

Alitak District Salmon Set net Fishery and Rehabilitation Plan

Submitted by Rick Metzger

The goal of this plan is to rehabilitate and sustain a viable set net fishery for the areas 65 to 70 set net permits and---28---- fishing camps that 150 to 200 people depend upon.

The fishery is primarily managed on sockeye returning to early run Upper Station and Dog Salmon Frazer systems and late run returning to Upper Station in Olga Bay. And 3 other smaller natural systems. . These smaller systems have been allowed to be diminished to OEG or lower status so as not to impede the traditional strong stock fishery management of Upper Station and Frazer Runs and mixed stock fisheries in other areas.

According to CFEC records In recent seasons the SO4K permits fished in the Alitak District have earned on average 1/3 or less of the earnings of the remaining SO4K permits. In recent years several of the camps have been abandoned or consolidated and several permits have left the area. Permit value and equity in fishing sites represent a capital investment in the fishery of 10 to-12 million dollars. Startup costs and seasonal operation costs of \$20,000 or more per camp easily exceeds 500,000 dollars per season. The setnet fuel bill alone for 2013 is in excess of \$200,000 for the 2013 season, equivalent to the entire set net share of the 2014 early run prediction. At today's prices it requires a catch of over 150,000 sockeye in the set net section before any of the camps are in the black.

The Alitak set net community has been working together with ADF&G and KRAA to identify management, biological problems and

enhancement potential of the systems of Olga Bay. There are many possible factors that could have contributed to the demise of Olga Bay stocks including escapement goals, viability of escapement (high jack %), lake fertility, fresh water survival and predation, out migration predation, ocean survival and interception. A recent ADF&G gap study report shows that not enough is known about any of these factors to measure their impact on the fishery. All we know is that the fishery has been in a downward spiral for many years.

Geographic differences divide the area into 3 management sections Alitak Bay, Moser Bay, and lower Olga Bay. Each area has unique features that affect the migration and harvest of salmon transiting through the sections. The Alitak Bay section is a wide open area with a tidal range of over 20' and exposure to extreme weather conditions. The sites in the Alitak section rely mostly on traveling fish and probably incur a high incidence of catch not returning to Olga Bay.

The Moser Bay section is a narrow bay with strong flood and ebb currents that funnels fish into Olga Bay. The sites in Moser Bay mostly rely on traveling fish headed to Olga Bay. During closed periods some schooling occurs along the shore line and in Chip and Snug Coves and daily hold backs occur from very strong currents ebbing through the Olga Narrows.

Olga Bay is a near estuary with an average tidal fluctuation of less than 2'. . Sites near the entrance along both East and West shorelines catch some schooled fish and traveling fish headed to both Upper Station and Dog Salmon/Frazer systems. Sites on the North East and North shores rely mostly on schooled early run sockeye returning to Horse Marine,

Dog Salmon/Frazer and later runs of chum and pinks returning to the Dog Salmon River.

These differences have made the area very difficult to manage equably. Fishing styles and gear and equipment have evolved quite differently in the 3 areas. This has caused much discord, discontent and discountenance amongst the fishers and a disproportionate amount BOF and ADF&G staff time spent over the years for the size of the fishery.

The one bright spot in the demise of this fishery is that most of the participants have stopped blaming each other (we have all gone broke) and are now looking for ways to bring our harvests back to a viable fishery through management changes and enhancement. It may not be possible to do this within the traditional bounds of the fishery. Olga Bay has been milked dry. It's time to reset escapement goals and reevaluate all of the systems in Olga Bay.

It may be possible to accomplish some of this in 2014. The traditional early run fisheries in the Cape Alitak seine area and the Alitak Bay Moser Bay and Olga Bay set net sections could be suspended and managed as a terminal fishery until Frazer and Upper Station early run goals are met. This will allow a separation of stocks in Olga Bay and insure that quality unmolested escapements get into both Frazer and Upper Station early run systems. Regulations for an orderly terminal fishery are already in place and have resulted in some very significant and efficient harvests of over escapements in past seasons.

This will also allow an opportunity to evaluate any surviving early run component into Horse Marine, Akalaura and Silver Salmon systems for enhancement potential.

Once escapements and evaluations are met a short terminal mop up fishery could clean up the surplus and the traditional fishery could commence in the Cape Alitak seine and set net sections.

Opening and close periods for most of July of _____ days open and _____ days closed would allow the traditional fishery on non-threatened stocks in the outer areas and the beginning of the late run Upper Station fish into Olga Bay. It would also allow for some schooling of late early run fish returning to the Frazer system.

The minor systems of Olga Bay Horse Marine, Akalaura, and Silver salmon have been allowed to diminish to near extinction. Historic escapement records into these systems before the manmade run into Frazer began show them having once produced returns that rival the current returns to Upper Station and Frazer Lakes. Enhancement and rehabilitation of these runs could significantly add to the sockeye catch of the Alitak District and also add to the biodiversity of the entire Olga Bay drainage. Cannery pack records fish trap catch records and escapements into Olga show many returns in excess of 1 million sockeye returning to Olga Bay. With unprejudiced management and guided enhancement Olga Bay can be returned to what it once was.

By raising the Upper Sta. early run OEG to a BEG in 2014 its at the same time as one of the lowest Frazer predictions ever made and at the same time we are exploring restoration and enhancement potential. This is a very good opportunity to marry all 3 situations together. I have developed a plan to accomplish this that I would like to present in committee. Thank you for reading

Rick Metzger