

## *Westside Management (7 proposals)*

### **PROPOSAL 54**

#### **5 AAC 06.368. Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan.**

Repeal the Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan, as follows:

5 AAC 06.368 is repealed:

#### **5 AAC 06.368. Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan. Repealed.**

[(A) THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN IS TO PROVIDE GUIDELINES TO ENSURE AN ADEQUATE SPAWNING ESCAPEMENT OF COHO SALMON INTO THE NUSHAGAK RIVER SYSTEM. IT IS THE INTENT OF THE BOARD OF FISHERIES (BOARD) THAT NUSHAGAK COHO SALMON BE HARVESTED BY THE FISHERIES THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY HARVESTED THEM. THE PLAN IN THIS SECTION PROVIDES MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES TO THE DEPARTMENT IN AN EFFORT TO PRECLUDE ALLOCATION CONFLICTS BETWEEN VARIOUS USERS OF THIS RESOURCE. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MANAGE COHO SALMON STOCKS IN A CONSERVATIVE MANNER CONSISTENT WITH SUSTAINED YIELD PRINCIPLES AND THE SUBSISTENCE PRIORITY.

(B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MANAGE THE COMMERCIAL FISHERY IN THE NUSHAGAK DISTRICT TO ACHIEVE AN INRIVER RUN GOAL OF 70,000 - 130,000 COHO SALMON PRESENT IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER UPSTREAM FROM THE DEPARTMENT SONAR COUNTER LOCATED NEAR THE VILLAGE OF PORTAGE CREEK BY AUGUST 25. THE INRIVER GOAL PROVIDES FOR

(1) THE DEPARTMENT'S SUSTAINABLE ESCAPEMENT GOAL OF 60,000 - 120,000 COHO SALMON UPSTREAM FROM THE SONAR COUNTER BY AUGUST 25;

(2) A REASONABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR SUBSISTENCE HARVEST OF COHO SALMON; AND

(3) A DAILY BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT OF FIVE COHO SALMON, AND A GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL OF 2,000 FISH IN THE SPORT FISHERY; THE SPORT FISHERY GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL OF 2,000 FISH DOES NOT APPLY IF THE TOTAL INRIVER COHO SALMON RETURN IS PROJECTED TO BE GREATER THAN 120,000 FISH BY AUGUST 25; THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MANAGE THE SPORT FISHERY TO ENSURE THAT THE SUSTAINABLE ESCAPEMENT GOAL OF 60,000 - 120,000 COHO SALMON IS ACHIEVED.

(C) IF THE TOTAL INRIVER COHO SALMON RETURN IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER IS PROJECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO BE LESS THAN 120,000 BUT AT LEAST 70,000 FISH BY AUGUST 25, THE COMMISSIONER SHALL CLOSE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE DIRECTED COHO SALMON COMMERCIAL FISHERY IN THE NUSHAGAK DISTRICT BY AUGUST 1; AND

(1) REPEALED 4/16/2016;

(2) THE COMMISSIONER MAY RESTRICT, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE COHO SALMON SPORT FISHERY IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER DRAINAGE UPSTREAM FROM THE DEPARTMENT SONAR COUNTER LOCATED NEAR THE VILLAGE OF PORTAGE CREEK SO THAT THE HARVEST DOES NOT EXCEED 2,000 COHO SALMON BY ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- (A) REDUCE THE BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT;
- (B) PROHIBIT THE USE OF BAIT;
- (C) RESTRICT FISHING TIMES AND AREAS;
- (D) RESTRICT TERMINAL TACKLE TO SINGLE-HOOK ARTIFICIAL LURES; AND
- (E) ALLOW CATCH-AND-RELEASE FISHING ONLY;

(3) IT IS THE INTENT OF THE BOARD THAT THE LOWER THE PROJECTED INRIVER COHO SALMON RETURN IS, THE MORE RESTRICTIVE THAT MANAGEMENT MEASURES WILL BE IN THE SPORT AND COMMERCIAL FISHERIES UNDER THIS SECTION.

(D) IF THE TOTAL INRIVER COHO SALMON RETURN IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER IS PROJECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO BE LESS THAN 70,000 FISH AND THE NUMBER OF SPAWNERS IS PROJECTED TO BE MORE THAN 60,000 FISH ON AUGUST 25, THE COMMISSIONER SHALL

(1) CLOSE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE DIRECTED COMMERCIAL FISHERY NO LATER THAN AUGUST 1;

(2) CLOSE, BY EMERGENCY ORDER, THE COHO SALMON SPORT FISHERY IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER DRAINAGE; AND

(3) RESTRICT THE COHO SALMON SUBSISTENCE FISHERY IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER DRAINAGE BY ESTABLISHING PERIODS BY EMERGENCY ORDER, DURING WHICH

(A) COHO SALMON MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM

(I) 9:00 A.M. MONDAY TO 9:00 A.M. TUESDAY;

(II) 9:00 A.M. WEDNESDAY TO 9:00 A.M. THURSDAY; AND

(III) 9:00 A.M. FRIDAY TO 9:00 A.M. SATURDAY; AND (B) SET GILLNETS MAY NOT BE MORE THAN 10 FATHOMS IN LENGTH.

