

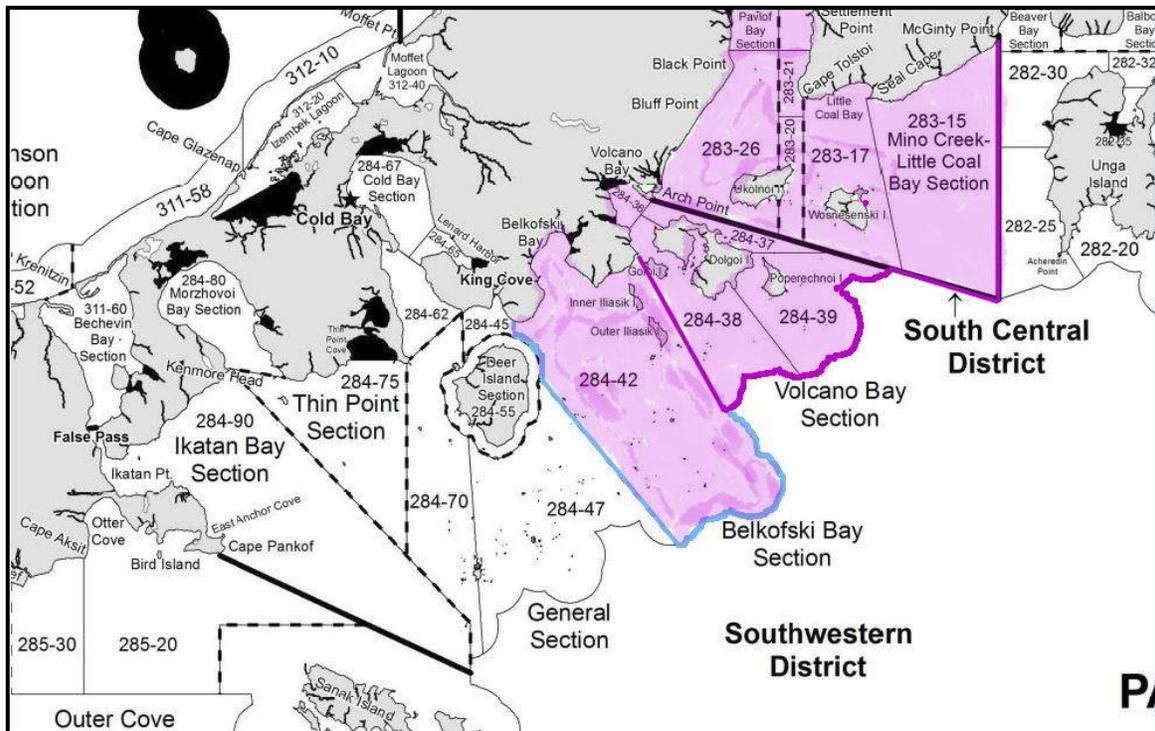


## Area M Board of Fish Meeting – Salmon Roundup

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

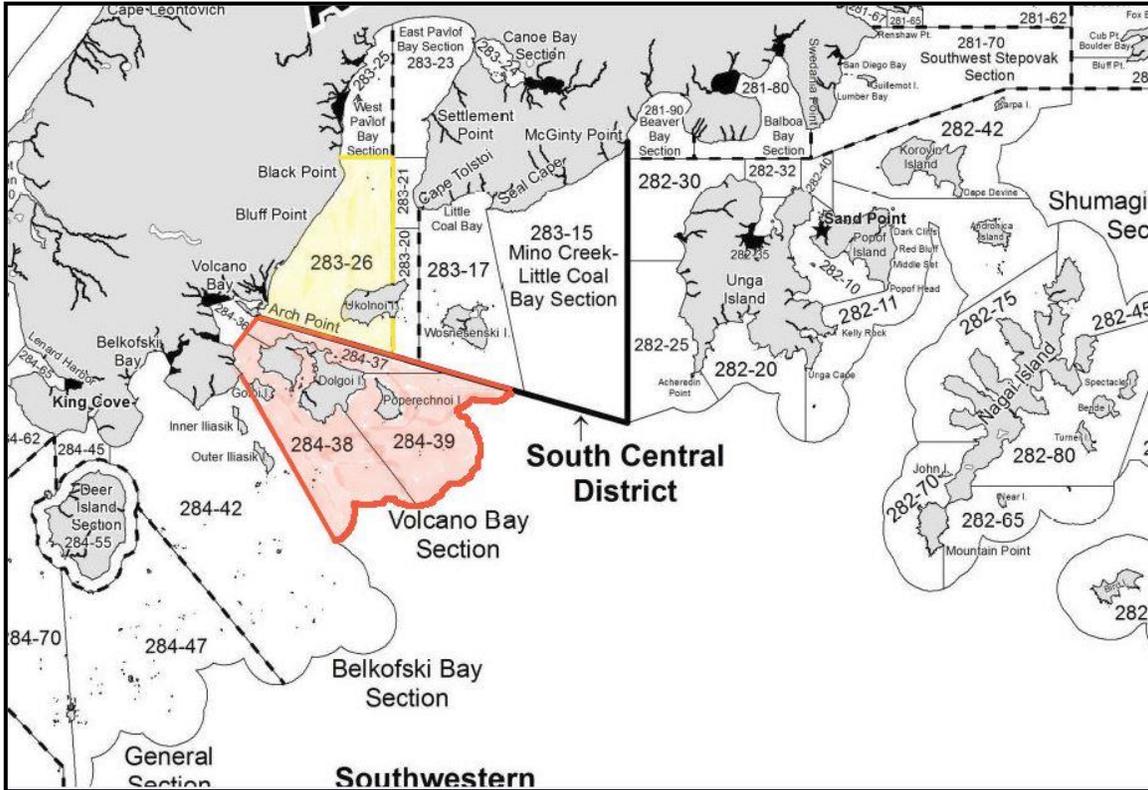
The calls for ‘status quo’ during public testimony mostly carried the week at the Alaska Peninsula / Chignik / Aleutian Islands finfish meeting of the Board of Fisheries February 23-29, with 42 of the 58 proposals considered either *failing* (26) or *no action* taken (16).

