



# Sport Fisheries Report for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Management Areas

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Northwest and North Slope Management Areas

RC 3, Tab 6





# ARCTIC-YUKON-KUSKOKWIM MANAGEMENT AREAS



NORTH SLOPE

NORTHWEST

YUKON

TANANA

KUSKOKWIM

# TANANA MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters of the Tanana River drainage from the Alaska–Canada border to its terminus at the Yukon River

- 10 Proposals:

- 6 northern pike
- 2 Arctic grayling
- 1 ice house registration
- 1 stocked waters

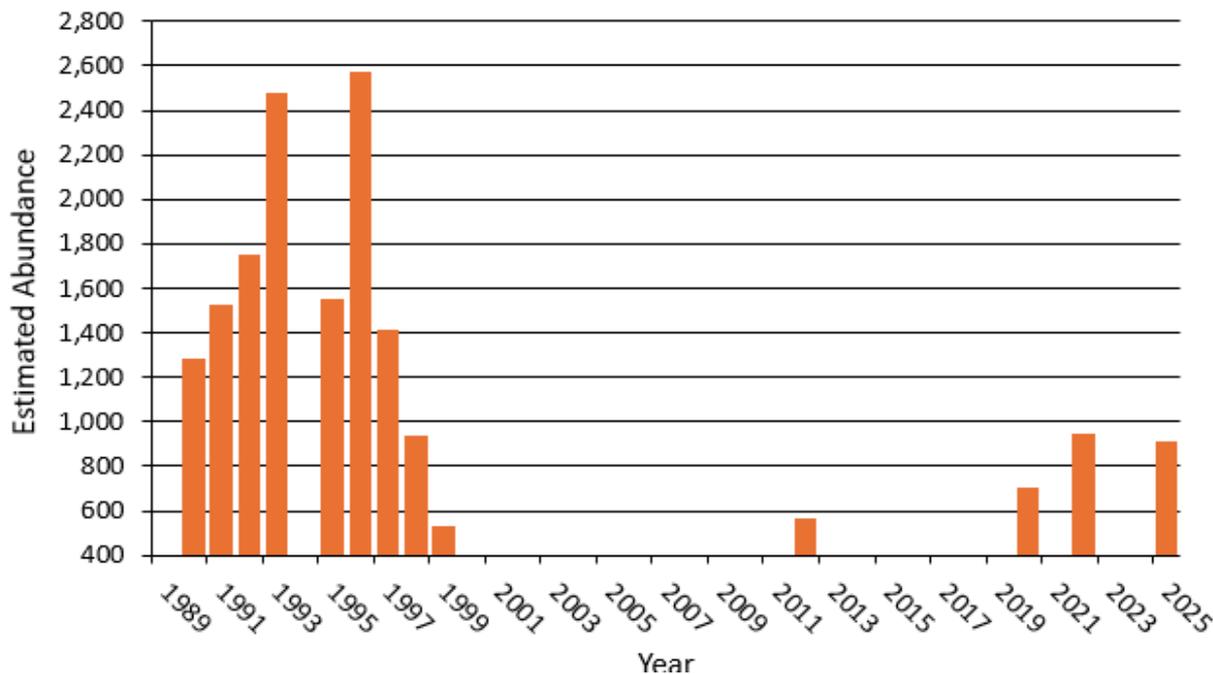


# HARDING LAKE NORTHERN PIKE (PROPOSALS 21 AND 22)

- At 2,500 acres is the largest road-accessible lake in the Tanana River drainage
- Sport fishing for northern pike has been closed since 2000 due to declining abundance related to receding water levels, which substantially reduced spawning and rearing habitat



