

DRAFT Document

Division of Sport Fish
Strategic Plan 2010-2014

Protecting and improving
Alaska's recreational fisheries resources



DRAFT

This page intentionally left blank

Division of Sport Fish Strategic Plan

DRAFT 06-16-09

Table of Contents

Message from the Director	1
Our Vision:	2
Organizational Snapshot	3
The Regions	4
Funding	5
Core Functions and Goals	6
Fisheries Management.....	6
Fisheries Research	6
Fisheries Enhancement	6
Angler Access.....	7
Information and Education Services.....	7
Fish Habitat	7
Workforce Support	8
Goals, Objectives, and Principal Activities	9
Definitions and Acronyms	1

Appendices

Appendix A: Activities Recommended for Implementation

Appendix B: Division of Sport Fish Offices



Message from the Director

As with any agency, business, or organization, success is measured by how well the entity progresses toward achieving its vision. This strategic plan is our five-year roadmap to ensure the Division of Sport Fish can achieve its goals and objectives.

It is my belief that fish populations important to recreational anglers and the economy of Alaska must be kept at highly productive levels using local fisheries management expertise. We will invoke state-of-the-art technologies and techniques towards our fish population stock assessments, habitat and aquatic research, and data collection programs. We will apply progressive business practices to administer public funds in a highly accountable fashion and exemplary public service will be provided to the angling public and citizens. The catalyst necessary to accomplish the challenges we face, solely rests with current and future personnel. To this end, support for and exposure to novel applications will become foundational within all sections of the division. We will recognize and reward personnel for exploring and applying new technologies. Heightened recognition for our efforts will be both our reward and personnel recruitment tool.

Preparation of this document was a group effort whereby numerous individuals deserve a hearty “thank you” for their time, energy and demonstrated intellect. In particular, I express gratitude to division staff who participated in the strategic planning process—their motivation and direct input helped greatly in shaping this plan and charting our direction for the foreseeable future.

Finally, I hope you will use this document to track our progress. The success of our division relies upon public input and those that support recreational fishing through the purchase of fishing licenses, stamps, equipment and fuel. Hold us accountable in our ongoing tasks to protect and improve our state’s fisheries resources. Let us know how we are doing. I look forward to hearing from you.

Charlie Swanton
Director, Division of Sport Fish

Our Mission:

By law, the mission of the Division of Sport Fish is to protect and improve the state's recreational fisheries resources

DRAFT

Our Vision:

Excellence in fisheries management and research for the benefit of recreational anglers, the state's economy, and future generations of Alaskans

