



Sport fisheries of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Management Areas



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RC 3, Tab 16

INTRODUCTION

- Describe demographics of AYK sport fisheries
 - Geography of the region
 - Describe each of the five Management Areas
 - Fishing effort
 - Stocked waters program

- Introduce BOF proposals by Area





TANANA MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters of the Tanana River drainage from the Alaska–Canada border to its terminus at the Yukon River
- Popular fisheries include:
 - 89 stocked lakes
 - Chena River Arctic grayling and burbot
 - Delta Clearwater River Arctic grayling
 - Tangle Lakes lake trout and Arctic grayling



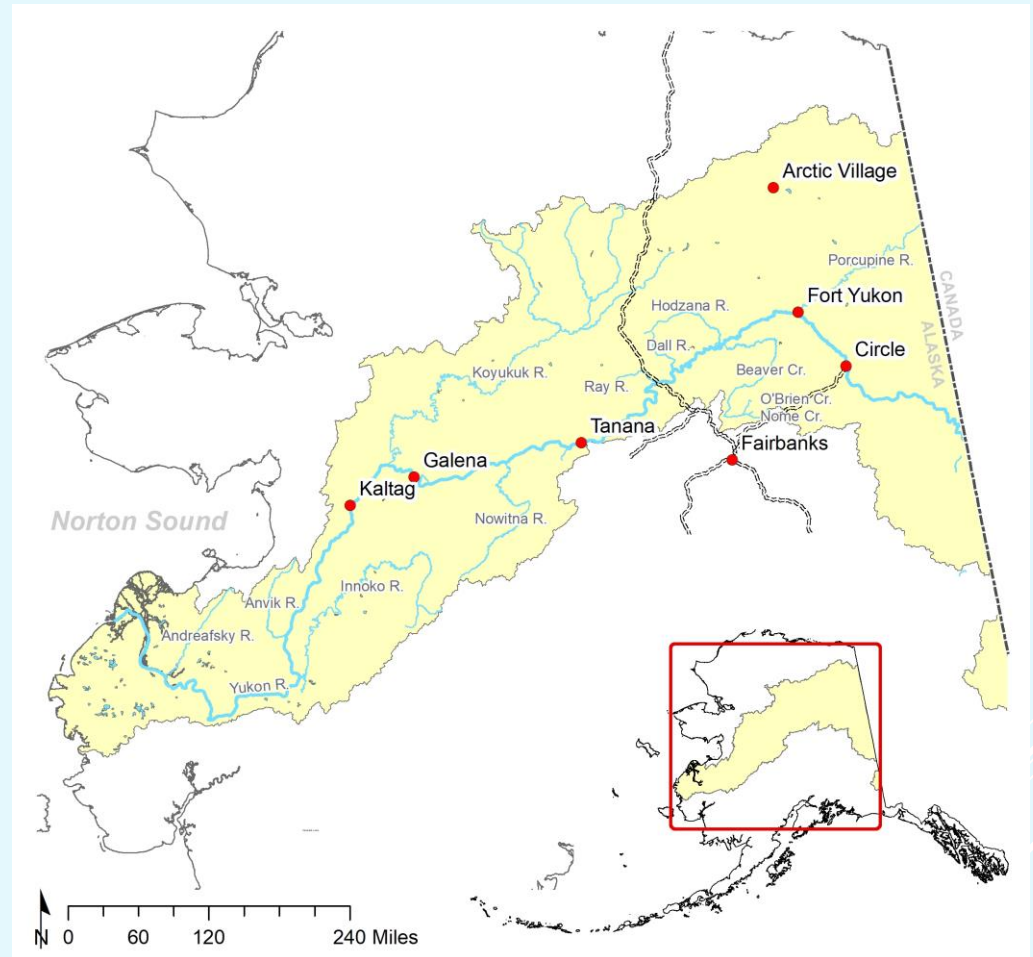
KUSKOKWIM MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage and all drainages in Kuskokwim Bay
- Popular fisheries include:
 - Kanektok and Goodnews River salmon, rainbow trout, and Dolly Varden
 - Aniak and Kisaralik River rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, and coho salmon



