

PROPOSAL 219 - 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.

Allow a unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure, no retention fishery on resident species when waters of Montana Creek are closed to fishing for king salmon, as follows:

Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. (1) and (10)

The solutions proposed would be to amend 5 AAC 61.114 in such a matter as to open that portion of Montana Creek upstream of the Alaska Railroad bridge upstream to the ADFG marker located one-half mile upstream of the Parks Highway to fishing for resident species during those days now closed to all fishing. Regulations currently in place upstream of the marker include catch and release of rainbow trout and Arctic grayling and methods and means are limited to only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure. No retention (catch and release only) of rainbow trout and Arctic grayling and the unbaited, single-hook artificial lure provisions would govern fishing in the now closed waters if this proposal were to be adopted. In addition it should be made clear that a person may not sport fish for king salmon in these waters except when the waters are specifically open to sport fishing for king salmon. That portion of Montana Creek downstream of the Alaska Railroad bridge and including all flowing waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River would remain closed as currently described in regulation. This proposal is

not meant to change any aspect of the regulations within the times and areas currently open to fishing for king salmon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Montana Creek from an ADFG marker located one-half mile above the Parks Highway downstream and including all flowing waters within one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River is closed to all fishing except when open to fishing for king salmon from mid-June through July 13. In 2016 this closure consists of a total of 17 days. Within the area described, the opportunity to fish for resident species and the conservation of king salmon can be accomplished during this time period in most of the area described in regulation. It is not meant to change any aspect of the regulations within the times and areas currently open to fishing for king salmon.

PROPOSED BY: Joe Mathis/ Montana Creek Campground (HQ-F16-039)

PROPOSAL 220 - 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. Establish sport fishery closure times in the Larsen Creek drainage, as follows:

Larsen Creek including all waters within a ¼ mile radius of its confluence with the Talkeetna River closed to fishing from 11:00 pm to 6:00 am from July 1 to August 15.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Establish a more organized fishery at the confluence of Larsen Creek and the Talkeetna River. Susitna River drainage sockeye salmon are currently designated as a Stock of Yield Concern. Larsen Creek is one of three indicator/ index lakes used to assess sockeye production in the Susitna Valley. ~Larsen Lake is the only monitored and index lake used by ADF&G to assess the sockeye production and spawning success on the main stream of the Susitna River. It has barely made escapement goals in the last 5 years and has had to be closed twice during that time due to low escapement numbers early on.

The area where people fish is a concentrated area at the confluence of the Talkeetna River and Larsen creek. Access into the mouth of Larson creek and the Talkeetna river confluence can be crowded with people wading shoulder to shoulder in the creek making fish passage difficult.

Rod and reel fishermen who would normally fish till 11:00 pm then sleep at the creek and fish at 1:00 am will be less likely to spend the night. Guides will still arrive at 6: 00 am to bring their clients through. This may intensify fishing during that period of the day, but it would allow a reprieve during the night for escapement.

PROPOSED BY: Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission (EF-F16-033)

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.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick McCormick (EF-F16-124)

PROPOSAL 222 - 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. Prohibit fishing for king, sockeye, and coho salmon in the Larson Creek drainage, as follows:

Larson Creek drainage

The Larson Creek drainage, including all waters within a 1/4 –mile radius of its confluence with the Talkeetna River:

Closed to king, coho and sockeye salmon fishing [Closed to king salmon fishing.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the Larson Creek drainage include sockeye and coho salmon to the area closed to king salmon fishing which is the ¼ mile radius of its confluence with the Talkeetna River. This area has been discovered and grown in popularity as a sockeye and coho fishing hole. The increased fishing pressure, harvest and catch and release mortality is not sustainable and jeopardizes meeting Larson Lake sockeye escapement goal. This is a staging area, as all confluences are, and the salmon should be protected. A quarter mile protection zone still leaves anglers a reasonable opportunity to harvest salmon. With global warming the smaller streams have warmer water temperatures that are sometimes above the lethal temperature for salmon to survive. Salmon tend to stag in the confluences longer waiting for cooler temperatures and are more likely to be caught. The warmer water temperature also increases the mortality from catch and lease because of the added stress on the salmon in addition to the lack of oxygen the warmer water creates. Coho are extremely susceptible to catch and release mortality. The 1993 ADF&G report on the “Mortality of coho salmon caught and released using sport tackle in the Little Susitna, Alaska-ADF&G documented a 69% mortality on coho salmon in the lower 10 to 15 miles, of fresh water systems. This lower section is where salmon are the most stressed and the majority of catch and release occurs. The lower section of fresh water systems is the highest for catch and release mortality because the salmon’s body is undergoing chemical changes to acclimate from salt water to fresh water. The Susitna drainage is very susceptible to warmer water and the negative impacts on adult and juvenile salmon. With the prediction of a continuing global warming trend it would be prudent for ADF&G to restrict more confluences to ensure escapements into spawning streams and lakes. There are many examples where the confluences were left opened to fishing too long and the systems either took a long time to recover or don’t recover at all.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F16-163)

