

PROPOSAL 144

5 AAC 09.369. Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan.

Restrict commercial fishing for salmon in areas both along the coast and in open seaward waters of the Outer Port Heiden Section and the open seaward waters of the Ilnik Section when the preseason Bristol Bay sockeye salmon forecast is 30 million fish or less, as follows:

This proposal seeks to restrict commercial fishing in areas both along the coast and in open seaward waters of the Outer Port Heiden and the open seaward waters of the Ilnik Section when the preseason Bristol Bay forecast is 30M salmon or less. The purpose of these area restrictions when the Bristol Bay preseason forecast is 30M salmon or less is twofold. First to appropriately spread the conservation of the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon amongst all users when the preseason forecast is 30M salmon or less; and secondly, when the Bristol Bay preseason forecast is 30M salmon or less., to direct more commercial fishing on local Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks, particularly the Meshik River and Ilnik River stocks, that migrate within known channels in each section. This proposal seeks to further limit the distance open to commercial fishing seaward in both fishing Sections. When the Bristol Bay preseason forecast is 30M salmon or less, the seaward boundary limit would be 0.5 miles seaward throughout these two Sections.

5 AAC 09.369. Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan

(j) In the Ilnik Section,

(1) notwithstanding 5 AAC 09.320(a)(4), from June 20 through July 20,

(A) commercial salmon fishing will be permitted in the Ilnik Section

(i) southwest of the Unangashak Bluffs based on the abundance of Ilnik River sockeye salmon;

and

(ii) northeast of the Unangashak Bluffs based on the abundance of Meshik River and Ilnik River sockeye salmon, combined;

(B) If the preseason Bristol Bay sockeye salmon forecast is 30M salmon or less, fishing will be allowed seaward for 1.5 miles.

(i) If inseason assessment indicates a run larger than 30M salmon, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Ilnik Section, and immediately reopen the Ilnik Section, with fishery restrictions that the commissioner determines appropriate

(C) [(B)] notwithstanding (B) if the commissioner closes that portion of the Egegik District specified in 5 AAC 06.359(c) for conservation of Ugashik River sockeye salmon stocks, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Ilnik Section and immediately reopen the Ilnik Section, with additional fishing restrictions that the commissioner determines necessary;

(I) The Outer Port Heiden Section is open from June 20 through July 31 to commercial salmon fishing in those waters west of a line from 57 _E0S.52' N. lat., 158_E34.45' W. long. to 57 _E0S.85' N. lat., 158_E37.50' W. long. based on the abundance of Meshik River sockeye salmon.

(A) If the preseason Bristol Bay sockeye salmon forecast is for 30M salmon or less, the Outer Port Heiden Section is open from June 20 through July 31 to commercial salmon fishing in those waters west of a line from 56 59.68 N. lat., 158 E40.45' w. long. Under this scenario, this section will be open to commercial fishing seaward for 1.5 miles.

(i) If inseason assessment indicated a run larger than 30M salmon, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Outer Port Heiden Section, and immediately reopen the Outer Port Heiden Section, with fishery restrictions that the commissioner determines appropriate

(B) notwithstanding (A), If the commissioner closes the portion of the Egegik District as specified in 5 AAC 06.359(c) for the conservation of Ugashik River sockeye salmon stocks, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Outer Port Heiden Section, and immediately reopen the Outer Port Heiden Section, with additional fishing restrictions that the commissioner determines necessary.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Sharing the conservation of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon. Currently, in both Ilnik and the Outer Port Heiden Sections, conservation action on Bristol Bay salmon is only taken after a conservation closure occurs in Bristol Bay. Specifically, closure of that portion of the Egegik District specified in 5 AAC 06.359(c) for conservation of Ugashik River sockeye salmon stocks will prompt the commissioner to take unspecified conservation action in the Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections. This delayed fishery management conservation action in the Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections will no doubt cause the conservation of Bristol Bay salmon to be mis apportion to the Bristol Bay fishers. Because the Bristol Bay preseason forecast has been fairly accurate, we believe that it is prudent and precautionary to base conservation efforts in the Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections on the Bristol Bay preseason forecast. Because Bristol Bay fishery managers are ultimately responsible for meeting subsistence needs and escapement goals, no additional conservation regulations are necessary for the Bristol Bay Management Area.

