

Perspective and Suggestions Concerning SOC Action Plan RC 266

James Moore- Troller since 1970 ATA, NSRAA, AKI boards member
Haines, Alaska

Chairman Jensen and Board,

I offer what I hope to be helpful perspective based on nearly a half century trolling experience and some suggestions for Spring and Summer Plan collection of useful data.

Perspective

- 1) Please continue to bear in mind that the exploitation of depressed Chinook stocks is not the problem. It appears to be ocean survival conditions. We have experienced similar low escapement periods in the 1970's and 1980's and the stocks ***rebounded in spite of increasing fishing pressure due to numbers of permits fished and fleet efficiency (effects of limited entry).***
- 2) During this time the summer (all species) troll season began April 15 and ran through September 20. We began to experience some spring "closures" in the early 1980's (1982?). **Till then the troll season for Chinook was nearly 150 days long with no areas closed as areas of high Chinook abundance.**
- 3) I remember one of the first closures in May and June (20 days?) was to address ESA concerns over some Columbia River Stocks. My "back of the envelope" calculations indicated the closure possibly cost each fishing family (trollers) \$11,000 in annual income. **Our combined sacrifice resulted in less that 1 fish arriving on the spawning grounds.**
- 4) We gave up May and June in the 80's for treaty. These were the very best King Salmon months- ***the heart of our industry.*** Unfortunately the guided charterboat industry took advantage of this "World Class" opportunity and filled in the vacuum. The effects of this new industry were erroneously considered inconsequential at first. This is a classic example of what you have termed, ***"unregulated allocative growth"***. Now that fleet is entitled to 20% of the treaty quota and they have been indicating they need more. That percentage has increased 3 times since it was first agreed upon.
- 5) Mitigation was made for reduction of our guideline harvest level of treaty fish (I believe we gave up nearly half) through funding much of the infrastructure of the Chinook hatchery programs. Expectations were that this would add 100,000 fish to the fleet. Broodstock for these programs came from Alaska stocks (including Unuk). The troll catch failed to meet expectations however. My opinion is that trollers are denied access to these fish when they are actively feeding in outside waters in May and June. ***Troll access to these hatchery fish is only permitted in and near terminal areas when they are not aggressively feeding and in limited openings in areas where encounters with treaty fish are relatively few. This is our Spring fishery and due to SOC we could now lose most of this opportunity.***

In summery it appears there are three components of the overall composition of Chinook stocks that are tracked with respect to how troll catch is managed.

- 1) *There is the treaty quota* (we are now fishing at half the guideline harvest level determined in 1999 which was reduced twice before that). 2015-16 saw the largest returns in the Columbia since the dams were constructed and our fleet had a quota less than we agreed to when we first entered the treaty to rebuild those stocks.
- 2) *There are the Alaska/TBR wild stocks* we are presently concerned about.
- 3) *There is the hatchery component* which is genetically identical to AK/TBR

Precision Management that would allow for the continued survival of the troll fleet requires accurate on time data from areas and times trollers cannot fish. *Our fleet is intensively sampled (some say 40%) but bear in mind we were allowed to fish for Chinook in traditional areas last season for 4 days! Compare this to 150 days we once enjoyed.* (We have nearly given up hoping our sacrifices for conservation would allow us to return to that since the resource has been almost entirely reallocated.)

Collection of useful data for precision management

I recognize the needs of the guided Charter industry, which require uninterrupted opportunity to conduct their business. They need to know, pre-season, what bag limits and restrictions they may be facing in the year ahead. It is essential that each user group share in the conservation burden but since the product they are marketing is an experience enhanced by a catch, and our troll fleet markets the catch itself, the burden may not be fairly evaluated. *Since the guided sports industry is permitted to fish nearly everywhere and all the time, they may do their fair share by providing useful on time data to both sportfish and comfish department managers.* I suggest you consider the following:

- 1) The Saltwater Sport Fishing Charter Trip Logbook is submitted weekly by the charter boat operators. I suggest the report be submitted electronically. From conversations with staff and operators it appears that data is compiled by hand and it has sometimes been one or even two years before it becomes available. In sports it is not used for in season management but real time reporting might be useful to comfish especially if it were combined with sampling. A better handle on catch rates and locations would be useful for comfish in managing all fisheries.
- 2) I suggest heads from all fin clipped fish be labeled and returned, at least those with CWT. A wand could be used to identify those. It would be useful determining where higher concentrations of Alaska hatchery fish occur as well as Alaskan wilds.
- 3) Latest generation of genetic sampling might be implemented determining precisely rivers of origin. It requires only a snip from a fin in a plastic bag with a label. Federal money might be available for this.
- 4) A rewards program might be helpful. Hats for CWTs etc.

Thanks for opportunity to brainstorm. JM