

RC for Proposal 122 – Create a commercial dip net fishery at the mouth of the Kasilof River.

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This RC is being submitted to change the wording in Proposal 122 to be

Proposal 122 – Create a commercial dip net fishery at the mouth of the Kasilof and Kenai Rivers.

Background: I was fortunate to be able to sit through the Board Process and to gather information in real time that enables a better proposal. Some of that information is that at current harvest levels the PU dip net fishery is sustainable. The Board did not feel there was conflict of interest between harvest in this area and achieving an In-River goal on the Kenai, nor in allocating to the commercial sector. Discussion around the dip net PU fisheries also spoke to a low individual harvest. Services such as a guide service or something of that nature that could help people access fish were viewed favorably. Commercial catcher/sellers would more definitely give Alaskans participating in the dip net fishery access to fish.

Discussion: My original proposal was directed toward the Kasilof River and what might be a better IN-SEASON version of the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area **to provide harvest opportunity to fishermen excluded by regulation, and to escape within its BEG.**

In department comments, the suggestion of conflict arose. It is possible to imagine an individual being angry at regulation. But I find it unlikely that someone of the mindset would choose to put in the labor intensive efforts of fishing a dip net. A PU participant may dislike commercial fishing. Even if that were to be the case, I would ask that opportunity not be lost by the mere possibility someone is prejudiced against me! That lost opportunity is much the greater injury than any individual insult. Regarding other potential conflict: the PU fishermen in the Kasilof area are primarily shore-based and so my proposal was that the commercial dip net fishery be from a vessel. Not to get nit-picky should a boat come into shore Blah, blah. The point being well understood that one would not be permitted to “stand in line” and compete on limited shore areas. Meanwhile, **a drift fishery is a completely egalitarian type of fishery.**

The idea of conflict was in my mind when I decided to expand upon my proposal. Having a **Stakeholder** seems like a better way to recruit truly interested individuals into the fishery and **to maximize the development of the fishery.**

This RC proposal is to open new areas and a gear type to commercial fishing. The fishery start dates would be the same on each River system as that of the PU dip net fishery, June 25 for the Kasilof and July 10 for the Kenai and then close on August 15th alongside other Cook Inlet commercial fisheries (unless extended by EO). The areas open to fish would be the same as well. I would like to adopt the hours in the Kenai River 6 am – 11pm to both Rivers, as I feel that it is a more conducive to a commercial fishery operating from a vessel. I do not feel that any further regulatory language is necessary. I feel that there may be discussion of fishable hours per week, as in a cap or limit but I don't personally believe that would have any value. How many hours would an individual actually want or physically be able to fish a dip net? It is labor intensive and inefficient. How many hours will I have to fish to catch the average of my gillnet harvest? Can I even do it? Why then would I pursue the fishery? Because I like those questions and the unknown. I very much enjoy operating as a catcher/seller. I think work is good and I would rather my crew... just be on the water. But also, one of THE most compelling reasons for me to consider this enterprising business is a pink fishery. There seems a huge unknown there as to what volume of fish I might be able to land which could prove very valuable to the processing sector over time. While I am simplifying the closure as of August 15th for this maiden voyage, the Board may wish to adopt language similar to drift areas 3 and 4 so as to be able to deal with an as yet unknown level of harvest in pink salmon stocks and selectivity against Coho salmon.

To discuss this issue a little further. The behavior of salmon species may lead to an extremely selective fishery if fished accordingly. I have watched schools of salmon interact in various bodies of water. Fish will tend to school and mingle. Large schools will tend to displace other salmon species. Schools tend to push other schools of fish higher or lower in the water. In a river system, the ebb or flow of the river and strength of current may largely dictate how and when fish move, etc. There are a lot of exciting things to explore and if successful in discovering very selective harvest areas, the dip net PU dipnet fishery on the Kenai or Kasilof Rivers may be able to be extended by EO into August in more discrete areas within their geographical area that would specifically target pink salmon.

Either of a Cook Inlet Drift or Set permit would give preference into the fishery. The permit would be registered to fish only in the dip net fishery for the season. It was my business plan to hold a dip net permit and a set net permit... however... as I think about it... though an individual can hold two commercial permits, **I am not sure if an individual can fish in two fisheries in the same season? That would be a very important clarification from Law Department.**

I do not know if the Board would want to place a cap on initial entry. I cannot imagine very many permits wanting to register initially. But if a cap is suggested, I would hope it not be too low. I would want any interested parties to participate. The more data we develop the more definitely we would be able to understand the ways to fish most efficiently and utilize best practices. Reporting requirements of all fisherman beyond catcher/seller data could be

developed which could be shared regularly with Fish and Game Management as well as in presentation to the Board at end of season.

Finally I do **NOT** support the idea that this fishery is a conversion for an existing commercial fishery. It does not, at any rate, supply an avenue by which more permits can be minted for the Cook Inlet Fisheries. Also, if this fishery is successful and the number of set and drift permit holders applying begins to increase, the State will be able to monitor how regulation is affecting Cook Inlet Permit Holders and have in a sense an annual 'vote' from the commercial fleet as to pertinent measures managing the number of permits in those fisheries for economic viability.

Proposal Recap – Commercial Dip Net Fishing

- Seasonal registration by CI Commercial Permit Holder
- Season Dates: June 25- August 15 or EO on Kasilof River
 - Open 6 am - 11pm, 7 days per week
 - July 10- August 15 or EO on Kenai River
 - Open 6 am – 11pm, 7 days per week

Drift/ vessel fishery only

3 nets per vessel

No retention of King salmon in either river

Ideal catcher/seller relationships with the public

Daily catch reporting with the Department of Fish and Game

Full presentation to the BOF at end of season

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