



Federal Subsistence Board News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
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Federal Subsistence Board approves changes to subsistence fishing regulations

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) met April 15-18, 2019 in Anchorage to consider 18 proposed changes to the Federal subsistence fisheries regulations, one nonrural proposal threshold assessment, a request for reconsideration (RFR) of a past wildlife proposal, and two fisheries temporary special action requests. The Board heard status updates on RFR15-01 (Kenai River Community Gillnet) and RFR18-01 (Unit 2 Deer), updates on the Partners Program for Fisheries Monitoring, the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program internships, and the Eastern Interior Alaska Hunter Education Pilot Program. The Board also conducted Tribal and Alaska Native Corporation consultations.

The Board adopted minor revisions to the Cook Inlet Area Regulations draft Final Rule, allowing it to move forward for publication in the Federal Register.

Changes to the Subsistence Fishing Regulations

The Board adopted 13 proposals to change the Federal subsistence fisheries regulations. Some of the changes approved by the Board include:

Southeast region:

- Revise customary and traditional use determinations for the Yakutat and Southeastern Alaska areas
- Eliminate the gillnet mesh size restriction for the Coho Salmon season in the Stikine River subsistence fishery
- Close Federal waters of Neva Creek, Neva Lake, and South Creek to harvest of Sockeye Salmon by non-Federally qualified users

Southcentral region:

- Remove the experimental designation for the Kasilof River experimental community gillnet fishery; name the Ninilchik Traditional Council as the operator of the fishery; align requirements in the regulations for this fishery with those for the Kenai River community gillnet fishery; and allow use of a set net, drift net, or pole net for this fishery
- Move requirements to check fish wheels from owner to operators for the Upper Copper River District
- Add current permit conditions for permit FFPW01 in the Prince William Sound Area, specifying the geographic area where the regulations apply
- Revise gear usage for Upper Copper River District subsistence salmon fishing permits, to only one unit of gear *per person* to be operated at any one time

Bristol Bay region:

- Extend Lake Clark fishing regulations to Sixmile Lake and its tributaries within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, unless otherwise prohibited, and allow rod and reel as a method and means for salmon fishing

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region:

- Allow Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest Chinook Salmon without clipping the tails during times when commercial sale of Chinook Salmon is not allowed
- Make dip nets legal gear for harvest of salmon in the Yukon River, and authorize the Federal inseason manager to require the live release of Chinook, Chum, or Coho Salmon during times of low salmon abundance, rather than only Chinook Salmon
- Allow use of six-inch or less mesh size gillnets prior to June 1 in the Kuskokwim River
- Specify that non-salmon spawning tributaries of the Kuskokwim River not expressly closed by special action remain open to the use of gillnets 100 yards upstream of confluence during times of closure to salmon fishing

Western Interior region:

- Allow use of drift gillnets and rescind net depth restrictions for Yukon River subsistence in District 4

The Board approved temporary special actions on each of the adopted regulatory proposals in order to enact changes immediately, rather than waiting until the new regulations are published in the Federal Register. The temporary special actions associated with the recently adopted regulatory proposals will expire upon publication of the regulations in the Federal Register.

The Federal subsistence fisheries regulations, effective upon publication in the Federal Register, are expected to be available statewide by mid-June. The regulations will be posted on the Federal Subsistence Management Program website, www.doi.gov/subsistence/fisheries.

The Board determined that Nonrural Proposal RP19-01 (Moose Pass) meets threshold requirements and has directed the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) staff to proceed with a full analysis of the proposal. The Board's final action on RP19-01 will occur in 2021. The Board also directed OSM to revise the Policy on Nonrural Determinations to include a threshold assessment for each nonrural proposal received in the future.

The Board approved Temporary Special Action Request FSA19-01 with modification, to immediately implement Board action on the Cook Inlet Final Rule related to the Kenai River community gillnet fishery, and will expire at the end of the 2019 fishing season. The modified special action permits, among other items, retention of early run Chinook Salmon less than 46 inches, or 55 inches and longer in length if the most current preseason forecast from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game or in-season inriver assessment projects the run to be within or above the Optimal Escapement Goal for early-run Chinook Salmon; otherwise live fish must be released.

The Board approved Temporary Special Action Request FSA19-02 with modification, to close Federal public waters to the harvest of Chinook Salmon from June 1, 2019 – July 1, 2019, except by Federally qualified subsistence users identified in the ANILCA Section 804 subsistence user prioritization (which includes residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefornek, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, and Kongiganek), in that portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage that are within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, unless reopened by Federal special action. Federal subsistence fishing schedules, openings, closures, and fishing methods will be determined by the Federal inseason manager.

The Board rejected a motion to further analyze claims submitted in RFR18-02 regarding Board decisions on wildlife proposal WP18-11 about moose in Unit 1C Berners Bay.

The Board will next meet at a summer work session, August 15-16, 2019, in Anchorage, and will hold an additional work session in January 2020 to discuss Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program funding. The next regulatory meeting will be the wildlife public regulatory meeting in April 2020. Exact dates and location of the 2020 meetings are to be determined.

Information about the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

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