PROPOSAL 223 - 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. Prohibit king salmon fishing in Unit 2 if no retention is allowed, as follows:

All King Salmon fishing will be closed in the Parks Highway Streams Of Unit 2 of the Susitna River any time retention of King Salmon is not allowed.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue I would like the board to address is that the retention of King Salmon has been denied on the Parks Highway streams in unit two of the Susitna river, yet, catch and release has been allowed. If nothing is done this tactic will increase the period of time until the run is restored and retention allowed.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta (EF-F16-088)

PROPOSAL 224 - 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Restrict hours and dates open to fishing on Jim Creek, as follows:

Amend Jim Creek drainage fishing season as follows:

Daily limits are the same as shown under general season and limits on page 43, except that from **July 20 - December 31, fishing is only open from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m. daily, and from August 10 - December 31,** [THE SECOND SATURDAY IN AUGUST (AUGUST 13) THROUGH DECEMBER 31,] sport fishing for any species is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Inadequate escapement opportunity for salmon migrating up the Jim Creek system throughout the coho and sockeye salmon runs should be addressed. Even though the Board adopted regulations that closed two days to all fishing in the Jim Creek drainage later in August, the coho salmon spawning escapement goal was, once again, not attained in 2014. In 2015 the McRoberts Creek / Jim Creek goal was attained, but only after a sport fishing season closing emergency order was issued. Although sockeye salmon provide an important component of sport harvest, the Department has no established sockeye salmon spawning escapement goal.

The Jim Creek system is an extremely productive salmon producer, that provides a 7 - day per week sport salmon fishery until the August reduction to a 5-day per week fishery. Participation and harvests are amongst the highest in the Knik Arm Management Unit. In light of recent low spawning escapements of coho (and possibly sockeye) salmon, it appears a more precautionary management approach may be appropriate in order to ensure adequate spawning escapements of both coho and sockeye salmon. It would be advantageous to consider more precautionary management that also maintains the 7-day per week sport fishing opportunity during the earlier portion of the season.

Although a member of the public expressed his concerns of declining Jim Creek salmon returns to the Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee, neither he nor the advisory committee developed a proposal to submit before the submittal deadline. This proposal provides an opportunity for the public and the advisory committee to consider and develop an acceptable precautionary management option(s) that better ensures sustainability of highly valued Jim Creek salmon runs.

Reducing fishing hours would create a more orderly fishery, while providing a daily opportunity for salmon to migrate unmolested through the shallow Jim Creek flats. Perhaps better options may also be developed.

PROPOSED BY: Andy Couch (EF-F16-080)

PROPOSAL 225 - 5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the know Arm Drainages Area. Reduce the bag limits for salmon, other than king salmon, and prohibit releasing coho salmon, as follows:

5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area

(2) salmon, other than king salmon,

(A) 16 inches or greater in length may be taken from January 1 - December 31; bag and possession limit is **two** [THREE] fish, of which no more than **one** [TWO] per day and one [TWO] in possession may be coho salmon; if retention of coho salmon is allowed under this chapter, **all coho salmon must be retained and there will be no catch and release fishing for coho salmon;** [A COHO SALMON 16 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH THAT IS REMOVED FROM THE WATER MUST BE RETAINED AND BECOMES PART OF THE BAG LIMIT OF THE PERSON ORIGINALLY HOOKING IT; A PERSON MAY NOT

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Little Susitna coho salmon escapement of 10,100 to 17,700 has exceeded the goal in 14 of 25 years by an average of 14,000 coho and only achieved the goal in 7 years. This system can not be managed with restrictions in the commercial fishery to pour more and more coho into this stream to achieve the escapement goal. It is obvious that the commercial restrictions are unnecessary and unwarranted in well over half of the years wasting hundreds of thousands of coho as well as sockeye, pink and chum salmon. In only 5 of 25 years of data was the goal not achieved, missing the lower end by an average of only 3,300 coho. This system is basically unmanaged and this needs to change. By reducing the bag limit back to one until the run is assessed and then liberalizing the goal to two or three coho and allowing for a more liberal harvest in the commercial fisheries all stocks will benefit without undue hardships being applied to any one group. Since the catch and release mortality is 70 percent catch and release should be illegal as it is really wanton waste. When you consider the fact that the Little Susitna is and index of other coho stocks, most with much less of an inriver exploitation the amount of overescapement, lost harvest and reduced production is staggering. A companion proposal has been submitted under commercial regulations.