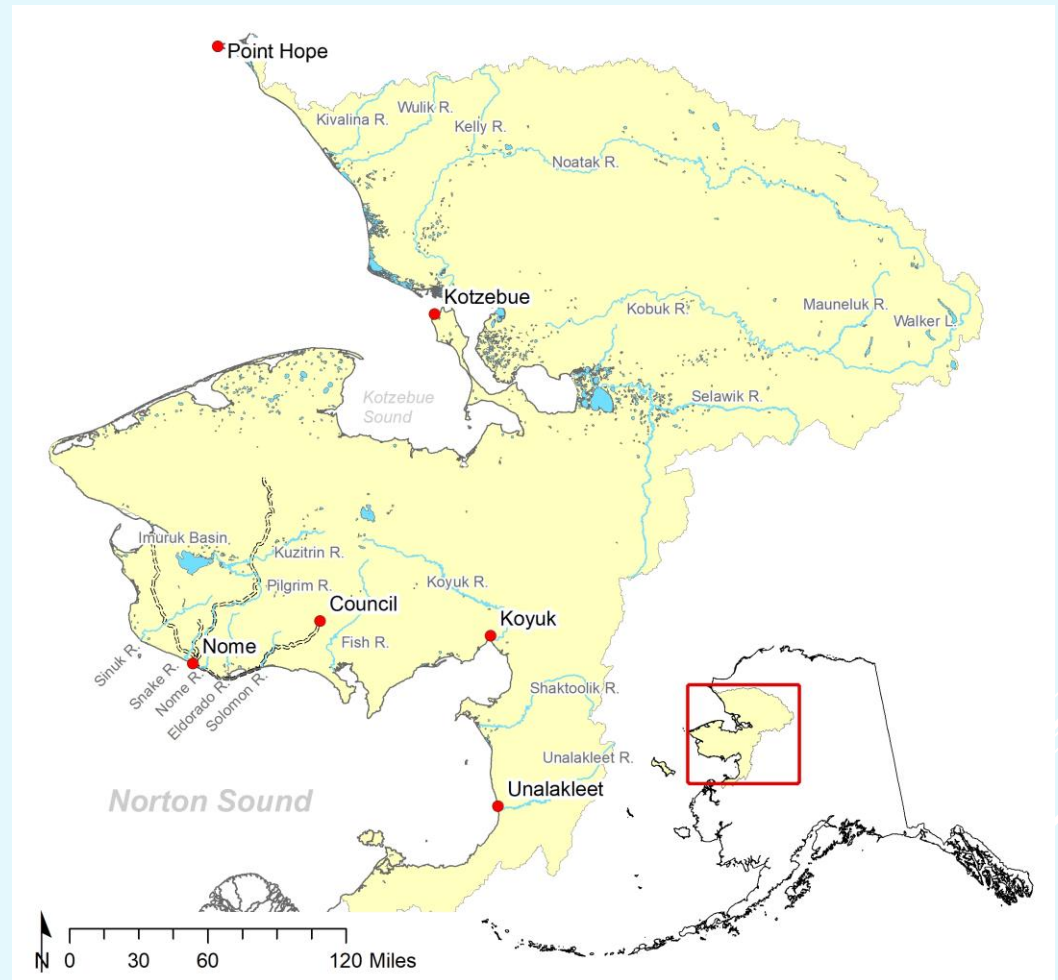
YUKON MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all of the Yukon River drainage in the state, except for the Tanana River drainage
- Popular fisheries include:
 - Dalton Highway roadside Arctic grayling
 - Beaver and Nome Creek Arctic grayling
 - Innoko River northern pike
 - Anvik River coho and chum salmon



