

PROPOSAL 217

5 AAC XX.XXX. New section.

Create a *Deshka River King Salmon Fishery Management Plan*, as follows:

5 AAC 61.XXX. Deshka River King Salmon Management Plan.

(a) The purpose of this management plan is to ensure an adequate escapement of king salmon into the Deshka River, to provide management guidelines and tools to the department, and to provide predictability in management. The intent of the board is that the department will consider the management options listed in this plan prior to considering any other available options for managing the fishery.

(b) The Department shall manage the Deshka River king salmon snort and guided snort fisheries to achieve the sustainable escapement goal and to provide reasonable harvest opportunities over the entire run.

(c) In the Deshka River,

(1) The seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and other special provisions for king salmon are set out in 5 AAC 61.110 -5 AAC 61.112;

(2) From January 1-July 13, from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers near Chijuk Creek (river mile 17), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River,

(A) If the pre-season forecast projects the run to be below the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order,

(i) Close the sport fishery to the taking of king salmon; or

(ii) Prohibit the retention of king salmon;

(B) If the pre-season forecast projects the run to be within the sustainable escapement goal the commissioner may, by emergency order,

(i) Prohibit the retention of king salmon;

(ii) Establish a maximum size limit of 28 inches as measured from tip of snout to tip of tail;

(iii) prohibit the use of bait;

(iv) Reduce the annual limit;

(v) Start the fishery as described in 5 AAC 61.112;

(C) If the pre-season forecast projects the run to be above the sustainable escapement goal the commissioner may, by emergency order,

(i) Start the fishery as described in 5 AAC 61.112;

(ii) allow the use of bait prior to June 1;

(iii) Increase hours to 24 hours per day.

(3) If the inseason escapement projection is below the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may close, by emergency order, the sport fishery to the taking of king salmon;

(4) If the inseason escapement projection is within the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order,

(A) Conduct the season as described in 5 AAC 61.112;

(B) Modify the maximum size limit allowed for retention.

(5) If the inseason escapement projection is greater than the sustainable escapement goal, the commissioner may, by emergency order,

(A) Increase hours to 24 hours per day;

(B) Increase bag and possession limits;

(d) When retention of king salmon is prohibited or a maximum size limit is in effect the use of bait and multiple hooks are prohibited.

(e) Nothing in this management plan is to be construed as diminishing or affecting the commissioner's authority to modify bag, possession, and annual limits and methods and means by emergency order under 5 AAC 75.003.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Adopt a Deshka River King Salmon Fishery Management Plan. With the downturn in Deshka River king salmon production, from 2013-2018 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has increasingly been managing the Deshka River sport king salmon fishery by preseason and inseason emergency orders. In 2018 the fishery was restricted to catch and release only fishing for the entire season / before a season ending closure. In 2019 the fishery was closed entirely by preseason emergency order. This management plan proposal is an attempt to document and record practices currently used in management by the Department, and also to provide an additional tool (the use of a size restriction in the management of the sport fishery). With such a plan sport users will have the opportunity to examine specific management actions the Department has taken or may likely take in the future when managing this resource. In addition, with a plan in regulation, fishermen and other users will have the opportunity to propose changes or tools to use in future Deshka River king salmon management.

PROPOSED BY: Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission/Mike Wood (HQ-F19-045)