PROPOSED BY: Earl Young

(HQ-F16-106)

PROPOSAL 226 - 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. Create a bag limit of one hatchery king salmon in the Susitna River drainage, as follows:

Amend the Northern District King Salmon Management Plan by adding the following provisions:

(12) In the Susitna drainage, allow the retention of 1 hatchery produced King salmon greater than 20 inches per day. Hatchery produced King Salmon are part of the seasonal and daily bag and possession. Hatchery produced King salmon are to be tagged immediately upon retention.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Inadequate opportunity to harvest King Salmon in the Susitna drainage. The road accessible east side streams in Unit 2 have been closed to King Salmon harvest by emergency restriction consistently since 2009.

Adult hatchery produced King Salmon are present in fishable numbers in the east side streams within Unit 2.

There is a reasonable opportunity to catch a hatchery produced King salmon, that is missing an adipose fin within Unit 2. I have personally witnessed several get caught. I even witnessed at least 10 get caught in one day.

Hatchery produced King salmon should only be present for the purposes of adding additional harvest opportunity.

PROPOSED BY: Ben Allen (EF-F16-116)

PROPOSAL 227 - 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. Allow harvest of hatchery king salmon when emergency orders restrict the sport fishery, as follows:

Add the following to the Northern District King Salmon Management Plan:

Continue to allow the retention of adult hatchery fin clipped King Salmon in unit 2 of the Susitna drainage on years of low abundance when emergency order restrictions are implemented on the sport fishery.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Adult hatchery King salmon present in Willow and Little Willow Creek, have not been allowed to be harvested under emergency order restrictions, issued throughout the last decade. Hatchery King salmon should be managed differently than wild stocks. I have observed several fin clipped Kings caught below the Parks Highway bridge on both Willow and Little Willow Creek. Additionally, I have heard of fin clipped fish caught at other Parks Highway streams.

Allowing harvest of hatchery fin clipped King salmon would have a minimal impact on wild stocks and provide an additional opportunity for Alaskans and tourists to harvest fish, in a region where harvest has been seriously restricted.

This is the same protocol that is successfully practiced throughout the Northwestern United States.

PROPOSED BY: Amber Allen (EF-F16-121)

PROPOSAL 228 - 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. Increase the hours open to fishing in Fish Creek, as follows:

Amend hours in both general and youth only fishery to read:

Fishing is allowed only on Saturday and Sundays and only between hours of (6 A.M. and 6 P.M.) to **5 A.M. and 10 P.M.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? According to the last few years of Alaska Department of Fish and Game weir escapements, Fish Creek coho salmon are abundant enough to allow a few more hours of daily fishing time. The area where sport salmon fishing is allowed on Fish Creek is extremely short, and the salmon fishery is only open two days per week, so there is plenty of time for salmon to swim through the area when fishing is closed.

PROPOSED BY: Julie Busch (EF-F16-086)

PROPOSAL 229 - 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. Reduce the maximum legal size for rainbow trout in Byers Creek from 20 to 16 inches, as follows:

The solution we propose to the current regulation allowing individuals to keep one Rainbow Trout over 20 inches during the times in which it is permitted is to: reduce the authorized size to no longer than 16 inches, while still maintaining a 2 fish per day limit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We would like to address the issue of Rainbow Trout that are of maturity to reproduce, i.e. 16 inches or longer, being kept on Byers Creek. If changes are not made to the current regulations set in place, depletion of a **NATURAL** trout stock will be the consequence. Depletion being defined as: reduction of average size, a decrease in the overall population, as well as having an adverse effect on the genetics of the fishery (if a large fish is kept, the genetics go with it). There is an alternative solution we had considered, but rejected due to the fact it would not be correct. To make the creek catch and release would only infringe on the right to keep a fish if they choose to, something all fisherman have done. However keeping a fish over 16 inches in length is significant because when you remove such a specimen from the population, you are not only taking that fish, but of all its potential offspring, and their potential offspring..and so on.

PROPOSED BY: Todd Hallsten, Parker Wallace, Thys Grogan, Austin Gibbs (EF-F16-007)

PROPOSAL 230 - 5 AAC 61.XXX. Deshka River King Salmon Management Plan. Create a Deshka River King Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

Adopt a Deshka River King Salmon Management plan as follows:

The purpose of this plan is to direct the Department to manage the Deshka River sport king salmon fishery to attain spawning escapements within the SEG range of 13,000 - 28,000 fish, while encouraging adaptive management to attain the escapement objective in a manner which avoids inseason closures and restrictions when possible, and thereby maximizes benefit as much as practical. If the Department's annual Deshka River king salmon outlook calls for a total return of less than 21,000 king salmon, then effective starting May 16, the

Department may use, in preferential order, one or more of the following tools to precautionarily increase king salmon escapement through the sport fishery: restrict anglers to use of one single hook only, restrict the fishery to use of artificial lures only, restrict harvest to one bag limit per day (either personal or proxy, but not both), reduce the number of days per week king salmon may be harvested.

