

King Salmon Management Plan (2 proposals)

PROPOSAL 37 – Create a king salmon conservation management plan that paired restrictions in Upper Cook Inlet and Lower Cook Inlet commercial fisheries.

5 AAC 18.XXX. New section This proposal will be heard at the LCI, Kodiak, and UCI meetings, and deliberated at the UCI meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Donald Johnson.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a new comprehensive, overarching king salmon management plan that would pair commercial restrictions in the Kodiak Management Area (KMA) with those in the Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) and Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) salmon management areas.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Management is based on inseason assessments of king salmon run strength in fishing districts where harvests will occur. King salmon are incidentally harvested in LCI and KMA commercial salmon fisheries targeting sockeye, pink, chum and coho salmon. In UCI, the commercial harvest of king salmon is tightly regulated through management plans that have been systematically modified by the board to meet the challenge of mixed-stock fishery harvest in the UCI area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Pairing unspecified management actions between Cook Inlet and Kodiak fisheries to conserve king salmon would add regulatory complexity and may provide an unknown savings in king salmon in some years. The proposal offers no specifics as to how this would be done, including which stocks of king salmon the comprehensive plan would affect. Presumably, restrictions would be imposed in the KMA area during years of anticipated low king salmon abundance in the Cook Inlet area. This could lead to lost commercial fishing opportunity and exceeding KMA salmon escapement goals.

BACKGROUND: A king salmon genetics study was implemented for the KMA from 2014 through 2016. In those years, Cook Inlet king salmon comprised less than 4.5% of the king salmon harvested in the KMA.

In Kodiak and LCI, there are no direct commercial fisheries harvests of king salmon. In LCI, the highest levels of king salmon deliveries occur when effort is closest to hatchery king salmon release sites (Halibut Cove and Seldovia).

In UCI, the largest commercial harvest of king salmon occurs in the directed set gillnet fishery in the Northern District and in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery. Both of these fisheries are prosecuted under the provisions of either the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.366) or the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.359). These management plans provide the department with step-down provisions to reduce the harvest of king salmon, including closures to commercial fisheries, that are enacted if escapement is less than desired or if escapement goals are not projected to be achieved.

Beginning in 2014, the board established nonretention of king salmon 28 inches or greater in length in the commercial seine fishery in the Kodiak Area prior to July 6. Beginning in 2005, if the department determines that the Karluk River or Ayakulik River king salmon biological escapement goals will not be met, nonretention of king salmon 28 inches or greater is established in the commercial salmon fishery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal. The department is **OPPOSED** to aspects of this proposal that add regulatory complexity and would make it difficult to meet LCI and KMA salmon management objectives without a measurable benefit to conservation of UCI king salmon. In the KMA, Cook Inlet king salmon are incidentally harvested in local stock fisheries targeting sockeye, pink, and chum salmon and make up a small fraction of the king salmon harvest. In LCI, there are no directed commercial fisheries that target king salmon. Districts that do not have hatchery releases of king salmon within its boundaries (Kamishak Bay, Eastern, and Outer districts) often go years with no reported commercial king salmon landings.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.