

PROPOSAL 176

5 AAC 29.112. Management of chum salmon troll fishery.

Establish a commercial fishery using troll gear to target hatchery-produced chum salmon in Crawfish Inlet, as follows:

Current regulations provide for two other hatchery areas to remain open to trolling for chum salmon during the coho closure. We propose that Crawfish Inlet be added to this short list of areas. The entire Inlet has been preliminarily designated as a Terminal Harvest Area, which suggests that the presence of wild coho in Crawfish Inlet should be negligible

Proposed language:

5 AAC 29.112. Management of chum salmon troll fishery.

(a) The commissioner may open, by emergency order, a hatchery chum salmon troll fishery only during the summer coho salmon troll fishery closures specified in 5 AAC 29.110(b)(2).

(b) If the commissioner opens a season under (a) of this section, chum salmon fishing will occur only:

(1) in the waters of Sitka Sound and the Eastern Channel east of a line from Vitskari Rock Light to Inner Point, south of a line from Inner Point to Black Rock at 57_ 03.12' N. lat., 135_ 25.63' W. long., to Signal Island Light at 57_ 02.78' N. lat., 135_ 23.58' W. long., and north of a line from Cape Baranof at 56_ 59.03' N. lat., 135_ 23.23' W. long., to Kulichkof Rock at 56_ 59.52' N. lat., 135_ 26.62' W. long., to Vitskari Rock Light; and

(2) in the waters of Neets Bay east of the longitude of Chin Point to the longitude of the easternmost tip of Bug Island.

(3) in the waters of Crawfish Inlet in any or all portions east of 135 degrees 11.05'W, as determined by the Department.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture's (NSRAA) new Crawfish Inlet release site has been developed, in part, to provide opportunity for trollers to harvest chum and attempt to better balance the harvest of enhanced salmon. However, current regulations require a mid-August closure of 2-10 days to provide for coho allocation and/or conservation; this closure typically occurs during the peak of the Crawfish chum return.

In 1994, the Board of Fisheries (Board) formed a task force composed of seine, gillnet, and troll representatives to develop an allocation plan for enhanced salmon. The Southeast Alaska Allocation Task Force recommended, and the Board approved, a troll allocation of 27-32% of the total value of the commercial catch of enhanced salmon. When authorizing the allocation plan, the Board also unanimously adopted a set of Guiding Principles (94-148-FB) to assist the Regional Planning Teams, ADFG, and future Boards in arriving at hatchery allocation decisions.

The troll fleet has consistently fallen short of its allocated share of enhanced salmon. Since 2005, the actual troll share has averaged just 16-19%. This long-term shortfall is economically significant and estimated to be roughly \$4 million per year.

Achievement of hatchery allocation goals is based on review of 5-year rolling averages. The 9th guiding principle provides that when a gear group has been outside of its allocated range for three consecutive years as measured using a 5-yr average, adjustments can be made. The troll fleet has been below its allocation range for 22 consecutive years.

To partially address this imbalance, in 2014 NSRAA began releasing chum salmon at Crawfish Inlet to create a troll chum fishery. This is in keeping with the 13th guiding principle, which states that new production is an appropriate tool to assist in meeting allocation percentage goals.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Trollers Association (HQ-F17-028)
