

ACR 2

Specify escapement objectives that must be met prior to opening the Copper River District to commercial fishing for salmon (5 AAC 24.310).

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

5 AAC: 24.310 (a)

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

Although the Board attempted to reduce early season Copper River salmon exploitation and allow adequate upstream escapement of Chinook Salmon at the 2024 Board of Fisheries meeting in Cordova through Proposal 51 / RC122, May sonar counts continue to be consistently below ADF&G's Miles Lake objective levels, Chinook escapements have required inseason emergency restrictions and closures, and appear to be well below the Sustainable Escapement Goal level — and especially when inriver subsistence and sport harvests are considered during the 2026 season.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?

(a). The Copper River District may only open after May 21 by emergency order when at least one Miles Lake sonar daily objectives has been met, and may be closed by emergency order until the midpoint of an up-to-date Miles Lake sonar cumulative objective has been met.

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

for a fishery conservation purpose or reason:

Although the commercial fishery “could theoretically,” be adequately restricted by emergency order to achieve May sonar objectives with more consistent and sustainable harvest rates throughout the entire season — this has not happened in the past three years. The most desirable early-returning salmon continue to be harvested at a significantly higher-than-sustainable rate by the commercial fishery. An Alaskan writer has compared salmon management with driving in that both should be done within the lines, however, during the 2026 season, in particular, the State's commercial management vehicle for Upper Copper River salmon spent most of the season with all wheels in the ditch and appears to have failed in achieving either the overall sonar salmon escapement goal or the Chinook Salmon Sustainable Escapement Goal. Therefore, 5AAC 21.310 (a) should be amended to provide more consistent harvest opportunity throughout the entire season and to avoid unsustainably high harvests at the start of the season.

to correct an error in regulation:

Not Applicable

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

The point of this ACR is to clarify conservative management within the regulation, thereby assisting management in meeting sustainable escapement goals and providing more sustainable and consistent harvest opportunity for all user groups throughout the entire season.

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

The decline of the most valuable early-returning Upper Copper River salmon may continue with unsustainable high exploitation rates as measured by ADF&G's sonar objectives. The risk of failure to attain the Chinook Salmon SEG will continue along with the possibility of a Stock of Management Concern Listing in the near future.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

There is an inriver escapement goal upon which the Miles Lake Sonar objectives are based on meeting. When sonar objectives are being met more commercial fishing may be allowed throughout the entire season, and all users have harvest opportunity levels as identified in the management plan.

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

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

I have participated in the Upper Copper River subsistence, sport, and personal use fisheries. For the past 4 seasons I have only participated in the subsistence fishery.

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

Some of the ideas in this ACR have been considered by the Board in the past. As identified in this ACR the Board adopted changes at the December 2024 meeting in Cordova in an attempt to reduce early-season Copper River salmon exploitation rates and increase Chinook salmon escapement levels. ACRs were also submitted last year seeking to address inadequate early-season sonar passage levels.

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