We recommend closing substantial portions of the Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections to commercial fishing when the preseason Bristol Bay sockeye salmon forecast is 30M salmon or less. The 30M salmon preseason forecast represents an anticipated escapement of approximately 7.2M salmon, leaving approximately 22.8M for potential harvest. The estimated total Bristol Bay escapement of 7.2M salmon from a run of 30M salmon would provide for escapements that would fall near the midpoint of the low range of the individual system escapement goals. Note also that since 1996, the total run Bristol Bay sockeye salmon has only fallen below 30 M salmon in 6 of the 22 years of record. The median run size during the period, 1996-2017, is approximately 39.4M salmon. Incorporation of this trigger in the Northern District fishery management plan will assure that conservation of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, when necessary, will be more appropriately shared among all commercial fishers that harvest Bristol Bay sockeye salmon. This recommendation to the management plan may preclude or possibly reduce additional inseason restrictions deemed necessary by the commission if a closure of that portion of the Egegik District specified in 5 AAC 06.359(c) for conservation of Ugashik River sockeye salmon stocks occurs. Accordingly, we propose that fishing be restricted both in shore length and seaward extension in the Outer Port Heiden Section and the seaward extension in the Ilnik Section. This would not only limit the area open to fishing in both Sections but may also focus fishing pressure on local salmon stocks, Meshik and Ilnik River stocks, that may or may not be affected by factors affecting the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon projection. Both Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Section fisheries are to be managed on the abundance of local sockeye salmon stocks, Ilnik and Meshik River stocks.

If nothing is done, fishing may continue in the Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections until it becomes obvious that restrictions are necessary because of closures in the Egegik District (Ugashik District). At that time, it will be too late to appropriately share conservation of Bristol Bay salmon amongst all commercial fishers. Bristol Bay Managers may be forced to restricted fishing periods or close the fisheries because of the need to meet subsistence needs and escapement goals. Additionally, if Northern Peninsula stocks are not affected by the factors negatively affecting Bristol Bay stocks, escapements to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers could be well over the targeted escapement because of the lack of fishing pressure directed on these stocks. This preseason closure of waters in the Ilnik and Outer Port Heiden Sections when the Bristol Bay preseason forecast is 30M salmon or less may be relaxed based on inseason assessment of the run.

Other solutions considered was to substantially reduce fishing time in both the Port Heiden and Ilnik Sections based on the preseason forecast of less than or equal to 30M Bristol Bay sockeye salmon. This may be a viable alternative or a combination of area and time restrictions. Another solution was to dramatically reduce the area opened to fishing within the Outer Port Heiden and Ilnik Sections so that the major harvest would consist of local stocks. These restrictions could possibly be relaxed on inseason assessment of the Bristol Bay run. Finally, we considered setting various triggers, based on the Bristol Bay preseason sockeye salmon forecast (30M, 25M, 20M salmon), that would stipulate increased closed waters and/or fishing time in the Outer Port Heiden and Ilnik Sections, commensurate with the pre-season Bristol Bay forecast.

Note that the WASSIP study found that Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks contributed an average of 48% to the SW Ilnik harvest (3 years); 30% to the NE Ilnik harvest (3 years); and 21 % to the Outer Port Heiden Section harvest (2 years).

PROPOSED BY: Lower Bristol Bay Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F18-022)

PROPOSAL 145

5 AAC 09.350. Closed waters and 09.369. Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan.

Restrict commercial fishing for salmon along the coast and in offshore waters of the Outer Port Heiden Section and restrict fishing in offshore waters of the northeast portion of the Ilnik Section, as follows:

This proposal seeks to restrict fishing both along the coast and in offshore waters of the Outer Port Heiden Section and restrict fishing in offshore waters of the NE portion of the Ilnik Section. The purpose of these area restrictions as to direct more commercial fishing on local Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks, particularly the Meshik River and Ilnik River stocks, that migrate within known channels in each Section. This proposal seeks to further limit the distance open to commercial fishing along the shore and offshore in the Outer Port Heiden Section and off shore in the NE portion of the Ilnik Section. The offshore boundary limit would be from 3 miles at the newly described northern open water boundary of the Outer Port Heiden Section (see below for location) to 2 miles offshore at the line that separates the SW and NE portions of the Ilnik Section at Unangashak Bluffs (159°10.25' W. long.).

These closures will also improve fish quality because of a shorter transport from fishery to processor and also provide for the harvest of Meshik and Ilnik River sockeye salmon stocks.

5 AAC 09.350. Closed waters. Salmon may not be taken in the following locations:

(3) Outer Port Heiden: waters of the Outer Port Heiden Section

(A) repealed 6/5/2016;

(B) east of a line from **56 E59.68' N. lat., 158 E46.45 W. long** [57 E05.52' N. LAT., 158_E34.45' W. long.] to 57_E08.85' N. lat., 158_E37.50' W. long.;

also, seaward waters are open to commercial fishing within the Outer Port Heiden and Ilnik Sections from a 3 miles seaward from a point on the shore 56 E59.68'N lat., 158 E34.45' W. long., to 2 miles seaward from the point on the shore, 159 10.25' W. long., that describes the line that separates the SW from the NE portions of the Ilnik Section.