(E) IF THE NUMBER OF COHO SALMON SPAWNERS IN THE NUSHAGAK RIVER IS PROJECTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO BE LESS THAN 60,000 FISH BY AUGUST 25, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CLOSE THE SUBSISTENCE, COMMERCIAL, AND SPORT FISHERIES.]

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In 2025, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game recommended discontinuing the Nushagak River coho salmon escapement goal due to a lack of coho salmon stock assessment. The *Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan* (plan) was adopted in 1996 when the department was actively assessing the Nushagak River coho salmon stock. The plan is structured around coho salmon escapement level triggers that direct specific management actions. The department has not conducted enumeration for coho salmon on the Nushagak River since 2018 and has only enumerated coho salmon 4 times since 2004. Over the past 20 years, triggers in the plan have rarely been used to manage fisheries targeting Nushagak River coho salmon.

It is unlikely the department will be able to enumerate coho salmon escapement in the Nushagak River in the future or collect enough data to evaluate run timing and escapement goals. Anecdotal reports indicate that run timing has changed over the last 20 years, shifting later. If this is the case, it

may render the dates defined in the plan impractical to implement even if coho salmon escapement data were to become available in the future.

Commercial interest in coho salmon has declined since the adoption of this plan. Most processors cease buying operations in the Nushagak District by the end of July, well before the August 10 historical midpoint of the coho salmon run. Without escapement data, the department will not provide directed commercial fishing opportunities on Nushagak River coho salmon. The subsistence and sport fisheries will continue to be managed per regulations established by the board.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.**

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-023)

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**PROPOSAL 55**

**5 AAC 06.368. Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan.**

**5 AAC 06.358. Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan.**

Repeal the *Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan*, as follows:

Delete 5 AAC 06.368. Nushagak River Coho Salmon Management Plan and the reference to the plan within the Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan (c)(D)(2).

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** ADFG is recommending that the Nushagak Coho escapement goal be eliminated. With the elimination of the escapement goal, there is no longer a reason to have a management plan directing ADFG on how to manage a fishery to ensure that a goal that no longer exists is met.

Also, ADFG has not been counting Coho salmon in the Nushagak for many years.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** No

**PROPOSED BY:** Robert Heyano (EF-F26-082)

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**PROPOSAL 56**

**5 AAC 06.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.**

Remove the sunset date and permanently adopt current defined offshore locations in the Nushagak District set gillnet fishery, as follows:

**Remove the words (and subject to (v) of this section) from section (n).**

**Make the introductory language of 5 AAC 06.331(n) is amended to read:**

**(n) in the Nushagak District, a CFEC salmon interim-use or entry permit holder may not set or operate a set gillnet seaward of set gillnets operate by another CFEC salmon interim-use or entry permit holder. In addition, not part of a set gillnet, anchor, peg, stake, buoy, or other device used to set the gillnet may be seaward of the following offshore locations:**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The existing seaward boundary for setnet operations on Ekuk Beach, defined in 5 AAC06.331(n), will not exist after May 31, 2026 due to the sunset language in 5 AAC 06.331 (v).This boundary, adopted in 2023, replaced the

previous measurement methodology which was unreliable due to fluctuations of the beach caused by weather and tide. The current boundary has provided an enforceable limit to operation of setnets by giving fishermen and enforcement an easily identifiable boundary. The boundary established under 5 AAC 06.331(n) should be maintained and the sunset provision in 5 AAC 06.331(v) should be removed.

5 AAC 06.331(n) works very well for the set gill net fishery on Ekuk Beach. It gives set and drift net fishermen as well as law enforcement a stable, easily-defined seaward boundary for set gillnet gear. The current outer limit is a fixed boundary based on latitudes and longitudes that do not fluctuate. This is a huge improvement from the previous boundary which was keyed to high and low water marks which fluctuate continually. In this section of the Nushagak, the beach is gravel and changes daily. The mean high-water mark fluctuates shoreward and seaward many feet depending on tide size and wind conditions. When there is a strong storm during a high tide, the mean highwater level, approximately 19 feet above mean low water, moves significantly shoreward. Later, over a few days of calm weather and small tides the beach fills back in and may move seaward even more significantly. The minus 3-foot tide mark, which also previously defined the outer limit, is very difficult to measure. The minus 3-foot tide level occurs rarely, and even when it does, it varies with wind conditions.