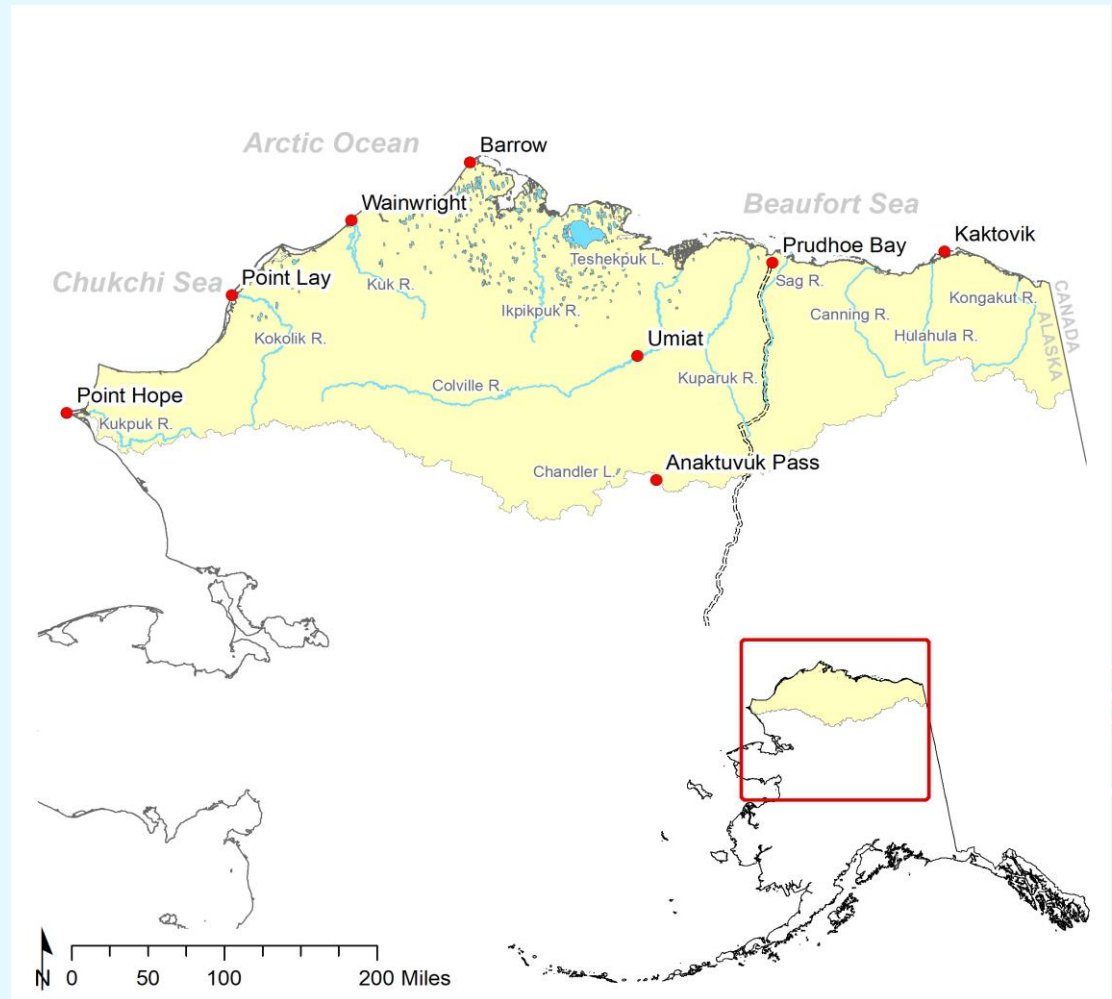
NORTHWEST MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters draining into the Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, Kotzebue Sound, and Norton Sound from Point Romanof to Point Hope
- Popular fisheries include:
 - Unalakleet River king and coho salmon
 - Nome roadside Arctic grayling and coho salmon
 - Noatak and Wulik River Dolly Varden
 - Kobuk River sheefish