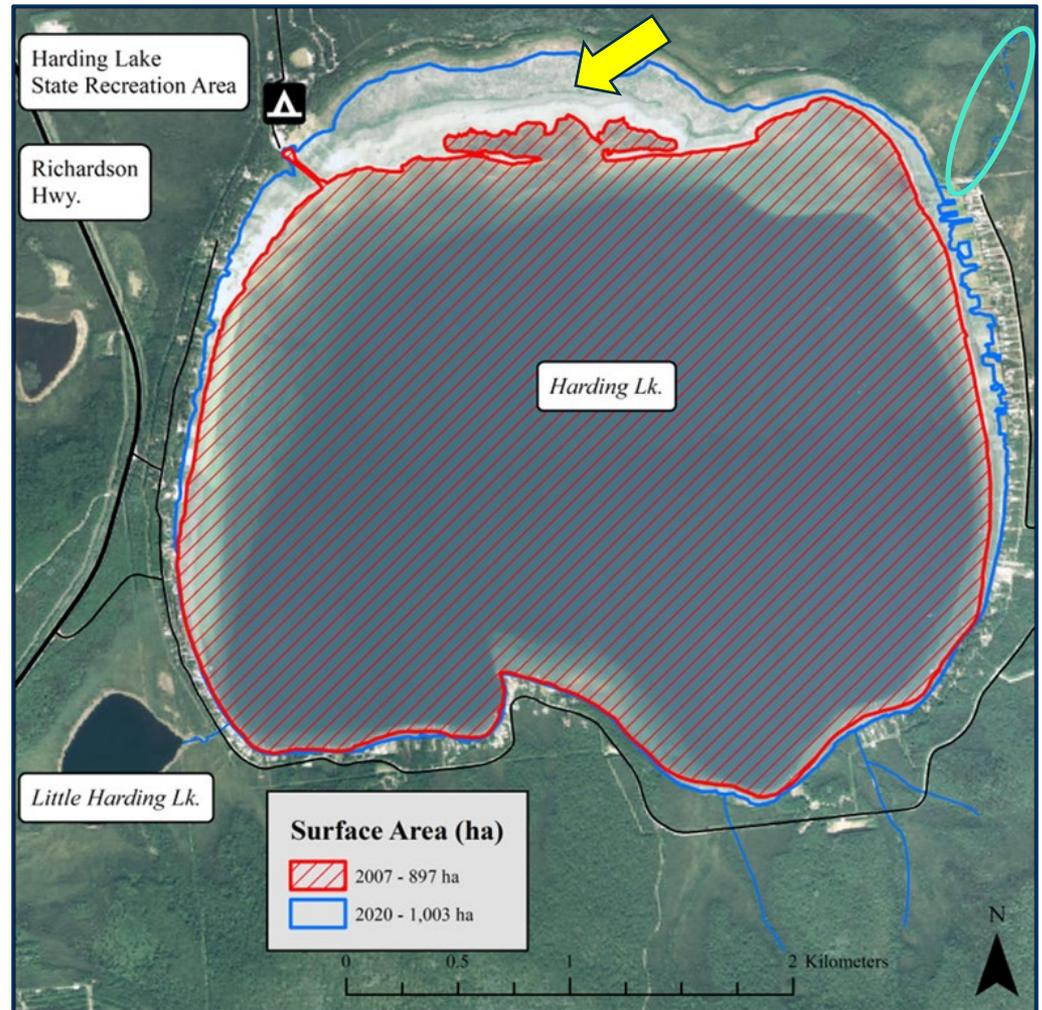
■ Abundance of Northern Pike  $\geq$  18 inches



- Abundance decreased from about 2,600 fish  $\geq$  18 in in 1995 to 531 fish in 2000
- Most recently it has stabilized at just above 900 fish

# HARDING LAKE NORTHERN PIKE (PROPOSALS 21 AND 22)

- In 2007, a water diversion structure was constructed to increase water levels
- From 2007 to 2020, lake surface area increased by about 250 acres but has since receded
- In the absence of any fishing mortality, the population has stabilized at around 900-1,000 fish
- **Proposals 21 and 22** - would allow catch-and-release fishing for northern pike in Harding Lake



