



Fish News

March 5, 2013

2013 AK Board of Fisheries Area M Roundup

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The Alaska Board of Fisheries Area M meeting, which ran February 28 through March 4, 2013, wrapped up by noon yesterday (Monday, March 4, 2013). A wide range of the public was on hand throughout the seven-day meeting to speak for or against proposals mostly pertaining to the Area M salmon fishery.

There were a few proposals that affected fisheries outside the Aleutians East fishing area. The Board decision on Proposal 162, that proposed to close Unalaska Bay to trawlers, ended in a compromise, allowing the trawlers in the Bay only during September and October. Proposal 250, which would have allowed set net permit stacking in Egegik and Ugashik, earned the most public comment of any proposal considered at this meeting. This proposal failed 2 - 5.

Area M deliberations began with Proposal 173, submitted by P.J. Brown, which deals with the Southeast District Mainland management plan. Substitute language from RC 147 supplanted the proposal, allowing a 300,000 fish harvest in the Chignik area to be projected by the ADFG, rather than waiting for achievement, in years of high abundance. The proposal passed.

June salmon management chum cap plans were rejected by the Board. Proposal 179 failed, and the Board took no action on proposals 180, 181 and 182. However, Proposal 183 with substitute language RC 124, changed the June season start date for seiners and drift net fishermen from June 7th to June 10th. It also allows for four 88-hour openings, interspersed by three 32-hour closures in June. This proposal passed 4 - 3 and results in a loss of 64 hours total fishing time in June, all at the beginning of the month. Set net fishing times in June remain unchanged from the 2012 schedule.

There was extended discussion during the meeting about Board of Fisheries member Vince Webster's potential conflict of interest to vote on various proposals to curtail Area M fishing and on the Bristol Bay permit stacking proposal. Mr. Webster and his family fish in Bristol Bay. In the end, Chairman Johnstone ruled that Webster was allowed to fully participate in the meeting.

Proposal 187 by David Adams and Ben Mobeck, proposed longer openings in July, with openings beginning at 6 a.m., but resulting in the same amount of fishing hours for July. Public testimony cited safety and economic considerations in support of the proposed changes. Proposal 187 was adopted with substitute language from RC 139, and states that the Commissioner may establish by emergency order, from July 6 to July 31, "six 36-hour fishing periods, followed by a closure of at least 60 hours, except that the first fishing period on July 6 will begin at 6 a.m. and not exceed 33 hours." Although this language is slightly ambiguous, the Board record clearly shows that the intent of this proposal is one opening of 33 hours on July 6 at 6 a.m., and six additional 36-hour openings in July.

Because proposals needed to be submitted before the April 10, 2012 deadline, without the benefit of information contained in the WASSIP study to be published in November 2012, there were three genetics proposals submitted in April 2012 as placeholders to allow proposers to react to information in the upcoming WASSIP study. The Chignik Regional Aquaculture Association (CRAA) submitted several RC's during this meeting to change management in the Dolgoi area in response to CRAA's interpretation of the WASSIP and SEDM studies. These RC's proposed sockeye harvest caps anywhere from 80,000 fish to 160,000 sockeye for June and July combined in the Dolgoi area. A WASSIP placeholder proposal with substitute language RC 142 from Webster would have halted Dolgoi Area fishing after 167,000 fish were harvested. The proposal failed 3 - 4, but this issue is expected to resurface at a future Board of Fisheries meeting.

The Nelson Lagoon Advisory Committee (NL AC) and Concerned Area M Fishermen (CAMF) both submitted proposals by the April deadline regarding the North Peninsula fishery. NL AC submitted proposals 197,198 & 199, and CAMF submitted proposal #

200. These groups worked out a compromise position during the meeting, and the Board eventually adopted Proposal 198 with language from RC 155 that would close fishing beyond 1.5 miles seaward in a series of sequential closures moving southwest from Stroganoff point to Bear River section, in an effort to allow fish bound for Nelson Lagoon to pass. This agreement also cleared the way for Proposal 200 with language from RC 136, Option 1, dealing with Cinder River and Outer Port Heiden, to be adopted. A similar proposal dealing with the Area T part of Outer Port Heiden, Proposal 203/RC 136, Option 2, was also adopted.

Proposal 212 was clarified through language in RC 156 and adopted; mandating no retention of sport-caught king salmon in the Nelson River. The proposal does not affect subsistence fishing on the Nelson. Proposal 214/RC 157, regulating sport fishing near the Unalaska church hole on the Illiuliuk River proposal, was also adopted.

Proposal 176/RC 158 changed fishing periods in Northwest Stepovak, not including Orzinski Bay, from only four 24-hour periods, with no more than 48 hour continuous, during a 7-day period, to not more than 96-hours in a 7-day period. The Board also adopted 'housekeeping' ADF&G Proposal 184, which clarifies conflicting regulatory language in the Southeastern District Mainland Salmon Management plan. Proposal 192, also submitted by ADF&G, was adopted, adjusting the markers in line with the current channel of Christianson Lagoon, on the north side of Unimak.

The Board took no action on multiple proposals, and failed to pass several others. Of notable mention are:

- False Pass Advisory Committee Proposal 191, to limit fishing to only 4 days out of 7 in Bechevin Bay: Failed 0 - 7.
- Board-generated Proposal 242, based on an ACR submitted by local fishermen, to measure seines in feet and inches, instead of number of mesh. Failed 0 - 7.
- King Cove Advisory Committee Proposal 195, to open the Southwestern District of Area M to drift net fishing in July and August. Failed 0 - 7.
- Proposal 193, to change the closed waters of Grub Gulch. Failed 0 - 7.

On Monday, the Board accepted the Department's recommendation to establish Swanson Lagoon as a Stock of Concern. The statewide finfish issues meeting of the Board of Fisheries is in two weeks (March 19 - 24, 2013) at the Anchorage Hilton. For more information go to www.aebfish.org

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