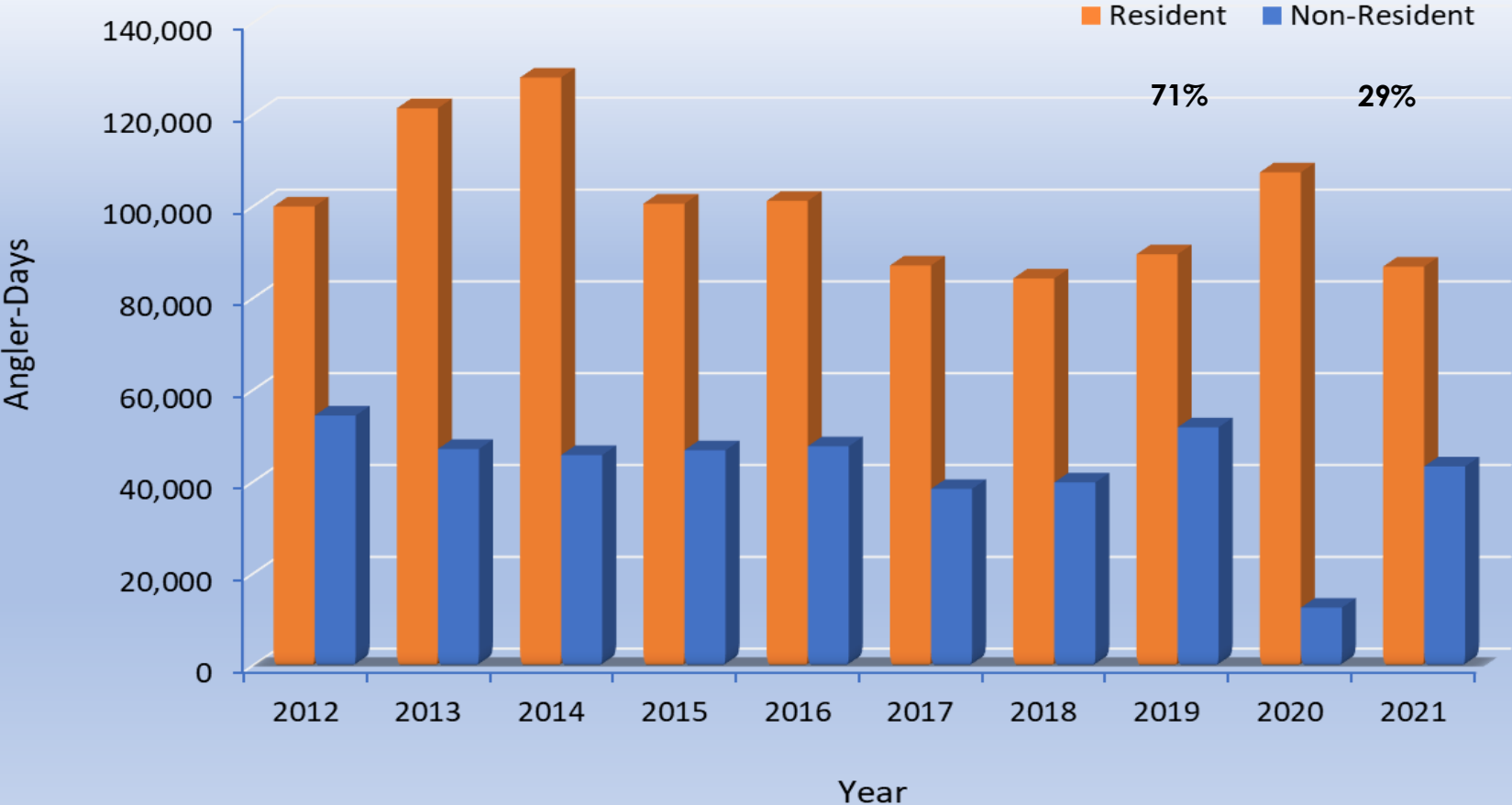


NORTH SLOPE MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters draining into the Arctic Ocean, Chukchi Sea, and Beaufort Sea from Point Hope to the Canada border
- Popular fisheries include:
 - Dalton Highway roadside Arctic grayling and lake trout
 - Ivishak, Hulahula, Canning, and Kongakut River Dolly Varden



Sport Fishing Effort in AYK Region by Residency, 2012-2021



STOCKED WATERS PROGRAM



STOCKED WATERS PROGRAM



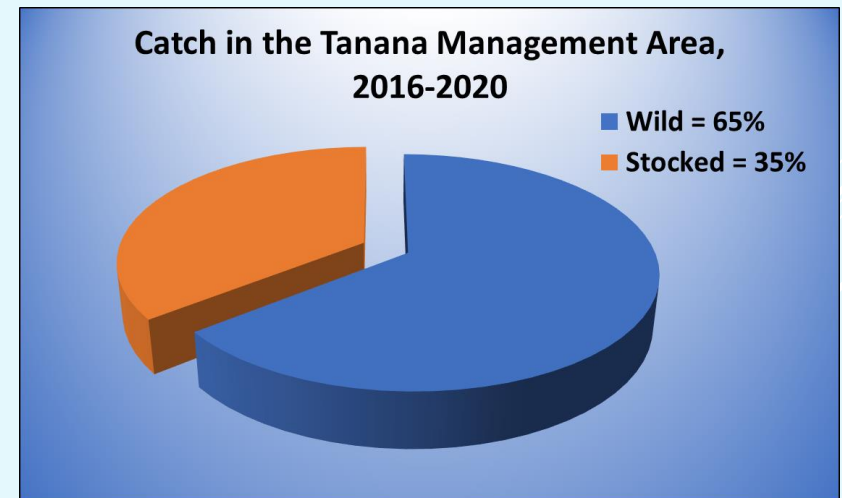
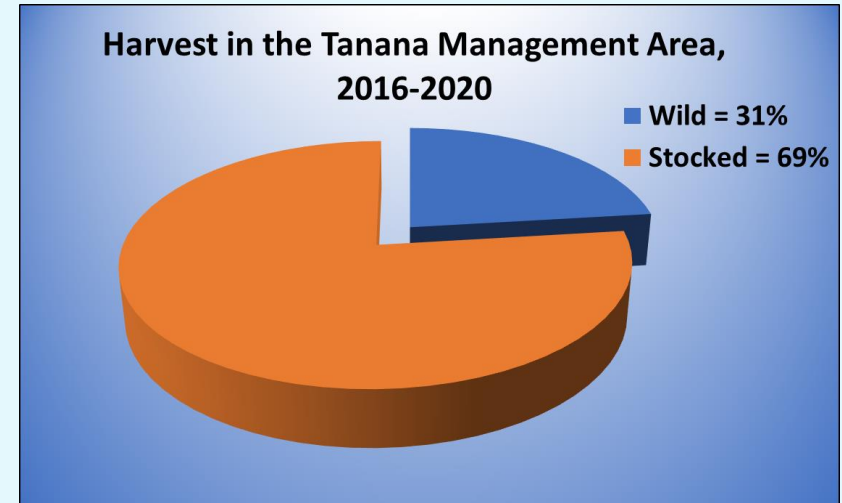
- 46,000 square foot facility
- Contains (8) 30' tanks, (20) 10' tanks and (4) 5' tanks

- Maximum capacity of 250,000 catchable-size fish and 735,000 fingerling-size fish



IMPACT OF STOCKED WATERS PROGRAM TO AREA FISHERIES

- 89 roadside and remote stocked lakes in the Tanana Management Area
- These lakes function to provide diverse angling opportunities, shift pressure from wild stocks, and provide harvest alternatives
- Recently, guiding operations have started to focus more on stocked waters



