

RC009

January 4 2018  
Board of Fisheries  
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Dear Board of Fisheries:

First, thank you all for the work you do on behalf of the fishing communities in Alaska, the fishing fleets and the fish. As a troller I have concerns about the direction the fisheries are headed, about decisions that have been made and decisions that are about to be made regarding king salmon.

As far as salmon, king salmon are the most desirable species that we can offer the consumer. The prices consumers are willing to pay for king salmon is a testament to their value commercially. Troll caught king salmon are what all salmon products are compared to. To the troll fleet, having access to these fish is essential to our success.

I fully understand the need for conservation of South East Alaska wild king salmon and with the poor returns and dismal predictions it is essential that steps be taken to insure their survival and sustainability. The burden of responsibility is on you, the Board of Fisheries and ADF&G to make the right decisions to guide us through these precarious times. I am sure it is difficult to make these decisions and you must look at all user groups and treat them fairly but I am only going to speak for my group, trollers.

You have the power to manage fishing for king salmon, you can limit fishing time or completely close it as we saw last year (2017). I believe complete closure is an extreme measure which is financially devastating for commercial and sport fisheries alike and should be a last resort.

Last year these extreme measures were taken without a comprehensive understanding for the decline of South East Alaska king salmon returns and in fact there is still a lack of knowledge, yet the "action" was taken to stop commercial trolling as if it was going to save the day. When the complete non retention of king salmon was instituted there was a loss of opportunity to the troll fleet to catch the 30,000 king salmon that was part of the "treaty quota". As scientifically noted most of these fish were south bound fish so hopefully this closure accomplished something of value to these threatened runs because it was a very costly decision to the trolling fleet and others in SE Alaska. Is there even a reliable method of measuring the success of this decision? If the concern was catching Washington and Canadian fish (again this was an agreed upon treaty quota) and they did not stop fishing for king salmon themselves, which they didn't, then the closure was actually very helpful to them but detrimental to Alaska's interests.

For some reason there seems to be an assumption that the troll fleet is so efficient that we can devastate runs of fish. Given the amount of time allotted to the trollers, and the effectiveness of trolling this could not be further from the truth. We catch only the fish that bite and it takes an abundance of fish under us to be successful. We take a small percentage of fish from many sources but we don't and can't take them all. In contrast fishing techniques like trawling, seining, gillnetting and fish wheels are so efficient that without proper management they could easily destroy a run of fish.

Trollers don't fish at the mouth of these rivers that are showing threatened numbers of king salmon. The fish, at this stage of their lives, are not interested in our gear. Conversely Seining and Gillnetting is most effective at these terminal areas where the fish are concentrated and the fish they are catching are 100% the fish that are going up that river. Also Sportfishing, in my opinion, in these areas is doing much more damage to these runs than trollers 50 to 100 miles from these rivers. Again the fish they are catching are 100% threatened fish. To run a king salmon derby in the vicinity of these threatened runs would be devastating. There is a proposal (134) to close all trolling in areas 9,12 and 14 when sport fishing is closed in the Taku/Juneau area. This proposal is restrictive and unnecessary as it does not give the ADF&G the option to manage these areas independently. Let them decide if these areas should be closed.

The State of Alaska has tried to encourage young people to enter the fishing industry, creating organizations and loan programs to get them involved. Trolling is a great way to enter the industry. It has a relatively low entry cost and does not involve a lot of crew. I wonder how many commercial fishermen have started this way? This last year's lack of access to king salmon may well have discouraged some and financially devastated others that are just starting out and are financially vulnerable. I know of at least two cases like this.

In closing, my intention is to bring awareness to the Board of Fisheries of the importance of king salmon to the troll fleet, Alaskans and future fishers. I have always been impressed with the great management of these resources by the Board of Fisheries and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and I hope that with creativity and good science you will find a way to sustain these important salmon runs and also at the same time allow fishing opportunity for Alaskans. Thank you.

Respectfully  
Dan Gallacher