

To Whom It May Concern:

As a concerned conservationist, fisherman and Alaskan outdoor enthusiast, I am writing in hopes to further progress the relationship between the citizens of the State of Alaska who are anglers and the Department of Fish and Game. This letter is written as a suggestion to alter certain regulations and practices in regards to Fishing Derbies (also referred to as Fishing Contest, Fishing Tournaments), fish survivability and an anglers option to release healthy, unharmed fish back into the lake. The changes suggested herein would apply only to lakes within the Southcentral Region of Alaska and any application encompassing further regional range, if they were admitted, would be dependent upon the Department.

Concern: During Fishing Derbies, anglers are not able to release fish they weigh in or measure as per current state regulations, killing 100% of these fish. Although great care is taken in the preservation of health for these fish and release would almost guarantee survival given certain safeguards, it is against state law to practice catch and release of these fish due to terminology, vague definitions and misappropriated intent of the law. This letter hopes to clarify the terms, redefine key words and apply proper intent of the regulation and law as we voice our opinion for change.

Current regulation with proposed changes in red:

Prohibited Acts

Possession or marking of live fish or live fish eggs:

- It is unlawful to possess, transport, release live fish or live fish eggs, or in any way mark any live fish prior to release:
- It is unlawful to possess or transport a live fish or live fish eggs from the shoreline of the body of water in which it originated. In lakes the shoreline would act as the boundary and not include any rivers, streams or creeks that provide flow via inlet or outlet sources. (Once it leaves the shoreline the fish or fish eggs is considered transported)
- It is unlawful to release live fish or live fish eggs into any waterbody that the live fish or live fish eggs did not originate.

Definitions

Bag Limit – The maximum legal take of fish per person per day, in the area in which the person is fishing, even if part or all of the fish are immediately preserved; a fish when landed and not immediately released becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it.

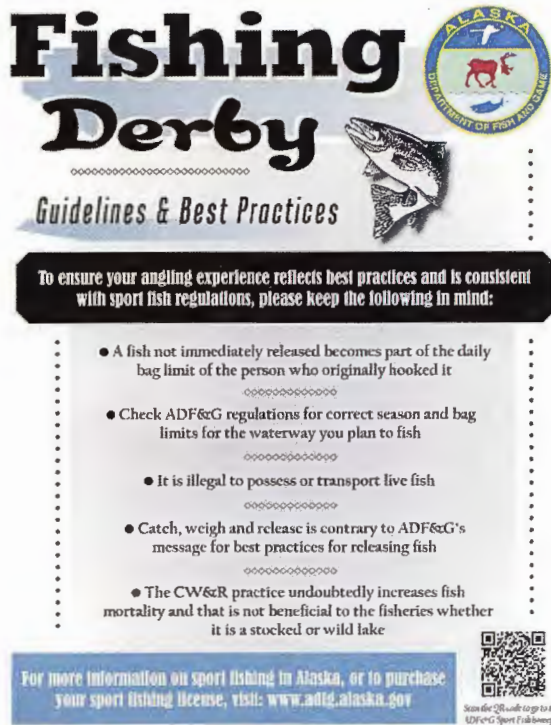
Bag Limit – The maximum legal take of fish per person per day, in the area in which the person is fishing, even if part or all of the fish are immediately preserved; a fish when landed and **not released or released in a condition in which it is not capable of swimming on its own power** becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it.

Transport – ship, transport, carry, import, export or receive or deliver for shipment, transportation, carriage or export.

Transport – ship, transport, carry, import, export or receive or deliver for shipment, transportation, carriage or export. **This term does not apply to sport caught fish unless they are removed from the shoreline boundary of the waterbody.**

THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO NORTHERN PIKE, WE ALL AGREE PIKE MUST BE EXPIRED UPON CAPTURE. WE UNDERSTAND THESE RULES WERE ORIGINALLY PUT INTO PLACE TO PREVENT THE INTRODUCTION OF PIKE. THESE CHANGES DO NOT ALTER THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THIS INVASIVE SPEICES.

THE ENTIRETY OF THESE LAWS, REGULATIONS CAN BE SUMMED UP IN ONE PHRASE. “IT IS ILLEGAL TO TRANSPLANT FISH OR FISH EGGS FROM WATERBODY TO A DIFFERENT WATERBODY UNLESS THE ADFG HAS ISSUED A PERMIT FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRANSPLANTATION, ie STOCKING PROGRAM.”



The flier features the title "Fishing Derby" in large, bold, black letters, with "Guidelines & Best Practices" in a smaller, italicized font below it. To the right is the Alaska Department of Fish and Game logo, which includes a moose and a fish. Below the title is a photograph of a fish. A black banner contains the text: "To ensure your angling experience reflects best practices and is consistent with sport fish regulations, please keep the following in mind:". Below this are four bullet points: 1. "A fish not immediately released becomes part of the daily bag limit of the person who originally hooked it"; 2. "Check ADF&G regulations for correct season and bag limits for the waterway you plan to fish"; 3. "It is illegal to possess or transport live fish"; 4. "Catch, weigh and release is contrary to ADF&G's message for best practices for releasing fish". A fifth bullet point is partially visible: "The CW&R practice undoubtedly increases fish mortality and that is not beneficial to the fisheries whether it is a stocked or wild lake". At the bottom left, a blue box says: "For more information on sport fishing in Alaska, or to purchase your sport fishing license, visit: www.adfg.alaska.gov". At the bottom right is a QR code with the text "Scan the QR code to go to the ADF&G Sport Fishing page".

