

**PROPOSAL 71**

**5 AAC 18.362. Westside Kodiak Salmon Management Plan.**

Modify the *Westside Kodiak Salmon Management Plan* to allow the department more flexibility for fishing periods in the Outer Karluk Section as follows:

5 AAC 18.362. Westside Kodiak Salmon Management Plan

...

(e) The Inner and Outer Karluk Sections must be managed

- (1) From June 1 through July 15, based on early-run sockeye salmon returning to the Karluk System; the commissioner may open, by emergency order, fishing periods in the Inner Karluk Section only if the department determines that the midpoint of the early-run escapement goal range will be achieved; in the Outer Karluk Section, from June 16 through approximately July 15, the commissioner **may** [SHALL] open fishing periods to occur at the same time as open fishing periods in the Central Section.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Under the Westside Kodiak Salmon Management Plan, early season management of the Central Section of the Northwest District and the Inner and Outer Karluk sections of the Southwest District is driven primarily by escapements of early-run Karluk sockeye, which occur mainly in June and early July.

The Westside Management Plan states that openings in the Outer Karluk Section of the Southwest District shall occur when the Central Section is open between June 16 and July 15. The word “shall,” has created a situation where the Outer Karluk Section is open whenever the Central Section is open. However, since the Outer Karluk Section is a near terminus area, with fish concentrating near the mouth of the Karluk River, opening the Outer Karluk at the same time as the Central Section, which is further north and farther away from the Karluk River, can create a conservation concern during weak returns.

If the Outer Karluk Section is not required to be open during Central Section openings, managers could keep the Outer Karluk closed until escapement goals are met, thereby decreasing the risk of overharvesting during weak returns while increasing the chances for Central Section openings. This would create greater fishing opportunities for both the set gillnet and seine fleets in the Central Section, including smaller seine boats, which sometimes can’t fish the exposed Outer Karluk Section due to weather.

Additionally, given the close proximity of the Outer Karluk Section to the Karluk River, a higher concentration of Karluk bound chinook salmon can be expected to be caught in the Outer Karluk Section than in the Central Section. Allowing the Outer Karluk Section to remain closed while the Central Section is open could increase the odds of reaching minimum escapements goals for Karluk River chinook salmon.

**PROPOSED BY:** Northwest Setnetters Association

(HQ-F23-077)

\*\*\*\*\*