2023 AYK SPORT FISH PROPOSALS

- **Proposals for Tanana Management Area**
 - 1 all salmon species
 - 2 northern pike
 - 1 burbot
 - 2 Arctic grayling
 - 1 lake trout
 - 3 stocked waters
- **Proposal for Northwest Management Area**
 - 1 Arctic grayling
- **Proposal for Yukon Management Area**
 - 1 all salmon species
- **Proposal for Kuskokwim Management Area**
 - 1 chum salmon



TANANA RIVER DRAINAGE SALMON (PROPOSAL 65)

- The Tanana River drainage supports runs of king, chum, and coho salmon
- Catch of all salmon species combined averaged 3,273 fish/yr for 2016-2020, harvest averaged 371 fish/yr
- 81% of harvest and 81% of the catch is coho salmon for 2016-2020
- Proposal 65- would require retention of sport caught salmon, if removed from the water, in the Tanana River management Area



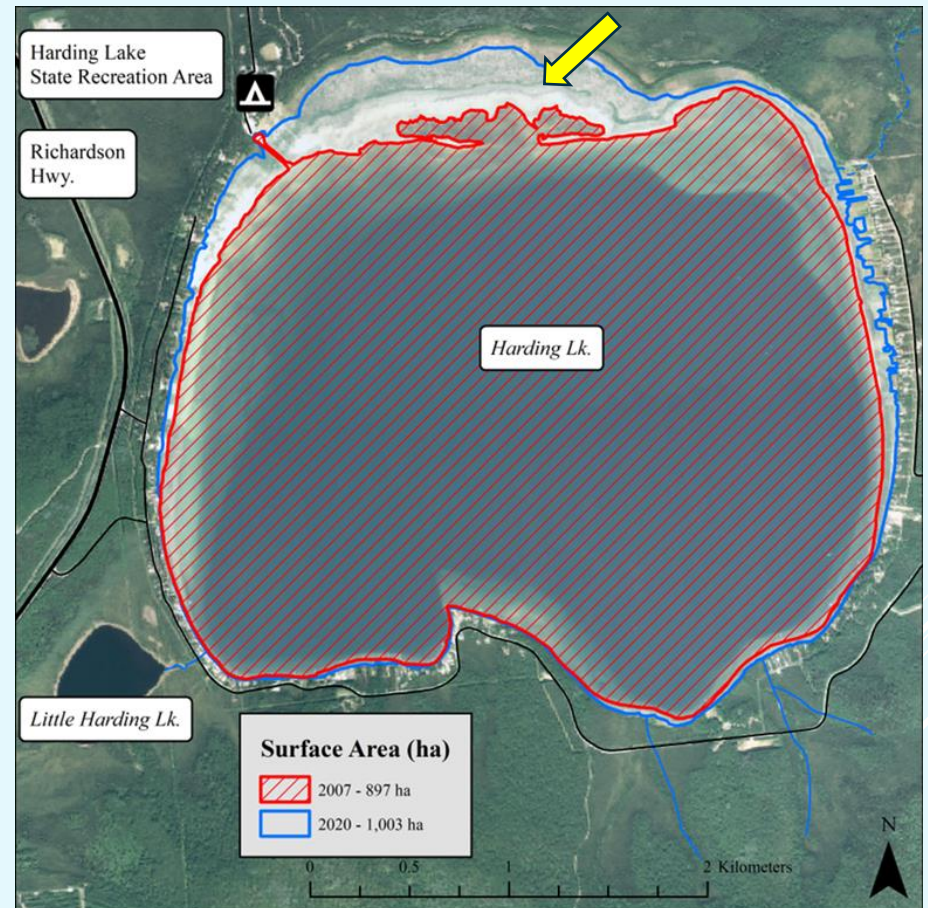
HARDING LAKE NORTHERN PIKE (PROPOSAL 66)

- Largest road-accessible lake in the Tanana River drainage
- Sport fishing for northern pike has been closed since 2000 due to declining abundance related to receding water levels, which substantially reduced spawning and rearing habitat



HARDING LAKE NORTHERN PIKE (PROPOSAL 66)

- Abundance decreased from 2,479 fish ≥ 18 in 1993 to 531 fish in 2000
- Since 2007, lake surface area has increase by 250 acres
- In 2022, abundance was estimated to be 927 fish ≥ 18 inches
- Proposal 66- would allow catch-and-release fishing for northern pike in Harding Lake



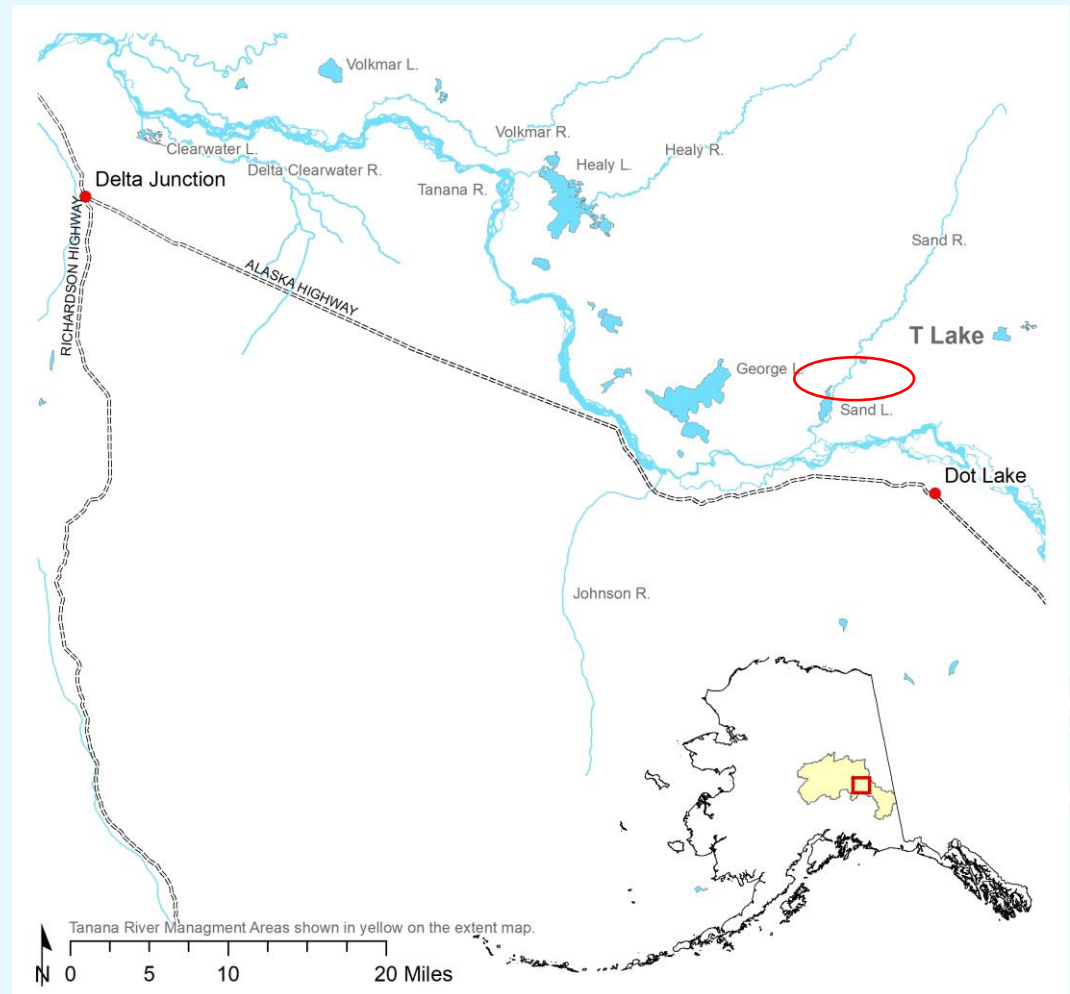
TANANA RIVER DRAINAGE NORTHERN PIKE (PROPOSAL 67)

- Set lines are used for burbot in rivers and lakes throughout the Tanana drainage
- In flowing waters an aggregate of up to 15 hooks may be used
- In lakes that allow set lines, up to 5 hooks may be used
- Often fish are hooked deeply or dead upon retrieval
- Northern pike will also strike dead baits on set lines, but it is unlawful to retain northern pike caught on set lines
- Proposal 67- would make it illegal to retain northern pike caught on set lines in the Tanana drainage



“T” LAKE BURBOT (PROPOSAL 68)

- T Lake is a small (425 ac), remote lake located approximately 9 mi off the road system northeast of the community of Dot Lake
- Contains very small populations of burbot and northern pike
- No SWHS responses on angler effort in T Lake since 2000



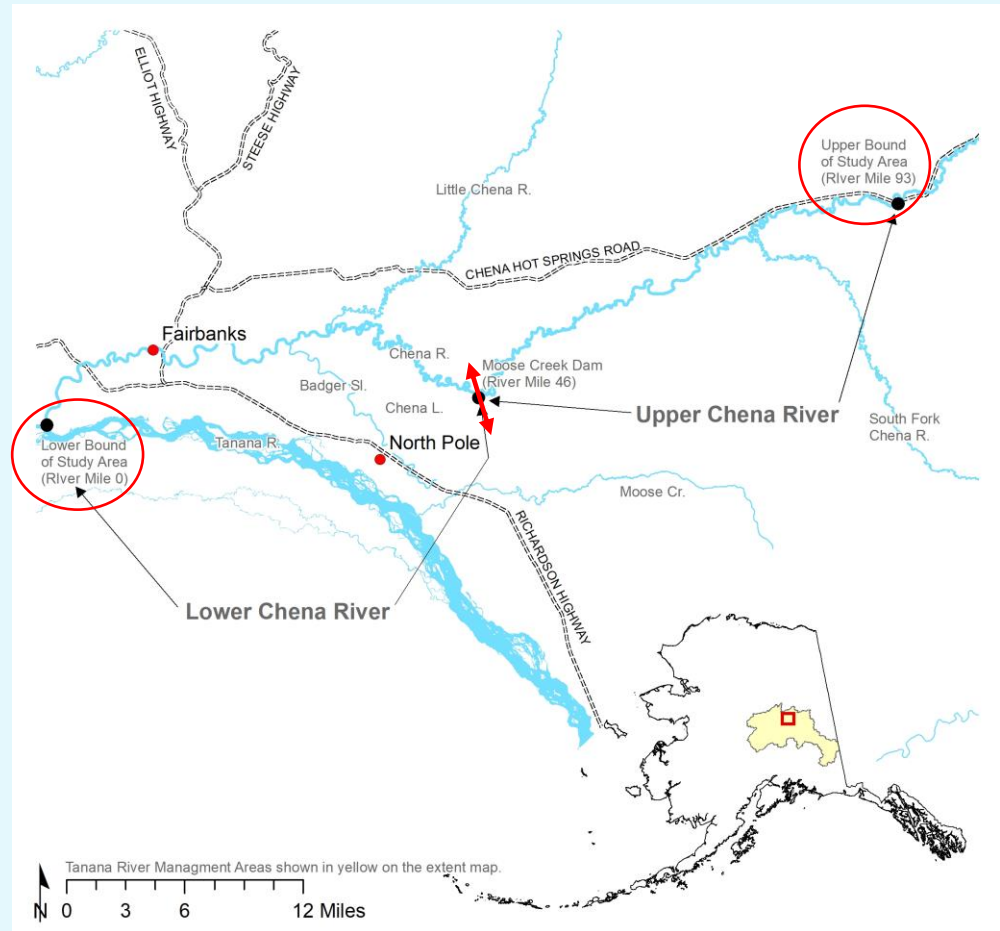
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- Contains very small populations of burbot and northern pike
- No SWHS responses on angler effort in T Lake since 2000
- Proposal 68- would repeal the set line prohibition and bag and possession limit for burbot in T Lake



CHENA RIVER ARCTIC GRAYLING (PROPOSALS 69 AND 70)

- Harvests averaged 30,000 fish in late-70's and early 80's
- Entire Chena River drainage was made catch-and-release for Arctic grayling in 1992
- Youth-only fishery opened in 2019 in the lower river (downstream of Moose Creek Dam) to a harvest of one fish any size over four weekends each summer
- 2021 population estimate = 24,896 fish ≥ 12 inches
- Radiotelemetry revealed that $>95\%$ of fish ≥ 12 inches migrate upstream past Moose Creek Dam for the summer



CHENA RIVER ARCTIC GRAYLING (PROPOSALS 69 AND 70)

- **Proposal 69-** would close the catch-and-release fishery for Arctic grayling in the lower Chena River (beginning 300 ft downstream of Moose Creek Dam to the Tanana River) and its tributaries, from April 1 through May 15
- **Proposal 70-** would establish a bag and possession limit of one Arctic grayling, with no size limit, in the lower Chena River and its tributaries, downstream of Moose Creek Dam to the Tanana River between June 1 and March 31*
- **This would also repeal the four weekends (eight days) of the youth-only fishery in June and July*