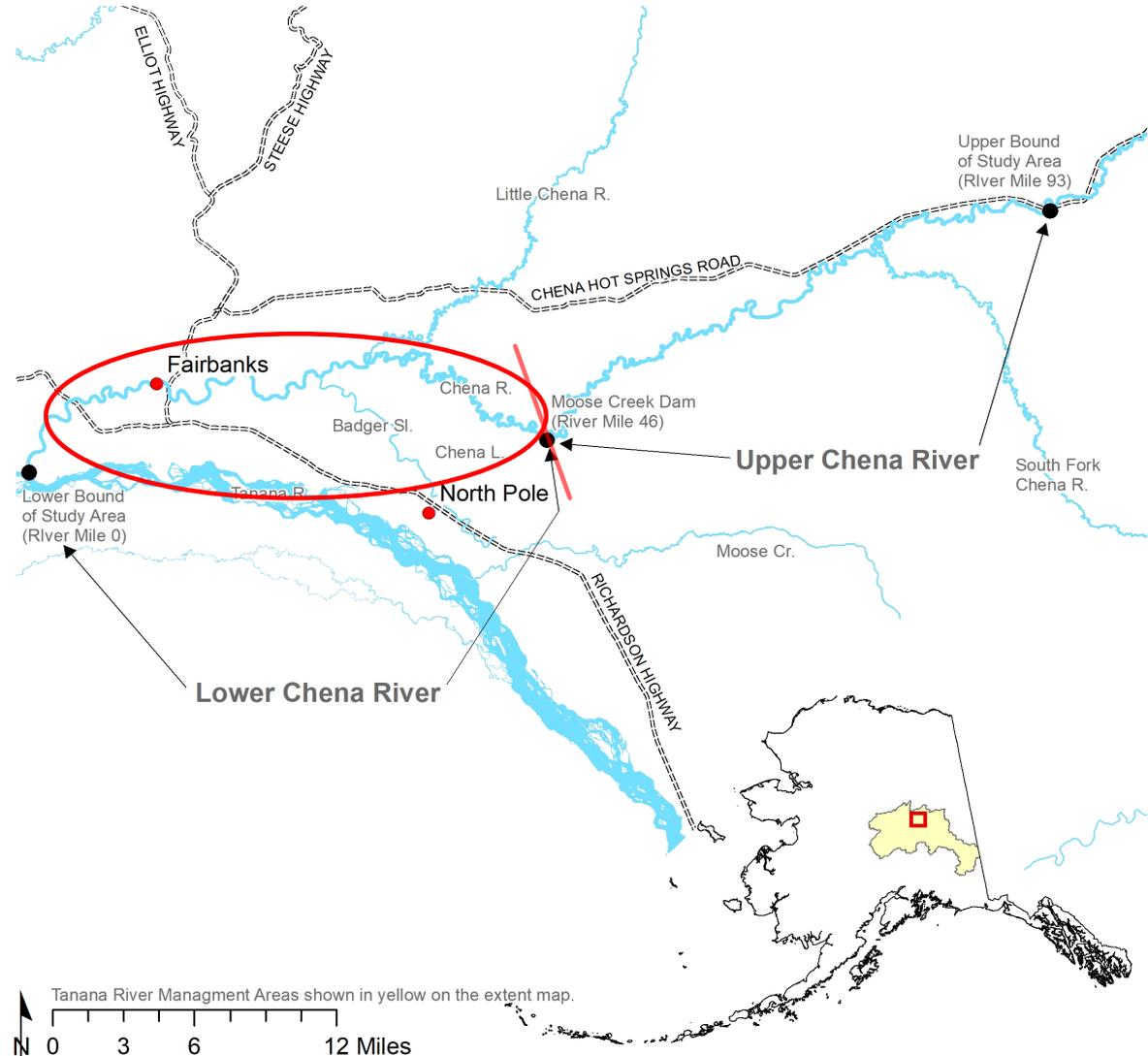
# VOLKMAR LAKE NORTHERN PIKE (PROPOSAL 23)



- Fishing effort is low, but it has a conservative bag and possession limit of 2 fish, only one of which can be  $\geq 30$  inches
- Management objective is to maintain a minimum abundance of northern pike 2,000 fish  $\geq 18$  inches
- The last stock assessment in 2009 found that abundance of fish  $\geq 18$  inches was 4,017 fish
- **Proposal 23** – would increase the bag and possession limit to match the background regulation of 5 fish, of which only one can be  $\geq 30$  inches

# CHENA RIVER YOUTH-ONLY ARCTIC GRAYLING FISHERY (PROPOSAL 24)

- Chena River Arctic grayling is one of the most popular fisheries in the Interior
- Due to conservation concerns, fishery was restricted to catch-and-release in 1992
- In 2019, a youth-only fishery opened to allow a limited harvest
- In 2023 this youth-only fishery was modified to allow a harvest of one fish by all anglers during June 1 – March 31