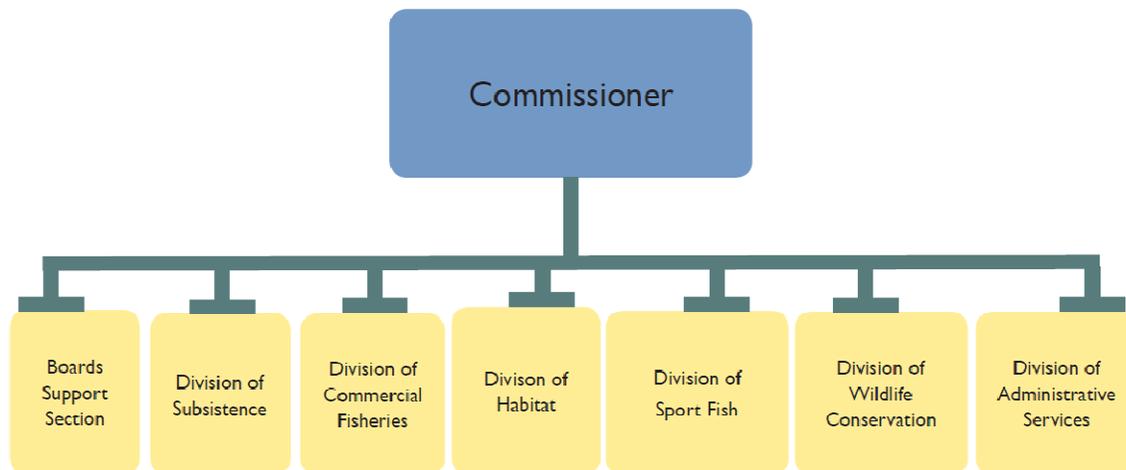
Organizational Snapshot

The Division of Sport Fish—along with the divisions of Commercial Fisheries, Habitat, Subsistence, Wildlife Conservation, and Administrative Services—is a discrete entity within Alaska’s Department of Fish and Game (see Department Organizational Chart, below). The division is charged with managing recreational fisheries (including shellfish) within state waters. The Division of Sport Fish was established in 1951 as part of Alaska’s territorial government to oversee Alaska’s developing sport fisheries. Its creation coincided with the passage of the federal Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950 (also known as the Dingell-Johnson), which gave states and territories funds to conduct scientific research related to recreational fisheries. Today, the Division of Sport Fish is responsible for oversight and management of Alaska’s sport fisheries with an estimated economic impact of 1.4 billion dollars annually.

In addition to our primary responsibilities, division personnel serve as staff and biological advisors to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, which is responsible for regulatory and fisheries resource allocation decisions. The division is comprised of more than 200 permanent full-time employees and 200 seasonal and temporary personnel. Our mission could not be accomplished without assistance from others whereby we maintain strong partnerships with other divisions and other governmental and non-governmental groups.

The division maintains Regional and Area offices throughout the state to serve the public (see Regional Office Contact Information at the back of this document).

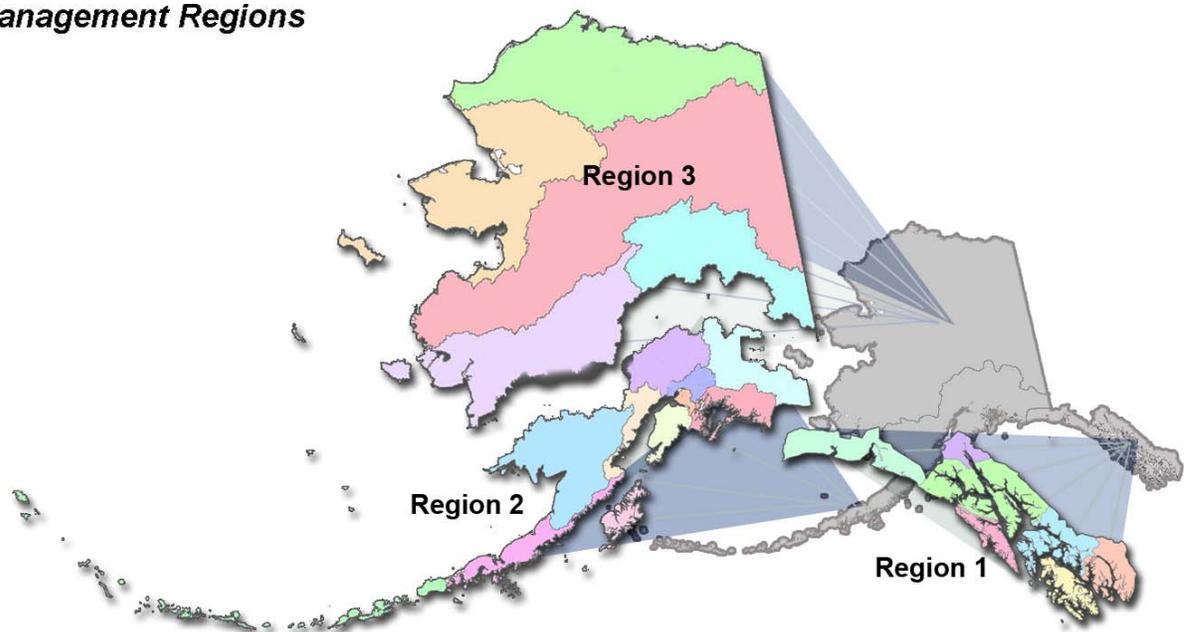
Alaska Department of Fish and Game Department Organizational Structure