Both the mean high water and mean low water levels are based on a tidal benchmark that is located in Clarks Point miles away from Ekuk Beach. This benchmark is not accessible for fishermen or enforcement, and requires specialized equipment and knowledge to locate, measure, and compare with individual sites. Without an accessible benchmark, and with a continually changing beach, it is extremely difficult for law enforcement and fishermen to accurately establish the mean high water or the minus 3-foot tide mark. Technically, a person could attempt to average the tide levels over many days and estimate boundaries, but because the beach is not stable, this method cannot give accurate, repeatable, or defensible results. In reality, to accurately establish either of these tide levels, one must hire a professional land surveyor to survey from the tidal benchmark in Clarks Point to the site, which may be up to 20 miles away.

The outer set gillnet boundary adopted by the Board in 2023 is effective and should be retained.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** 5 AAC 06.331(n) was a collaborative effort between set and drift net users, enforcement and the Board of Fisheries in 2023. I have discussed with and have the support from many set gillnetters for this proposal.

**PROPOSED BY:** John O'Connor

(EF-F26-071)

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### **PROPOSAL 57**

#### **5 AAC 06.331. Gillnet specifications and operations.**

Adopt offshore locations used in the Nushagak District set gillnet fishery for the drift gillnet fishery, and prohibit drift gillnet gear from coming into contact with set gillnet gear , as follows:

06.331(n) sets a seaward limit for operation of set gillnets by establishing defined coordinates as the outer boundary. This set of coordinates should also function as a shoreward boundary for drift gillnets and related equipment, preventing drift boats and drift gillnets from entangling with set gillnets, lines, and other equipment.

Revised Section:

06.331(n) *In the Nushagak District, and subject to (v) of this section, a CFEC salmon interim-use or entry permit holder may not set or operate a set gillnet seaward of set gillnets operated by another CFEC salmon interim-use or entry permit holder. In addition, no part of a set gillnet, anchor, peg, stake, buoy, or other device used to set the gillnet may be seaward of the following offshore locations; and no part of a drift vessel, gillnet, line, buoy, or other device used to drift a gillnet may be shoreward of the following offshore locations while the drift gillnet is in the water:*

New Section:

*(w) No part of a drift vessel, gillnet, line, buoy, or other device used to drift a gillnet may be operated so as to come into contact with a set gillnet, line, anchor, peg, stake, buoy, or other device used to operate the setnet.*

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Drift boats and drift gillnets are being operated inside the coordinates defined in 06.331(n), which define the seaward limit for setnet operations along Ekuk Beach, and have often been entangled in setnets and setnet lines and gear. This entanglement endangers fishermen, damages setnets, running lines, anchors, pegs, stakes, buoys, and other devices and prevents continued operation of the setnet for at least 1 tide, and often longer depending on the size of the following low tides, creating a material loss of catch for the setnet operation.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** Yes, I collaborated with fishermen on Ekuk Beach and will work with the Nushagak Advisory Committee to review this proposal at their convenience.

**PROPOSED BY:** Christine O'Connor, Jamie O'Connor, Sonja Rootvik Ewing, Kevin Ewing, Warren Libby, Avi Friedman, Noris Friedman, Celia Friedman, Jeff Rasco, Haley Rasco, Michelle Atkiq Snyder, Logan Ball, Travis Ball, Terri Stone, Dave Reynolds, Dayle Ferry, Grayson Sanborn, Margot Stroop, Julia Harding King, Cameron Libby, Grayson Libby, Benjamin Ahrens, Bryon Wilson, Dennis Ball, Trace Oxentenko-Ball, Lauri Libby Rootvik, Sean O'Connor,

(EF-F26-117)

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## **PROPOSAL 58**

### **5 AAC 06.358. Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan.**

Modify the trigger to open the Wood River Special Harvest Area when the total run is estimated to be over 5 million fish, as follows:

Modify the trigger to open the WRSOA to match the Wood River OEG when its used in-season.

(3) when the escapement of sockeye salmon into the Wood River exceeds 1,600,000 (1,100,000) fish and the escapement is projected to exceed 2,000,000 (1,400,000) fish);

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Currently, the department may open the Wood River Special Harvest Area (WRSOA) when the escapement of sockeye salmon into the Wood River exceeds 1,100,000 fish and the escapement is projected to exceed 1,400,000 fish. The current SEG for the Wood River Sockeye run is 700,000-1.8 million and was established in 2015.

