

PROPOSAL 127 – 5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan and 21.360. Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan. Remove inriver goals from the list of escapement goals in the *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* and realign inriver and escapement goals in the *Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

Option 1:

Drop “inriver goal” from the list of escapement goals in 21.363(e) since in-river goals are allocative in nature and the department should not be put in a position of favoring one allocation strategy over another without consultation with the Board. The Kenai River is the only location in the state where in-river goals exist in regulation.

Option 2:

Realign in-river and escapement goals to avoid continuing confusion. Standardize the upper end of the in-river goal for each tier at 1.5 million which is equal to the upper end of the SEG (1.2 million) plus 300,000 sockeye which is the current maximum sport harvest above the sonar. The lower end of in-river goals for each tier should be retained as is in order to continue to ensure that escapements are distributed throughout the goal range and large runs are shared among fisheries.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? A complex of codified management plans now govern the salmon fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet and elements of one plan, on occasion, conflict with elements found in another. Major UCI fisheries harvest mixed stocks bound for more many different rivers. During its 2008 meeting, the Board developed specific regulatory language for Upper Cook Inlet at the request of the Department to provide guidance when objectives or prescriptive tools of one management plan conflict with or compromise the department’s ability to direction of another plan. Additional clarifications are needed in this language.

Interpretation and application of in-river goals and the optimum escapement goal in the Kenai late-run sockeye salmon management plan continues to be a source of confusion. The current in-river goals are also based on old data which substantially underestimates the numbers of sockeye that are currently harvested in the sport fishery above the sonar.

The plan identifies an OEG of 700,000 – 1,400,000. This is consistent with the SEG of 700,000 to 1,200,000 with an allowance at the top end in place since 1999 in recognition that large escapements continue to provide large returns. In-river goals are designated for three run size tiers in order to distribute escapements throughout the range and share the bounty of large runs among fisheries.

One problem is what to do when numbers are exceeding the in-river goal but still within the escapement goal. In-river goal ranges are relatively narrow (only 200,000 fish wide) and can be difficult to hit given uncertain run forecasts and wide variation in run timing. However, even when Kenai sockeye escapements are still comfortably within the OEG, exceeding in-river goals can trigger out-of-plan actions that conflict with the intent of management plans for other stocks including Kenai kings and Susitna sockeye. In-river goals are themselves allocative targets designed to distribute harvest among commercial and in-river fisheries. However, out-of-plan actions inevitably impact the allocation balance among commercial drift, commercial setnet, personal use, and sport fisheries. This places the Department in the no-win situation of having to decide between one set of allocative targets and similarly allocative out-of-plan actions. Allocation decisions are the responsibility of the Board, not the Department.

Another problem is that the sport fishery has demonstrated the capability of harvesting many more sockeye above the sonar than when the in-river goal ranges were originally established. There are only 150,000 fish between the upper end of the SEG and the top tier as measured at the sonar. However, in recent years as many as 300,000 are harvested by the sport fishery above the sonar. As a result, we are effectively managing for a lower SEG than has been identified.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai River Sportfishing Association (HQ-F16-070)

PROPOSAL 128 – 5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan. Amend plan to prioritize the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks and to maximize economic yield and the overall benefits from salmon stocks managed under the plan, as follows:

5 AAC 21.363 Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan.

add a new line to; 5 AAC 21.363 (a)(3) **(D) the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks and to maintain sustainable salmon runs.**

5AAC 21.363 (a)(4) in these management plans, the board **must** [MAY, AS APPROPRIATE] address the following considerations:

add a new line to ; 5AAC (a)(4)**(C) the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks to maximize the economic yield and the overall benefits from these salmon resources;**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan needs updated to direct the board and the department to develop management plans that are in compliance to Alaska’s Constitution, Alaska’s laws, statutory conservation mandates, the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) and the Sustainable Salmon fisheries policy 5AAC 39.222. The current plans are not in compliance. Through the years the political pressure from special interest groups have gone too far in developing and lobbying for the passage of management plans that are reallocation and lack any reference to science, maximum sustained yield or of harvesting the surplus. They are unsustainable and are harmful to the resource, habitat and the people, communities, businesses and the state that depends upon optimum returns and the surplus to be harvested. The biologist are not allowed to use science and their manage tools to

harvest the surplus and achieve escapement goals without going over the top end by sometimes gross amounts. Over escapement is chronic. The current management plans create annual unharvested surplus salmon stocks in UCI in the millions of salmon and the loss of millions of dollars in State taxes and tens of millions of dollars lost to the users and local economies. There is also the factor of lost jobs and the lost high protein sustainable seafood. Data from reports show that in 2014 over 80% or 23,000,000 of UCI surplus salmon were not harvested. That unharvest surplus is larger than the combined commercial harvest of California, Oregon and Washington. This is not good Stewardship.

