

PROPOSAL 160 - 5 AAC 57.121. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area. Prohibit the use of bait in the late-run Kenai river king salmon fishery until escapement goals have been met, as follows:

Kenai River – Lower Kenai River Mainstem and Skilak Lake

Change; under METHODS AND MEANS

Gear restrictions:

- From the mouth of the Kenai River to ADF&G regulatory marker at Skilak Lake:
- January 1 – **July 31** [June 30]
- Only one unbaited, single-hook lure is allowed

Delete; The rest of this section dealing with bait and unbaited requirements through July 31.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The use of bait should be prohibited in the “Late Run” Kenai River Chinook fishery until the “Department” has determined escapement goals will be met. Historically the run has started with bait and if restrictions are needed bait is prohibited later in the season (although in recent years bait has been prohibited at the beginning of the late run season). The last time the season started with bait on July 1 was in 2011.

By starting the season with bait and restricting later on the harvest is disproportionately directed toward the early segment of the “Late Run” as they are vulnerable to harvest for a longer period of time. The most important justification to start the season with “no bait” is to protect “Early Run” stocks that are still moving through the lower part of the drainage in early July and are vulnerable to harvest.

Bait is already prohibited at the beginning of the “Early Run” which has been totally closed to fishing in recent years. Starting the late run with bait places additional impact on these stocks that are at historical low levels and is not a sound fishery management practice. Even if early run stocks recover and bait is allowed during the season by Emergency Order, the late run should begin without the use of bait to reduce harvest at the end of the early run. Additionally, starting the season without bait and liberalizing if warranted would provide consistency in regulation along with predictability to local anglers, businesses and the guide industry. It is far less disruptive when an ongoing fishery is liberalized compared to when it is restricted.

The intent of this proposal is to remove mandatory dates to go to bait, during the King salmon season, and allow the department the flexibility to liberalize to bait based on scientific evaluation of run strength and run timing.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai Area Fisherman’s Coalition

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