# CHENA RIVER YOUTH-ONLY ARCTIC GRAYLING FISHERY (PROPOSAL 24)

- Since the 2023 regulation change, comments were expressed to staff that parents could not fish with their children during the youth-only fishery
- Angler surveys conducted by ADF&G staff demonstrated little participation in the youth-only fishery
- Participation in the youth fishery is low, and population is healthy
- **Proposal 24** – repeal the 2019 youth-only fishery regulation change



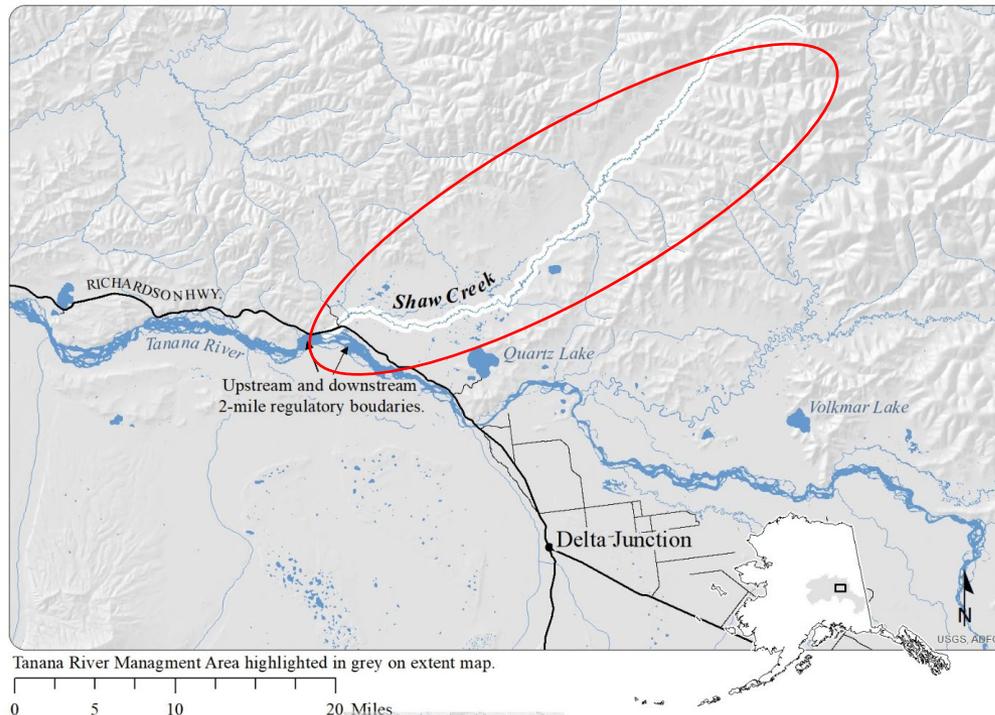
# TANANA RIVER AREA ICE HOUSE REGISTRATION (PROPOSAL 25)

- In the Tanana River Drainage, registration of ice houses with ADF&G has been required since 1969 for houses not removed daily
- In the mid-2000's, portable, pop-up, style shelters constructed of poles and fabric became increasingly popular
- Permit system no longer provides meaningful information on fishing effort, and abandoned ice houses has not been an issue
- **Proposal 25** - would repeal the registration requirement for ice houses in the Tanana River Area



# SHAW CREEK ARCTIC GRAYLING (PROPOSAL 26)

- Shaw Creek is a small tributary of the Tanana River north of Delta Junction
- Fishing effort is low, very few SWHS responses, and access to upriver fishing is difficult



- Currently, Arctic grayling fishing is open all year but restricted to catch-and-release only during spawning from April 1 to May 31
- **Proposal 26** – would remove the April 1 to May 31 catch-and-release restriction

