harvest area when it is open:

(1) set gillnets may be operated only within 1,800 feet of the mean high tide mark;

(2) a set gillnet may not exceed 35 fathoms in length;

(3) drift gillnets may not be operated in waters within 1,800 feet of the mean high tide mark;

(4) no more than 50 fathoms of drift gillnet may be used to take salmon;

(5) a permit holder may not use more than one gillnet to take salmon at any time;

(6) a person may not operate a gillnet outside the special harvest area when operating a gillnet in the special harvest area;

(7) there is no minimum distance between gear, except that a gillnet may not be set or operated within 600 feet of a set gillnet located outside of the special harvest area; and

(8) a vessel may not have more than 200 fathoms of drift gillnet or 105 fathoms of set gillnet on board.

(g) The commissioner may depart from the provisions of the management plan under this section as provided in 5 AAC 21.363(e).

(h) For the purposes of this section, “week” means a calendar week, a period of seven consecutive days beginning at 12:01 a.m. Sunday and ending at 12:00 midnight the following Saturday.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This plan is far too complex and has many unnecessary restrictions and conflicting objectives. Since managing for the escapement goal is all that is necessary and puts the health of the fish above all else, the remainder of the language is arbitrary and unnecessary and preventing the department from achieving the proper escapement level. The hourly limitations in the set gillnet fishery are unnecessary since the department is going to manage for the same escapement goal regardless, which is what 5 AAC 21.363 (e) directs them to do anyway. Additionally the Supreme Court just ruled that once the season starts the department should ignore the plans and manage for the escapement goals for all stocks. Windows or mandatory closed periods are not only unnecessary, they lead to huge over escapements which are likely unconstitutional and contrary to the Boards mandate to conserve and develop. This plan will work much better if you allow the department to do their job with minimal guidelines. Since 2008 when 21.363 (e) was added to prevent overescapements in the Kasilof River they have continued. This has lead to gross unharvested surpluses and a waste of millions of sockeye as well as other stocks like pink salmon all for no real benefit. The board does not have the authority to continue to waste these fish under the guise of "Conservation and development".

PROPOSED BY: Debra Blossom

(HQ-F16-110)
