

PROPOSAL 87 – 5 AAC 21.353. Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan.
Amend *Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan* to maximize commercial harvest of sockeye salmon, as follows:

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District and Kenai River coho salmon in order to provide sport and guided sport fishermen a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The department shall manage the Central District commercial drift gillnet fishery as described in this section **to maximize the commercial harvest of sockeye salmon.**

(b) The regular weekly fishing periods are as described in 5 AAC 21.320(b). The fishing season will open the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.

(c) From July 9 through [JULY 15] **July 20, or until an inseason assessment of Kenai River sockeye salmon run strength is determined by the department,**

(1) fishing during the first regular fishing period and second regular fishing period is restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(2) at run strengths greater than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open one additional 12-hour fishing period in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict and Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(3) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, the commissioner may, by emergency order, open additional 12-hour fishing periods in one or more of the following sections and areas:

(i) the Expanded Kenai Section of the Upper Subdistrict;

(ii) the Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;

(iii) Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(iv) Drift Gillnet Area 2;

(4) Additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict.

(d) From [JULY 16] **July 20** through July 31,

(1) at run strengths of less than 2,300,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, fishing during all regular 12-hour fishing periods will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict;

(2) at run strengths of 2,300,000–4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai river,

(A) fishing during [ONE] **all** regular 12-hour fishing period per week will be [RESTRICTED TO ONE OR MORE OF] **opened in the following sections and areas:**

(i) Expanded Kenai Section of the Upper Subdistrict;

(ii) Expanded Kasilof Section of the Upper Subdistrict;

(iii) Anchor Point Section of the Lower Subdistrict;

(iv) Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(B) [THE REMAINING WEEKLY 12-HOUR REGULAR FISHING PERIOD WILL BE RESTRICTED TO ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:] **Additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed in one or more of the following sections:**

- (i) Expanded Kenai Section;
- (iii) Expanded Kasilof Section;
- (iii) Anchor Point Section

(iv) Drift Gillnet Area 1

(3) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, [ONE REGULAR 12-HOUR FISHING PERIOD PER WEEK] **all regular** fishing periods per week will be restricted to **one or more of the following areas or sections:**

(A) Expanded Kenai Section;

(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(C) Anchor Point Section;

(D) Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(E) Drift Gillnet Area 2;

(F) Central District;

(4) additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed only in one or more of the following **areas or** sections:

(A) Expanded Kenai Section;

(B) Expanded Kasilof Section;

(C) Anchor Point Section;

(D) Drift Gillnet Area 1;

(E) Drift Gillnet Area 2;

(F) Central District;

(e) From August 1 through August 15, **on Kenai River sockeye salmon runs under 2,300,000 fish,** there are no mandatory area restrictions to regular fishing periods, except that if the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery is closed under 5 AAC 21.310(b)(2)(C)(iii), or the department determines that less than one percent of the season's total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period for two consecutive fishing periods in the drift gillnet fishery, regular fishing periods will be restricted to Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4. In this subsection, " fishing period" means a time period open to commercial fishing as measured by a 24-hour calendar day from 12:01 a.m. until 11:59 p.m. **On Kenai runs over 2,300,000 fish, from August 1 through August 15, there are no mandatory area restrictions to regular fishing periods.**

(f) From August 16 until closed by emergency order, Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 are open for fishing during regular fishing periods.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? At the 2014 Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting for Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) finfish, restrictions were added to the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan that make this plan very inflexible and significantly changed the intent of the plan from when it was adopted in 1999. This proposal seeks some relief from these overly burdensome restrictions so that the drift plan is more in line with 5 AAC 21.363 (a) (1), where it states that the harvest of UCI salmon should be allowed in order to maximize the benefits of these resources. The current drift gillnet management plan is too restrictive and does not allow ADF&G the tools it needs in order to harvest surplus Kenai and Kasilof river sockeye salmon stocks. An overly restrictive drift gillnet management plan can therefore result in over escapement of these stocks, which it has in two out of two years since the plan was changed. Over escapement results in immediate loss to fish harvesters of all sectors and it also poses unneeded economic loss to the people of Alaska by not maximizing the benefits of these resources!

Therefore, I urge the BOF to carefully consider providing ADF&G with as many flexible management tools as necessary to ensure the future health of our salmon resources by crafting management plans that are more flexible and less restrictive. Overly-restrictive management plans often hinder our manager's ability to do their most important job, i.e., managing fisheries to meet established escapement goals.

PROPOSED BY: David Hillstrand

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