# STOCKED WATERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

## RAINBOW LAKE

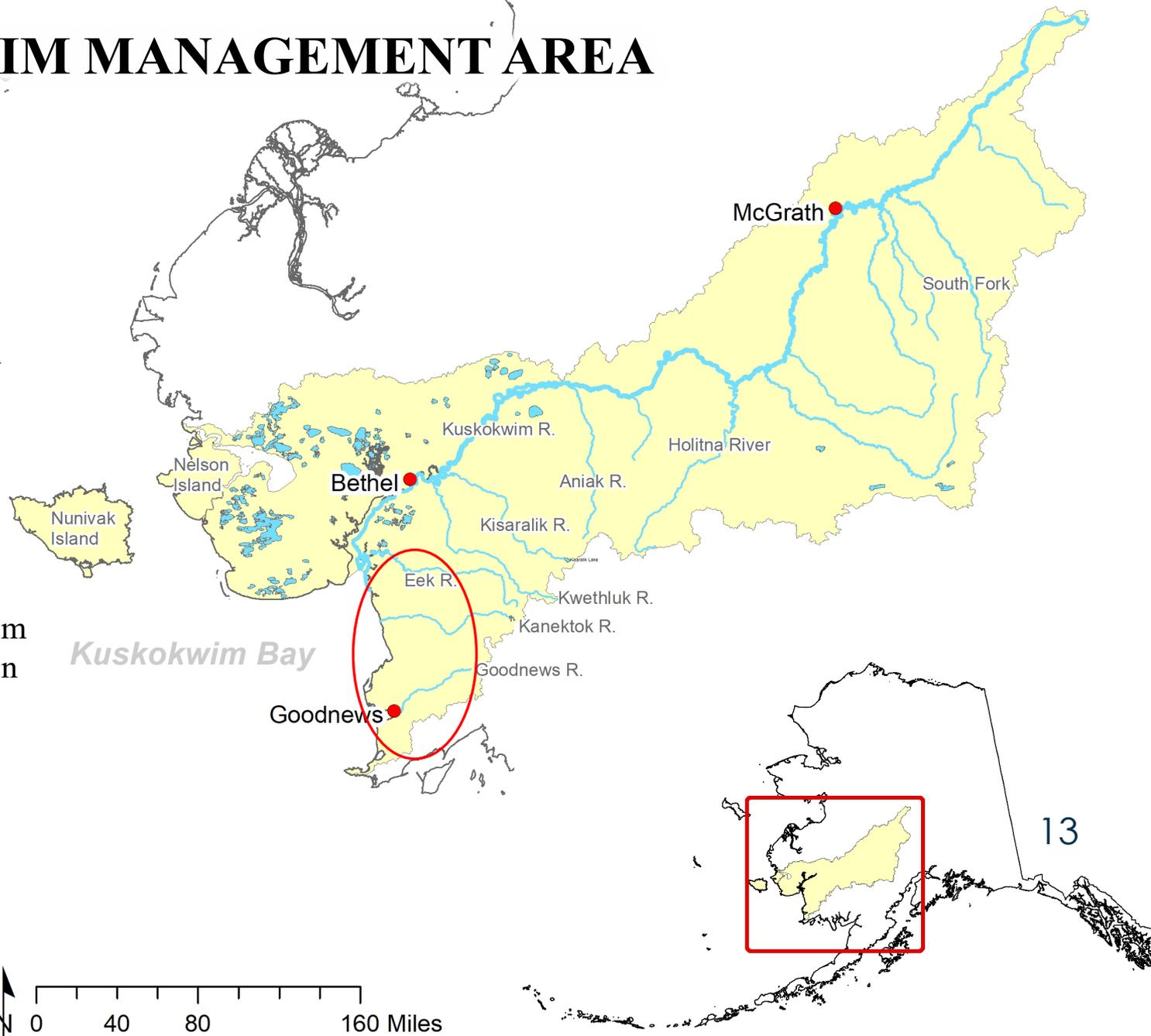
### (PROPOSAL 27)

- Rainbow Lake is a small remote lake about 12 miles northwest of Delta Junction
- Managed to provide opportunity to catch fish  $\geq 18$  inches
- Current bag and possession limit is 5 fish, only one of which can be 18 inches or greater
- Multiple sampling events have shown lake not productive enough to consistently produce 18-inch rainbow trout
- **Proposal 27** - would increase the daily bag and possession limit from 5 to 10 fish, only one of which may be 18 inches or greater



