

PROPOSAL 312 (formerly ACR 4)

5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan.

Increase the season dates and weekly fishing periods for dip net gear under the *Kenai River laterun king salmon stock of concern management plan* (5AAC 21.382) as follows:

5 AAC 21.382.(g).(5)

(5) From June 20 through [July 31] **August 15;**

...

(B) openings [may] **will** occur outside of specified openings in this section based on abundance of sockeye salmon **from 7am-7pm seven days a week unless closed by emergency order.** [as announced by emergency order, for not more than three 12-hour periods per week];

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The dipnetting provisions for the Upper Subdistrict setnet fishery in “5 AAC 21.382. Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan” were instituted very late in the meeting process after all opportunity for public involvement and comment were past. As a result it was a very, very rough framework with a lot of unknowns. After this summer and prosecution of this completely new and experimental fishery, we know quite a bit more about it and some adjustment is warranted. Dipnetting in the open inlet is clearly very low efficacy and extremely dependent on many variables. Tidal Currents, Weather, and fish densities produce a huge range of results from completely unfishable to possibly financially viable harvests. This fishery is inherently perfectly clean, is 100% targetable and has zero impact on any king salmon returns. However current levels of opportunity are insufficient to produce relevant sockeye harvests. Due to the low impact nature of this fishery I would like to see increased time and opportunity allowed in order for people to actually try to make it work.

First, there is no reason for the fishery to close on July 31. With mandated release of both king and coho salmon there is no conceivable reason for this fishery to close early. Our fishing season has gone to Aug 15th for a very long time and substantial amounts of sockeye are still on area beaches in August.

Second, I would like to see a lot more open time so that people could work their fishing around it. Much of the time there will not be densities of fish to justify fishing, and it is incredibly important to be able to fish whenever there are sufficient fish on each individual fisherperson’s site to make the dipnetting work. Dipnetting in the open inlet is completely unprecedented. This is not dipnetting in a river. We regularly have weather that is completely prohibitive to the gear type. Fishing in 5 foot seas, the dipnets come completely out of the water with every wave which basically reduces effectiveness to zero. This seems obvious, but I in fact tried fishing one rough day this summer to see if it was as bad as I expected. It was. It is extremely weather dependent. Expecting the department to give opening times that are situated around weather, fish densities, and other scheduling issues for individual fishermen is completely unfeasible. I would like to see dipnetting open from 7am-7pm every day from June 20th to Aug 15th. Expected harvests are still quite low, and current management issues basically guarantee an overabundance of sockeye. Dipnetting 7 days a week is almost certainly warranted by sockeye numbers in all recent years. In the extremely unlikely case where managers were concerned about sockeye harvest in the

dipnet fishery, they could easily close openers but this is so unlikely that I think it is entirely reasonable to have the default be scheduled fishing time. This would allow for planning and predictability for fishermen to work around other jobs and the fishing variables already mentioned and would relieve the pressure on the department to constantly make announcements. Particularly in the possible scenario where other gear types with higher catch potentials (beach seines etc) are being actively managed by the department having them juggle dipnet openings as well seems completely unnecessary.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person

(HQ-F24-ACR4)