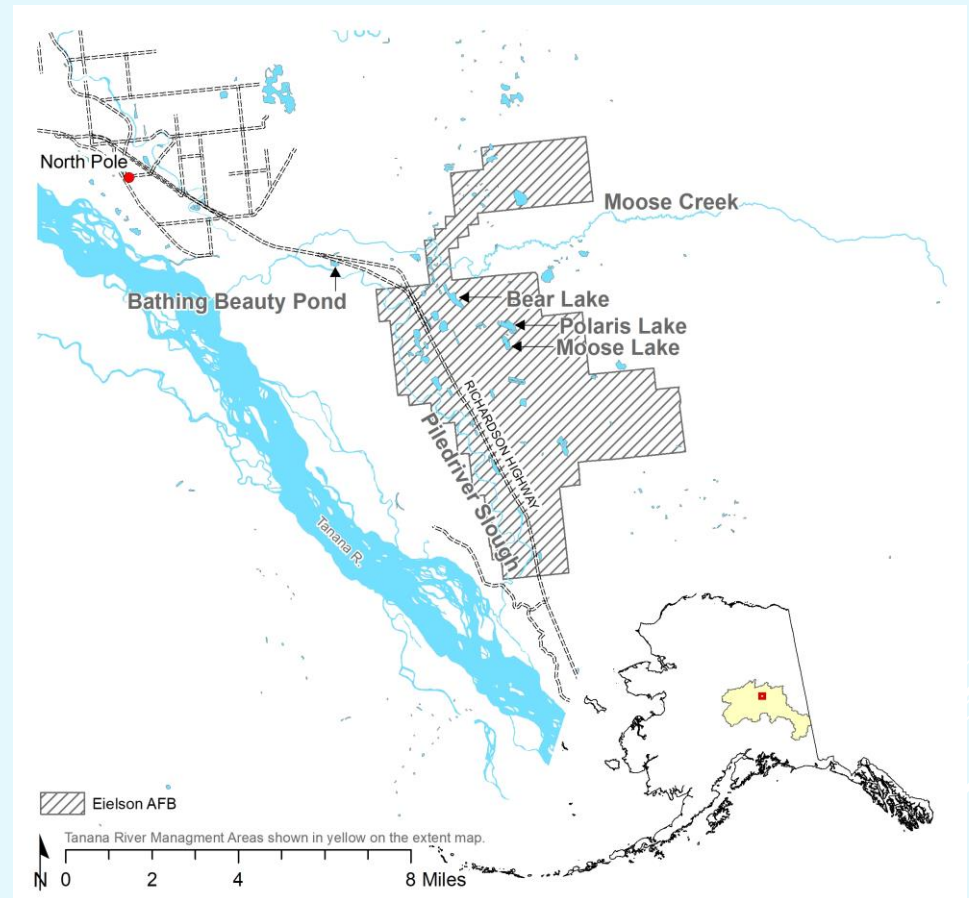
FIELDING LAKE LAKE TROUT (PROPOSAL 71)

- Located along the road system in the Delta River drainage, supports lake trout, burbot, and Arctic grayling fisheries
- Harvests averaged 231 fish annually in the early 1990s to only 21 fish in 2016
- Current bag and possession limit of 1 fish ≥ 26 inches
- Estimated abundance of lake trout ≥ 14 inches was 1,637 fish
- Under the Tanana River Area Wild Lake Trout Management Plan (5 AAC 74.040) the department manages wild lake trout populations using conservative regulations and maintaining harvest below MSY
- Proposal 71- remove minimum size restriction of ≥ 26 inches for harvest



TANANA DRAINAGE STOCKED LAKES (PROPOSAL 72)

- Testing of water quality and fish from Polaris, Bear, and Moose Lakes, Bathing Beauty Pond, Moose Creek, and Piledriver Slough indicated that fish may be unsafe for human consumption due to PFAS contamination
- These water bodies are connected to a plume of groundwater contaminated with PFAS associated with Eielson Air Force Base
- Since 2019, these lakes have been restricted to catch-and-release only fishing for all fish species annually by emergency order
- Proposal 72- Allow for catch-and-release fishing in Bathing Beauty Pond, Bear Lake, Moose Lake, Polaris Lake, Piledriver Slough, and Moose Creek in regulation



SEWARD PENINSULA ARCTIC GRAYLING (PROPOSAL 75)

- Seward Peninsula is known for its large Arctic grayling
- Most fishing effort for Arctic grayling within Northern Norton Sound occurs on five streams along Nome-area road system
- These Arctic grayling populations are primarily composed of fish ≥ 15 inches where smaller fish are uncommon to catch
- In Northern Norton Sound, the background bag and possession limit is five fish, of which only one fish ≥ 15 inches
- In the Pilgrim and Snake Rivers, the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling is two fish, only one may be ≥ 15 inches
- Proposal 75- Remove the minimum length limit and reduce the bag and possession limit for Arctic grayling in Northern Norton Sound drainages



YUKON RIVER DRAINAGE SALMON (PROPOSAL 86)

- The Yukon River drainage supports runs of king, chum, sockeye, pink, and coho salmon
- Catch of all salmon species combined averaged 3,622 fish/yr for 2016-2020, harvest averaged 776 fish/yr
- 93% of the catch and 97% of harvest is of chum, coho, and pink salmon from the Andreafsky and Anvik River drainages
- Proposal 86- would require retention of sport caught salmon, if removed from the water, in the Yukon River Management Area



KANEKTOK RIVER DRAINAGE CHUM SALMON (PROPOSAL 94)

- The Kanektok River drainage supports runs of king, chum, sockeye, pink, and coho salmon
- Majority of sport fishers are nonresident who target rainbow trout, king, and coho salmon while chum salmon are generally caught incidentally
- Catch of chum salmon averaged 10,801 fish/yr for 2016-2020, harvest averaged 323 fish/yr
- No recent stock assessment information but chum salmon escapement averaged 45,000 fish during 2002-2012
- Neither subsistence fishing nor sport fishing have been restricted because of conservation concerns since at least 2000
- Proposal 94- would close sport fishing for chum salmon in the Kanektok River to nonresidents from June 1–July 15





THANK YOU!