

Lower Cook Inlet Summer Fishery (3 proposals)

PROPOSAL 6

5 AAC 58.XXX. New Section.

Create a management plan and establish a guideline harvest level for the lower Cook Inlet summer salt water king salmon sport fishery as follows:

- (a) **The goal of this management plan is to stabilize the sport harvest of king salmon in the mixed stock salt water fishery in lower Cook Inlet from April 1 through August 31;**
- (b) **The lower Cook Inlet salt waters include all salt water south of the latitude of Bluff Point at 59 40.00'N. lat excluding shore-based harvest;**
- (c) **the bag and possession limit is 2 king salmon any size;**
- (d) **the annual limit and harvest record specified in 5 AAC 58.022 applies to king salmon 20" or greater harvested in this fishery;**
- (e) **the guideline harvest level is X,XXX king salmon**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The king salmon harvest in the lower Cook Inlet summer fishery has continued to increase in recent years due to shifting effort from the upper Cook Inlet summer king salmon fishery as a result of emergency order (EO) preseason and inseason restrictions and closures. Guided effort towards king salmon in Cook Inlet salt waters may also be increasing with restrictions to guided fishing for Pacific halibut from the federal Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan. From 2002–2013, the king salmon harvest in this fishery averaged approximately 5,300 fish annually. In the last three years, the harvest has increased over 50% from the 2002–2013 average to an average of approximately 8,300 fish and in 2021 was over 11,000 fish. Based on genetic mixed stock analyses of this fishery from 2014 through 2018, 98% of the king salmon harvest are from stocks originating outside of Cook Inlet. In 2023, the department restricted the bag limit from 2 to 1 king salmon in this fishery due to concerns with harvest of Cook Inlet stocks as they migrate through lower Cook Inlet salt waters. Adopting a management plan with a guideline harvest level would help better identify appropriate harvest level for this mixed stock fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-017)

PROPOSAL 7

5 AAC 58.030. Methods, means, and general provisions - Finfish.

Prohibit snagging and spear fishing for king salmon in Seldovia Harbor and Lagoon until June 24 as follows:

The solution is simple. Just prohibit snagging kings in the Seldovia Harbor and Seldovia Lagoon, until June 24. In other words, reinstate the old regulation with the addition of diving and spear fishing. Appropriate wording:

Snagging and spear fishing for king salmon is not allowed in the Seldovia Harbor, Seldovia Lagoon Channel and Seldovia Lagoon until June 24.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? SNAGGING OF RETURNING HATCHERY KING SALMON SELDOVIA. Since 2020 regulation changes allowed snagging of king salmon from the Seldovia Harbor to the Seldovia Lagoon. In discussion with a local ADFG fishery biologist this was inadvertently done in an attempt to simply regulations. This regulation prohibiting snagging reaches back to the 1980s, when I first started fishing there. The reason was to provide a window for anglers to use non-snagging methods to harvest stocked kings returning to Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon, Halibut Cove Lagoon and Seldovia Lagoon. I was told the regulation also arose from safety concerns of snagging in a confined area and to also maintain a sporting fishery.

Before the 2020 regulation changes snagging was prohibited in the Seldovia Lagoon and nearby areas, Homers Nick Dudiak Lagoon and Halibut Cove Lagoon until June 24. This was also reasonable as remaining kings mainly quit biting. That way people could still get kings. By then most people had got the kings they wanted by sport fishing methods and less people were fishing. This made snagging less dangerous.

Now that snagging is allowed year around, south of the designated line from Anchor Point to Point Pogibishi, except for the Nick Dudiak Lagoon, the fishery for stocked Seldovia kings is very changed. Below is a summary of the reasons not to snag until June 24.

1. Seldovia kings were not open to snagging until June 24, which allowed for a sport and local fishing experience.
2. Snagging quickly kills all of the returning kings. The locals, of which I am one, and tourist have a greatly reduced chance of catching kings. People fly into the airport walk over to the northwest edge of the runway and quickly snag the kings and leave. How does this help the local economy?
3. Seldovia's economy is now heavily dependent on tourism and this king run brings people in to sport fish. I know companies that send employees and clients to Seldovia to fish these kings and also fish with local charters. They spend money in local restaurants, bar, food and lodging etc..
4. In 2020 when it was proposed to stop stocking kings in Seldovia and allocate the fingerlings to Homer there was strong local and outside objections. ADFG then dropped the proposal because of the strong interest to keep stocking the Seldovia kings.
5. The City of Seldovia has considered trying to raise money to stock additional kings and possibly silvers.
6. Kings do not bite when people are snagging close to you. That forces people fishing to also snag if they want a king.
7. Snagging is very dangerous from the Seldovia Bridge. The bridge is often quite crowded on the top and below with people fishing for kings and tourist watching the action.

8. Now some divers are spear fishing in the Lagoon. It just a matter of time until some are inadvertently snagged. Some just swim right under your boat and you're not even aware they are there. These people could easily be snagged in vulnerable areas like the throat.

If snagging is prohibited in Anchorage Ship Creek and nearby tidal areas and the Homer Nick Dudiak Lagoon, why should it be allowed in Seldovia Lagoon, harbor and channel.

PROPOSED BY: Thomas Dunagan (EF-F23-005)

PROPOSAL 8

5 AAC 58.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish.

Prohibit snagging in Seldovia Bay as follows:

From January 1 through June 15, snagging is closed in the waters of Seldovia Bay starting at the entrance of the Seldovia Boat harbor including all waters east and south of the breakwater wall and upstream through the Seldovia slough and including the entire Seldovia Lagoon.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In a recent regulation change the salt waters of Kachemak Bay were opened to snagging to align with the rest of Cook Inlet. This change included the waters of the Seldovia Slough and Lagoon. The Department of Fish and Game releases king salmon smolt in the Seldovia Lagoon each summer. Historically the waters of the Seldovia slough and lagoon were closed to snagging until June 24th. This gave people the opportunity to enjoy the sport fishery before snagging opened and fish could be harvested before they began to turn.

Seldovia and this fishery would benefit more if the regulation returns to the way it has been historically. Since ADF&G began releasing the king smolt in the head of Seldovia Lagoon the returning adults spend more time there causing them to turn faster than they have historically. To allow for equal opportunity and a chance to harvest these fish while they're still bright we propose moving the snagging date up one week from June 24th to June 15th.

PROPOSED BY: Seldovia Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F23-131)