The Regions

The division is divided into three geographic and two technical regions. The division maintains Headquarters Offices in Juneau and Anchorage, a Southeast Alaska Regional (Region I) Office in Douglas, a South-central Alaska Regional (Region II) Office in Anchorage, and an Interior Alaska Regional (Region III) Office in Fairbanks. The Research and Technical Services (Region IV), and Habitat Conservation and Access Defense (Region V) technical regions serve a statewide function and are located in Anchorage. The geographic regions are further partitioned into a total of 22 management areas with offices located throughout the state.

Division of Sport Fish Management Regions

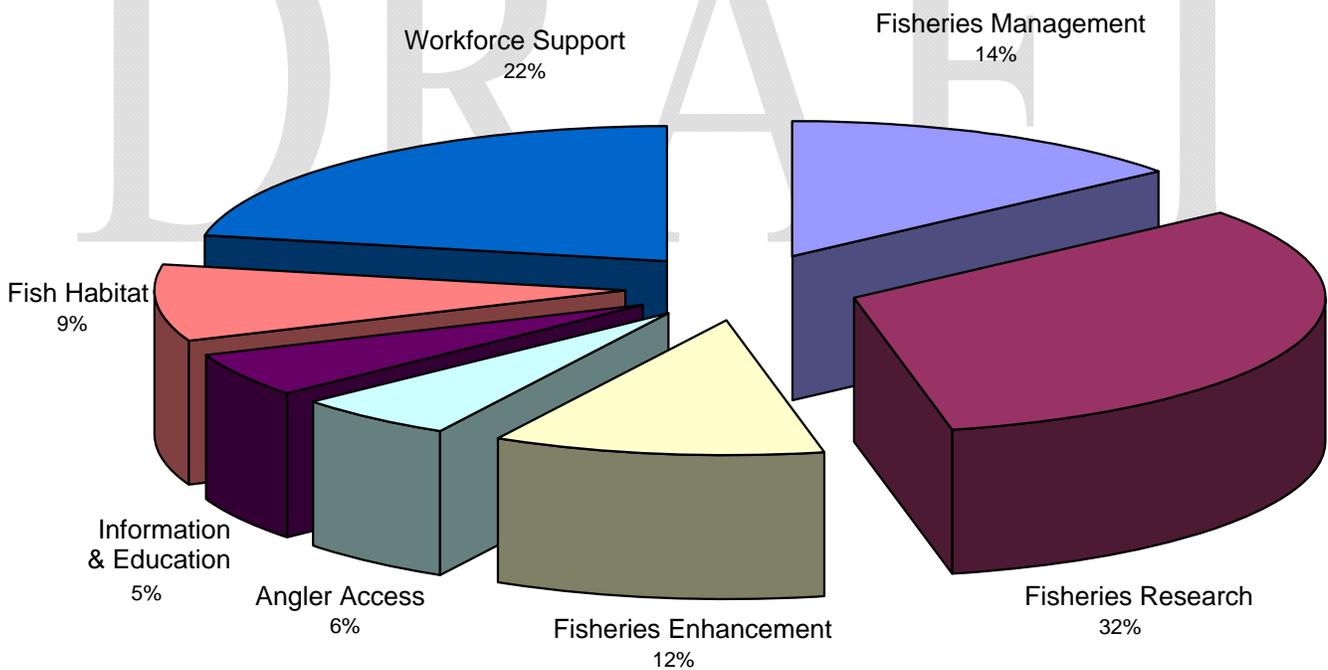


See Regional Management Area divisions at: <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Management/>

Funding

The division has an annual operating budget of approximately \$50 million. The primary funding sources are the state’s Fish and Game Fund (license sales and stamp receipts) and the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program (federal tax dollars derived from sport fishing-related equipment and fuel). These sources are supplemented with competitive grant awards, cooperative agreements, partnerships, and legislative appropriations. All funds are allocated based upon the goals, objectives and activities outlined within this strategic plan.

