Division of Sport Fish

REGULATORY SIMPLICITY: MAKING IT EASIER TO FISH

A presentation to the Alaska Board of Fisheries on October 17, 2017
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Angler Profile

- Fishes multiple locations
- Targets more than one species of fish
- The reasons why people fish vary.
- Wants to remain in compliance with the law.
More About Our Anglers

- ~500,000 anglers fish in Alaska each year.
  - Resident and non-resident anglers
    - Fish road accessible and remote areas
Angler Days by Region (2015)

2015 Sport Fish Angler Days

Southcentral: 1,274,994
Southeast: 594,490
Southwest: 195,387
Artic-Yukon-Kuskokwim: 147,460

Over 500,000 anglers
Over 13 million days fished
Angling Days

- Kenai Peninsula Freshwater:
  - 562,231 angler days
  - Kenai River – *Probably the most heavily fished; Probably the single most regulated water in the state.*

- Yukon River Drainage:
  - 8,230 angler days
Complex Regulations - What anglers have to say

Comments from the 2015 Statewide Harvest Survey

“There are so many regulations that I feel I should retain legal representation prior to making my first cast.”

“Please keep regulations simple. As I get older and my grandkids get older I want to be able to fish with my grandkids knowing I am legal.”

“The regulations are overly restrictive and unnecessarily complex. ... I have made over a dozen trips in the past years. I don’t think I’ll be making any more.”
“The time spent fishing was fun, even though we didn’t catch any fish. The rules, however, are very confusing. I spent a lot of time wondering if I was doing something wrong (illegal). You have to simplify your book ... A guy shouldn’t have to be a lawyer to go fishing. I would have tried more fishing spots but I wasn’t clear on the rules.”
How Complex Regulations Affect Anglers

- Keep people from feeling comfortable while fishing. Or prevent people from fishing all together.
- Can lead to citations.
- Increase inquiries to ADF&G staff.
- Leads people to seek answers from fellow anglers.
Why Regulations Can Be Complex

[Diagram showing a triangle with Opportunity at the top and Regulatory Complexity and Conservation at the bottom]
Challenges to Understanding Regulations

3 Criteria that Create Complexity

1. **Number of regulations.**

2. **Language (terminology)**

3. **Variability**

The Division of Sport Fish is faced with the challenge of reducing regulatory complexity – this directly involves the Board of Fisheries.
“I found it difficult to enjoy fishing because of all the rules.”

- Comment from 2015 Statewide Harvest Survey
Overall Number of Regulations

- **Southcentral: 96 pages.**
  - Susitna Drainage: 18 pages
    - 100+ waters with Special Regulations
  - Upper Copper/Upper Susitna Drainage: 6 pages
    - 80+ waters with Special Regulations

- **Southeast: 48 pages.**
  - Juneau/Glacier Bay Area: 4 pages
    - 150+ waters with Special Regulations
  - Bristol Bay fresh waters: 10 pages
    - 70+ waters with Special Regulations

- **Northern: 48 pages.**

- **Southwest: 40 pages.**
Emergency Orders - Issued in 2016

- 24 in Southeast
- 11 in AYK
- 41 in Southcentral
  - In 2015, 59 EOs were issued in Southcentral
  - Currently at 40 (2017)
"The rules and regs for fishing are extremely complicated. I suggest you simplify all of the verbiage so it would be easier for regular folks to understand."

– Comment from 2015 Statewide Harvest Survey
(Terminology) “Fly-Fishing Only” vs. “Water where only flies may be used”

**Waters where only flies may be used:**

Terminology is more easily understood.

In waters where only flies may be used, sport fishing is permitted by the use of one “artificial fly.”

*artificial fly* means a fly that is constructed by common methods known as fly tying, including a dry fly, wet fly, and nymph and that is free of bait ...”

**Fly-Fishing-Only waters:**

Common question: **Do I have to use a fly rod?**

In waters designated as fly-fishing-only waters, sport fishing is permitted as follows:

- Not more than one unweighted, single hook fly with gap between point and shank three-eights inch or less;
- Weights may be used 18 inches or more ahead of the fly.
“Artificial lure” means a lure that is man-made, free of bait and is used to attract fish for the purpose of taking fish; (B) includes an artificial fly.

“Artificial fly” means a fly that is constructed by common methods known as fly tying, including a dry fly, wet fly and nymph, or a bare single hook, and that is free of bait; ...
“Help fisherman understand why all the different regulations on single vs. multiple hooks. Seems to be random.”

- Comment from 2015 Statewide Harvest Survey
Inconsistent regulations can include:

- Bag and possession limits.
- Where and when the use of bait and multiple hooks is allowed.
- Example: Kenai River.
Between the Russian River, the Sanctuary area (B) and the area downstream to the Powerline (A) and the remainder of the Upper Kenai – dates, daily bag and possession limits and allowable gear type varies.
There is no consistent directive when it comes to whether or not a fish, if removed from the water, becomes part of the bag limit of the person who originally hooked it.

*King salmon, coho salmon, rainbow/steelhead trout.*

“Should make all anglers aware not to hold fish out of the water for pics if not keeping them.” - Comment from 2015 Statewide Harvest Survey
• Work within Board of Fisheries process – reduce, simplify, standardize regulations.

• Began utilizing GovDelivery as a way to allow anglers to sign up to receive email notifications such as EOs and fishing reports.

• Working to streamline information online.
Ongoing Changes to Regulation Summary Booklets:

- Standardized the structure and format to make it easier to read.
- Added and standardized maps for areas with Special Regulations.
- Standardizing the lay-out and design of each book.
- Addressing FAQs where appropriate in the summary book.
What ADF&G is Doing (cont.)

• Regulation Modernization Project

• Moving to put sport fish regulations into a Content Management System.

• Working to take advantage of advanced mobile and web technologies that are GIS enabled and allow for greater search functionality.
What ADF&G is Doing (cont.)

Arranging Angler Survey/Focus Groups
Anglers in Alaska

No one should choose to stay home rather than fish because the regulations are too hard to understand.

By working together, we can do better...

Public service responsibility to make sport fishing regulations easy to understand.
Thank You.