

ACR 11

Prohibit discard of Chinook salmon caught in purse seine gear in the Alaska Peninsula and Chignik areas (5 AAC 09.373 and 5 AAC 15.364).

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.

5 AAC 09.xxx. Retention of king salmon taken in a commercial fishery.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.

Agenda Change Request (ACR) TO **RESCIND** action on Proposal #135 that was approved by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in a 4-3 vote at the February 2026 Alaska Peninsula/Area M meeting to *Create a new regulation to provide the department emergency authority to require nonretention of king salmon and to amend retention provision. Amended with substitute language found in RC149. Further amended to strike paragraph (b) from both the chapter 9 and chapter 15 sections of RC149.*

This action allowed the ADF&G commissioner emergency authority to allow non-retention of king salmon 28" or greater in length in the Area M purse seine (S01M) sector. Because of a delay in the Department of Law review of proposals, this action was not posted until a July 17, 2026 Sand Point Commercial Salmon Fishery Advisory Announcement #13 For Emergency Order #4-FS-M-SP-11-26):

5AAC 09.373. Retention of king salmon taken in a commercial fishery. (a) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 09.365(e), from June 1 through October 31, all king salmon 28 inches or greater in length caught by an S01M CFEC (purse seine) permit holder may not be retained and must be immediately returned to the water unharmed. (b) Notwithstanding (a) of this section, a S01M CFEC permit holder shall retain all visibly injured or dead king salmon caught by the permit holder and record the injured or dead king salmon on an ADF&G fish ticket. (c) For purposes of this section, "caught" means brought on board the vessel.

The mandatory retention of Chinook salmon as incidental catch in a sockeye-directed fishery is a critical CONSERVATION issue that is replicated in many other parts of the state. The Department noted that the language in the original proposal gave the Commissioner discretion on implementing non-retention, but the substitute language passed in RC149 was not discretionary.

Aside from fish tickets, the Area M fishery has no substantive way to verify actual harvest, or even collect genetic or ASL (age-sex-length) data on Chinook salmon. As mentioned many times by the Department during the February 2026 Area M Board meeting, this action will make it more difficult to assess actual king salmon harvest within the purse seine sector and make enforcement more difficult. It will compromise data collected in a test fishery prior to 2026. Like the discussion in Bristol Bay on the Chinook salmon of the Nushagak River, *we simply do not have enough data on incidental king harvest.*

The passage of this proposal (based on substitute language in RC149) was predicated on allowing king salmon that are considered to be still viable to be released in order to reach spawning. Sounds

good in theory; in practice most fishermen understand that any fish released from commercial gear is likely to not to make it 10 miles much less thousands of miles to spawning grounds.

Drift gillnet boats have a mandatory retention because of known gill damage, but salmon caught in purse seines are subject to other conditions that can damage fish from pressure, handling and suffocation. Without any oversight, the action of throwing even recorded fish overboard leaves too much discretion to the boat to make a quick decision on the viability of a fish that will, in all likelihood, never make it to spawning.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?

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STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED BELOW.

for a fishery conservation purpose or reason:

Chinook stocks are imperiled all over Alaska. “Decreased returns of Chinook salmon in the region and throughout Alaska have prompted statewide concern about the health of Chinook salmon stocks (ADF&G 2013) and an increased realization that little is known about the migratory pathways and stock of origin in commercial catches.” (“Assessment of Genetic Stock of Origin of Chinook Salmon Harvested in Commercial Salmon Fisheries of the Westward Region, 2014”/ ADF&G)

According to a 2015 ADF&G study “Assessment of Genetic Stock of Origin of Chinook Salmon Harvested in Commercial Salmon Fisheries of the Westward Region, 2015–2016” Chinook salmon caught in the commercial fisheries of Area M (the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands management areas) are genetically diverse, originating primarily from **Coastal Western Alaska, the North Alaska Peninsula, and British Columbia/Pacific Northwest** river systems.

Genetic Stock Breakdown

- **Coastal Western Alaska:** Typically forms the single largest genetic component of Chinook stocks migrating or caught in the region (often exceeding 50% in mixed-stock analyses).
- **North Alaska Peninsula:** Contributes a substantial local and regional portion (frequently around 13% or more depending on the specific district and timing).
- **British Columbia and Pacific Northwest:** Comprises another major migratory contingent, alongside smaller percentages from other regional Alaskan systems like Southcentral or Southeast Alaska.

The Board of Fish is expected to be considering several new Stocks of Concern (SOC) in 2027. This is indicative of an increasing salmon crisis for Chinook, chum and coho.

to correct an error in regulation:

NOT APPLCABLE

to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:

NOT APPLCABLE

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?

Critical information needed on actual Chinook harvest in Area M will continue to be lost and could contribute to greater Chinook declines for Western Alaska, Southeast, Cook Inlet and Outside Chinook stocks.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

This ACR applies to a harvest practice within a single sector and is not allocative.

The conservation of wild salmon is a fundamental principle reflected throughout the State's statutes and regulations and remains the highest management priority. Achieving sustainable escapement is essential not only for the long-term viability of individual salmon stocks but also for the continued sustainability of Alaska's fisheries. The Board recognized this principle in adopting these regulations, which were designed to focus harvest on abundant sockeye salmon while minimizing impacts on wild Chinook and chum salmon stocks that have experienced decades of decline. Although fisheries management influences harvest rates, state law and policy require that management decisions prioritize the long-term sustainability and conservation of wild salmon populations.

IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.

Not applicable.

STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.

The Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (FAC) is an advisory to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. We are deeply concerned with the declining Chinook, chum and coho stocks on the Yukon River and in the general trend of declining abundance all over Western Alaska. We are further concerned about the general decline in average size and year class of Chinook, and average sizes for all salmon species, including sockeye. This greatly impacts subsistence, personal use and sports fishing, aside from the historic loss of commercial fishing, and it makes potential recovery much more difficult.

STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF FISHERIES

This was a proposal passed by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in February 2026 .

SUBMITTED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (FAC)