Sport Fisheries
FY06 - FY08 Expenditures by Core Service



Division of Sport Fish: Core Functions

The Division of Sport Fish strives to achieve its mission and vision through seven interdependent core functions: fisheries management, fisheries research, fisheries enhancement, angler access, information and education services, fish habitat, and workforce support. Each core function is further defined by corresponding goals, objectives, and principal activities.

Fisheries Management

The division's priority to manage the State's recreational fisheries for sustained yield and recreational angler satisfaction is centered on an area-based management system. The division is partitioned into 22 management units, dispersed among 3 regional offices, which ensures direct relationships between area managers, users, and resources. The managers expend considerable efforts in working with recreational anglers, the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and federal and international regulatory bodies to craft fishing regulations and solutions that are effective, minimally intrusive, and enforceable. Area management biologists actively monitor fish stocks and fisheries to adjust regulations in-season as required; work closely with enforcement staff in the policing of regulations; maintain a dialogue with local user groups and recreational anglers throughout the year; assist in habitat conservation and restoration efforts; and provide local expertise to the angling public.

Fisheries Research

Management of Alaska's recreational fisheries is based on sound scientific practices and objective-based research. The division's commitment to scientific principles and rigorous project planning and design ensures that data and information collected will address management needs and be scientifically defensible. Research projects are designed and conducted to assess a wide array of management information needs that focus on characterizing fish populations, describing fish habitat use and needs, and assessing fishery characteristics and economics. Research projects are developed and implemented by a team of research and management biologists, biometricians, and cartographic, programming and publication staff to ensure that the data collected are meaningful, statistically sound, and in a timely manner. Research results are well-documented in peer-reviewed reports and are made available to the public, other researchers, and fishery regulators.

Fisheries Enhancement

Many of Alaska's most popular and reliable fisheries are created and supported by the division's enhancement program (e.g., hatcheries). Program personnel work with management staff to diversify and increase recreational angler opportunities by producing and releasing Chinook and coho salmon; rainbow trout and lake trout; Arctic char; and Arctic grayling into local streams, lakes, and marine waters. The program places great importance on strict adherence to state and division policies designed to maintain genetic integrity and health of wild stocks. Enhancement staff operate hatchery facilities; collect and report on production data; perform stocked-lakes research; and are responsible for all facets of fish enhancement including remote egg-takes from wild stocks, egg incubation, rearing, and release. Personnel also establish cooperative projects with private, non-profit hatchery operators to implement enhancement activities where State

facilities are not practical and work with various local groups to identify future needs for enhancement to ensure sustainable sportfishing opportunities.

Angler Access

Alaska's exceptional recreational opportunities require that access to the state's public lands are provided and secured. The division supports this endeavor through two programs: *Recreational Boating and Angler Access* and *Access and Defense*. *Recreational Boating and Angler Access* is primarily tasked with establishing and managing federal grant projects that develop or maintain a range of infrastructure such as boat docks, boat ramps, associated parking areas, boardwalks and trails, handicap-accessible fishing docks, and restroom facilities. Local governmental agencies, the public, and area managers initiate Recreational Boating and Angler Access projects, which then require management of many components including contract and budget administration; permitting and environmental issues; and legal concerns. The *Access and Defense* program is tasked with identifying and protecting public access to fish and wildlife resources. This program coordinates the department's participation in the state's land planning process to identify existing public access and fish and wildlife habitat requiring protection; analyzes land and water management plans and land use actions; supports the state's assertion of ownership of submerged lands underlying navigable waters; defends the public's use of trails and easements; and nominates and defends easements during federal, state and municipal land conveyances.

