

Submitted at the request of Board Member Kluberton
January 23, 2015

Board Generated Proposal X – 5 AAC 01.270 Lawful gear and gear specifications and operation. Allow subsistence fishermen to operate fish wheels without a livebox during times necessary to conserve king salmon in the Kuskokwim River drainage, as follows:

5 AAC 01.270(n)(2) is amended by adding a new sub paragraph to read:

5 AAC 01.270 Lawful gear and gear specifications and operation.

(n) Notwithstanding (b) and (j) of this section, during times when the commissioner determines it to be necessary for the conservation of king salmon, the commissioner, by emergency order, may close the fishing season in any portion of the Kuskokwim Area and immediately reopen the season in that portion during which the following gear limitations apply:

(2) for fish wheels:

(A) **except as provided in (C) of this paragraph**, a fish wheel used to take fish must be equipped with a livebox that is constructed so that it contains no less than 45 cubic feet of water volume while it is in operation;

(B) the livebox of a fish wheel must be checked at least once every six hours while the fish wheel is in operation, and all king salmon in the livebox must be returned alive to the water; [AND]

(C) a person may operate a fish wheel without a livebox only if

(i) the fish wheel is equipped with a chute that returns fish captured by the fish wheel to the water alive;

(ii) the person closely attends the fish wheel while it is operation; and

(iii) the person returns all king salmon caught to the water alive;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? At the October 2014 work session, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) accepted ACR 8 regarding the Kuskokwim River king salmon subsistence fishery and developed board-generated Proposal 272. The board also initiated a Kuskokwim Subsistence Salmon Panel to obtain public input on subsistence fishing regulatory changes, including gear specifications, to provide for the conservation of Kuskokwim River king salmon. During a panel meeting in Bethel in January 2015, there was discussion about fish wheel operators only having the option of using liveboxes to release king salmon during times of king salmon conservation. At this meeting, it was agreed to propose that subsistence fish wheel operators be provided the additional option of using a chute and closely attending a fish wheel to return king salmon caught to the water alive. This would provide more flexibility to provide subsistence opportunity for more abundant fish species while conserving king salmon. This regulatory wording is similar to Yukon River subsistence fishing regulations pertaining to this same issue. In combination with the department's discretionary time and area authority, the additional flexibility provided by these regulatory changes would enhance conservation of king salmon while providing for subsistence harvest opportunity.