

**Rum Runner Charters**"our 26<sup>th</sup> year"

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Additional Comments on the Sport King Salmon Management Plan

To Members of the Board,

My name is Chris Conder and I am representing myself and the Juneau Charter Boat Owners Association.

I did not get a chance to discuss the Chilkat and King Salmon Rivers Sport King Salmon Action Plan during my testimony before the Board. I want to provide an alternative to Sportfish Option A, District 11, for the Board to discuss and add detail to my written and public comments.

Economics

It is of extreme importance to note that Sport Fishing in general and Charter Fishing in particular bring in many jobs to Southeast and supports not just our businesses but a multitude associated businesses. All Sport Fishing brings with it a huge economic boon to Southeast for the small percent of salmon that it takes. Charter Fishing companies are generally small family owned businesses, the vast majority money that is made goes directly back into the community where the company is based out of. Charter businesses also generate income for Fish and Game both through Licenses and King Salmon stamps.

The charter fleet is limited in the time it can operate and not every port has the same business model but when King Salmon is open our season general runs from May through September. During May and June, King salmon is really the only salmon available. When King Salmon is closed down, those trips are lost with no way to recoup the money, if closed for 1.5 months that is the same as losing one 4<sup>th</sup> of your yearly income. This loss cannot be regained, it is hard to stay in business under those conditions.

In Juneau, our fleet relies mostly on day trips with the majority of our clients coming off the cruise ships, most of these trips will be a once in a lifetime time and a once in a lifetime chance to have the opportunity to catch a salmon. Last year we had a total closure from April 15<sup>th</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup>, those visitors lost that opportunity. It was devastating to our local charter community, our employees and the associated businesses including tackle supply shops, bait shops, fuel sellers, mechanic shops, fish processors, shipping companies, lodging providers, transportation providers, just to name a few. The members of the association lost about \$250,000 in bookings during this closure...this does not include the losses to the support businesses which were substantial considering they not only lost our business they also lost all

the business from local anglers that were not allowed to fish. Altogether we estimate conservatively the closure cost the Juneau economy more than \$500,000 not including loss of revenue to the city from local sales taxes.

#### District 11A in 2017

In District 11A we were shut down till June 14<sup>th</sup> last year, no salmon fishing allowed. After the opening and until July 31<sup>st</sup>, District 11 caught a grand total of 331 Kings according to Alaska Department of Fish and Game records, of these 193 were released and only 34 were Taku fish, that is just 10% of the catch and these 34 Taku fish account for less than .5% of the Taku fish taken by all user groups. That is a pretty negligible percent for the money that is generated. The majority of our Kings caught are from the terminal run into DIPAC.

In looking at Fish and Game Sport King Salmon Management plans, Option A, although still economically damaging would be preferred, Plans B and C would be devastating.

#### Modification of Chilkat Action Plan Option A: No Retention Option

I mentioned every port has a different business model. As an option I would ask the board to look at no retention option instead of full closures in District 11 and 15, we believe we can sell some of our day trip clients on the sportsmanship of Catch and Release, it would help mitigate the damage.

In The Pacific Salmon Commission Joint Chinook Technical Report on King Salmon Mortality Rates 1997: Mortality Rates for released King Salmon ~ 16 inches and over was less than 16% including drop offs for all hook types. The mortality rate I suspect would be much lower in our districts because we utilize safer/better handling techniques, the researchers in the study cited handled and tagged the fish, which causes undue additional stress. The twenty-year-old study also averaged barded and multiple hook types; in District 11, operators can further reduce mortality by using single barbless hooks. This study also was sampling all sizes and ages of Chinooks. The vast majority of the Kings available during May and June are breeder Kings not the more fragile feeder Kings. Breeders are big, tough fish with I suspect a much higher survival rate.

Because of our low rate of catch of the Taku fish, I would ask to the Board to consider for District 11 to allow No Retention from May 1<sup>st</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup> using the restrictions mentioned above in the Terminal Hatchery Area of District 11, then go to Option A on June 14<sup>th</sup> (the scalpel). I would further ask that No Retention be at looked at any time a full closure is being considered. The No Retention option saved businesses in District 15 as opposed to full closure last year.