

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Teleconference on Yukon River Summer Chum Salmon Management Plan
June 29, 2009

Summary of Actions

The Alaska Board of Fisheries met by teleconference June 29, 2009. Seven of seven board members were present and public listen-only sites were available at Fish and Game offices in Emmonak, Anchorage, and Juneau. The purpose of the teleconference was to consider a petition submitted by the Department of Fish and Game regarding an amendment to the Yukon River Summer Chum Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 05.362). Specifically, the department asked for an emergency regulation to prohibit the sale of king salmon incidentally caught in the chum directed fishery.

The department described conservation concerns regarding low king salmon returns to the Yukon River and the resulting need to conserve king salmon stocks in Districts 1-5. It explained how removing the incentive to take king salmon would result in expanded opportunity in the commercial summer chum salmon fishery this season. If king salmon could be retained but not sold, fishermen would not target king salmon during summer chum salmon directed fishing periods and king salmon retained for subsistence use could help meet subsistence needs that are still unmet because of reductions in subsistence fishing time for king salmon. The department noted that the situation was unexpected and unforeseen and that the opportunity to harvest summer chum salmon would quickly pass with a resulting loss of economic benefit to fishermen in an already economically depressed region.

The board discussed whether the situation was unexpected or unforeseen. It noted that this year's poor king salmon returns were widely known. The board referenced its previous concerns over bycatch of Yukon River king salmon in the Bering Sea as expressed in its recent letter to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The board acted to delegate authority to the commissioner to make the specific regulatory change to 5 AAC 05.362 by adding a new subsection to read: "(i) During the summer chum salmon season specified in this section, in Districts 1-5, king salmon taken may be retained but not sold. The commissioner may close the season and immediately reopen the season allowing the sale of king salmon."