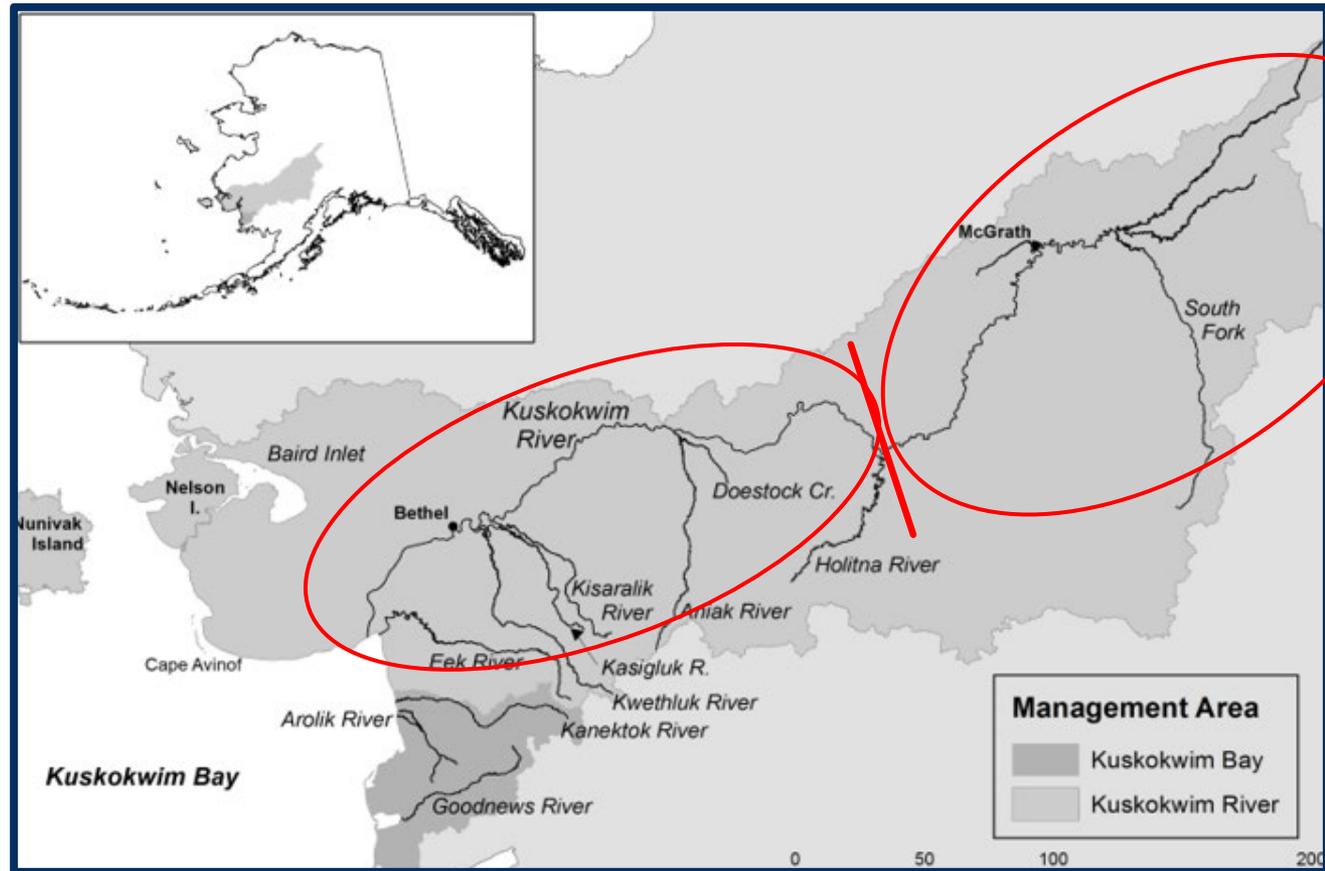
# KUSKOKWIM MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage and all drainages in Kuskokwim Bay
- 2 Proposals:
  - Upper Kuskokwim River king salmon
  - Kuskokwim Bay sheefish



