

Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory Council

Federal Fisheries Proposal

Proponent

Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Issue

Repeal time and date restrictions on subsistence fishing in the Norton Sound/Port Clarence Area on the Unalakleet River and allow subsistence fishing for salmon 24/7 during the times it is open.

Existing Federal Regulation

Norton Sound/Port Clarence Area

43 CFR 51.27(e)(2)

(2) Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area. The Norton Sound-Port Clarence Area includes all waters of Alaska between the latitude of the westernmost tip of Cape Prince of Wales and the latitude of Point Romanof, including those waters of Alaska surrounding St. Lawrence Island and those waters draining into the Bering Sea.

(i) Unless otherwise restricted in this section, you may take fish at any time in the Port Clarence District.

(ii) In the Norton Sound District, you may take fish at any time except as follows:

(A) In Subdistricts 2 through 6, if you are a commercial fishermen, you may not fish for subsistence purposes during the weekly closures of the State commercial salmon fishing season, except that from July 15 through August 1, you may take salmon for subsistence purposes 7 days per week in the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik River drainages with gillnets which have a stretched-mesh size that does not exceed 4 1/2 inches, and with beach seines;

(B) In the Unalakleet River from June 1 through July 15, you may take salmon only from 8:00 a.m. Monday until 8:00 p.m. Saturday.

(C) Federal public waters of the Unalakleet River, upstream from the mouth of the Chiroosky River, are closed to the taking of Chinook salmon from July 1 to July 31, by all users. The BLM field manager is authorized to open the closed area to Federally qualified subsistence users or to all users when run strength warrants.

Proposed Federal Regulation

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(C) Federal public waters of the Unalakleet River, upstream from the mouth of the Chirosky River, are closed to the taking of Chinook salmon from July 1 to July 31, by all users. The BLM field manager is authorized to open the closed area to Federally qualified subsistence users or to all users when run strength warrants.

Why is this needed? The Council noted that having time-limited openings and closures did not always align well with weather events, which sometimes prevented opportunities to harvest salmon that were outside of the open periods from 8am Monday to 8pm Saturday. The intent of the proposal is to remove the time restrictions (8am Monday through 8pm Saturday) for harvesting salmon. By removing part (B) of the regulation, this would allow subsistence activities to take place 24/7 up to the July 1 to July 31 closure to all users above Chirosky River of Chinook Salmon and keeps the authorization of the BLM Field Manager to open the closed waters to federally qualified subsistence users or to all users when the run strength warrants. This change in regulation would benefit subsistence users to harvest anytime of the day and maximize harvest efforts during times the weather allows.