

PROPOSAL 114

5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan.

Modify the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

LR King Salmon Management Plan

Goals

SEG 13,500 – 27,000 (midpoint 20,250)

OEG 15,500 – 27,000 (midpoint 21,250)

Lower River (Downstream from the Slikok Sanctuary July 1 – July 31)

- 1) If the preseason forecast projects the inriver run to be less than the lower bound of the SEG:
Closed
- 2) If the preseason forecast projects the inriver run will exceed the lower bound of the SEG, the department may begin the season:
 - a) Closed, or
 - b) With no bait / no retention of king salmon except for king salmon less than 20in. in length, or
 - c) With no bait / retention if projected inriver run is within the OEG range.
Maximum size 36 inches in length
- 3) If the preseason forecast projects the inriver run will exceed the OEG range:
 - a) All sizes may be retained
 - b) May be opened to the use of bait
- 4) At such time that the run strength can be assessed in-season:
If the projected spawning escapement is less than the lower bound of the OEG range:
Closed

If the projected spawning escapement is within the OEG range:
 - a) No retention of king salmon except for king salmon less than 20in. in length, or
 - b) With no bait / retention maximum size limit 36 inches in length, or
 - c) May be opened with the use of bait. All sizes may be retained
* Dependent on where the projected escapement is within the OEG range

If the projected spawning escapement exceeds the OEG range:
 - a) May be opened to the use of bait
 - b) All sizes may be retained
- 5) Quit fishing when a fish is retained.
- 6) No change in seasonal limit.

- 7) Middle River restrictions remain in place.
- 8) Any size restrictions will apply to the PU fishery as well.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I am proposing two new elements to the Kenai River Chinook Late Run (LR) Management plan that will help conserve and rebuild abundance and diversity of Kenai LR salmon following a recent period of historical low abundance by implementing a precautionary management strategy that recognizes the large uncertainty in the historical stock assessment information and the recent productivity of low runs and escapements. The purpose of this plan is to provide for adequate escapements that result in more sustainable, reasonable and predictable fishery opportunities based on abundance.

I believe this plan will help increase escapements of kings, particularly large kings, at low to moderate run sizes. This plan gives us a better chance at distributing escapements throughout the entire range by managing for higher escapements that will reduce the risks of future low returns and help the LR become more stable and sustainable.

Proposed OEG 15,500 – 29,000

Between 1986 – 2008 the Kenai LR average escapements were around 35,000. Since 2008 the average escapement is around 16,000. Many of these lower escapements were achieved by the virtue of intensive management and harvest limitations. This level of low escapements puts us in the lower quartile of the SEG range and has failed to produce run strengths adequate enough to accomplish returns throughout the mid to upper levels of the range. Something has to change or we will continually struggle with opportunity limitations in all associated fisheries and mixed-stock fisheries because of low production and future king salmon returns. Ideally, we should strive to target escapements closer to the MSY of the SEG range which would be around 19,000 fish.

By establishing this precautionary OEG range, we believe it will raise the escapement levels and production over time. By rebuilding run abundance we not only help this valuable resource recover but we provide a better opportunity to achieve more predictable fishing opportunities with less restrictions for all users.

The lower bound of this OEG (15,500) is in keeping with the Department's suggested target buffer as presented in their 2017, Kenai River King Salmon Management Targets and OEG memo. In this memo they stated, "A similar margin of error (10%) for LF escapement projections is 1,350 fish. This additional 10% buffer to the lower bound of the recommended LF SEG range results in an escapement buffer target of 14,850 large king salmon." Then for simplicity, they suggest an increase of 1,500 resulting in a target of 15,000 (13,500 plus 1,500)

The 36in. Harvest Option

This measure provides the department with another harvest option to utilize as the run is developing and run strengths are questionable. This 36in. maximum size option helps counter the

effects of selective harvest of our biggest kings while protecting the large majority of female spawners (more than half of the 3 ocean females and nearly all of the 4 and 5 ocean females).

PROPOSED BY: Dwight Kramer

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