

Alaska Board of Fisheries Statement of Findings
on Proposal No. 127 to Remove the Ban on Treble Hooks
in the Southeast Alaska Troll Fishery
January 1982

See also
#81-88C-FB

In January 1981 the Alaska Board of Fisheries passed a regulation prohibiting the use of treble hooks in the Southeast Alaska Troll Fishery. This decision was reaffirmed at the January 1982 meeting when a proposal to include treble hooks as legal gear was rejected by a 4 to 3 vote of the Board.

The Alaska Board of Fisheries' January 1981 statement of findings included the following:

'The depressed status of the stocks and need to enhance survival and growth of chinook and coho salmon requires adoption of efforts to reduce mortalities to younger age class salmon that would either spawn as jack males or continue saltwater feeding and growth before commencing their spawning migrations.

'Board members expressed concern that the treble hook could promote harvests of shaker size salmon, particularly in areas where a shaker-sized age class is congregated. Consequently, increased mortalities could result because more fish are being subjected to additional handling time to free the hooks prior to release.'

At the January 1982 Board meeting much of the testimony given both favoring and opposing the use of treble hooks was similar to that given in January 1981. In addition, new information obtained by ADF&G during a research troll fishery in April and May of 1981 and presented to the Board indicated that sublegal chinook salmon captured on treble hooks (to be tagged and released) included a smaller percentage of seriously injured fish than those captured by single hooks. However, statistical tests of the significance of the differences observed were inconclusive and only indicated that some evidence existed in the ADF&G study to suggest that a smaller percentage of sublegal chinook salmon were injured with treble hooks than with single hooks.

Other information obtained in the ADF&G study indicated that a significantly lower percentage of legal-size chinook salmon captured on treble hooks suffered serious injury than those captured on single hooks. Also treble hooks caught 18% more of the fish biting than did single hooks. Preliminary analysis of this study suggests that fewer sublegal salmon were caught by single hooks while greater numbers of legal were harvested by the single hook. (A larger percentage of the fish caught by single hook were legal than those caught by treble hook.)

With respect to data obtained during the 1981 ADF&G study it was emphasized that

"the results apply to fish captured and handled under 'research' conditions with the objective of minimizing injuries to allow tagging and release of the fish."

Hooks were removed by hand after the fish was immobilized by electric shock as compared to the standard commercial fishing technique of 'shaking' sublegal fish loose and/or removing the hook with the aid of a gaff.

Board members voting in favor of continuing the ban on treble hooks generally reiterated the findings of the 1981 decision and voiced the opinion that under actual fishing conditions higher injury rates occurred while shaking or releasing sublegal chinook salmon hooked with treble hooks as a result of more ripping and tearing action being required when disengaging two or three of the hooks embedded simultaneously in the fish's mouth. They also stated that the greater time required to unhook a sublegal fish from a treble hook could cause additional shock and trauma and thus additional mortalities. The Board also determined that all of the afore described effects of treble hooks on salmon are also caused by the use of any other types of multiple pointed hooks. In reaffirming their prior action that banned the use of treble hooks in conjunction with commercial trolling operations, the Board amended the current regulation to clarify that their intent is to ban the use of all multiple pointed hooks.