This proposal attempts to add language to the UCI Salmon Management Plan that will give direction to the board and department to correct these issues.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F16-125)

PROPOSAL 129 – 5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan. Amend plan to prioritize the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks and to maximize economic yield and the overall benefits from salmon stocks managed under the plan, as follows:

5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan.

...

(3) in adopting the specific management plans described in (2) of this subsection the board will consider:

(A) the need for sustainable fisheries for all salmon stocks and salmon species throughout the Cook Inlet basin;

(B) the protection of the fisheries habitat both in the fresh water and the marine environment throughout the Cook Inlet basin; and

(C) the various needs and demands of the user groups of the salmon resources of upper Cook Inlet;

(D) the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks to ensure sustainable runs;

(4) in these management plans, the board **must** [MAY, AS APPROPRIATE] address the following considerations:

(A) the need to allocate the harvestable surplus among commercial, sport, guided sport and personal use fisheries; and

(B) the need to allocate the harvestable surplus within user groups;

(C) the need to harvest all surplus salmon stocks to maximize the benefit and the economic yield of these resources;

....

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unharvested surplus salmon describes those salmon in excess of escapement needs that are not harvested by commercial, sport or personal use fisheries. Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) has some of the largest wild, native salmon returns in Alaska. ADF&G does not enumerate the return of all stocks but based on the actual harvest and research data, the 2014 returns of all UCI salmon stocks could be estimated at around

30,000,000 fish. After escapement needs (7,000,000), there were approximately 23,000,000 salmon available for harvest. Of the 23 million salmon available for harvest, only around 4.5 million were utilized.

These abundant salmon stocks should be available for harvest; however, the effects of current BOF and ADF&G management plans and policies result in over 80% of these stocks going unharvested. In 2014, about 88% of the Chinook, 19% of the sockeyes, 84% of the coho, 96% of the pinks and 87% of the chums were in excess of all harvests or escapement needs and not utilized.

Unharvested surplus salmon also cause much more variability in returns. These erratic returns are more difficult to predict, more difficult to manage to achieve escapement goals and, as ADF&G reports assert, are not sustainable (SP 07-17, FMS 14-06).

Fisheries management needs to be focused on fully utilizing these abundant renewable resources with the understanding that allocation and daily management decisions have direct economic consequences to the welfare of the state.

The unharvested surplus stocks represent millions of lost tax revenue dollars to the State Treasury, tens of millions of dollars in lost economic benefit to the regional economies, loss of food products and by-products, and lost jobs. These same non-utilized salmon represent an opportunity for growth and diversification in local, regional and state economies.

The commercial sector is the only user group that has the capacity or the ability to harvest and monetize these surplus stocks.

PROPOSED BY: United Cook Inlet Drift Association (HQ-F16-012)

PROPOSAL 130 – 5 AAC 21.363. Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan. Amend *Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan* so that fishery restrictions on fully allocated stocks of concern are shared among all user groups in proportion to the respective user group harvest of that stock, as follows:

5 AAC 21.363 Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Management Plan would be amended by adding (a)(7) as follows:

(7) Where there is a management plan, and when the stock of concern is fully allocated among all user groups, the burden of conservation shall, to the extent practicable, be shared among all user groups in close proportion to their respective harvest on the stock of concern.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The BOF needs to be in compliance with past Supreme court rulings in Pullen verses Ulmer and the recent Supreme Court ruling Lieutenant Governor of the State of Alaska verses Alaska Fisheries Conservation Alliance. All users need to share in resource conservation in proportion to their use. The board already has direction on how to fairly conserve fish in the absence of a management plan (5 AAC

21.363(a)(6)), but this direction does not exist for the creation of new management plans. Without this language, the equitable allocation of fishery resources in Upper Cook Inlet is not ensured.

(6) consistent with 5 AAC 39.220(b), it is the intent of the board that, in the absence of a specific management plan, where there are known conservation problems, the burden of conservation shall, to the extent practicable, be shared among all user groups in close proportion to their respective harvest on the stock of concern.

PROPOSED BY: David Hillstrand

(EF-F16-025)
