

Susitna River Personal Use Fisheries (4 proposals)

PROPOSAL 228

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Close dipnetting in the vicinity of Anderson Creek during the personal use fishery on the lower Susitna River as follows:

5 AAC 77.540(h)(2) is amended to read:

...

(2) between ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately one mile downstream from Susitna Station downstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located near the northern tip of Bell Island/Alexander Creek cutoff, **excluding the waters of Anderson Creek and between markers located approximately 300 feet downstream and 50 feet upstream of the mouth of Anderson Creek is closed to dipnetting;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Anderson Creek supports a small stock of coho salmon that would be susceptible to overharvest if allowed to be targeted in the Susitna River personal use dip net fishery. Consideration for this small stock was overlooked when this new personal use fishery was implemented in 2020. The department has been issuing emergency orders to close dipnetting in the vicinity of Anderson Creek each season until a correction could be made in regulation at a regularly scheduled board meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-003)

PROPOSAL 229

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Increase the number of days the Susitna River dip net fishery is open as follows:

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

...

(h) Salmon may be taken by dip net in the Susitna River, only as follows:

(1) from July 10 through July 31, **Monday 6:00 a.m. to 11 p.m.,** Wednesday 6:00 a.m. to 11 p.m., **Friday 6:00 a.m. to 11 p.m.,** Saturday 6 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; the department may alter the time, or area of, or close the fishery, based on salmon abundance; the commissioner may, by emergency order, extend the personal use fishery through August 31 if the department projects that both sockeye and coho abundance will be above the upper end of all Susitna River escapement goals for sockeye and coho salmon;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Expand the personal use fishery in the lower Susitna River.

The personal use fishery in the lower Susitna River has been in effect for three (3) seasons. As in 2020 and 2022, this year will present six (6) days to dip net for personal use. However, over the history of the fishery, salmon are scarce until around July 17. This effectively diminishes opportunities to dip net to four (4) days per season.

Additional days in the allotted time will offer opportunities to accommodate people's personal schedules.

PROPOSED BY: Kristine Ogonowski

(HQ-F23-097)

PROPOSAL 230

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Increase the open season of the Susitna River dipnet fishery as follows:

(h) salmon may be taken by dipnet in the Susitna River only as follows:

July 10 – July 31: Open to fishing only on Wednesdays, and Saturdays from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., **and from August 20 - September 30: open to fishing Wednesdays and Saturdays days per week from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Many people focus a significant portion of their annual food gathering activities around the moose hunting season, yet moose populations fluctuate, abundances of game may be in other locations, and sometimes only illegal moose may be spotted, so it is beneficial to have a additional food gathering opportunities available. Although the largest abundances of salmon have already passed through the lower Susitna River personal use fishery area, there are still some salmon migrating through this area late into moose season- I know because I've seen them squirting through shallower spots below Alexander Creek and have seen seals in the river (presumably hunting salmon).

While on moose hunting trips, I've unsuccessfully attempted to catch salmon with sport fishing gear in Alexander and Anderson Creek, and would like an opportunity to see if food gathering would be successful using a dip net in the lower Susitna River Personal Use fishing area during the moose season. Evidently there is a harvestable surplus, at this time of year, since the Northern District set net fishery is allowed to fish with their maximum of 3 nets during the late season, and their season generally runs all the way through September, until closed by emergency order (issued end of September / early October). Because this proposed personal use harvest opportunity would occur at the end of the salmon runs, if a shortage of salmon were to occur, it should have already been identified by the upstream weirs in the Susitna River Drainage —and an emergency order could be issued to adjust or close the personal use fishery (just like the commercial fishery) if necessary. This fishery would occur so late in the season I anticipate both effort and harvest would be modest, at best. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for several years monitored salmon abundances with fish wheels in and near the current Lower Susitna River personal use area — I do not know their dates of fish wheel operation, but suspect by August 20, wheels may have already been removed, because of declining salmon passage numbers. If so, this would further support anticipated modest or low salmon harvest. At the same time, to cabin owners and Alaska residents hunting along the river, an alternative food gathering opportunity could be significant in providing either a few quality meals, or perhaps, even an additional level of food security for the approaching winter — and especially so for those who do not harvest a moose.

An additional benefit of this fishery is an extra data point for the Department of Fish and Game regarding late season salmon movement in the Susitna River. When combined with the CPUE data from the July fishery, this will give the department extremely low cost information about the Susitna River drainage during a time that has seen relatively little study.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Warta (EF-F23-049)

PROPOSAL 231

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Modify dates of the Susitna River dip net fishery as follows:

5 AAC 77.540. Upper Cook Inlet Personal Use Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

...

(h) salmon may be taken by dipnet in the Susitna River, only as follows:

- (1) **July 17 – August 7**: [JULY 10 - JULY 31:] Open to fishing only on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 6 a .m . to 11 p .m .

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Purposes of the Northern District Salmon Management Plan include: The department shall manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks for commercial and inriver uses to provide an opportunity to harvest these salmon resources based on abundance. The department shall also manage the chum, pink, and sockeye salmon stocks to minimize the harvest of Northern District coho salmon, to provide sport and guided sport fishermen and other inriver users a reasonable opportunity to harvest these resources over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions, or as specified in this section and other regulations.

The inriver Lower Susitna River personal use dipnet fishery is only allowed to harvest salmon on Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 10 - 31. The board created this fishery with conservative opportunity during the last board cycle. Personal use harvests have been modest during the first three years of this fishery - and harvest data indicates the first Saturday and Wednesday (up to one third of the annual personal use harvest opportunity in this fishery) occur before there are many salmon available for harvest. Harvest data and ADF&G Susitna River drainage fish wheel and weir data indicate better abundance of the 4 salmon species open to harvest in this fishery later in the season. In addition, harvest data indicates that a few king salmon have been illegally taken in this fishery. Whereas the Northern District Salmon Management Plan specifically seeks to provide harvest opportunity based on abundance, and whereas the plan further specifies providing sport, guided sport, and OTHER INRIVER USERS a reasonable opportunity to harvest not just chum, pink, and sockeye salmon, but also coho salmon over the entire run, and whereas illegal to harvest king salmon are more likely to be caught in the early portion of July, we therefore propose amending the Lower Susitna River personal use fishery to run one week later on Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 17 - August 7. .

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission (HQ-F23-039)
