

Finding of the Alaska Board of Fisheries
Southeast Alaska Chinook Salmon Allocations
(Previously Finding #93-04-FB)

March 1992

The Alaska Board of Fisheries approved regulations allocating a fixed percentage of the chinook salmon harvest ceiling to the commercial troll and recreational fisheries during its March 7-15, 1992 meeting in Juneau, Alaska.

During the 1980s, many chinook salmon stocks along the Northwest Pacific coast and Southeast Alaska were depressed. To address this problem, the United States and Canada signed the Pacific Salmon Treaty in 1985, and a 15-year rebuilding program for these stocks was initiated. Under terms of the treaty, an annual catch ceiling is placed on the number of chinook salmon that can be landed by all gear groups in Southeast Alaska. Except for a 5,000 fish, pre-treaty production level and an annually calculated risk factor that accounts for the uncertainty in the estimate, chinook salmon produced in Alaskan hatcheries do not count against the harvest ceiling.

A base harvest of 263,000 chinook salmon was established under the Treaty. The gillnet and seine fisheries were provided separate allocations which allowed them to continue chinook harvests at slightly below their historic average. The recreational harvest which had fluctuated between 20,000 - 25,000 remained unrestricted. The troll fishery annual average harvest was reduced by approximately 23%. The reduction represented the Alaska contribution to the rebuilding program established under the Treaty.

In addition to harvest reductions, the Treaty provided funding to establish enhancement programs to rebuild chinook and other salmon stocks.

In recent years, the number of chinook salmon caught in the recreational fishery that count against the treaty catch ceiling has risen due to increasing abundance of some chinook salmon stocks and an increase in recreational fishing effort. The increase in the recreational harvest has reduced the number of chinook salmon available for harvest by the commercial troll fleet.

In meetings held from March 7-15, 1992, in Juneau, the Board of Fisheries considered a request from the Alaska Trollers Association to set aside a fixed allocation of the annual US/Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty chinook salmon ceiling for the commercial troll fishery. Staff from the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Law, and the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

presented a total of eleven oral reports designed to provide the board with a comprehensive understanding of the Southeast Alaska chinook salmon allocation issue. In three days of public testimony, the board heard from approximately 130 individuals and ten Southeast Alaska fish and game advisory committees. Additionally, a large volume of written public testimony was received.

After a lengthy debate on the issue, a majority of the board found that a fixed allocation was necessary to stabilize the chinook salmon catch allocation between the commercial troll and recreational fisheries. The board approved a regulation mandating the department to manage the Southeast Alaska and Yakutat commercial troll and recreational fisheries so that, after deducting 20,000 fish previously allocated to the commercial net fisheries, the commercial troll fleet would get 83 percent and the recreational fishery 17 percent of the allowable catch under the treaty. All fisheries are allowed to take additional chinook salmon that are of Alaska hatchery origin; this is in accordance with the hatchery add-on principle of the treaty.

In support of the allocation the Board found the following:

1. Personal use, sport and commercial fisheries have existed in Southeast Alaska since Territorial days. The guided recreational fishery is the most recently developed. It has experienced significant growth since 1984.
2. Commercial fisheries participation is subject to limited entry. Recreational fisheries participation is increasing. In 1985, 16,664 chinook were harvested by Alaska residents, or 67% of the total sport harvest. In 1990, 28,297 chinook were harvested by Alaska residents, or 55% of the total harvest.

The Board found different characteristics among recreational users. Unguided recreational resident anglers have harvested chinook for many years. Guides, lodge owners, outfitters and charter boat operators were recognized as participants with an economic interest in the fishery. Non-residents make up the majority of clients to these businesses although they also serve resident anglers. The Board identified characteristics of the troll fishery. Eighty-five percent (85%) of permits are fished by residents, many are residents of rural Southeast communities. The fishery has a significant number of second and third generation participants. Of Southeast commercial fisheries, trolling may involve an entire family in fishing activity.

3. The Board unanimously recognized the importance of the resident recreational sport fishery in providing opportunity to take fish for personal and family consumption. Commercial fishermen were found to supply household needs from the commercial catch. It is the desire of the Board that residents harvesting for personal use suffer the least restriction to meet chinook allocations.
4. Both commercial and sport fisheries have other stocks of salmon, groundfish and rockfish available for harvest. Each group attaches the highest value to chinook salmon. The Board recognized the importance of providing opportunity to harvest in the sport fisheries which may not be directly dependent on the number harvested. Public testimony expressed concern that the establishment of vessel moratorium and an IFQ system will limit commercial fisheries opportunity.
5. Both sport and commercial fisheries provide revenue to the state. Sport fisheries generate revenue through license sales and federal funds. Commercial fisheries generate revenue through license sales, federal funds, enhancement and raw fish taxes.
6. The larger communities of Ketchikan, Sitka and Juneau derive the greatest economic benefit from the tourism-oriented recreational fishery. These towns also benefit economically from their commercial fisheries. Sport fishing derbies also provide revenue to communities. Many Southeast rural communities are almost entirely dependent on income from the troll fishery. The degree of dependence on trolling by these rural communities was especially significant to the Board.
7. The Board recognized that while many commercial fishermen enjoy their occupation, it is the role of sport fisheries to provide recreational fishing opportunity in the state.