Information and Education Services

An informed and participatory public is central to the division's management and decision-making processes. Information and Education Services (I&E) provides recreational anglers and other members of the public with information about fisheries management, research, and sport fishing opportunities in a timely manner and with an emphasis on exceptional customer service. This information may include changes to regulations, salmon run strength, lists of lakes most recently stocked, fishing tips, or fishing trip planning assistance. Information is disseminated using various media including personal phone calls, public meetings, local radio, and the Internet. I&E is committed to pursuing technologies such as online license and permit sales and a redesigned website that will improve data collection and information services to the public. I&E advocates public resource stewardship and sustainable use through public education and skills development programs for the public. The division's education programs are directed at recruiting and retaining recreational anglers of all ages.

Fish Habitat

Alaska's productive fisheries are not only attributed to its extensive pristine habitats (fresh water, estuarine, and coastal waters within three miles from shore), but also due to progressive state and federal agency conservation practices and laws. The Division of Sport Fish complements other entities' habitat protection work with programs funded directly by the division and through public and private grants. These programs are directed at protecting and restoring fish habitats for the benefit of fish and current and future recreational anglers. The division's habitat conservation staff conduct research on habitat and fish use of habitats; ADF&G, as well as other agencies and the public use the resulting information to make decisions regarding land and water use permitting, land and water use planning, and fisheries management. The division's fish

habitat staff also work cooperatively with other agencies and the public to administer stream bank restoration and fish passage improvement projects across the state.

Workforce Support

Workforce support is composed of two components, the division leadership team and dedicated administrative staff, which enable the division to achieve its goals in a fiscally responsible manner. The Division Leadership Team (DLT) is composed of the director, deputy director, assistant directors, regional supervisors, the administrative operations manager, and an administrative officer. The DLT provides oversight to the entire division, strives to develop its workforce, and provides resources to support its programs. The division's administrative staff is responsible for supporting other core functions through their day-to-day operations, which include budgeting and financial management; payroll and personnel management; and providing exceptional customer service to the public, division, and department staff.

DRAFT

Goals, Objectives, and Principal Activities

Goal 1: Fisheries Management

Ensure the sustained use of Alaska's recreational fisheries while optimizing economic and social benefits

- Objective 1. Use area- and fishery-based management to develop and achieve management objectives consistent with the sustained yield principle
- Utilize annual area management review process to identify data needs and gaps; prioritize projects; and review management actions
 - Develop, maintain, and review fishery-based management plans that detail prescribed objectives and attendant regulatory actions
 - Contribute to an effective Alaska Board of Fisheries process
 - Maintain area offices and staff presence
- Objective 2. Inform the public about management practices and policies so they are knowledgeable about and can participate meaningfully in the regulatory process
- Facilitate public participation in state regulatory processes including Alaska Board of Fisheries and Advisory Committees
 - Facilitate public participation in federal and international regulatory processes, such as the Federal Subsistence Board
- Objective 3. Consider recreational angler preferences and impacts, including both social and economic effects of management actions, in the decision-making processes
- Regularly collect, utilize, and report data on the economic significance and social benefits of sportfishing in Alaska
 - Communicate recreational angler preferences to decision-makers
- Objective 4. Achieve recreational angler compliance with laws and regulations
- Reformat and regularly update the regulation summary book to improve understanding and ease of use
 - Educate recreational anglers regarding regulations

- Maintain dialogue with Alaska State Troopers to identify enforcement priorities relative to specific fisheries and licensing requirements
- Provide staff enforcement training, and provide opportunities for trained staff to participate in enforcement activities

Objective 5. Develop and cultivate associations with recreational anglers, the public, and relevant agencies

- Establish and maintain personal contact with local communities, recreational anglers, fishing organizations, and Advisory Committees
- Develop and participate in inter-agency management teams
- Collaborate with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are working on priority fisheries and habitat issues

