

PROPOSAL 236

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

Create a Susitna River personal use dip net fishery, as follows:

(h) In the Susitna River, salmon may be taken by dip net as follows:

(1) from July 10 through August 10, only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 8 am to 8 pm daily.

(2) the annual limit is specified in 5 AAC 77.525, except that king salmon 28 inches and greater in length may not be retained, and any king salmon caught 28 inches or greater in length must be returned to the water immediately. — All northern pike caught may be retained without limit, but northern pike may not be returned to the water alive.

(3) from a boat or from shore downstream of an ADF&G regulatory marker on the northwest bank of the Yentna River/Susitna River confluence to an ADF&G regulatory marker located upstream of Alexander Creek Cut Off Channels/Bell Island on the West Bank and an ADF&G regulatory marker located downstream of the Susitna Station side-channel on the East Bank.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Adopt a Susitna River personal use dip net fishery.

Many Alaska residents of Northern Cook Inlet would have easier access to this fishery than driving hundreds of miles to participate in Kenai and Kasilof River personal use fisheries, or driving to the out-of-region Copper River personal use fishery. Currently Alaska residents fishing the Susitna River drainage are allowed to harvest a much lower percentage of surplus salmon compared to Kenai, Kasilof, and Copper River inriver salmon harvesters.

The large Susitna River floodplain would allow this fishery to occur with minimal environmental impact. The Susitna River personal use dip net fishery would spread personal use fishermen over more area and lessen impacts/crowding on Kenai, Kasilof, and Copper River personal use areas. Northern Cook Inlet should enjoy economic benefit — similar to local economic benefits provided by Kenai, Kasilof, and Copper River personal use fisheries.

More Alaskan residents reside in Northern Cook Inlet (Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley) than in any similar-sized area of Alaska, so it is appropriate to provide this personal use fishery here. A July 10 start, ensures most migrating king salmon have already passed, with remaining king salmon predominately males under 28 inches in length. Allowing harvest of all salmon (except king salmon 28 inches or greater in length), spreads harvest impact over 5 species, while easing identification (by size) of king salmon to be released. Closing the fishery after August 10 would focus harvest during a period of pink, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon abundance. 8 am — 8 pm provides 12 hours of fishing and 12 hours of unmolested salmon passage per day, without encouraging Susitna River boat traffic during hours of lower visibility. This Alaska resident opportunity, to put food on the table, would be 4 days/48 hours per week.

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