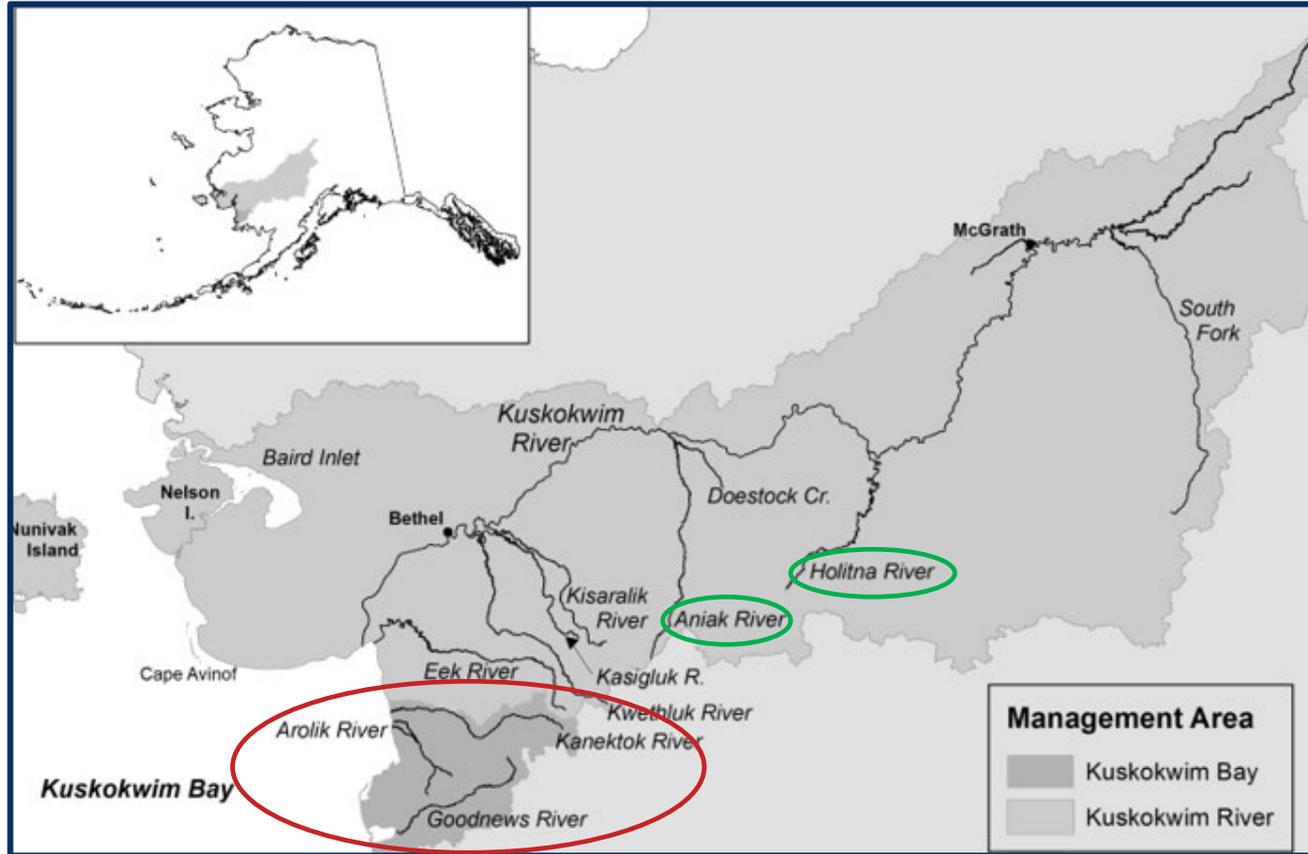
# UPPER KUSKOKWIM RIVER KING SALMON (PROPOSAL 13)

- Special regulations in the Kuskokwim River drainage for the mainstem and tributaries including the Holitna River and downstream
- Lower river king salmon sport fishing season: May 1 – July 25
- Upper river king salmon: no closed season
- **Proposal 13** - close sport fishing for king salmon from July 26 - April 30 in the upper Kuskokwim River drainage



# KUSKOKWIM AREA SHEEFISH (PROPOSAL 14)

- Sheefish are found throughout the Kuskokwim River drainage
- The Goodnews, Kanektok, and Arolik Rivers are outside of the Kuskokwim River drainage and do not contain sheefish but have special sport fishing regulations for them
- Proposal 14 – would repeal the bag and possession limit for sheefish in these three rivers



# NORTHWEST MANAGEMENT AREA

- Includes all waters draining into the Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, Kotzebue Sound, and Norton Sound from Point Romanof to Point Hope
- 3 Proposals:
  - Pilgrim River king salmon
  - Methods and means
  - Kotzebue area sheefish



# PILGRIM RIVER KING SALMON (PROPOSAL 37)

- The Pilgrim River flows for 45 miles from Salmon Lake to the confluence with the Kuzitrin River
- Primarily a sockeye salmon system, the Pilgrim River also supports a small run of king salmon as well as a popular northern pike fishery
- No record of king salmon caught in the sport fishery since 2003
- **Proposal 37** - close sport fishing for king salmon in the Pilgrim River drainage



