

Memorandum

RC 65

To: Alaska Board of Fisheries

From: Duncan Fields

Date: January 13, 2016

Re: Response to RC's 54 & 55 regarding Cook Inlet origin Sockeye in the Kodiak Area

RC' 54 & 55 mischaracterize recent genetic stock identification information released by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. On the basis of this mischaracterization, proponents then request that the Alaska Board of Fisheries take unusual steps to address Kodiak management plans and/or look at regulatory changes in the Kodiak management area at the Cook Inlet Finfish meeting scheduled for February 2017.

At the outset, it's important to remember that the new genetic stock identification information is qualified both temporally, by opportunistic sampling, and by application to future years. In other words, the analysis expresses caution regarding the application of past year assessments to future years.

Regarding Cook Inlet bound Chinook salmon; the genetic stock identification information reflects that Kodiak area catches are relatively small. It appears that, cumulative for the island, these catches are less than 5% of Chinook sampled and 250 fish. Moreover, the district specific assessment confirms that there is not a specific district within the KMA that consistently reflects a higher percentage of Cook Inlet origin Chinook over the test period.

Regarding Cook Inlet bound Sockeye salmon in the Kodiak Management Area, the recently released genetic stock identification information confirms what both fishermen and the Department of Fish and Game have known for many years. It is neither "new" or "significant" that there are Cook Inlet bound sockeye in the Kodiak Management Area. Most important, the genetic information does not identify a specific area where Cook Inlet origin sockeye are consistently present. Moreover, it shows that in all but two areas, local sockeye dominate the catch.

The two areas that show a larger presence of Cook Inlet origin sockeye during some portions of the season are Alitak and the Cape Igvak fishery. The Cape Igvak information is a single data point that was likely influenced by environmental conditions. The Alitak assessment comes from seasons of limited fishing opportunity on historically low runs. Genetic information for each area should not be used to project future potential catches of Cook Inlet origin sockeye.

In conclusion, the Board is encouraged to recognize recently released genetic stock identification information for Chinook and sockeye in the Kodiak Management Area as helpful for assessing the productivity of Cook Inlet systems and relevant for developing escapement goals. The information does not provide a basis for the Board to consider Kodiak Management plans out of cycle and will inform the Board and public during the next Kodiak Board of Fisheries meeting in 2020.