

PROPOSAL 70

5 AAC 74.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Tanana River Area.

Modify the size limit in Fielding Lake to allow retention of lake trout less than 28 inches, as follows:

5 AAC 74.010 (C)(9)(B)

Modify the special regulations, for Fielding Lake as follows:

Lake trout may be taken only from October 1 through August 31, with a bag and possession limit of one fish, which must be less than 28 inches in length; all lake trout caught that are greater than 28 inches in length must be released immediately;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Since 2007 a 26-inch length limit was instituted for Fielding Lake, concurrent with a bait restriction. This was based on an allowable yield of 78 fish including a 10% hooking mortality. When you look at the 5-year harvest average and include a 10% hooking mortality of the 5-year catch, the yield has been near the allowable threshold. Without a length limit allowable harvest increases to approximately 200 fish.

The current minimum 26-inch limit concentrates the fishing pressure on the oldest and largest fish which are also the most fecund or fertile, producing the most offspring. Foul hooked fish that are less than 26 inches must be released. If a fisherman is looking for a lake trout to eat, finding one under 26 inches will be more probable.

Regulations in Yukon, Canada have gone to a possession limit under 26 inches, releasing anything longer – or including a protected slot limit.

Removing the 26-inch limit would ensure that harvest/mortality do not exceed prescribed yield targets. Limiting fish harvested to a maximum size limit of 28 inches would protect native brood stock and create a high-quality special management water. Unlike Paxson, Summit and Louise, Fielding is a smaller lake with limited spawning areas, susceptible to over fishing of the larger lake trout.

The benefits are several:

The allowable yield will be substantially higher than the current 78 per year increasing to approximately 275;

the larger more fecund fish important to spawning will be protected and thrive;

The smaller more prevalent caught fish can be kept, if desired for eating;

A high quality “special management water” would be created;

Fishing opportunity for larger fish would be protected.

Other options considered:

Keeping current regulations intact: Several nearby lakes have gone to a 1 fish any size limit and stayed well within allowable yield limits. The difference between Louise, Paxson and Summit lakes is they have much larger populations of lake Trout. Fielding Lake has a significantly smaller acreage and sustainable yield. Preserving the larger spawning fish is important to maintaining a high-quality sport fishery. The existing regulations indicate that we have stayed near the current

allowable yield – a concerning issue for maintaining a healthy population of large fish.

Catch and release only. While many fishermen have moved to catch and release, this would deny fishing opportunity and unnecessary.

Revising the regulation to allow harvest for 1 fish with a bag and possession limit of 1 fish. This significantly increases allowable harvest, increases the chance for fishermen to catch and keep a fish and would allow foul hooked fish to be kept. However, this will allow the most fecund fish to be caught. If fishing pressure increases due to the higher allowable harvest, this very well could impact the number of large fish available to catch in this lake. Releasing fish under 28 inches would ensure a high-quality special management water for the lake trout fishery.

A modified maximum size limit: this is where anglers are permitted to harvest only one fish over the designated size. Essentially a protected slot limit where no fish can be retained. This is more common in lake trout management and may be more acceptable to the angling public. I am not opposed to this option. I think a 32” minimum size (as a starting point) for allowable harvest would be acceptable to me – though not my favorite option. My reasoning here is you don’t need to keep a 30 inch plus lake trout to eat. If you wish to have it mounted it is now quite common to take a couple measurements and a picture for a trophy mount.

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