

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Findings regarding regulatory action taken to address salmon
stocks of concern in the Upper Cook Inlet Area

2011-266-FB
March 26, 2011

During its October 13–14, 2010 Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) work session, the board heard reports from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) on escapement goals set by the department for Cook Inlet salmon fisheries. The board also heard department recommendations on Stock of Concern status and concurred with them.

Susitna River Sockeye Salmon: Yield Concern (established 2008)
Chuitna River King Salmon: Management Concern (established 2011)
Theodore River King Salmon: Management Concern (established 2011)
Lewis River King Salmon: Management Concern (established 2011)
Willow and Goose Creeks King Salmon: Yield Concern (established 2011)
Alexander Creek King Salmon: Management Concern (established 2011)

The department developed action plans for each of these stocks for public and board review for the February 22–March 5, 2011 Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting held in Anchorage, consistent with the board's *Policy for Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries* (5 AAC 39.222).

The department developed action plans, identifying management and research activities that could be implemented in response to the various stocks of concern that had been identified. Also included were a number of regulatory options for the board's consideration for conservation purposes. Following a review of these options, and after taking public comment, the board took four specific measures to address the management and yield concerns identified by the department. The purpose of this board finding is to identify those specific regulatory actions taken to address the stock of concern issues raised with the understanding that future board action(s) could be taken when the stock of concern levels abated. The following regulatory actions were taken during the February 22–March 5, 2011 meeting.

Susitna River Sockeye Salmon (Yield Concern)

The board specified in the *Central District Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.353) that from July 9–15, fishing during the first regular period is restricted to the expanded Kenai and expanded Kasilof sections. Previously, fishing during this time frame was restricted to the regular Kenai and Kasilof sections and Drift Gillnet Area 1. The board specified that additional fishing time between the first restricted period and the second regular period during this time frame may be allowed in the expanded and/or the current Kenai and expanded Kasilof sections. The board also added a limitation that fishing during the second regular fishing period is restricted to the Kenai and Kasilof sections and Drift Gillnet Area 1. The board adopted these measures to allow the passage of more sockeye salmon to the northern portions of Cook Inlet.

Chuitna River King (Management Concern)

Theodore River King (Management Concern)

Lewis River King (Management Concern)

The board increased closed specific commercial fishing areas described in the *Northern District King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 21.366) to fishing for king salmon if sport fishing for king salmon in the Chuitna River is closed. The increased areas closed from the Wood Chip Dock (61° 2.559' N, 151° 14.356' W) north to the Susitna River. The board also prescribed sport fishing closures for the taking of king salmon in the Chuitna, Lewis, Beluga, and Theodore River drainages, including closures to catch and release. The board adopted these measures to allow the passage of more king salmon to spawning locations.

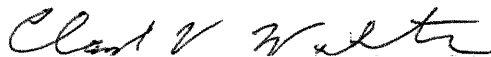
Willow and Goose Creeks King Salmon (Yield Concern)

The board removed from 5 AAC 61.114 (*Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area*) the final weekend from streams in Unit 2 of the Susitna River drainage area for fishing. The board also specified that in waters open to sport fishing for king salmon in Unit 2, that from May 15 to July 13 sport fishing for any finfish species is closed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Additionally, in the Goose Creek drainage, sport fishing was closed for king salmon, and upstream of the Parks Highway only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure may be used. (Note: this was already in regulation and the board just acknowledged it. The regulatory language written regarding gear above the highway was necessary because Goose Creek had to get pulled out of a combined section and inserted as a stand-alone.) The board adopted these measures to allow the passage of more king salmon to spawning locations.

Alexander Creek King Salmon (Management Concern)

The board removed size and bag limits on northern pike taken from Alexander Lake as specified in 5 AAC 61.112 (*Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area*) and allowed the use of spear and bow and arrow for northern pike on Alexander Lake as specified in 5 AAC 61.110 (*General provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area*). The board also removed restrictions on the disposal of pike caught in the Susitna River drainage (Chapter 61) and the West Cook Inlet Area (Chapter 62), except that it did specify that pike caught may not be released alive back into the water. The board adopted these measures in hope of reducing overall number of pike feeding on king salmon smolt.

ADOPTED this 26th day of March, 2011



Vince Webster, Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries

Vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed