

MEETING REPORT

REGION I PUBLIC MEETING STRATEGIC PLANNING ISSUES, SOLUTIONS, AND VISION

Location: Juneau Yacht Club

Date: November 3, 2001

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OPENING REMARKS:

Kelly Hepler, Director of the Sport Fish Division, opened the meeting pointing out his twin purposes for the strategic planning effort: increasing the effectiveness and accountability of the Division in preserving, protecting, and enhancing sport fishing in Alaska. Director Hepler stressed his desire that this strategic planning support the economic and social importance of sport fishing in the state. He also noted that the strategic planning process will be conducted cooperatively with the public and focus everyone on the state's management activities and recreational fishing opportunities. He indicated that the planning process will include many opportunities for public input over the coming months. Regional Supervisor, Rocky Holmes, welcomed the participants and reported on regional activities supporting the strategic planning.

MEETING PRODUCTS AND APPROACH:

The meeting facilitator, (Michael Fraidenburg, Dynamic Solutions Group) identified there were three kinds of information needed from the public at this juncture: (1) identification of the major issues and opportunities facing sport fishing right now and in the future; (2) a listing of potential strategies to respond to these issues and opportunities, and (3) articulation of the preferred future, or vision, Alaskans hold for sport fishing. The information sought at these meetings was of a qualitative nature and meant to be an exploratory, first discussion with the public. Refinement of the discussion will occur as the strategic planning process continues. Participants and staff were asked to introduce themselves. Staff were present as observers, but, occasionally were called upon to provide historical or factual content to inform the public's discussions.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES CONCERNING SPORT FISHING IN ALASKA

Participants in the Juneau public meeting identified eleven broad issues and opportunities affecting sport fishing now and/or in the future.

Allocation and resource sharing was a widely held concern. In the Juneau meeting the concern went beyond general sharing concerns to pointed concerns about king salmon and

halibut sharing. Growing conflicts between sport, commercial and subsistence use, between regions, and between guided anglers and resident anglers were noted.

Providing **recreational opportunity** is an important value and is impeded by complexity of regulations acting as a barrier to sport fishing and concurrent sport and commercial halibut fisheries creating gear conflicts.

Lack of **access** sites and support infrastructure (e.g., ramps, docks), especially in marine areas, is a concern of Juneau area stakeholders.

Resource supply concerns clearly center on an unresolved difference opinion over the appropriate use of enhancement. Opinions ranged from desires to increase fish stocking to desires to limit enhancement. Program administration concerns exist and were expressed as coordination weaknesses between existing enhancement programs. Also of concern is depletion of localized resources near population centers (e.g., urban areas like Juneau) and local stock depletion near rural communities by visiting sport fishers from outside that community.

Maintaining an adequate **information and knowledge base** is an important value with concerns about the quality and quantity of existing monitoring programs, an incomplete harvest accounting across all harvest sectors, lack of king salmon management tools, and inadequate inventories of streams and native-species. Also noted was the important link between the Department's ability to manage or influence habitat decisions and the quality of the science the Department can bring to the trade-off decisions between habitat protection and development.

Jurisdictional concerns exist around authority and coordination problems. Loss of state management jurisdiction to the federal government is a concern as is efficiency losses due to a general lack of federal, state, and local government coordination. For the short term, there was encouragement to recognize that there will be state/federal law conflicts to deal with. There is interest in managing international transboundary issues as they affect sport fishing.

Broad **system changes**, such as climatic or ecosystem change, was noted as an issue affecting the future of Alaskan sport fishing.

A range of **conservation and management philosophy** changes are on the list of concerns and include: managing by-catch in commercial fisheries (e.g., king salmon and dolly varden trout), the Department's position on halibut individual fishing quotas, starting to use private-sector methods for resource allocation, setting halibut size limits, lack of enforcement, implementing weak stock management, dealing with unresolved culvert issues, the need for coordinated, total fisheries management (not just sport or commercial fishery managed as independent sectors), evaluating limited entry programs, considering a charter fishing moratorium, and enforcement of shellfish pot fishing.

Citizen access to **decision making processes** is a very high value. Concern exists that sport fishing interests are under represented on the Board of Fisheries. There was some concern about Governor involvement in specific fishery issues (e.g., trout) instead of using the normal decision making bodies (e.g., the Board of Fisheries).

Program support surfaced in the form of concern over the lack of a long-term plan for how king salmon stamp funds will be used and a general lack of matching funds for otherwise worthwhile projects.

In the **strategic planning process** itself there is a need to ensure there is a program prioritization process and assurance the planning will be consistent with the ANILCA.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

When asked to react to the above list of issues and opportunities, the participants identified potential strategies to deal with these.

Create a vision. There is a need for the Division to frame the planning question and provide a starting point for public discussion on the preferred future for sport fishing in Alaska.

Cooperation. The tribes can be a source of matching funds for projects that are beneficial to all Alaskans.

Citizen Participation. The Department should categorize the issues and solutions for the public to review and continue its existing quality efforts at getting information out to the public. Future processes should ensure robust public access to decision making.

Audits. Providing appropriate status reports or white papers can help all parties make informed decisions. Potential topics include examining the future of enhancement in Alaska, the impacts of existing limited entry programs on the resource and their applicability to other user groups, and cross division (i.e., fishery) impact analyses of regulatory packages.

Conflict resolution forums. Creating processes to define disputes and negotiate resolutions would be time well spent and help resolve issues like resource sharing among users.

Management philosophy. There is a need to understand and potentially address with a new management philosophy a suite of issues like by-catch mortalities, simplifying sport regulations, removing the 27" king salmon size limit, finding ways to spread out sport fishing effort, and re-structuring the Department's Divisions to remove artificial separations between these functions.

Proactive management strategies. Developing some solutions, ahead of crises, would be useful, possibly in the areas of:

- In-season management capacity for sport fisheries,
- Contingency planning for key species that might be designated as "customary and traditional,"
- Sport fishery advocacy in international fishing issues,
- Customizing or regionalizing management that recognizes that different needs exist in different parts of the state, and

- Resolving the dual management issue.

Existing management systems change. Fair and equitable access to decision making would be enhanced through restructuring the Board of Fisheries to be responsive to all stakeholder groups, possibly by restructuring the representation on the Board and by having Department positions out for public review ahead of Board meetings.

Information and education. Specific topics mentioned were requests for information on how sport fishing enhancement works and how decisions are made.

What to do about enhancement? The group was asked to pick one issue discussed today and have a detailed discussion on ways to resolve it. Enhancement was selected and the group identified that solutions could arise by *increasing the knowledge base* (identify streams suitable for enhancement, setting wild stock escapement goals); by *clarifying the goal* for enhancement in Alaska; by *improving coordination* (state/tribal/federal enhancement agreements, public/private partnerships, developing a comprehensive enhancement plan for Southeast Alaska, and agreement about how king salmon stamp money will be used); by *increasing the transparency of and access to decision making*; and by *ensuring enhancement funding stability*.

PREFERRED FUTURE (VISION) FOR SPORT FISHING IN ALASKA

When meeting participants were asked to complete the sentence:

“Ten years from today, sport fish management will make Alaska a better because...?”

They said:

there is more respect among user groups, there is a better allocation process in place, there has been a discussion with stakeholders about the future, there is reasonable fishing opportunity, and the authority for management will rest with the state of Alaska.

In answer to the question: “What is the preferred future you would like to see for sport fishing in Alaska?”, the vision from this meeting was for:

- Equal representation for resident sport anglers in regulatory processes,
- Citizens having access to decision making,
- Stability of sport fishing opportunity,
- Resolution of allocation disputes,
- A management process that continually refines the definition of “maximum benefits” from the sport fishery,
- The end of dual management in Alaska,

- Reasonable expectation of harvest, dependable (predictable) opportunity, and diversity of fishing experiences,
- Public support for management, and
- A realization that the Department and the public are dependent on each other.

When asked to identify the elements of common ground that cut across all Alaskans, the participants felt these were:

Resources that are healthy and managed with good information; *relationships* between users that resolve conflicts and reduce animosity; and *sport fishing opportunity* that provides reasonable expectation of harvest, economic viability of the sport fishing industry, resources available within reasonable travel of residences, quality fisheries, and reasonable access to king salmon through July 4.

MEETING EVALUATION

Participants would enhance the quality of future meetings like this by continuing to provide professional facilitation and by changing the meeting format to increase staff involvement, getting larger and more diverse public participation, being clearer in meeting announcements about the purpose of the meeting, having a more focused agenda, and, perhaps, changing to a weekday (instead of a Saturday) meeting day.

PARTICIPANTS: Ken Dole, Walter Jack, Sr., Ron Somerville, Mike Bethers, Steve Peterson, Mac Meiners, Jr., Kathy Hansen, Eric Fry, Dale Kelly, Jim Becker, Carl Rosier, Chad Soiseth, (Angoon AOC), Alaska Trollers Association, Gillnetters

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