

UNITED SOUTHEAST ALASKA GILLNETTERS

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March 23, 2017

Board of Fisheries
Jessalynn Rintala
ADF&G

Sent via email and online form: jessalynn.rintala@alaska.gov

Dear Board of Fisheries Members:

Re: **OPPOSE PROPOSAL RC19 - AAC 33.331. Gillnet specifications and operation.**

“(d) In Districts **6**, 8, 11, and 15, through the fourth Saturday in **July** [JUNE], the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish fishing periods during which the maximum gillnet mesh size is six inches.”

United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters OPPOSES extending the required gillnet mesh size of six inches for another month as proposed by the Department of Fish and Game yesterday.

While we agree that the lack of king salmon is a big concern and altering management tactics may be helpful to increase their numbers, extending this net restriction will not significantly contribute to the universal desire for more king salmon. Our fleet’s catch of king salmon in July is very minimal.

We are concerned about what the proposed could mean for our fleet. In District 15, gillnetters could potentially have a 6-inch MINIMUM net restriction in place for sockeye conservation at the same time as this proposed 6-inch MAXIMUM rule. Nets typically stretch with use and being in compliance with these two rules would be nearly impossible. Such a violation of illegal gear could be a misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$15,000 fine.

Increasing the mesh size to 6 1/8 would help alleviate some of the net stretching concern.

In the lower districts, chum salmon opportunity may be hampered for those catching chums in July with their 6-inch or larger net. If a fisherman was planning to do that this summer and only owns a net larger than 6 inches, they would have to buy a new net to comply. This is likely impossible since the process of ordering, making, shipping, and hanging a net takes many months.

We understand the Department needs to make, and has made, some impactful conservation measures to allow regeneration of Southeast king salmon and we are generally supportive of those efforts. If this gillnet proposal is placed, how will other commercial gear groups additionally contribute during the timeframe and areas in question?

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Wallesz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Wallesz
Executive Director

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The mission of United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters is to protect, serve and enhance the gillnet fleet of southeast Alaska. We represent the interests of 473 salmon gillnet permit holders and their families.