

Chitina Dipnetters Association
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Chitina Dipnetters:

Chitina Dipnetters Association (CDA) board members Jesse Wandling and I represented the Chitina Personal Use Dipnet Fishery (CPUDF) users at the December 10-16 2024 PWS/Copper River finfish meeting in Cordova Alaska. The results of the meeting were both positive and negative for our fishery.

I'm happy to say that all proposals seeking to reduce our bag limit, require in-season reporting, prohibit or restrict guides in the Upper Copper River District, prohibit possessing multiple personal use permits (ie Chitina and Kenai), prohibit removing king salmon from the water if to be released, and prohibit dipnetting from a boat all failed. Proposal 58, which would have allowed the Fish and Game Commissioner to raise the CPUDF king salmon bag limit if the upper bound of the Copper king salmon escapement goal was met, failed. Its companion bill, Proposal 59, with similar wording concerning sockeye salmon, passed. The CDA sponsored Proposition 70, a proposal to extend the CPUDF lower boundary, failed on a vote of 0-7.

The underlying tone of this BOF meeting was ensuring sufficient numbers of king salmon upriver to meet spawning escapement goals, which have been lacking in recent years, and supplying more salmon to the Uppermost Copper subsistence fishery. This was highlighted in the Ahtna regional native corporation and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park sponsored Proposal 51. This proposal sought to reduce salmon fishing opportunity in the Copper River District drift gillnet fishery.

Jesse and I expected if this proposal passed in any form, that, in the guise of "sharing the burden of conservation by all users", to also see a hit to the CPUDF. We were not wrong. The BOF generated their own amendment to this proposal calling for the commercial drift fishermen to give up their first week of fishing (eliminate 2, possibly 3, opening periods for them), delay the CPUDF opener until after June 10, and prohibit CPUDF king harvest until July 1. Jesse and I were consulted on this amendment early the morning of the BOF deliberation and, after considering the worst case scenario of the CPUDF not opening till June 21, as initially proposed, and the need to protect the Copper River king salmon stocks, we gave our assent.

We felt that since the CPUDF currently does not open until sometime during the week of June 7-15, depending on sonar counts, the most fishing time we would lose is 3 days. As far as the king harvest delay, although we are losing the 1 king in our bag limit until July 1, it can be supplemented by 1 extra sockeye. With the drift gillnet fishing fleet losing their first week of fishing, it should mean an early surge of sockeye salmon for the CPUDF opening. If king salmon numbers rebound in the future, we will be immediately making proposals to the Board of Fish to recover our ability to retain June king salmon.

Your membership dues and apparel purchases from our online store (<https://chitinadipnetters.com>) enables CDA to represent you, as we did at this and will continue for future BOF meetings. Flight costs along with room and board for the 8 days Jesse and I were in Cordova was not cheap. CDA dues are annual and based on calendar year. Please remember to renew your membership in the new year.

Thank you, and here's wishing you the merriest Christmas and good fortune in the coming year.

Thank You!

Chuck Derrick

President

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