Once the Department can project a king salmon escapement of 17,000 king salmon past the Deshka River Weir or when 13,000 king salmon have swum past the weir (whichever comes first), the Department may return the fishery to normal fishing regulations the following day.

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

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? For 5 consecutive years (starting in 2012) the Deshka River sport king salmon fishery has been managed by preseason emergency orders setting the regulations to be used at the start of each season. From discussions the Commission has scheduled with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game it has come to our attention the Department seems to have no clear plan as to when and what emergency regulations may be appropriate at specific projected king salmon return levels. This creates several additional problems, a significant one of which is for the past 5 years regulations published in the Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary have been inconsistent with preseason emergency regulations issued by the Department. Every time this occurs the Department must spend considerable time and money (consequentially) to publicize these changes. We believe sport anglers may be better served with a Deshka River king salmon management plan printed in the regulations book, and clarifying what anglers might expect under specific king salmon outlook and return levels. This is even more appropriate during these times of state financial downturn.

In addition, when the fishery is managed by emergency regulation there is no clear way for the public to weigh in on an ineffective emergency regulation or propose a regulation change, since all emergency orders expire after 90 days. For example for the past two years ADF&G has been implementing emergency Little Susitna River and Susitna River drainage king salmon regulations starting May 1, but since there is no significant king salmon harvest until after May 15, the primary result of implementation on May 1 is to minimize benefit for hardly any, and in some years, zero biological gain.

Another dubious emergency regulation is the reduction in annual king salmon limit from 5 to 2 fish throughout the Susitna River drainage and Little Susitna River combined. On the Deshka River and Little Susitna River, in particular, there is enough angling effort that a reduction in annual bag limit likely has little positive affect on king salmon escapement — especially considering that

many Alaskans simply take up proxy fishing to sidestep a decreased annual limit. In these times of state economic hardship wouldn't it be more cost effective if the Department simply kept the annual limit at 5 king salmon and, thereby, reduced the need for proxy permits and proxy fishing? During times of king salmon shortage, wouldn't king salmon escapements be more positively increased by restricting daily harvest to one bag limit (either personal or proxy, but not both)?

PROPOSED BY: Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission (EF-F16-032)

PROPOSAL 231 - 5 AAC 61.XXX. Susitna River King Salmon Management Plan. Create a Susitna River King Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

Develop a Susitna River King Salmon Recovery Plan as follows:

(a) The purpose of this plan is to ensure adequate king salmon spawning escapements into mainstream Susitna River drainage tributary streams upstream of Unit 1 and provide management guidelines for the department. The department shall manage Susitna River king salmon sport harvest as follows:

(b) From May 1 - May 31 the department may allow sport king salmon harvest in all waters of Unit 2 open to king salmon fishing, that did not fail to attain king salmon escapement within the appropriate goal range the previous year.

(c) From May 1 - June 15 the department may allow sport king salmon harvest in all waters of Unit 5 open to king salmon fishing, that did not fail to attain king salmon escapement within the appropriate goal range the previous year.

(d) From May 1 - June 20 the department may allow sport king salmon harvest in all waters of Unit 3 and Unit 6 open to king salmon fishing, that did not fail to attain king salmon escapement within the appropriate goal range the previous year.

(e) each following year that the appropriate king salmon escapement goal(s) are attained for waters in that particular Unit and / or Unit(s) further upstream, the department may incrementally add up to another week of harvest opportunity until the full season of harvest opportunity is restored or an escapement goal is not attained.

(f) after failing to attain a specific king salmon escapement goal range, the department may reduce up to a week of harvest time for that specific water and / or a portion of downstream waters the following year.

(g) the department may identify and use other king salmon abundance indices it deems appropriate.

(h) The Commissioner may depart from the provisions of the recovery plan under this section as provided in 5AAC 21.363

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? All Unit 2, Unit 3, Unit 5, and Unit 6 waters of the Susitna River drainage, sport king salmon harvest has been closed for a period of 4 -5 years. Even though most waters are open to catch and release king salmon fishing, and even though some Unit 2 streams have been attaining escapement goals, the department has not developed any plan on when or how to determine if king salmon stocks have recovered enough to once again allow some harvest. This proposal seeks to develop conservative options in which sport king salmon harvest may once again be allowed. The proposed starting seasons under (b), (c), and (d) when king salmon harvest might be allowed are all scheduled early enough in the

season that only limited king salmon harvests would likely occur in each management unit. The public, user groups, advisory committees, and department are all welcome to weigh in with suggestions and options that might be agreeable.

PROPOSED BY: Andy Couch

(EF-F16-130)
