

PROPOSAL 58

5 AAC 67.022. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means in the Bristol Bay Area.

Close sport fishing for king salmon in a portion of the Naknek River drainage, as follows:

5 AAC 67.022(d)(11).

King salmon fishing is closed on the Naknek River from “Painter Bob’s Cabin” upstream to the ADF&G marker at “Trefon’s Cabin” near the mouth of Naknek Lake and on all major creek tributaries draining into the Naknek River, including Big Creek, King Salmon Creek, and Pauls Creek. (These are all areas where king salmon actively spawn). In these closed areas, king salmon may not be targeted at all, and if they are accidentally hooked while targeting other species, must NOT be removed from the water and will be released immediately.

Naknek River Drainage:

-Naknek River main stem

King Salmon: Closed year round to all king salmon fishing from Painter Bob’s Cabin” upstream to the ADF&G marker at “Trefon’s Cabin” near the mouth of Naknek Lake.

-Big Creek – upstream of its confluence with the Naknek River to its headwaters.

King Salmon: Closed year round to all king salmon fishing

-King Salmon Creek – upstream from the ADF&G markers at the confluence of the Naknek River to its headwaters

King Salmon: Closed year round to all king salmon fishing

-Pauls Creek - upstream of its confluence with the Naknek River to its headwaters.

King Salmon: Closed year round to all king salmon fishing

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Over the years the Naknek River has seen a drastic increase in the number of guided sport fisherman. At the same time, we have seen a notable decrease in the numbers of king salmon in our river. Recognizing this decrease, ADF&G has already closed fishing of king salmon in certain areas, including the mouth of King Salmon Creek to the King Salmon Creek Bridge, and the mouth of Pauls Creek up past the Pauls Creek Bridge. However, this does not stop anglers from fishing the remaining portions of the tributaries king salmon actively spawn.

Currently the upper Naknek River, above the first ADF&G marker located half mile upstream above Rapids Camp, is open to catch and release king fishing. These areas are fished very hard, and it takes a significant toll on the kings when they are most vulnerable. Even catch and release fishing while kings are near or at their spawning stage results in high mortality rates. Anglers end up removing the fish from the water to release them, which is in violation of the law, either because of the difficulty of releasing one of these big powerful fish, or to take pictures. This can easily result in the death of the fish. We are not able to enforce catch and release king fishing and evidence of this is shown on numerous lodge social media sites, web sites, brochures, tv shows and promotional material.

It can be argued that the Naknek River is no longer a premier destination for king fishing, as it once was. Once king salmon reach the spawning grounds, the point at which they are most exhausted from their long journey home and therefor the most vulnerable, they should be left alone to spawn, and ensure a viable fishery in future years

What will happen if nothing is done? If nothing is done we risk the health of the world famous Naknek River king run. Future generations will not be able to enjoy our salmon for which the area is world famous for. The Naknek River will cease to be a premier destination for sport fishermen. Local subsistence users who depend on king salmon for an important food source may also suffer. IF THESE CHANGES ARE NOT IMPLEMENTED WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEE A DECLINE IN OUR OVERALL KING SALMON RETURNS. The added pressure of sport fishermen catching king salmon on their spawning grounds will in no way help the future of the Naknek River's once great king run.

PROPOSED BY: Naknek/Kvichak Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F18-086)