Objective 6. Minimize impacts of invasive species on fish stocks, recreational fisheries, and fish habitat

- Create a “How-To” manual for the development and implementation of eradication plans
- Develop field detection and monitoring programs
- Develop and implement public communication plans related to the prevention, identification, and management of invasive species

DRAFT

Goal 2: Fisheries Research

Promote Excellence in Fisheries Research

- Objective 1. Plan research projects that are scientifically and statistically sound, cost-effective, and address management information needs
- Use the area management review process to identify management-based research needs and information gaps
 - Use an operational planning process to identify measurable objectives, sampling methods, analytical techniques, and costs, and to ensure that projects are scientifically and statistically reviewed and approved
 - Provide research staff with training opportunities related to statistical and analytical techniques; sampling methods; and applications of new technologies
 - Utilize expertise from cooperating entities including the University of Alaska, other governmental agencies, NGOs, and private consultants
- Objective 2. Conduct research to improve our understanding of population dynamics, life histories, and habitat requirements of recreationally-fished species
- Explore the use of alternative research technologies, methods, and analyses as appropriate
 - Create a consistent process to identify inter-departmental information needs and to prioritize and coordinate future cooperative research projects
 - Utilize partnerships to fund and conduct research relative to information needs of common interest
- Objective 3. Conduct research to improve our understanding of use patterns, satisfaction, and preferences of recreational anglers
- Create and implement an electronic system to sell and track fishing licenses and permits
 - Conduct surveys to estimate use patterns (e.g., harvest and effort data, angler satisfaction) from guided and non-guided recreational anglers

- Objective 4. Publish research results that are peer-reviewed, well-written, and timely
- Adhere to the divisional and departmental reporting policies and procedures
 - Provide staff with resources to complete reports
 - Promote and facilitate publication in peer-reviewed journals

DRAFT

Goal 3: Fisheries Enhancement

Diversify recreational fishing opportunities via supplemental production of hatchery-reared fish

- Objective 1. Conduct enhancement activities in a manner that protects wild fish and habitats
- Adhere to the policies on genetics, pathology, lake stocking, and waters bearing anadromous fish
- Objective 2. Meet regional enhancement needs for prioritized anadromous and freshwater fisheries
- Construct and maintain hatchery infrastructure
 - Implement prioritized regional stocking plans
 - Base production goals on area-specific management needs
- Objective 3. Produce fish in a manner that is biologically sound, cost-effective, and utilizes innovative practices
- Develop best management practices for standard hatchery operating procedures
 - Develop long-term research plan to identify information needs and to improve fish husbandry and production effectiveness
 - Develop and monitor partnerships as needed with private non-profit hatcheries
- Objective 4. Inform the public and division staff about fishery enhancement
- Develop and implement a public communication plan for hatchery production and stocking programs

Goal 4: Angler Access

Protect and improve public access to recreational fisheries resources

- Objective 1. Secure and protect recreational angler access to public lands
- Protect and defend access through participation in state and federal land and water use planning, review of land use actions, and research of navigable waters and historic trails
 - Identify and prioritize lands/easements that currently or could provide public access
- Objective 2. Maintain or improve current access sites and facilities
- Maintain and improve access-site partnerships
 - Create and maintain a regional inspection and maintenance schedule and database based on cooperative agreements
- Objective 3. Identify, prioritize, and develop new access sites and facilities projects
- Construct prioritized access projects
 - Involve the public to identify access priorities and facilities maintenance needs
 - Conduct statewide assessments of non-motorized angler access sites
 - Coordinate with other programs and agencies to consider access opportunities
- Objective 4. Inform the division staff and public about access opportunities and the decision-making process
- Develop and implement a public communications plan about access available to anglers and the access decision-making process

Goal 5: Information and Education Services

Inform and educate the public about recreational fishing with an emphasis on exceptional customer service