This ADFG issued flier provides inappropriate guidelines and does not serve the best interest of the Angler, Conservationist, Fish Species, or Derby/Tournament Organizer. “Best practices” is surely objectionable and the vague statistics are misleading.

The first bullet limits the ability of the Angler to weigh or measure a fish with the opportunity to release a fish healthy and unharmed. This bullet guarantees the death of the fish and prohibits the Angler from practicing catch and release.

The before mentioned rule changes would allow an Angler to properly care for a fish, have it weighed/measured for derby criteria and be released healthy and unharmed.

It should not be illegal to possess and transport a live fish within the boundary of a lake unless you are in possession of fish which violates the bag/size limits for the species and the water body. (Example:

If I am fishing in my boat and I catch a fish I plan on eating and place that fish in my livewell to keep it alive and fresh, I am now in violation of the law. **This does not make sense, especially when the laws intent is to prohibit illegal stocking of fish from one source to another.)**

The last two bullets of this flier seem really aggressive towards those individuals/groups who provide derbies for the residents and visitors of this state. Catch, Weigh and Release (CWR) does not guarantee 100% survival rate, however the “guidelines and best practices” along with current regulations does guarantee a 100% kill rate. **Give the anglers, who have a devout commitment to resources, an opportunity to practice catch and release. Change the above stated regulations, amend this flier and let us all do our part to protect the fishery.**

Importance of Fishing Derbies

As stated in the ADFG Web Article of Alaska Fish and Wildlife News August 2006 by Jon Lyman, the sport fishing contests are valuable to Alaska. Revenue generated for the surrounding businesses has the potential to be immense. It provides an outlet for ADFG to engage the people of the community by which the department represents while also providing Biologist and Fish Stocking Managers an opportunity for real time data on the population of fish on the water body. These derbies have proven to be a valuable source of income for area businesses, data for ADFG and enjoyment for Alaskans and tourist alike. Let us progress this opportunity while ensuring the ability to keep our fish alive and well.

Fish Care and Management During Fishing Derbies

Prior to the fishing derby it is necessary to coordinate the appropriate equipment to maintain live release fish. The equipment is listed below and can be fashioned in several different manners, these are just examples.

Fish Holding Tank – A tank capable of sustaining flowing/aerated water that fish can be placed in after



they are weighed/measured to ensure they are capable of supporting their own swimming function. This will also serve as an opportunity for children to view the fish and ADFG or Derby Officials to provide educational seminars.

Once the fish have shown capability to recuperate, they will be released back into the waterbody. If fish expire they are returned to the angler or donated to the nearest food bank. Anglers always have the option to retain their fish towards their daily bag/size limits.

Fish Holding Bags – Anglers have already created several avenues to maintain the health of fish during



transport to and from weigh in or measurement. Some use coolers and some use coolers with external aerators that continue a push of oxygen into the water. For the purpose of immediate weighing or measuring of fish anything capable of holding water and providing the fish ample room to remain in its natural state is sufficient for the short journey. Berkley has designed several types of bags with the purpose of providing derby catch and release fishing. These bags come in different styles and dimensions and provide adequate space for fish to maintain their natural posture while remaining submerged.



Fish Handling During Weigh In or Measurement Process– Fish should be handled as quickly as possible to achieve the data necessary for measurement. Anglers should take great care to put the fish in water immediately after it's caught for movement to derby location on the

lake. If the fish is being measured, it should be measured in water with the measuring board on the bottom of water container. If the fish is being weighed, it should be weighed using a water tank weigh system so the fish remains in water during the process. Variations of both systems are numerous.

Photographic Fish Measurements – In some cases where derby officials want a catch and release tournament only, it is highly advised to use a standard measuring device available to all anglers at the time of capture. Once an angler has caught the fish it can be measured, photographed with the measuring device and released within seconds. This method greatly reduces fish handling and almost certainly ensures 100% survival rate. This method is currently being applied to the Still Cold Open Tournament Series on Big Lake and has proven to be effective.



In closing, we as citizens of the State of Alaska, who value the fisheries, would like to see the changes take effect immediately. There should not be a reason to delay obvious changes that enhance the fishery, the relationship between citizen and state, and the passion we all share for fishing. **We would like to see immediate results in the effect of an Emergency Order until it can be appropriately documented in the regulations.** Timing is critical as there are several derbies still left throughout the winter. Thank you for your time and due diligence in this matter.

Very Respectfully

✗ JASON A. PERREGO

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