

**PROPOSAL 142**

**5 AAC 77.678. Personal use smelt fishery.**

Establish bag and possession limits and lawful gear for smelt fishing in the Ketchikan area, as follows:

5 AAC 77.678 Smelt may be taken for personal use at any time **in Ketchikan District**

**(1) The daily and possession limit is 50 pounds per individual**

**(2) Allowed gear: dip nets and throw nets**

**Proxy fishing allowed on behalf of qualified fishing permit holders**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Firstly, the Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Government (KIC) strongly supports the Customary and Traditional Use designation for ooligan on the Unuk River. Secondly, KIC does not support a commercial ooligan fishery in Ketchikan Management Area and would like it stricken from the fishing regulations. Thirdly, KIC supports the following proposal that would support limited access to harvestable ooligan resources until such a time as native fishing rights are fully and adequately addressed.

The Department of Fish and Game has been closing the eulachon (ooligan) fishery on the Unuk River and elsewhere in Ketchikan District since 2005. This has been a customary and traditional use area for indigenous people in the region and a source of subsistence and trade. Ooligan as the native peoples call this small anadromous fish have been eaten fresh smoked and been converted to ooligan grease. This cultural practice has been all but eliminated for over a decade and elders have been deprived of this subsistence resource and young people have not been exposed to harvesting, eating and preparing ooligan an important part of their cultural heritage. The eulachon population levels on the Unuk River and elsewhere in SE Alaska are not accurately known due to insufficient monitoring. Allowing fishing with adequate harvest reporting would provide additional information not currently being collected on population trends, and can be used to adaptively manage the fishery based on creel census and the additional catch per unit effort information rather than taking the very conservation approach of annually closing the fishery altogether. If ooligan are present in numbers that warrant the effort and expense of harvesting small amounts for personal use the ADFG should allow for this culturally significant fishery. Due to a very narrow harvest window coupled with the challenges of getting to the Unuk River and other known spawning areas; the unpredictability of eulachon timing; and variation in spawning locations it is expected any personal-use harvest impacts would be minimal, even without a bag limit. With the addition of a bag limit coupled with the traditional ecological knowledge and reverence for fisheries resource possessed by tribal fisherman whom are the primary user of this resources, population levels should not be significantly impacted. In addition, fish found in isolated tide pools can and should be collected, to avoid wanton waste of trapped fish. Also, a liberal proxy fishing policy should be allowed since most tribal members in the region do not have the ability to access the ooligan resources due to distance from population centers. There is a high cost of travel associated with fishing for ooligan in locations such as the Unuk River; a small bag limit makes such travel unfeasible.

**PROPOSED BY:** Ketchikan Indian Community

(HQ-F20-053)

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