The biggest change for South Peninsula fishermen came in response to Proposal 186 by the Chignik Advisory Committee (AC). That proposal would have set up a new Dolgoi Island Section Management plan similar to the management scheme currently used in the Southeastern District Mainland (SEDM), which is based on the seasonal harvest of sockeye in the Chignik Management Area L.



Sockeye salmon are tallied on fish tickets in the above area up to a trigger of 191,000 fish.

Instead, the Board passed substitute language found in [RC 192](#). This action tallies sockeye harvested in the area from the Belkofski Bay section to the Mino Creek-Little Coal Bay section based on fish ticket data. When that harvest reaches 191,000 sockeye, the Volcano Bay section including Dolgoi, would close until July 26<sup>th</sup>, and the Long Beach/Ukolnoi sections would close until July 17<sup>th</sup>.



When the harvest in the larger Dolgoi area reaches 191,000 sockeye, the Volcano Bay section (shaded in Orange) including Dolgoi Island, would close until July 26<sup>th</sup>, and the Long Beach/Ukolnoi sections (shaded in yellow) would close until July 17<sup>th</sup>.

Area M fishermen would have preferred 'No Action' on Proposal 186, but most accepted the final outcome. The sockeye catch in those areas would not have reached 191,000 in 6 out of the past 8 years, however in 2014 that trigger would have been hit on July 15, and in 2015, 191,000 sockeye were tallied in the larger Dolgoi area by June 22.



Area M fishermen meet during the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting in Anchorage Feb. 23 – 29, 2016. Photo by Paul Gronholdt.

The action on Dolgoi was the culmination of much back and forth dialogue between South Peninsula fishermen, Chignik fishermen and Board members.

Other agreements between fisher groups were worked out on Northern District proposals: Proposal 147 amended (rather than repealed) rolling closures in the Bear River, Three Hills and Illnik sections, using substitute language found in [RC 174](#). Proposal 159 opened fishing in the Outer Port Heiden section back to 3 miles from the 1 ½ mile restriction, but included a compromise buffer area around the local Reindeer Creek.

An anomaly in 2015 of 51,000 King salmon caught in the South Peninsula area was discussed during deliberations of a proposal that would have seriously reduced June fishing opportunity. The previous 10 year average of kings caught in the South Peninsula salmon fishery was 6,200 king salmon caught. The mostly small king salmon caught in 2015 are largely considered to be from Pacific Northwest hatcheries based on the [genetic analysis](#) of king salmon bycatch samples in the GOA trawl fishery. Proposal 184 to restrict the June fishery was amended to exclude set net, but eventually failed by a vote of 2 to 5. Another proposal that would have reduced our area by moving the Area M boundary with Bristol Bay Area T down the beach, also failed 2 to 4, with one Board member recused from voting.

The Board also passed [Proposal 191](#) by the King Cove Advisory Committee, to repeal the minimum mesh size for drift nets fishing in the Unimak District area, likely the last area in the state still under such a restriction.

February Board of Fish meeting information, including proposals and record copies (RCs) can be found [here](#). You can find a preliminary summary of the meeting actions [here](#).

Next week, March 8 – 11, at the Anchorage Hilton, is the Board of Fisheries final meeting this cycle to discuss statewide finfish & supplemental issues. One proposal of note at the Statewide meeting is [Proposal 215](#) by the Peninsula Fishermen's Coalition to limit pollock trawl in the South Peninsula to vessels 58 feet length overall.

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