

Kenai and Kasilof Rivers Sport (12 proposals)

PROPOSAL 143

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Clarify the fishing season for king salmon less than 20 inches in length on the Kasilof River, as follows:

5 AAC 56.122 is amended to read:

(8) Kasilof River drainage, excluding Crooked Creek and Tustumena Lake and its tributaries:

(A) king salmon [20 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH] may be taken from January 1 – June 30, upstream of Sterling Highway Bridge, and from January 1 – July 31 downstream of Sterling Highway Bridge; bag and possession limit **for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is** [OF] one fish; annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, except as provided in (b) of this section; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; from January 1 – June 30,

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2001 the board created the statewide freshwater definition of jack salmon to establish a consistent length with a bag and possession limit of 10 fish. That statewide regulation is the default unless an area- or drainage-specific regulation changes it. The regulatory chapter for Kenai Peninsula 5 AAC 56.120 for Kasilof River establishes a season specific to king salmon 20 inches or greater in length. This has created confusion about whether or not there is a fishing season for jack king salmon. The department would like to clarify the language in 5 AAC 56.122 to reflect that fishing for jack king salmon is allowed during the same season dates as king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, therefore the statewide jack king salmon bag limit applies in the Kasilof River.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-148)

PROPOSAL 144

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the season, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

Align spring sport fishing dates for Bishop and Bench Creeks, as follows:

5 AAC 56.122 is amended to read:

(a)(3) Bishop Creek Drainage, including Daniels Creek:

(A) from **June 11 – April 30**, [JUNE 15-APRIL 14] flowing waters are open to sport fishing;

(a)(14) Bench Creek drainage, including Bench Lake, **from June 11 – April 30, waters are open to sport fishing;** [IS CLOSED TO SPORT FISHING FROM MAY 2-JUNE 10]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This change will bring Bishop and Bench creeks into regulatory alignment with other streams within the Northern Kenai

Peninsula Management Area that have spring spawning closures and improve regulatory simplicity while providing reasonable protection for spawning resident species of fish.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-149)

PROPOSAL 145

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area; and 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Allow sport, personal use, and subsistence fishing for sockeye salmon on the Kenai River until August 15, as follows:

During Board of Fish meetings I've heard commercial fishermen say that they are over escaping Red salmon into the rivers and streams. To prevent this from being a problem I propose that instead of closing Red fishing for sport, personal use, and subsistence fisherman, on July 31st that we leave the season open for another one to two weeks or the 15th of August. With this change sport, personal use and subsistence fishermen can help commercial fishing with their over escapement problem. It will also put more fish in the freezers and on the tables of the sport, personal use and subsistence fisherman.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Over escapement of Red Salmon

PROPOSED BY: Neil DeWitt (EF-F19-042)

PROPOSAL 146

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area; and 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Increase the sockeye salmon limit to six fish per day in the Kenai River when the commercial fishery is open, as follows:

I suggest upping the limit to 6 per day as soon as the commercials start netting the inlet. There are very few quality days with enough fish passing once the nets are in. If there are enough fish to net, then there are enough for sports fishermen to keep 6 on the day on days that are good.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Bag Limit for Sockeye is started at 3 fish per day and is not upped to 6 per person until approximately 800,000 fish have entered the river.

Unfortunately there are few quality days while the nets are in (sufficient numbers to catch fish).

PROPOSED BY: Frank Casey

(EF-F19-015)

PROPOSAL 147

5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit fishing for salmon on the upper Kenai River after taking the bag limit for that day, as follows:

No catch and release salmon fishing on the upper Kenai River from its mouth at Skilak Lake, upstream to the bait line above the Sterling Hwy bridge at Kenai Lake, including the entire Russian river drainage, after the daily combined bag limit of salmon has been reached.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Upper Kenai River drainage has become an overcrowded salmon fishery. In addition, the salmon stocks in the Upper Kenai drainage have experienced a steady decline. Catch and release salmon fishing after a bag limit has been reached can deny other anglers' opportunity.

PROPOSED BY: Cooper Landing Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(HQ-F19-109)

PROPOSAL 148

5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area; 5 AAC 57.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Middle Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area; and 5 AAC 57.123. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Allow two unbaited, single-hook, artificial flies and limit hook size throughout the Kenai River drainage, as follows:

We would like the regulation to read something like the following: In the entire Kenai River watershed, the use of two unbaited, single hook artificial flies is allowed, provided that flies must have a gap between point and shank of 1/4 inch or less.