Besides providing stability to participants referenced in the allocation criteria, the Board found that management to achieve a specific number of chinook harvested inseason will be less disruptive to US Canada Treaty negotiations. This new management will assure that projected recreational harvests match actual harvest and will prevent overages in total gear catch which move the state out of compliance with the Treaty.

The allocation of 83% troll and 17% recreation fixes both fisheries at current levels. This type of allocation is not consistent with

past Board actions which recognize historic harvest levels and attempt to preserve them. In justification of departure from historic allocations the Board found the following:

1. Given current data available and present management capability, fixing the allocation at the current level of harvest is least disruptive to resident recreational angler fishing for personal and family use.
2. Fixing the allocation at current levels is least disruptive to present management. This allows ADF&G to exercise management options to maintain status quo rather than move back to prior harvest levels. Managing to achieve a specific harvest inseason is a new exercise for the Sport Fish Division and requires changes in budgeting and data collection. The Board specifically requested data collection on recreational effort and harvest by residents, non-residents, outfitted charter, guide and lodge participants.

It is the expressed intent of the Board of Fisheries that in establishing these fixed allocations to troll and recreational fisheries that all gear types (net, troll and sport) be managed to achieve their allocation separate from one another within the 7.5 percent range.

The board discussed establishing a separate allocation for guided sport anglers, but did not do so because of a lack of data on what portion of the historical catch came from this group as well as other legal questions.

In order to provide the necessary means to achieve the recreational allocation, the board established a management plan. The objectives of this plan are to allow uninterrupted sport fishing opportunity for chinook salmon in marine waters and to minimize regulatory restriction on unguided sport anglers. If the total seasonal harvest is projected to be within ± 7.5 percent of the allocation, no regulatory changes will occur to the fishery. If the total seasonal harvest is expected to exceed the allocation by more than 7.5 percent, the department may implement any of the following restrictions as appropriate:

- Prohibit charter guides and crew members from retaining chinook salmon while clients are on board.
- Reduce the bag limit and possession limit to one fish per day for guided sport anglers.
- Increase the chinooks salmon size limit from 28 to 30 inches.

- Ban the use of downriggers on charter boats.
- Ban the use of downriggers by all anglers.
- Close areas where the percentage of Alaska hatchery chinook salmon is low.
- Reduce the bag limit and possession limit to one chinook salmon per day for unguided recreational anglers.
- Reduce the sport fish chinook salmon bag limit to zero.
- Allow a trophy fish only fishery (greater than 40 inches).

However, if the fishery is projected to be more than 7.5 percent less than the allocation, the department may liberalize recreational fishing regulations as follows:

- Increase the bag and possession limit for unguided anglers.
- Increase the legal number of rods to two for unguided anglers.
- Decrease the minimum size limit.
- Increase the bag and possession limit for all anglers.
- Increase the legal number of rods to two for all anglers.

In order to improve catch reporting and assist in management of the recreational fishery, the department may:

- Establish a mandatory log book program to monitor the harvest and effort of guided sport anglers (charter boats and fishing lodges), outfitters and dry skiff rentals.
- Require an annual nontransferable harvest record.
- Require heads of all adipose fin-clipped chinook salmon, along with the date and location of their catch, be turned in to the department.
- Establish other reporting requirements necessary to obtain information required to implement the provisions of this management plan.

In addition to the above, the board also required that the department manage the 1992 summer troll fishery so that the

cumulative overage is reduced from the estimated overage of 38,000 chinook to about 10,000 chinook. In 1993, the department will deduct 1,700 fish from the sport fish ceiling, with the remainder of the existing overage to be made up by the commercial troll fishery. Further, beginning in 1992, each group will independently deal with the risk factor and be responsible for any accrued underage or overage.

For the commercial troll fishery, the board made the following changes:

June Fisheries

- Restrict the June hatchery access fishery in District 13 only to that area that is also open during the experimental fishery.
- Restricted the June hatchery access fishery in district 103 to that portion south of Tlevak Narrows and north of a line from Cape Chacon to Cape Muzon.
- Required trollers to keep fish caught in the hatchery access fishery separate from those harvested in the experimental troll fisheries and to report these fish separately on fish tickets.
- Reduced the number of chinook salmon that count towards the treaty ceiling that can be harvested from 40,000 to 35,000 during the June hatchery access and experimental fisheries.
- Made the starting dates for the June hatchery access and experimental troll fisheries more flexible.

Winter Fishery

- Changed the starting date for the 1993 and 1994 winter troll fishery from October 1 to October 11.

Summer Fishery

- The board made no specific changes to the summer troll fishery except to note that the savings from the June and winter troll fisheries should increase the number of chinook salmon available for the summer troll fishery.

Finally, the board charged a task force to develop recommendations, in the form of board proposals, concerning the summer fishery by

April 9, 1993. The main objectives of the task force are to ensure that the summer troll fishery for chinook be of at least a 10 day minimum duration with a goal of 20 days and to minimize the incidental mortalities to the greatest extent practicable. The task force will be comprised of trollers representing nine geographical areas including at least one hand troller, one lower 48 troller, one Native troller, one Alaska Troller Association board member, a chairperson, and two non-voting seats held by an Alaska Department of Fish and Game representative and a processor.

Michael B. Martin
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Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries

Approved: Kodiak, Alaska - January 11, 1993

Vote: 7-0