5 AAC 09.369. Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan

(j) In the Ilnik Section,

(1) notwithstanding 5 AAC 09.320(a)(4), from June 20 through July 20, (A) commercial salmon fishing will be permitted in the Ilnik Section

(i) southwest of the Unangashak Bluffs based on the abundance of Ilnik River sockeye salmon; and

(ii) northeast of the Unangashak Bluffs based on the abundance of Meshik River and Ilnik River sockeye salmon, combined; **Commercial salmon fishing will be permitted in seaward waters within the Outer Port Heiden and Ilnik Sections from a 3 miles seaward from point on the shore 56 E59.68'N lat., 158 E34.45', to 2 miles seaward from the point 159 10.25' W. long that describes the line that separates the SW from the NE portions of the Ilnik Section.**

(I) The Outer Port Heiden Section is open from June 20 through July 31 to commercial salmon fishing in those waters west of a line from **56 E59.68' N. lat., 158 E46.45 W. long** [57 E05.52' N. lat., 158_E34.45' W. long.] to 57 _E08.85' N. lat., 158_E37.50' W. long. **within a line 3 miles**

seaward from a point on the shore 56 E59,68'N lat., 158 E34.45' W. long., to 2 miles seaward from the point on the shore, 159 10.25' W. long., that describes the line that separates the SW from the NE portions of the Ilnik Section, based on the abundance of Meshik River sockeye salmon. If the commissioner closes the portion of the Egegik District as specified in 5 AAC 06.359(c) for the conservation of Ugashik River sockeye salmon stocks, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close the Outer Port Heiden Section, and immediately reopen the Outer Port Heiden Section, with additional fishing restrictions that the commissioner determines necessary.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? 1. Overescapement of sockeye salmon into the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers. Escapements into the Meshik River have exceeded the high end of the current SEB of 86,000 salmon the last 4 years, 2014-2017, ranging from 95,500 in 2014 to 191,725 in 2017. In the Ilnik River, sockeye salmon escapements have exceeded the high end of the current SEG of 60,000 sockeye salmon in 2016 and 2017. In 2016, 124,000 salmon escaped to spawn; in 2017 a record 238,000 sockeye salmon escaped to spawn. This escapement is nearly 4 times the upper end of the current SEG. This proposal seeks to adjust the Sections so that more local Northern Peninsula salmon stocks are harvested, resulting in more appropriate escapement to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers. Note also that WAS SIP indicated that Northern Peninsula sockeye salmon stocks contributed an average of 48% to the SW Ilnik harvest (3 years); 30% to the NE Ilnik harvest (3 years); and 21% to the Outer Port Heiden Section harvest (2 years).

2. Quality of delivered fish that are harvested in the Outer Port Heiden Section; Most fishers are fishing very near the northern boundary of the Outer Port Heiden district. Delivery of these fish is delayed by the long travel distance from the point of harvest to the processor, resulting in degraded quality salmon.

3. Additionally, frequent very rough seas within the Outer Port Heiden Section makes it very difficult to fish and to transport fish to processor, resulting in waste and fish being delivered that are poor quality.

If nothing is done, escapements to the Meshik and Ilnik Rivers will continue to exceed the upper end of the SEB. Additionally, poor quality fish will continue to be delivered to processors because of the long travel distance and time. Other solutions considered was to close the northern portion of the Outer Port Heiden Section, as described above, but limit fishing to 1.5 miles from shore in both the open portion of the Outer Port Heiden and the NW portion of the Ilnik Sections, but this would eliminate much of the Outer Port Heiden Section to fishing because of shallow water.

PROPOSED BY: Lower Bristol Bay Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F18-023)

PROPOSAL 146

5 AAC 09.369. Northern District Salmon Fisheries Management Plan.

Close portions of the Northern District to commercial fishing for salmon when escapement goals are not met for two consecutive years, as follows:

5 AAC 09.369 (n): If the escapement goal for the Bear or Nelson Rivers is not met for two consecutive years from June 20 through July 31, the department shall manage the Bear River, Three Hills, and Ilnik Sections to conserve Bear River and Nelson River sockeye salmon stocks by allowing the passage of sockeye salmon from the northeast to the southwest of the Northern District as described in this subsection. Notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 09.320, from June 20 through July 31, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, establish fishing periods for the Bear River and Three Hills Sections and that portion of the Ilnik Section between the longitude of Unangashak Bluffs at 159° 10.25' W. long., and the longitude of Three Hills at 159° 49.45' W. long., during which the waters that are between the three-mile seaward boundary line, described in 5 AAC 09.301, and a line that is one and one-half miles shoreward of the three-mile seaward boundary are closed for one 24-hour period during a seven-day period. The waters located to the southwest of the open waters where a 24-hour closure has occurred will have sequential closures that allow fishing only in the waters out to the one and one-half mile line described in this subsection for the first 24 hours of an open fishing period. When the department is assured that the escapement goal will be met for the river that did not meet the escapement goal for two consecutive years, then the rolling closures will no longer be in effect.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To provide protection for the Nelson and Bear Rivers in the management of the Northern District fishery. If the escapement at Nelson or Bear Rivers is not met for two consecutive years, management action will be taken from Unangashak Bluffs in the Ilnik Section, as well as the Three Hills, and Bear River Sections to conserve stocks by implementing rolling closures.

PROPOSED BY: Nelson Lagoon Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F18-053)