In 2022 the BOF adopted the Nushagak King Action plan that created an OEG for the Wood River sockeye in years where it was estimated to be larger than 5 million in total run size. The in-season trigger described above was not modified to match instances where an OEG is in use.

In instances where it is estimated that the Wood River sockeye run is greater than 5 million fish, the OEG is in place with 700,000 sockeye as the lower bound,, and the upper bound is 15% of the Wood River run size above the 1.8 million fish upper bound of the SEG. So if a total run to the Wood River was estimated to be 5 million fish, the upper bound of the OEG would be 2,550,000 (SEG of 1,800,000 plus 15% of 5 million (750,000) = 2,550,000).

The trigger to open the WRSWA needs to be modified to match the OEG when it's in use.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** No

**PROPOSED BY:** Frank Woods (EF-F26-097)

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**PROPOSAL 59**

**5 AAC 06.358. Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan.**

Ensure drift gillnet fishing opportunity in the Wood River Special Harvest Area, regardless of allocation, as follows:

**WHEN THE WRSWA IS OPEN UNDER ( c ) ( 3 ) OF THIS SECTION THE WOOD RIVER WILL BE OPEN TO THE GEAR TYPE THAT IS BEHIND IN ALLOCATIONFOR THE NUSHAGAK DISTRICT INITIALLY. THEN EVERY 48 HOURS THEOPPOSITE GEAR TYPE WILL BE ALLOWED TO FISH FOR UP TO 48 HOURSALTERNATING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE TWO GEAR TYPES REGARDLESS OF ALLOCATION PERCENTAGES. THIS WOULD ONLY APPLYWHEN THE NUSHAGAK DISTRICT AND WRSWA ARE OPENSIMULTANEOUSLY.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? THE WOOD RIVER SPECIAL HARVEST MANAGEMENT. (WRSWA)**

CURRENTLY WRSWSA ALLOWS THE GEAR TYPE BEHIND IN THEIR ALLOCATION TO FISH FIRST AND CONTINUE FISHING IN THE WRSWSA AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN BEHIND IN THEIR ALLOCATION. DUE TO THE LACK OF SET NET GEAR NUMBER FLUCTUATION AND RADICAL FLUCTUATION IN DRIFT GEAR NUMBERS, SET NET GEAR IS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY GETTING TO FISH IN THE WRSWA WITH ALMOST NO OPPORTUNITY FOR DRIFT NET GEAR.

THIS IS DOES NOT SEEM EQUITABLE FOR SET NET GEAR TO GET ALL THE WRSWA OPENINGS AND THE DRIFT NET GEAR GETS ALMOST NONE OF THE WRSWA OPENINGS.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** NO, BUT I DID VISIT WITH TIM SANDS BIOLOGIST OF NUSHAGAK DISTRICT REGARDING THIS ISSUE AND HAVE TALKED WITH NUMBER OF OTHER FISHERMAN WHO AGREE WITH ME ON THIS ISSUE.

**PROPOSED BY:** Leo Jennings (EF-F26-004)

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**PROPOSAL 60**

**5 AAC 06.358. Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan.**

Increase the length of a set gillnet in the Wood River Special Harvest Area, as follows:

**5 AAC 06.358. Wood River Sockeye Salmon Special Harvest Area Management Plan**

(d) When the Wood River Special Harvest Area is open under this section, the following apply within the open waters:

(1) set gillnets may be operated only as follows:

(A) a set gillnet may not exceed 37.5 [25] fathoms in length;

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?**

Lengthen set gillnets in the Wood River Special Harvest Area (WRSHA) from 25 fathoms to 37.5 fathoms. This would mirror what's already allowed in the Naknek River Special Harvest Area (NRSHA) under 5 AAC 06.360. When the WRSHA was originally created, openings were concurrent with drift fishers. It made sense then to have shorter set gillnets because the drift fleet was fishing at the same time. When regulations changed in 2012 to have separate gear openings, the need to reduce gear conflict went away. Since the WRSHA is primarily used to harvest surplus salmon, additional gear would help to maximize harvest. The WRSHA also allows for more room between set gillnets (250' vs 150') compared to the NRSHA, making even more room for these longer nets.

a) What would happen if nothing is changed? Setnetters in the WRSHA would continue to fish with 25 fathoms, but would lose fishing opportunity they might have if allowed to fish 37.5 fathoms like setnetters in the NRSHA.

b) What are other solutions you considered? Why did you reject them? None

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** Yes, discussions were had amongst various Nushagak setnetters who were all in favor.

**PROPOSED BY:** Tom Rollman, Levi Rollman, Rick Wysocki, and Bert Luckhurst (EF-F26-125)

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