

## **PROPOSAL 239**

### **5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area**

Establish a large king salmon escapement goal for the Little Susitna River as follows:

The weir is in place, and we have the technology, so we need to start differentiating between large king salmon and jacks. Do not count jacks as part of the escapement goal. Even if ADF&G continues to count all kings at the weir start differentiating between larger kings and jacks

Additionally, I would like to see a change in regulations to address the “jack” issue on the Little Susitna River. Perhaps allow retention of jacks under 20 inches at all times even when fishing or retention is closed by emergency order

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** My issue is that all king salmon are currently being counted at the ADF&G operated weir. I would like the Board to adopt a large fish Little Susitna River king salmon spawning escapement goal.

Amend the Little Susitna River king salmon management plan to differentiate between large kings and smaller jacks. The Little Susitna River currently has a “jack” problem, and it is affecting future returns.

This is what is written on the Departments web site when you look at fish counts for the Little Susitna River:

*“ADF&G operates a weir that is located at river mile 32.5, approximately 4 miles upstream of the public use facility off Point MacKenzie Rd. Escapement is primarily monitored using a resistance board weir. An underwater video system is installed within the weir and motion-detected fish passage is recorded during nighttime hours and at times when the river is heavily glaciated.”*

For many years the escapement goal has been between 2,100 4,300 king salmon. Currently every king salmon that passes through the weir is counted (when water conditions permit).

I believe that there is a problem of too many smaller (jack) kings returning annually on the Little Susitna River. Over the past 10 years I have averaged 21 fishing days, 75 hours, and 53 kings caught per year on the Little Susitna River. These data are based on the arbitrary size that jacks are chinook salmon that are under 20 inches in length. Nearly all of these smaller jacks are male. The female component of a king salmon run consists almost entirely of older age-class “large” fish.

Of my 532 kings caught in that 10 year period, 224 or 42% were under twenty inches in length, and they are what we commonly call “Jacks”. I realize that my sample size is small, but I realistically believe that at least one in three or 33% of king salmon returning to the Little Susitna river are undersized jacks! This also implies that only 33% of the counted spawning run are large females.

ADF&G counts large fish on other fisheries in the State. Recent technology like the underwater video system and motion-detected fish passage for recording during nighttime hours are currently used on the Little Susitna River Weir. Technicians can differentiate between species even when multiple species are in the weir at the same time. Why would managers not want to use this technology to differentiate between large king salmon and the smaller jacks? Why would managers not want to count only larger fish?

I believe that the Little Susitna River has a jack problem, and that ADF&G needs to address this issue. If jacks are viable and they contribute to the spawn, is that what we want? Do eggs fertilized by jacks produce more jacks for future runs. Is there such a thing as too many jacks? Even if ADF&G continues to count all kings at the weir would it not be better to know how many of those kings were jacks?

Is 20 inches really the measurement that differentiates between two year old fish and three year old fish? I catch a lot of kings on the Little Susitna River between 15-24 inches in length.

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