

PROPOSAL 159

5 AAC 33.381. District 6: Wrangell Narrows-Blind Slough Terminal Harvest Area Salmon Management Plan

Modify the Wrangell Narrows-Blind Slough Terminal Harvest Area Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

- (a) This management plan distributes the harvest of Crystal Lake Hatchery king and coho salmon returns to the terminal waters of Wrangell Narrows in Section 6-A south of 56°46' N. lat. and north and east of the northern tip of Woewodski Island at 56° 36' N. lat., 132° 59' W. long and the fresh waters of Blind Slough upstream [OF A LINE BETWEEN BLIND POINT AND ANCHOR POINT] among fisheries while protecting hatchery broodstock.
- (b) **Creates a Blind Slough sport area between a line between Blind Point and Anchor Point upstream to a line at 132°53'28"W 56°37'58"N to 132°53'38"W 56°37'58"N**
- (c) **Creates a closed area in the freshwater upstream from a line 132°53'28"W 56°37'58"N to 132°53'38"W 56°37'58"N upstream to a line 132°49'24"W 56°36'52"N to 132°49'24"W 56°36'49"N from June 1 – July 15.**
- (d) The harvest of Crystal Lake Hatchery king salmon in the terminal harvest area will be distributed between the sport and commercial fisheries as follows when the projected adult return of king salmon to the terminal harvest is
 - (1) below 1,000 fish, sport and commercial salmon fisheries in the terminal harvest area will be closed **to king salmon fishing** from June 1st through July 31st;
 - (2) At least 1,000, but less than 2,000 fish, the commissioner shall open, by emergency order, the season for the terminal waters of Wrangell Narrows to sport fishing for king salmon with a **resident** daily bag and possession limit of **one** king salmon [28 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH AND TWO KING SALMON LESS THAN 28 INCHES] **any length, and a nonresidents daily bag and possession limit one king salmon any length** from June 1 through July 15 during which time the terminal harvest area commercial salmon area fishery in Wrangell Narrows will be closed. **Blind Slough sport fishery will be open to residents only, with a daily bag and possession limit of one king salmon any length from June 1 to July 15;**
 - (3) at least 2,000 but less than **3,000** fish the commissioner shall open, by emergency order, the season for the terminal waters of Wrangell Narrows to sport fishing for king salmon, with a **resident** daily bag and possession limit of two king salmon [28 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH AND TWO KING SALMON LESS THAN 28 INCHES] **any** length and a nonresidents daily bag and possession limit **one** king salmon [28 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH AND TWO KING SALMON LESS THAN 28 INCHES] **any** length from June 1 through July 15 during which time the terminal harvest area commercial salmon area fishery in Wrangell Narrows will be closed **Blind Slough sport fishery will be open with a resident daily bag and possession limit of two king salmon any length**

and a nonresident daily bag and possession limit of one king salmon any length from June 1 to July 15;

(4) at least 3,000 but less than 4,000 fish the commissioner shall open, by emergency order, the season for the terminal waters of Wrangell Narrows to sport fishing for king salmon, with a resident daily bag and possession limit of three king salmon any length. Nonresidents daily bag and possession limit two king salmon any length from June 1 through July 31 during which time the terminal harvest area commercial salmon area fishery in Wrangell Narrows will be closed. Blind Slough sport fishery will be open with a resident daily bag and possession limit of two king salmon any length and a nonresident daily bag and possession limit of two king salmon any length from June 1 to July 15;

(5) more than 4,000 fish the commissioner shall open, by emergency order, the season for the terminal harvest area to sport fishing for king salmon, with a resident daily bag and possession limit of four king salmon and a nonresidents daily bag and possession limit three king salmon any length from [DURING WHICH TIME A DAILY BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT MAY BE MORE THAN TWO KING SALMON 28 INCHES OR GREATER IN LENGTH AND MORE THAN TWO KING SALMON LESS THAN 28 INCHES] June 1 through July 31 during which time the terminal harvest area commercial salmon area fishery in Wrangell Narrows will be open to harvest 50% of the projected return over 4,000 fish. Blind Slough sport fishery will be open with a resident daily bag and possession limit of four king salmon any length and a nonresident daily bag and possession limit of three king salmon any length from June 1 to July 15.

(e) Regional Alaska Fish & Game managers shall have authority to close fishing during periods of drought and warm water conditions to reduce stress on king salmon holding in the slough prior to reaching the hatchery. Daily closure authority will also be allowed for the hatchery to collect broodstock in the lower Blind Slough

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) is proposing amendments to the Wrangell Narrows-Blind Slough king salmon management plan. The goal of these amendments is to:

- ensure the full collection of broodstock for the hatchery, which has not been met in 10 of the last 20 years under this plan.
- distribute harvest opportunities across multiple user groups, while recognizing that this fishery is a critical resource to local Alaskan residents and provides economic benefits to the community.

The previous plan written in 1997 is in desperate need of updating to the current times. Several new factors have emerged in recent years that are jeopardizing the full collection of broodstock and disproportionately affecting certain user groups over others. These factors include:

- an increase in nonresident users. Fishing lodges and boat rentals have increased significantly and nonresident anglers greatly outnumber residents fishing this resource.

- the current plan allows the same nonresident take in lower fish return years while eliminating the freshwater Blind Slough fishing area. This puts the burden on local Alaskan residents that do not have access to a boat, especially the youth, elderly, and less advantaged.
- warmer weather patterns and warming waters of the Blind Slough. Summertime water temperatures are at the top extent for king salmon survival causing die off events before the adults can return to the hatchery.

Amendments to the plan include:

- Closing a portion of the Blind Slough area (the portion of Blind slough above the Forest Service boardwalk “lagoon” to the hatchery). This area should be considered a refuge for king salmon to spawn. The vast majority of legally caught kings are below the “lagoon” where king salmon rest in deeper pools and can escape with the changing tides. Above the lagoon they are exposed and more susceptible to the stresses of warm water. Fishing in these areas where fish hold and wait for desirable water conditions causes stress on king salmon staging their way up to the hatchery.
- removing size restrictions and shortening the length of the season. Implementing this is intended to reduce the number of kings caught and released, which will reduce stress, mortality, and increase egg quality.
- Shortening the season in fresh water to reduce pressure on king salmon when they are most vulnerable.
- Reducing the overall bag and possession limits while allowing for residents an opportunity to harvest king salmon where the current management plan does not allow.

Note: This amendment is not intended to prohibit opportunities for disabled individuals to fish for king salmon where the Blind Slough Rapids trail accesses fresh water at the point 132°53'29"W 56°37'57"N.

Note: These amendments work in conjunction with amendments to 5AAC 47.023 to ensure the protection of broodstock to the Crystal Lake Hatchery

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Yes, SSRAA worked with members of the Petersburg Advisory Committee to develop this plan. The provisions in 5AAC 47.023 were not known prior to the AC meeting, and a proposal had not been developed to address this new information, so the Petersburg proposal extended the open time period in order to not revert to the provisions in 5AAC 47.023. SSRAA only supports the July 15 dates in this proposal if amendments to 5AAC 47.023 are also adopted by the BOF.

PROPOSED BY: Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA)(HQ-F24-122)
