

AGENDA CHANGE REQUEST FORM
ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES

The Board of Fisheries (board) will accept requests to change its schedule under certain guidelines set forth in 5 AAC 39.999. The board will accept these agenda change requests (ACRs) only:

- 1) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason; or
- 2) to correct an error in regulation; or
- 3) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.

The board will not accept an ACR that is predominantly allocative in nature in the absence of new compelling information, as determined by the board [5 AAC 39.999 (a) (2)].

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

1) CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD. If possible, enter the series of letters and numbers that identify the regulation to be changed. If it will be a new section, enter "5 AAC NEW".

Alaska Administrative Code Number 5 AAC:

None.... This request is in reference to SSFP; 5 AAC 39.222, which directs the department to provide the BOF, at regular meetings, with reports on the status of salmon stocks and identify any salmon stocks that present a concern related to yield, management, or conservation.

2) WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM. Address only one issue. State the problem clearly and concisely. The board will reject multiple or confusing issues.

The Kenai River Early Run Chinook (ER) populations have been in a precipitous decline since 2006. The causes for such a rapid decline are largely unknown, however, we believe that it is absolutely necessary to consider all aspects of management options to have the best chance of stock recovery and a "stock of concern" status may be a necessary conservation option.

Department data illustrates that these stocks have declined by about 70% since 2006 compared to previous historical values. This assertion is hard to quantify, however, since ADF&G is transitioning from the old split-beam sonar system to the new Didson system. They have little confidence in historical sonar counts and insufficient data to evaluate the Didson counts by comparison. This quandary brings into question their assumptions of escapement and productivity used in managing this fishery. However, other indexes of abundance also indicate a significant decline in ER numbers. Everyone seems to concur that this decline is due in part to marine survival being lower, however, we feel that the decline is also due to harvest patterns in-river. Fishing on mainstem spawning fish in July, insufficient spawning area protections, and over-harvest of the population because of biased high sonar counts are some other contributing factors.

One long-standing historical index that offers a more consistent evaluation might be the Cumulative Net Apportioned Sonar Estimates in recent years compared to historical values. This value is determined by running a drift gill net at various stages across the river near the sonar site twelve times a day. The season totals are then scrutinized for variables in water conditions, strengths of the Sockeye run, etc. and then

compared to past split-beam equivalency values to determine the apportionment. ADF&G data (attached) illustrates that since 2006 the highest apportionment value was 4,822 Kings, with only 2,774 in 2012. Also note that the sport harvest still has to be deducted from these values to determine an escapement figure. Using these values could mean that we have not met the minimum OEG escapement goal of 5,300 in any of the last five years.

There are two other quantifiable indicators that cooperate this decline. Since 2006, USF&W has operated a weir on the Funny River to determine early run strengths into that tributary. In 2006 2,779 ER Kings were counted. Counts since have steadily declined to only around 870 in 2012. This illustrates about a 70% decline in the last 6 years. ADF&G also established a weir on Slikok Creek in 2008. Historical foot counts from 1990 – 2004 averaged 165 Kings with some years exceeding 300. Since 2008 the counts have averaged around 46 fish. In 2012 the count was 30 with only 10 females and we can expect bear predation to reduce this number significantly. These values represent about an 80% decline since 2004.

It should be mentioned that these 2012 Funny River and Slikok Creek weir counts were very low but they could have been worse if it weren't for the in-season harvest restrictions put in place by the department.

In conclusion, the Kenai River Early Run Chinook require management protection to help facilitate their recovery. We have to do all we can in-river to assist in such a recovery and listing this run as a “stock of concern” may be a valuable management option that we need to consider.

3) WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER? Or, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new or amended regulation say?

We are requesting the board to direct the department to provide a complete stock assessment, analysis and recommendation as it pertains to a possible “stock of concern” status (either yield or conservation) of the Kenai River Early Run Chinook stocks. Additionally, we would support a special meeting in 2013 to discuss UCI Chinook issues and to consider the stock of concern option for the Kenai River early run Chinook and the possible implementation of other regulatory changes necessary to correct the decline in these ER stocks.

4) STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE. If one or more of the three criteria set forth above is not applicable, state that it is not.

a) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason:

The Kenai River Early Run Chinook stocks are in decline and conservation applications offered by a “stock of concern” status may be a necessary management tool to provide more conservation to facilitate a recovery.

b) to correct an error in regulation:

Not applicable

c) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:

Not applicable

5) WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?

The board may not have a complete stock assessment and information pertaining to a “stock of concern” consideration. We believe this stock may not have made minimum escapements for the last 5 years and if 2013 is another failure then a stock of concern status should be a consideration. If the board waits until the 2014 UCI meeting to entertain stock of concern considerations it may be too late to expect the department to provide a complete analysis of the issue.

6) STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

If it is deemed that a “stock of concern” status is necessary for recovery of these stocks then all user groups would share in the burden of recovery management strategies.

7) IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.

N/A

8) STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR (e.g., commercial fisherman, subsistence user, sport angler, etc.)

KAFC is a private angler sport fishing group that is interested in conservation of our resources so that we have sustainable fishery populations for current and future generations to enjoy. We believe in science based and adaptive management of our resources.

9) STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING.

The “stock of concern” status has not been considered before for Kenai River Early Run Chinook stocks.

Submitted by:

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Dwight Kramer, Chairman KAFC