



ALASKA TROLLER

Newsletter of the Alaska Trollers Association

January 2024



FROM THE WHEELHOUSE



ATA Priorities

To reverse the longstanding trend of reduced troll harvest

Legal defense

Membership recruitment and activation

Transboundary River and habitat concerns

Sea lions and other marine mammals

Mitigation and Funding Possibilities

State Legislation

Marketing (MSC, Genetically Modified Salmon & Fish Farms)

Data Preparation for effectiveness in all venues

Fundraising

Happy New Year Trollers,

2023 has been a difficult year but rewarding in some ways.

WFC: This time last year we faced the grim prospect of losing our Summer and Winter King Salmon fishery. Thanks to ATA's efforts and with help from the Tlingit/Haida, Alaska Congressional Delegation, the State, ALFA, and the entire collected community of Southeast Alaska, we got a Stay in the Ninth Circuit Court allowing us to fish Chinook. A final outcome is yet to be determined. Rebuttals to Arguments are still being filed in court. We expect the Court's decision sometime midyear.

Other News: In early August the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued a Press Release stating that the SEAK sport harvest of Chinook was projected to go 15,000 kings over their harvest ceiling and the out-of-state portion of the fishery would not be closed! 80% of the Southeast Alaska sport Chinook are now harvested is by Guided Sport and bareboats of whom the vast majority of are non-residents. The ADF&G press release also said the overage would be deducted from the commercial Troll harvest which left only enough Chinook for one day of fishing in the August Commercial Troll opening.

Here is the genesis of how that happened:

In March of 2022 ATA went to the in-cycle but out of region Covid-riddled Anchorage Board of Fish meeting. ATA (85% Alaskans) and resident sport fishermen represented by Territorial Sportsmen Inc (TSI) had formed a Southeast Alaska (SEAK) resident harvesters coalition. Our coalition successfully negotiated an Agreement (RC 178) with the Southeast Alaska Guide's Organization (SEAGO). The language of "The Agreement" was signed by representatives of the three parties, then passed unanimously and unchanged by the BOF. The Agreement was to be adopted in regulation as the SEAK Sport Fishery Chinook Management Plan.

...Continues on Page 2

Included in The Agreement (RC 178) was a phrase that held Sport harvests to their “Sport Fishery Harvest Ceiling”. Remember, under the disastrous 2018 Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) Southeast Alaska (and only SEAK) is required to “pay-back” overages. So why was the out-of-state sport sector allowed to go significantly over their allocation?

ATA investigations revealed that ADF&G had arbitrarily and unilaterally removed key language from the 2022 Agreement. The words “sport fishery” were eliminated from the phrase “sport fishery harvest ceiling”. This modified language means there would be no in-season management of out-of-state sport harvest until all remaining Treaty Allocated Chinook were harvested. In other words, in August, ADF&G took 17,000, the final count of kings, from the 85% Alaska resident Trollers and gave them to out-of-state residents.

Like every other troller, I was shocked to discover what the Department had done. What was ATA to do? By then it was August 13 and ATA had less than 36 hours to submit an Agenda Change Request (ACR) to the BOF asking to reinsert the deleted language. An ACR can only be submitted at one time each year. Fortunately two ATA Board candidates, Monique Wilkinson and Dave Richey, had expressed interest in submitting an ACR, which they did.

The ACR was listed as ACR 13 and was accepted by the BOF in a 6 to 1 vote at the Anchorage Work Session on Friday the 13th of October. Getting an ACR accepted is extremely rare. ACR 13 became Proposal 259 and was scheduled to be heard at the next BOF regular meeting at the end of November in Homer.

Meanwhile ADF&G submitted ACR 11 which became Proposal 257. This proposal sought to remove the considerable remaining language in the SEAK Sport Fishery King Salmon Management Plan that held out-of-state Sport Chinook to their “harvest limit” in every tier.

In support of Proposal 259 once again TSI’s indefatigable Larry Edfelt, ATA’s Amy Daugherty, ATA Board Members Matt Donohoe and David Richey, as well as Ceri Malein (at her expense), Jacquie Foss, and SPC’s Tad Fujioka traveled to another distant BOF Meeting on behalf of trollers to Homer in late November.

It became clear that the mostly rail-belt board members know little about SEAK issues so our Alaska Fish and Game Commissioner easily tap danced his way into maintaining his distorted regulatory language and killed Proposal 259. Disappointingly, Märit Carlson-Van Dort argued and voted against SEAK Residents with the other new members following, with the exception of Mike Wood and Chairman John Wood who voted for us. Chairman Wood stated, “A deals a deal”. Godfrey had left the meeting prior to this vote for a business matter.

The Moral of This Story

If you’re still reading I need to tell you that it’s really important for trollers to attend the once in 3 year cycle SEAK 2025 BOF Meeting expected to be in Ketchikan in January. Even though Proposal 259 didn’t pass in Homer, it was good to go there and make arguments against the theft of Chinook from the Alaska’s Trollers. Now we know what we’re up against. Chances are better we’ll keep our August Chinook Fishery if Trollers turn up in Ketchikan.

We intend to submit many proposals so need all to send comments to the BOF and ask them why they’re trying to destroy the SEAK economy. We’ll post updates to our website so stay tuned.

- Matt Donohoe, ATA President