

PROPOSAL 125

5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.

Amend the *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* and include inseason assessments, as follows:

Re-write: c) From June 19th until July 19th there will be two regular Monday and Thursday fishing periods from 7:00 until 7:00pm. There will be two (2) restricted openers for drift fishing to Area 1. Between July 6th and July 15th, the Department shall use the restrictions to the best of their ability during this time frame to pass Sockeye Salmon into the Northern District. If actual Kenai run data warrants closing the sockeye salmon drift fishery due to extra low escapements in the Kenai River, the fishery may be closed after the 15th of July by EO. No additional fishing during this time frame, except for possible over escapement concerns which would allow Expanded or Corridor Openings only

d) Starting on July 20th, and ending on August 3rd, the drift fleet will be limited to one Area 1 opening per week and one Expanded Kenai or Kasilof section per week, every Monday and Thursday from 7:00am until 7:00pm, and until the season is closed by EO. This does not apply to Chinitna Bay. If minimum sockeye escapement, is not physically counted at RM 19, within 200,000 fish of the minimum escapement by the end of the day on July 22nd, Management will close the drift fleet and other commercial and sport fisheries as well, until the minimum escapement for sockeye salmon in the Kenai River is met. Once the minimum escapement has been met, the drift and all other fisheries will re-open on a normal basis. If sockeye escapements on the Kenai have exceeded the maximum escapement before the 1st of August. The fishery will be opened to Area 1 once per week, and at least 3 Expanded Kenai and/or Kasilof section openers, including the Anchor Point expanded section fishery. Management can issue any additional closures or opening by EO during this specified period, if needed at any time to prevent under or over escapements, just never more than two (2) Area 1 openings in any week.

f) From August 3rd until closed by EO, the drift fishery will be open every Thursday from 7:00am until 7:00pm in Areas 1, 3 or 4. Mondays the drift fishery will only be open in Areas 3 and 4. Chinitna Bay will remain closed unless opened by EO.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? After many years of drift fishing in Upper Cook Inlet the runs have become smaller in actual size, as well as run strength over the last 30 years. Many factors are involved, but the biggest is problem is completely managing a run based on forecasts, and not knowing how many spawners there actually are. The regulations are beyond cumbersome and ineffective at lending good management in Upper Cook Inlet. Some of the politics must come out of Cook Inlet for it to survive. The Kenai and its ecosystem are being destroyed. Best decisions are made in real time with real data in front of you. Forecasts are great, but as we have seen repeatedly they are rarely as accurate as we would hope. We need fair date parameters to start with, and then let management do their job as the run materializes. Forecasting and then managing on projected run strengths is not a good management practice and in my opinion has led to the weaknesses we are currently experiencing.

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