- Objective 1. Inform recreational anglers and division staff about Alaska's recreational fishing opportunities, angler access, regulations, and fisheries management
- Utilize media and ADF&G website to provide timely updates regarding fisheries information and Emergency Orders
 - Improve Internet presence and information accessibility
 - Develop public communication plans that describe key messages, products, and delivery methods for division informational materials and services
- Objective 2. Promote participation in recreational fishing activities
- Inform and instruct recreational anglers about the skills needed to participate in Alaska's fishing opportunities and provide experience-based skill-building opportunities
 - Conduct innovative recreational angler recruitment and retention initiatives
 - Identify opportunities to develop urban and youth fishing programs
- Objective 3. Provide the public and division staff with information, and products that are consistent, accurate, and easily found and understood
- Deliver exceptional customer service
 - Provide educational program templates that can be tailored to local management areas
- Objective 4. Standardize informational products Increase public understanding of and participation in the stewardship of Alaska's recreational fisheries resources
- Integrate stewardship principles in all division education programs
 - Develop and deliver Alaska-specific K-12 stewardship curricula

Goal 6: Fish Habitat

Conserve habitat to sustain recreational fisheries resources

- Objective 1. Protect fish habitat to sustain recreational fisheries
- Administer Alaska's Anadromous Waters Catalogue
 - Conduct inventories to expand the coverage of the Anadromous Waters Catalogue
 - Prioritize, document, and reserve water rights in lakes and rivers to ensure water quantity and quality
 - Collect hydrological and biological data relevant to habitat protection
 - Provide recommendations on fisheries-related public access projects to fisheries resources to minimize impacts to aquatic and riparian habitats
- Objective 2. Improve or restore degraded fish habitat
- Conduct high priority projects to protect, enhance, and / or rehabilitate degraded habitat
 - Provide recommendations on fish passage standards
 - Provide training on and promote habitat restoration best practices
- Objective 3. Develop and cultivate partnerships to conserve fish habitat
- Provide technical skills and coordination support to partner organizations and agencies
 - Utilize partnerships to promote benefits of stewardship, land and water use planning, and habitat conservation and restoration
- Objective 4. Inform the public about the division's habitat conservation efforts
- Develop and implement a communication plan for habitat conservation activities including research and restoration

Goal 7: Workforce Support

Provide exceptional support to our workforce to attain the Division's vision and goals

- Objective 1. Recruit, develop, and retain highly qualified and motivated staff
- Develop and implement division-wide recruitment strategies
 - Continue to implement the Department's workforce development initiative
 - Provide division staff with opportunities for professional development, training, and job advancement
 - Fund full-time staff salaries from permanent funding sources
 - Develop and implement an internal employee awards program
 - Conduct annual evaluation of employee satisfaction
 - Perform annual employee performance evaluations and workload assessments
- Objective 2. Provide staff with sufficient resources to perform assigned work
- Ensure that staff have appropriate tools, technology, and equipment
- Objective 3. Promote a strong team approach between division staff, the regions, the division, and the department
- Ensure that staff understands and works towards achieving the division's vision and strategic priorities
 - Provide regular communication between regions in all aspects of the division's work
 - Encourage all ADF&G divisions to communicate across the department about decision-making on important issues
- Objective 4. Provide timely and effective administrative support
- Ensure that staff are familiar with administrative processes
 - Maintain up-to-date budgeting and financial data
 - Streamline administrative procedures in coordination with the Department of Administration
 - Ensure division-wide consistency in application of administrative procedures
- Objective 5. Ensure that funding is sustainable and aligned with the division's priorities and programs

- Ensure projects are based on and prioritized by the division's strategic plan
- Prepare annual evaluation on progress toward achieving strategic plan goals, objectives, and activities
- Protect the state's authority over federal Sport Fish Restoration Program funding sources
- Develop division-wide approach to coordinate efforts on competitive grants and other funding processes

