

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Teleconference on Pike and Sablefish Sport Fisheries
April 28, 2009

Summary of Actions

The Alaska Board of Fisheries met by teleconference April 28, 2009. Six of seven board members were present (Jensen absent). Vince Webster chaired the meeting and public listen-only sites were available at Fish and Game offices in Palmer, Anchorage, Juneau, Petersburg, and Sitka. Scheduled agenda items included two sport fishing proposals the board generated at its March 2009 meeting: one to liberalize bag limits for Northern pike in Alexander Lake west of Wasilla and the second to increase bag limits for sablefish (black cod) in Southeast Alaska.

PROPOSAL A

ACTION: Adopted as amended

DESCRIPTION: Liberalize limits for Northern pike in Alexander Lake.

AMENDMENT: Specified no bag or possession limit on pike less than 27 inches in length; a bag and possession limit of one fish for pike 27 inches or greater in length; open Alexander Lake to sport fishing through the ice using five lines with bait; add Alexander Creek to the list of waters where five lines may be used through the ice; and to not allow wanton waste.

DISCUSSION: The board considered the need to specifically put into regulation the restriction on wanton waste, but concluded that would be redundant with current restrictions. The board expected that taking action to reduce the number of pike would have a positive effect on king salmon production.

PROPOSAL B

ACTION: Adopted

DESCRIPTION: Increase the resident and nonresident daily bag limit for sablefish (black cod) to four fish in Southeast Alaska and remove the resident annual limit.

DISCUSSION: The board recounted its previous actions to enact limits and require reporting, which it considered to be important conservation steps. The board recognized overall conservation concerns and noted the substantial reductions in the allowable commercial harvest in recent years. There was discussion on whether a bag limit of four fish would result in allowing an increased sport harvest or would result in a meaningful restriction compared to having no limit.

OTHER ACTIONS

The board made a finding of emergency on king salmon stocks in the Northern District of Cook Inlet. Following that action, it adopted an emergency regulation to restrict the first two Northern District commercial set gillnet fishing periods to six hours, down from the 12 hours previously scheduled. The department explained that the management plan calls for closing king salmon fishing in the Northern District if the Deshka River is closed to sport fishing. The board examined the potential additional number of fish entering the river systems with a cut in commercial fishing time and compared that to the potential additional escapement expected from the announced restrictions in the

sport fishery. The board addressed the allocation criteria and the Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy in its discussion.

The board considered discussing the topic of the December 2009 meeting location in light of the comments submitted to the board. The acting chair noted that board chair Jensen had recently polled the board members to assess the level of support for considering a possible change in meeting venue and found that there was insufficient support. To confirm the level of support, the acting chair polled the board members as to whether or not they were interested in discussing the topic again and found that less than a majority of the board expressed interest. Board members noted that the topic had been considered by the board on two previous occasions.

Board members and the Deputy Commissioner David Bedford recognized the outstanding service of board member Bonnie Williams of Fairbanks over the last three years and expressed gratitude for her commitment and contributions to state fisheries management.