



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF SPORT FISH

MEMORANDUM

TO: Alaska Board of Fisheries

DATE: December 29, 2008

THRU: Jim Marcotte
Division of Boards

FILE: /KSMP_PST15pctEffect.doc

FROM: Brian Frenette
SEAK Regional Supervisor

TELEPHONE: 465-8590

SUBJECT: 15% PST Reduction &
Effect on the SEAK Sport Fishery
under the King Salmon Management
Plan

Southeast Alaska King Salmon Management Plan—Executive Summary

The Southeast Alaska (SEAK) King Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 47.055) was adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) in 1992, and subsequently modified by the BOF in 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006. The plan establishes four key objectives. Those objectives state that the sport fishery will be managed by the Department to accomplish the following:

- (1) manage the sport fishery to attain an average harvest of 20% of the annual harvest ceiling specified by the PSC, after subtraction of the allocation specified in 5 AAC 29.060;
- (2) allow uninterrupted sport fishing in salt water for king salmon while not exceeding the sport harvest ceiling;
- (3) minimize regulatory restrictions on resident anglers; and
- (4) provide stability to the sport fishery by eliminating inseason regulatory changes, except those necessary for conservation purposes.

The SEAK King Salmon Management Plan has seen numerous changes since inception in 1992, and changes over the past ten years (1999-2008) have continually worked toward keeping sport harvests within the 20% allocation. In 2002, the BOF established and charged a task force to work toward developing a suite of 'tools' within the context of the Plan that would keep the sport fishery within their allocation given growing concerns of increasing non-resident angler participation in the SEAK sport fishery, and to address an apparent pattern of consistent overages of the allocation. The task force worked diligently for over a year to come to consensus on a set of management measures within the context of the Plan for presentation to the BOF. The BOF adopted these measures in 2003.

A new agreement on fishery arrangements under the Pacific Salmon Treaty was reached between the U.S. and Canada in May 2008. One of the key elements to reaching that agreement was a 15% reduction in allowable catch of king salmon in SEAK. This reduction could have significant implications for management of the sport fishery; especially at lower levels of abundance.

Current Plan Background

Since the ratification of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) in 1985, Southeast Alaska (SEAK) has been allowed a specific number of "treaty" king salmon for harvest (king salmon from Alaska hatchery facilities are not counted as treaty fish). The harvest quota allocated to SEAK varies annually, and is solely dependant upon the preseason abundance index (AI) generated by a complex statistical model based on biological information collected on numerous Pacific Coast king salmon stocks.

The king salmon harvest quota for SEAK fisheries under terms of the PST is allocated domestically by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) under 5 AAC 29.060 as follows:

- Purse seine fishery; 4.3 % of the annual harvest ceiling (quota);
- Drift gillnet fishery; 2.9% of the annual harvest ceiling (quota); and
- Set gillnet fishery; 1,000 fish.

The remainder are allocated to the commercial troll and sport fisheries under 5 ACC 29.069 as follows:

- Troll; 80%;
- Sport: 20%.

The SEAK sport fishery is further managed by the King Salmon Management Plan (Plan) established in 1992 (5 AAC 47.055). The Plan has been modified by the BOF on a number of occasions since inception, and the most current version was adopted in 2006. The Plan specifically directs the Department to:

- (1) manage the sport fishery to attain an average harvest of 20% of the annual harvest ceiling specified by the PSC, after subtraction of the allocation specified in 5 AAC 29.060;
- (2) allow uninterrupted sport fishing in salt water for king salmon while not exceeding the sport harvest ceiling;
- (3) minimize regulatory restrictions on resident anglers; and
- (4) provide stability to the sport fishery by eliminating inseason regulatory changes, except those necessary for conservation purposes.

In order to meet these objectives, the Plan lists specific management measures that may be applied to the sport fishery at specified ranges of abundance, and directs the Department to establish specific region-wide regulations that will either liberalize or restrict harvest. The plan triggers management action based on the preseason Abundance Index (AI), a value generated by the Chinook Technical Committee under the PST, from which a specific harvest level for the SEAK commercial and sport fisheries is derived. Depending on the level of the preseason AI, regulations could include implementing measures such as: bag limits for resident and non-resident anglers; annual limits for non-resident anglers; minimum size limits; and periods of non-retention. A current objective of the Plan is to ensure regulatory stability of the sport fishery once the season has commenced.

There are seven AI ranges in the current Plan that have specific, corresponding management 'actions' for use in keeping the sport fishery within the directed allocation. Those seven AI ranges equate to harvest ranges in numbers of king salmon allowed to be taken by the sport fishery.

Historical Performance of the Sport Fishery

Based on the preseason AI under the 1999 PST (and resulting allocation to the sport fishery under 5 AAC 29.060), sport angler harvest averaged 17.4% during 2003 to 2007, the period in which the current management plan has been in place. Due to the extremely low preseason AI in 2008 (1.07), severe management measures were implemented consistent with the existing Plan, and Emergency Regulations adopted by the BOF in April, 2008. Preliminary estimates show that these actions had the effect of keeping the sport harvest below the 20% allocation (16.4%) by nearly 6,000 fish.

2009 PST Agreement Effect in SEAK Fisheries

In May 2008, the Pacific Salmon Commission reached agreement to renew various fishery arrangements under the PST for the next ten years (2009-2018). One significant change is the reduction of 30% and 15% respectively in existing allowable catch levels of king salmon in the fisheries off the coasts of British Columbia and SEAK. This 15% reduction of the SEAK harvest will have an impact on both the commercial and the sport fisheries, especially in years of low abundance like that observed in 2008. The Plan triggers management actions for the sport fishery that will limit harvest to the level allowed at a specified AI. Since the new PST agreement reduces harvest at any given AI by 15%, it raises a question of whether the management actions as currently specified in the Plan are necessary or sufficient to meet the Plan's objectives.

Upcoming Board of Fish Meeting (February 2009)

The BOF received five proposals for consideration at the February 2009 meeting that, if adopted, would modify management of the king salmon sport fishery under the Plan. This is in sharp contrast to the previous Southeast BOF meeting (2006) when 23 proposals were submitted asking for changes to the Plan. Four of the five proposals up for consideration in 2009 seek to modify the existing management measures; the remaining proposal requests an allocation within the sport fishery between guided and non-guided anglers.

The 15% reduction to the allowable catch of king salmon is not addressed in any of the proposals received which is likely due to the timing associated with reaching the new PST vs. the deadline for submitting proposals for the 2009 BOF meeting.

Distribution:	C. Swanton (HQ-SFD)	J. Hilsinger (HQ-CFD)
	R. Bentz (HQ-SFD)	S. Aspelund (HQ-CFD)
	D. Bedford (CO)	G. Williams (CO)
		S. Kelley (SEAK Reg.-CFD)
	B. Chadwick (SEAK Reg.-SFD)	B. Davidson (SEAK Reg.-CFD)