

PROPOSAL 20

5 AAC 77.591. Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Amend the annual limit for salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict, as follows:

The total annual limit for each personal use salmon fishing permit is 15 for a household of one and 30 for a household of more than one.

Supplemental permits for 10 additional sockeye shall be available when ADFG determines that a weekly harvestable surplus of 50,000 salmon or greater will be present in the Chitina Subdistrict. An additional supplemental permit may be issued to a permittee who has met the limits of a previously issued supplemental permit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2014, the Board of Fish (BOF) increased the limits for the Chitina Personal-use (PU) dipnet fishery. It is now 25 sockeye for a head of household and 10 additional for each additional member. Previously, the limit was 15 sockeye for a household of one and 30 for a household of more than one, with the possibility for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to permit an additional 10 sockeye per household when there was a weekly surplus of 50,000 or more.

The previous limits were more conservative, as well as more adaptive to the in-season realities of salmon abundance. Several signs indicate that the sockeye fishery on the Copper River is currently experiencing strain. In 2018, the fishery was unable to meet its sockeye escapement goals, even after commercial fisheries remained closed for almost the entire season. For the past five years, the Gulkana hatchery has been unable to obtain sufficient brood-stock to meet its egg-take goals. A return to these previous limits would help to address these issues.

At the time this regulatory change was adopted, the justification given was that it would standardize regulations, bringing the Chitina PU fishery into line with the limits of the Kenai PU fishery. However, the Copper and Kenai are two very different river systems, with different ecological characteristics as well as different patterns of fisheries participation.

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