

RC 021

11/30/16

Alaska Board of Fisheries
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Greetings,

My name is Gary Sinnhuber, and I am opposed to **Proposal #10**, which would require mandatory retention of the first King Salmon caught, when using bait on our three local streams.

First - just a little background on myself. I've been a resident of Alaska since 1976, and have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Food Science and Technology from Oregon State University. I worked as the Quality Assurance Manager for seafood processing plants, first in Kodiak for 2 years and then in Homer at Icicle Seafoods for 20 years, until a massive fire burnt the plant down in the summer of 1998. For the last 17 years I've been the owner and lead guide for a walk and wade fish guiding service on our local streams near Homer. I am also a member of the Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

Proposal # 10 references a couple of studies done on fish mortality, when comparing catch and release fishing, using artificial means vs. bait. Apparently, these studies showed a drastic increase in mortality when using bait. I don't know what fish they were testing, and what bait was used, and if the fish were in salt water or fresh water. Each species of fish will react differently to the terminal tackle being fished, and will also respond differently to various types of bait. In addition, the aggressiveness of a particular fish can be very different in salt water as compared to fresh water.

But I do know from my own experience over the many years of fishing and guiding for King Salmon on our local streams, that this increase in fish mortality for our King Salmon is absolutely not the case, when using bait. The most common bait used for catching King Salmon is salmon eggs or roe. Over the years, with various restrictions, because of less than ideal King Salmon returns, I have also used many artificial means for catching King Salmon.

What is unique for King Salmon, when they are in fresh water, is that they attack the bait differently in most cases than other salmon, by apparently just crushing the bait, without wanting to consume it. If you don't set the hook immediately on a bite, the fish will not be hooked in most cases. In 19 out of 20 hookups, my data over the years show that the hook is lodged right in the upper top of the mouth, or in the corner of the mouth, where it is easy to release quickly.

So, on the average when using bait, 1 out of 20 fish will be hooked in one of the gill rakers, thus breaking the gill, and causing the fish to bleed out, and not survive. This is very easy to notice, and we commonly call this a bleeder. While I am guiding my guests for King Salmon, I explain the possibility of hooking a "bleeder," in which case, that fish must be retained. This is being a good steward of our streams, and should be encouraged by all.

In my experience over the last 6 or 7 years of being restricted to artificial means of fishing for King Salmon, I've experienced more bleeders on King Salmon using artificial means, rather than bait. My data shows that on the average, 1 out of 10 fish will get hooked in the gills, and not survive. Again, this fish should be retained, when there is a bag limit.

In good conscious, I would not be fishing with bait, if I knew that bait was killing a high number of fish, and were not being retained, but going to waste.

I would enjoy giving you more details about all of this, during our meetings, if so desired.

Respectfully and sincerely submitted,

Gary Sinnhuber
Owner/Lead Guide
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