

## **PROPOSAL 208**

### **5 AAC 21.366. Northern District King Salmon Management Plan.**

Restrict the commercial king salmon fishery in the Northern District as follows:

(10) if the king salmon sport fishery on Deshka River, **Susitna River Drainage Unit 2, Unit 4, Unit 5, or Little Susitna River** as described in 5 AAC 61 is

...

(B) conducted as a catch and release fishery, **or closed**, the commissioner shall, by emergency order, **close the commercial king salmon fishery throughout the Northern District**; [REDUCE THE TIME ALLOWED PER FISHING PERIOD PROVIDED FOR IN THIS SECTION TO NO MORE THAN SIX HOURS IN DURATION, OR FROM 7:00 A.M. UNTIL 4:00 p.m.;]

[(C) CLOSED, THE COMMISSIONER SHALL CLOSE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE COMMERCIAL KING SALMON FISHERY THROUGHOUT THE NORTHERN DISTRICT;]

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Although the purpose of the Northern District King Salmon Management Plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of king salmon into the Northern District drainages and provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the Northern District king salmon stocks primarily for sport and guide sport uses in order to provide sport and guided sport fishermen with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon over the entire run as measured by the frequency of inseason restrictions.

With what the department has identified as a downturn in saltwater production, in the last decade there have been inseason restrictions and / or closures to Northern District drainages every year. In 2021 sport fishermen could not harvest a king salmon from any of the wild stock Northern District drainages until June 18. In 2022 there was zero opportunity for sport anglers to harvest a king salmon from any Northern District fishery other than the hatchery fisheries at Ship Creek and Eklutna Tailrace / Knik River. In addition at the last Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting, directed king salmon harvest by the Northern District commercial fishery was expanded to allow commercial harvest of king salmon at times when the Northern District sport fisheries targeting wild king salmon were restricted to catch and release fishing.

The current stipulations of the management plan appear to defy the purpose of the plan as identified in the first paragraph. 1. More specifically the commercial harvest, provided in the plan, is at times (most years) exacerbating king salmon escapement shortages — rather than ensuring adequate king salmon escapement. 2. With the plan allowing commercial harvest, when the sport fishery is closed to harvest, it appears the fishery is managed primarily for commercial uses — instead of sport and guided sport uses as identified in the plan. 3. If the purpose is to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest king salmon over the entire run — then allowing commercial harvest when sport harvest is closed only increases the likelihood that ZERO sport harvest may be allowed over the entire run in more drainages (as occurred in 2022). Note: significant king salmon producing drainages that provided zero sport king salmon harvest during 2022 include Little Susitna River, Susitna River drainage Units: 1 (Deshka River), Unit 2 (Willow,

Little Willow, Sheep, Goose and Montana Creek, and Kashwitna River), Unit 4 Yentna River (Lake and Peters Creek and Talachulitna River), Unit 5 Talkeetna River (Clear and Prairie Creek).

We request the Board consider more conservative management of the commercial fishery — similar to what was regulation before the last Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting — but considering a more wholistic Northern District king salmon stock approach rather than only Deshka River king salmon.

**PROPOSED BY:** Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F23-134)

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