Notes: 1) A hook with ¼ inch gap is approximately a size 10 hook. 2) If the BOF and ADF&G are concerned about snagging of sockeye salmon, this allowance of two small flies could be prohibited during the sockeye fishing season or in the Russian River fly fishing only area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Anglers would like to be able to use two small wet flies in the entire Kenai River drainage year around. This is especially popular during in the winter and early spring when fish are feeding on small aquatic insects. Many people are currently fishing with this method despite the regulations making it legal to only fish with a single hook. This proposal would allow anglers to use two wet flies or nymphs to fish provided the hook size is limited to prevent snagging of salmon. Because of the complexity of the Kenai

River regulations we do not know how to word a proposal. Therefore, we would leave the specific wording up to the BOF and ADF&G.

Please note that we are both long time Alaska residents who have extensive fishing experience on the Kenai River. One of us is retired from ADF&G and the USFWS and the other owns a fly shop in Anchorage. The Kenai River regulations are too confusing and should be simplified. We can't imagine how a first time angler on the Kenai must feel when they look at these regulations.

PROPOSED BY: Phil Brna & Mike Brown (HQ-F19-065)

PROPOSAL 149

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit catch and release fishing for king salmon on the Kenai River, as follows:

Other than king salmon within specified size, hook and release of king salmon on the Kenai River will no longer be deployed as a recovery plan.

More kings will spawn, return could rebound. All users will benefit if more kings spawn.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Fewer king salmon, smaller king salmon, Kenai River hook and release is a failed recovery strategy. Too difficult to reduce mortality when kings are hooked more than once.

If this problem is not solved there will be a continued downward trend.

PROPOSED BY: John McCombs (HQ-F19-030)

PROPOSAL 150

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Require retention of sockeye salmon caught in the Kenai River, as follows:

The Kenai River sockeye salmon fishery is catch and keep. Every sockeye salmon caught, up to the daily bag limit, must be kept. Once the bag limit is caught, the angler cannot fish on the Kenai River for the remainder of that day. There is no release of sockeye salmon regardless of where the sockeye salmon is hooked. No snagging is allowed.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce the waste of sockeye salmon, from catch and release mortality, in the Kenai River. Because the Kenai River is on the road system it gets heavily fished by tens of thousands of anglers. Hundreds of thousands of sockeye salmon are caught and released. It is well known that sockeye salmon do not readily bite a fly and have to be legally snagged by a method called lining, which results in snagging in the mouth or other parts of the body. If snagged other than in the mouth, the salmon has to be released.

The sockeye salmon also have to be in the river in large numbers for this lining method to be effective. It is common for anglers to spend the day catching and releasing sockeye salmon for the fun of it. When the sockeye are thick in the river it is not unheard of for an angler to catch and release forty, fifty, sixty or more sockeye in a day. These sockeye are going through an enormous amount of stress at this time because their body is chemically acclimating from leaving salt water and entering fresh water. The added stress from catch and release, especially when snagged and released with gashes, results in a high mortality or nonviable eggs because of the build up of lactic acid.

Most anglers do not know or use best practices on catch and release which compounds the mortality. This large mortality number, from allowing catch and release sockeye fishing in the Kenai River, is nothing more than legally allowing a wanton waste fishery. The released salmon often swims off only to die unseen, in the murky water. This fishing practice is not sustainable and is not being good stewards of the resource nor is it portraying to tourist the value Alaskans put on salmon for food, recreation, jobs and economic importance. The vast number of anglers spending the whole day on the river, also greatly contributes to bank erosion and habitat degradation, which jeopardizes future salmon production. There are many other systems in the Cook Inlet drainage for angler opportunity to fish, which will help relieve this unsustainable fishing pressure on the Kenai River.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F19-101)

PROPOSAL 151

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Allow retention of sockeye salmon snagged on the Kenai River, as follows:

The board should remove language forbidding the retention of foul hooked sockeye and leave language forbidding intentional snagging. This would be good for the fish, the fisherpersons, the enjoyment of the sport by more people (i.e. people would get off the river faster), and add more personal safety for adults and children in the associated fisheries.

This would NOT increase unsportsmanlike methods.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current regulations forbid the retention of unintentionally snagged sockeye salmon. This results in crowded fishing conditions, fish being tortured (perhaps several times), and I suspect lower spawning and survival rates of snagged fish. The definition of snagging appears to be an issue also which has resulted in unequal enforcement based on the decision of the enforcer. More people on the river means more hooks flying through the air in crowded conditions.

PROPOSED BY: Steve Pratt (EF-F19-048)

PROPOSAL 152

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bags, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

Prohibit barbed hooks when fishing in the Kenai River drainage, as follows:

The solution to the raising issue as the Kenai gets more and more pressure would be not allowing barbed hooks to be fished while targeting Rainbow Trout/Steelhead and Dolly Varden. In addition to that, the solution goes further in that having barbed hooks in the angler's tackle box or in a boat is illegal.

5 AAC. Fishing equipment for the Kenai River and its tributaries.

The ownership of all barbed hook meant for targeting the sport species, Rainbow Trout/Steelhead and Dolly Varden in the Kenai River drainage is illegal. The angler may not have any barbed hooks on his/her person at anytime while fishing the Kenai River and its tributaries. This includes, the current fishing lure/fly, any fishing lure/fly not being used, and all storage inside the vessel. This goes into effect year round.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue I would like the board to address is the use of barb hooks on the Kenai River. Due to the exponentially high volume of anglers on the Kenai River year round that use barbed hooks, it has caused the sport fish species (ie: Rainbow Trout and Dolly Varden) to be caught and released a multitude of times. Most of the river's population of fish are being caught multiple times a week and have no mandibles left due to poor education on unhooking fish with barbed hooks. These fish look like elderly humans without their dentures in, and it is truly saddening to know that a good portion of the fisheries species are like this.

PROPOSED BY: Jordan Perrego

(EF-F19-046)

PROPOSAL 153

5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan.

Increase the bag limit for the Kenai River coho salmon sport fishery to three fish July 1 – August 31, as follows:

5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan (a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of coho salmon into the Kenai River drainage and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the Kenai River coho salmon stocks primarily to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run. (b) Notwithstanding any other provisions in this chapter, for the conservation of coho salmon stocks, the department shall manage sport fishing in the Kenai River drainage as follows: (1) coho salmon fishing is closed in the Middle and Upper Sections from November 1 through June 30, and in the Lower Section from December 1 through June 30; any coho salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately without further harm; (2) repealed 6/4/2008; (3) coho salmon may be taken as follows: (A) from July 1 through October 31, in the Middle and Upper Sections; (B) from July 1 through November 30, in the Lower Section; (C) from July 1 through August 31, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is three fish;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the last board cycle, reallocation of early run coho tied into the 1% rule. During the last cycle, commercial fishing declared that there was a surplus of early run cohos. This surplus was available because the sport fishery bag limit had been reduced from 3 fish to 2. KRPGA did not submit a proposal to go to a 3 fish bag limit as we were unsure of current health of early run coho stocks.

Although we are still uncertain of those stocks, we feel certain that sportfish were reallocated to commercial fishers in the last cycle and used to negotiate moving the 1% rule to August 7.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Professional Guide Association (HQ-F19-070)

PROPOSAL 154

5 AAC 57.170. Kenai River Coho Salmon Management Plan.

Increase limits for Kenai River coho salmon from two to three fish, as follows:

Increase coho daily bag and possession limit in the Kenai River from two fish to three fish beginning on the day after the closure of the set net fishery in the Upper Subdistrict.

Corresponding regulatory changes are:

(C) from July 1 through **the day upon which the set net fishery in the Upper Subdistrict is closed for the season** [AUGUST 31], the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is two fish;

(D) from **the day after the set net fishery in the Upper Subdistrict is closed for the season** [SEPTEMBER 1] through November 30, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon 16 inches or greater in length is three fish;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? For nearly forty years, the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon in the Kenai River was 3 fish, 16 inches or greater in length. In response to low coho abundance during the late 1990's, bag and possession limits were reduced to 2 fish as part of a comprehensive plan that included restrictions on commercial fisheries. Since that time, abundance has improved.

Commercial fisheries are no longer restricted specifically to conserve Kenai River coho salmon, yet the sport fishery still operates under the lowered bag and possession limit for the first part of the run in August. Increasing the bag and possession limit from 2 to 3 fish in August would not jeopardize the sustained yield for the resource, would provide increased opportunity for harvest and would produce additional economic value for the fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (HQ-F19-125)