DRAFT

Definitions and Acronyms

17b	Section 17b of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act related to public easements
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game (the department) (http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/)
Anadromous	Fishes that spend most of their life at sea and migrate to fresh water to spawn (breed)
ANILCA	Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
Alaska Board of Fisheries	The Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), a seven-member board appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature, sets seasons, bag limits, methods and means for the state's subsistence, commercial, sport, guided sport, and personal use fisheries, and it also involves setting policy and direction for the management of the state's fishery resources. The board is charged with making allocation decisions, and the department is responsible for management based on those decisions (http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/index.php).
Biometrics	Refers to the application of the concepts of statistical probability and the scientific method to the collection and analysis of data used to assess fish stocks
Communication Plan	A tool used to identify target audience and means to reach it, determine key message(s), identify materials to be produced, identify staff/equipment resources, and describe an approach and timeline for implementation
Division	Division of Sport Fish (http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/)
DLT	Division Leadership Team, consists of the director, deputy director, assistant director, regional supervisors, the administrative operations manager, and an administrative officer
DOT&PF	Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (http://www.dot.state.ak.us/)
Enhancement	Increasing fish stocks, such as through supplemental hatchery production
Estuarine	Referring to a partially enclosed body of water (such as bays, lagoons, sounds or sloughs) where two different bodies of water, typically fresh and salt waters, meet and mix
FY	Fiscal Year—July 1 through June 30

Invasive Species	Fish, animals, or plants that are both non-native to a particular ecosystem and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health
OMB	Office of Management and Budget (http://gov.state.ak.us/omb/)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NFHAP	National Fish Habitat Action Plan (http://fishhabitat.org/)
PNP	Private non-profit hatchery
RS 2477	Revised Statute 2477, which allowed for the construction of highways across public lands not otherwise reserved for public purposes (repealed 1976 under the Federal Land Policy Management Act)
Reservation of Water	A water right (appropriation of water) to maintain a specific flow rate in rivers (or level of water in rivers and lakes) for one or a combination of four types of uses: 1) protection of fish and wildlife habitat, migration, and propagation; 2) recreation and parks purposes; 3) navigation and transportation purposes; and 4) sanitary and water quality purposes
Stewardship	Principles which contribute to the conservation of a fishery that persists and obtains yields on a continuing basis; characterized by fishing activities and habitat alteration, if any, that do not cause or lead to undesirable changes in biological productivity, biological diversity, or ecosystem structure and function, from one human generation to the next.
State Waters	Internal waters of the state including rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, the tidal zone of the state from mean higher high water to mean lower low water, and those waters extending generally three miles seaward (see http://www.touchngo.com/lglcntr/akstats/aac/title05/chapter039/section975.htm)
Sustained Yield	Sustained yield is an output of renewable resources that does not impair the productivity of the resource; it implies a balance between removal through the activities of the fishery and replenishment through incremental growth and/or recruitment of the stock. The sustained yield principle is one of the fundamental elements of dependable recreational fisheries in Alaska. The department has a statutory responsibility to manage the use of wild fish stocks for sustained yield (AS 16.05.730(a)). Scientifically based assessments of wild stocks are the foundation of the sustained yield principle.



The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The Department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, or if you desire further information, please write to ADF&G, PO Box 24425, Juneau, AK 99802-5526;
USFWS, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington VA 22203, or
OEO, US Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240

For information on alternative formats for this and other publications, please contact the Department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-4120, (TDD) 907-465-3646 or (FAX) 907-465-2440

Photo credits:

All photos © Julie K. Jessen unless otherwise noted
Photo of Charlie Swanton: courtesy Charlie Swanton
Goal 2 & 3 photos: courtesy ADF&G
Goal 4 large photo: courtesy Klaus Wuttig
Goal 5 photo: courtesy Rosetta Alcantra

DRAFT