

PROPOSAL 206

5 AAC 21.358. Northern District Salmon Management Plan.

Amend the *Northern District Salmon Management Plan* to allow for regular amounts of set gillnet gear in the Northern District commercial sockeye salmon fishery during times of reduced effort in the Central District, as follows:

5 AAC 21.258 (h) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 21.358(a), from July 20 through August 6, if a regular Monday or Thursday regular fishing period in the Central District drift gillnet fishery is restricted or closed to reduce the harvest of Central District sockeye salmon, the commissioner may, by emergency order, rescind subsection (c) and return a full complement of fishing gear to the Northern District set gillnet fishery. The regular period restriction referred to in this subsection is for Drift Area 1 or full Central district fishing periods.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? When the Northern District Salmon Management Plan was adopted the plan was based on the assumption that Kenai River sockeye salmon stocks would likely dominate ADF&G’s management strategy for use of the Central District drift gillnet fleet to harvest these fish. The plan assumed that the bulk of the harvestable surplus of Northern Cook Inlet (NCI) sockeye salmon would be caught by the Central District drift fleet. When Susitna River sockeye salmon were later classified as a Stock of Yield concern, 5 AAC 21.358(c) was adopted to stabilize the Northern District set net fishery with limited opportunity to catch the remaining portion of the harvestable surplus of NCI sockeye salmon. From July 21 through August 6, ADF&G was provided with authority to reduce gear in the Northern District set gillnet fishery to reduce the harvest of Susitna River sockeye salmon. The drift fleet was also restricted to meet the same objective.

During the 2018 UCI commercial fishery, the Kenai River sockeye salmon run did not return as predicted, and the Central District drift fisheries were greatly restricted and closed. These Central District closures meant that some of the harvestable surplus of NCI sockeye salmon was not harvested by the drift fleet. However, the Northern District setnet fishery was not given opportunity to harvest any of these fish.

Under the existing language of 5 AAC 21.358 increasing the fishing opportunity in the Northern District is not explicit and the regulation could be interpreted to not allow it. This proposal seeks to clarify the regulation to explicitly state that during times of low abundance of Central District sockeye salmon stocks, which results in reduced fishing effort there, the Northern District sockeye salmon fishery should be managed to catch the harvestable surplus normally caught in the Central District.

PROPOSED BY: Northern District Set Netters Association of Cook Inlet/Stephen Braund
(HQ-F19-062)
