

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
South Unimak and Shumagin Islands
June Salmon Management Plan
(5AAC 09.365)
Finding

History and Background

At its regularly scheduled Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands Areas meeting in Anchorage, which began November 13, 1991, the Board of Fisheries took action on the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery.

The meeting was publicly noticed as required by AS 44.62.190-210. The meeting drew considerable public attendance and testimony. The board heard testimony from 126 members of the public and nine western Alaska Advisory Committees. The board also reviewed a considerable volume of written comments submitted by the public.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff presented 23 different oral reports that provided the board with a comprehensive review of the information available for the peninsula fisheries. The staff reports were not restricted to the Alaska Peninsula commercial fisheries. Because most of the salmon going through the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Fishery spawn in other areas, the board had the department provide reports on the status of all western Alaska chum salmon stocks, as well as the commercial and subsistence fisheries on these stocks. Specifically, these reports included the Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim River, Yukon River, Kotzebue and Norton Sound areas.

Since 1975, the Alaska Peninsula Area M South Unimak and the Shumagin Islands June fishery has been managed under a board regulatory plan. The plan specifies a sockeye salmon catch allocation in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery of 8.3 percent of the projected Bristol Bay sockeye salmon harvest. Initially, under this plan, other salmon species harvested incidentally to the sockeye were not limited.

Following large incidental harvests of chum salmon in 1982 and 1983, the board, over a period of several years, adopted various regulations intended to limit the incidental harvest of chum salmon. Among the actions taken was a board imposed cap on the number of chum salmon (chum cap) allowed to be taken in the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Fishery. The chum cap was initially set at 400,000 in 1986, was removed in 1987, was reimposed at 500,000 in 1988, and then raised to 600,000 fish in 1990 and 1991. In 1990, the board also adopted significant gear depth restrictions and closed the fishery for the first two weeks in June. These changes to the chum cap and the management plan

reflect ongoing efforts by the board to strike a balance between two goals: attainment of the sockeye quota and control of the incidental chum harvest.

Adult salmon tagging studies conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in 1987 indicated that chum salmon tagged and released during the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery were recovered from a wide variety of areas, including large numbers from Japanese hatcheries. Of the western Alaska stock component, the largest contributors were chum salmon bound for Bristol Bay and Kuskokwim River spawning areas. Relatively minor components of the chum salmon were from stocks returning to Kotzebue, Norton Sound, and Yukon River areas.

At the November meeting, the board considered and rejected proposals to close the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery; they also rejected proposals to eliminate the cap on the number of chum salmon incidentally harvested.

Board Opinion

The board voted to retain a limit on the chum salmon catch but changed the way in which it is determined. Under the new revision to the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery, the chum salmon cap for a given year will be equal to 40 percent of the projected Bristol Bay sockeye salmon harvest for that year, with the added stipulation that in no year will the chum salmon harvest exceed 900,000 fish regardless of the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon allocation.

The board examined the catch limits over the past ten years and found that, on an average, at 40 percent of the preseason projected Bristol Bay sockeye salmon harvest the chum salmon catch limit would have been very close to the previous 600,000 chum salmon limit. An incidental chum catch limit of 40 percent would not result in a significant change to the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery chum cap (Attachment No. 1). The board found the changes made to the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery to be consistent with the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 09.365, including specifically the policy embodied in the regulation). The board anticipated that due to large sockeye salmon returns projected for the next few years, the chum harvest could be expected to be above the 600,000 fish level for these years (See Attachment No. 1). In years of lower sockeye salmon returns, however, the chum harvest would be considerably below 600,000 fish.

The board was aware of conservation concerns for certain western Alaska chum salmon runs, particularly in portions of northern Norton Sound and for certain upper Yukon River fall chum salmon runs. The board was also aware that subsistence fishing on these

discrete runs is being managed conservatively, as part of an ongoing rebuilding effort. This was expressed in staff reports and public testimony. Based on available information from histories of the fisheries and the 1987 tagging study, the board determined that the impact of the South Unimak and Shumagin Islands June fishery on returns to these subareas was so minimal, if detectable at all, as to be insignificant.

The board determined that the potential increase in the chum harvest limit in years with large sockeye returns would not impact conservation of western Alaska chum salmon populations and would not interfere with the reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvest of these salmon, which the board previously determined were customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. At the same time, basing the chum cap on a ratio of 40 percent of the projected Bristol Bay sockeye harvest would provide an opportunity in most years for the Alaska Peninsula fishermen to harvest their historical sockeye salmon catch allocation.

Approved: (Yes/No/Absent/Abstain) (6 / 1 / 0 / 0)
Location: Anchorage ADF&G Office
Date/Time: 03/02/92 @ 12:10 p.m.

Michael B. Martin
Mike Martin, Chairman
Alaska Board of Fisheries

Enclosure

View 9/11

Year	8.3% of BB Forecast	Actual Sockeye	Actual Sockeye/Chum	Actual Chum Catch	.3 of the GHL -- Number of Chum Salmon --	.4 of GHL	.5 of GHL
1982	2258	2121	1.94	1094	677	903	1129
1983	1793	1961	2.50	784	538	717	897
1984	1356	1389	4.12	337	407	542	678
1985	1685	1862	3.89	479	506	674	843
1986	1107	470	1.34	351	332	443	554
1987	775	793	1.79	443	233	310	388
1988	1542	756	1.43	527	463	617	771
1989	1463	1745	3.83	456	439	585	732
1990	1327	1347	2.60	519	398	531	664
1991	1920	1549	2.01	771	576	768	960
1992	2300				690	920	1150
1993	1800				540	720	900
1994	2300				690	920	1150
1995	2100				630	840	1050