

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
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Jan 5, 2018

Dear Board of Fisheries Members,

Subject: Proposals 132, 133, 76, 82 and 83.

I'm a 50 year resident of Juneau/Auke Bay and have been very involved in Northern Southeast fisheries during that time both in fisheries and as a fishery biologist for the ADFG in Juneau. Years ago I was involved in Taku and Chilkat River king salmon research and management.

King salmon conservation is the hot topic this year and rightfully so. Marine survival may have impacted survival in the ocean and return of mature spawners, and even though the Dept. had many indicators showing poor run strength, they did nothing to conserve escapement until 2016. They managed fisheries just as though nothing was wrong even though escapements were failing to meet minimum escapement goals and catches of local kings in inside fisheries dropped to the lowest levels on record. As a consequence the Taku and Chilkat King salmon stocks are in the worst shape in history.

In the 1970's the Taku stock was in very poor shape (although not nearly as bad as at present) and the Dept. booted the sport fishermen, gillnetters and trollers out of Taku Inlet in the spring and a year later booted trollers out of Northern inside areas during the spring and then the Taku stock finally started to rebound. After several years closure the Taku was reopened and provided the most productive sport and commercial fisheries it ever produced.

During the last 10-20 years there have been many changes in Northern Inside commercial fisheries which have had large impacts on survival and return of Taku and Chilkat King salmon. The Dept. has opened 30+ inside areas to trollers to access spring hatchery returns but they have proven to also intercept many mature wild kings returning to local systems. (I'm told that 65-70% of Taku kings harvested are taken by the commercial troll fishery). Huge releases of enhancement chums from DIPAC have attracted nearly the entire southeast gillnet fleet to lower Lynn Canal and this has had major impact on survival of rearing Chilkat kings rearing in Lynn Canal and returning mature fish heading back to the Chilkat. Chum troll fisheries use small terminal gear which out migrating king salmon smolts often love to bite and inside rearing and late returning mature kings are also intercepted in the chum troll fisheries.

The only way that Taku and Chilkat king stocks are going to rebuild is with substantial reductions in fisheries where these stocks are targeted or intercepted.

I submitted proposals 132 and 133 to try and get the Dept. to actively do their job responsibly and manage the fisheries to put adequate escapements into the Taku and Chilkat Rivers. When

indicators show that projected runs are not developing, management staff needs to immediately take action-in season- to move escapement through the fisheries rather than continue to operate like nothing is wrong as they have for years. Proposals 132 and 133 which were supported by the local Advisory Committee could be used as a starting point and I hope the Dept. implements even more conservative management than I propose. It's time that every fisherman, regardless of user group, starts to worry about how many kings get up the river rather than how many they can catch. I just turned 70 and there's a good chance that old guys like me will never see good spring king fishing again here in Juneau.


Other Issues:

The Department's management has resulted in closure of personal use shrimping in Juneau as well as in Tenakee Inlet and lack of sufficient red king crab locally to provide for annual personal use.

Requiring 7/8 mesh panels in sport shrimp pots (proposal 76) would further reduce access to the resource as it would allow coon stripes to escape. Prudent shrimpers know to pick out keeper size shrimp and simply dump the little ones back overboard. Proposal 76 is unnecessary and I'm opposed to it.

Proposal 82, which would close area 11-A to commercial shrimping and proposal 83 which would close 11-A to commercial shrimp and king crabbing demonstrates the dire need for a large personal use only area around large communities like Juneau. Larger commercial operators which have much greater harvest capability and impact on the resources should be required to move father out of town where there is much less personal use fishing I support these two proposals and hope you do too.

Respectively,



Mike Bethers