# NORTHWESTERN ALASKA METHODS AND MEANS (PROPOSAL 38)

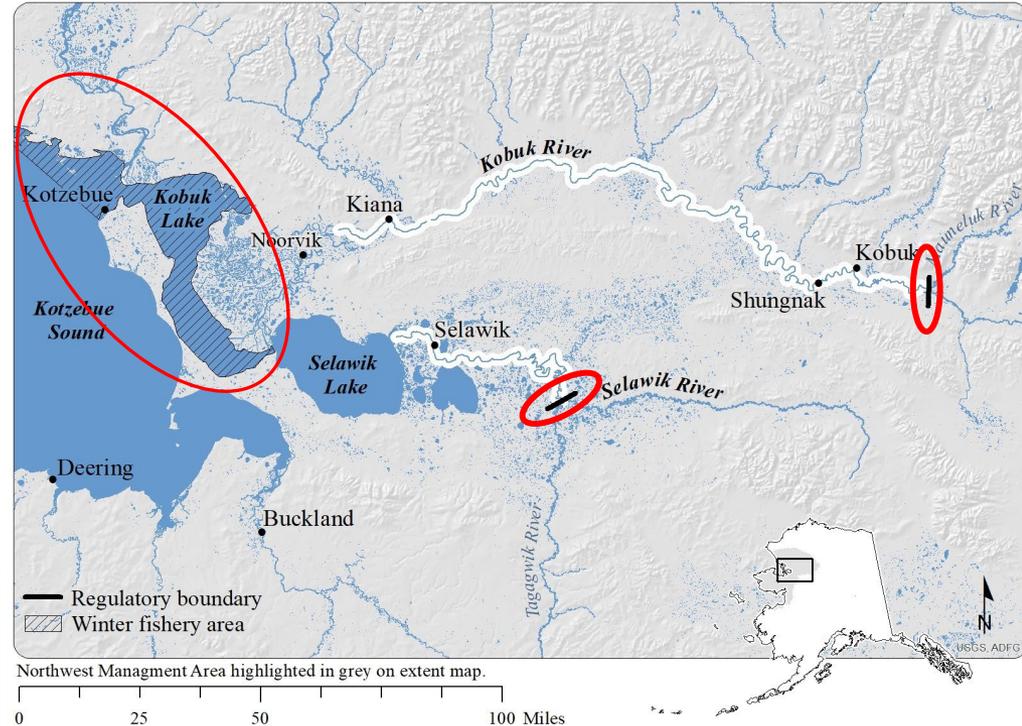
- In Northwestern Alaska, anglers may not fish for salmon in freshwater with multiple hooks with a gap between point and shank larger than 1/2 inch (1/0 hook)
- **Proposal 38** – would increase allowable hook size for multiple hooks when fishing for salmon with a gap between point and shank up to 5/8 inch (3/0 hook) in the Northwestern Area
- *And now, let's switch over to sheefish...*

1/2 inch



# BIOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OF NORTHWEST ALASKA SHEEFISH

- Support important subsistence and sport fisheries
- Spawning occurs in the upper Kobuk and Selawik Rivers, afterwards fish move to brackish waters near Kotzebue to overwinter
- Until 1998, daily bag and possession limit was 10 fish for the Northwestern Area



- Special regulations adopted in 1998 and 2001 reduced the bag and possession limit in the upper Kobuk and Selawik Rivers to 2 fish

# BIOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OF NORTHWEST ALASKA SHEEFISH

- Spawning run size
  - Selawik River – 32,943 fish in 2016
  - Kobuk River – 35,402 fish in 2018
- Spawning frequency
  - Consecutive and non-consecutive spawning
  - 75% of males spawned every year
  - Just 30% of females spawned every year
- Winter movements
  - Kobuk and Selawik sheefish use same areas in winter
  - Can be caught together from same ice hole



# BIOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OF NORTHWEST ALASKA SHEEFISH

- Management challenges
  - Limited data on abundance of spawning fish
  - As winter progresses, sheefish become concentrated in Hotham Inlet close to Kotzebue
  - Majority of the harvest is likely taken in the winter fishery
- **Proposal 39** – would reduce the background bag and possession limit for sheefish in the Northwestern Area from 10 fish/day to 5 fish/day, no size limit





*Questions?*

*Chandler Lake, Brooks Range*