



2014 ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Alaska Trollers Association's mission is to *preserve, promote, and perpetuate the troll fishery and the fishing industry in Alaska. To that end, ATA works for sound management & public policies, conservation, and safety at sea for the general welfare and mutual benefit of all trollers.*

Here are just a few of the issues ATA focused on last year.

Fisheries Policy

Pacific Salmon Treaty: ATA members and staff serve as members of the Northern and Transboundary Rivers Panels. ATA monitored and provided input regarding the current treaty agreement. Ongoing concerns with unwarranted quota restrictions and intransigence for implementing key treaty commitments that would improve data collection on stocks impacting Alaska, or provide additional fish to Southeast fishermen. ATA requested, and the state pursued, an initiative that would have allowed quota fishermen to harvest a few more fish from a record breaking Columbia River run. Unfortunately, the Southern delegates even opposed that. The issues are likely to heat up as we approach the 2018 re-negotiation. *ATA requests additional fleet support to finance critical treaty and legal needs.*

Chinook Mitigation Program: ATA co-chaired the Stakeholder Panel, which defined uses of a \$15 million fund intended to help offset Alaska's treaty-related Chinook cuts. ATA successfully secured monies to improve ice and fuel delivery to trollers in Pelican, Wrangell, Craig, Yakutat, and Port Protection; build and improve infrastructure and equipment for troll processing and logistical support; upgrade hatchery facilities and produce additional Chinook and coho salmon; and, provide nearly \$6.5 million in direct cash payments to trollers for fishing years 2009-2012. 2014 was the last year.

North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP): Trollers are the only Alaska salmon fishermen managed under a federal FMP. Cook Inlet gillnetters, who want to secure federal oversight for their fisheries have filed suit under the FMP. We will monitor this suit for possible ramifications to the FMP and Southeast fisheries.

Trawl Bycatch: Provided comments to NPFMC on management options to control salmon and halibut trawl bycatch in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

Endangered Species Act: Since 2012 ATA staff has followed NMFS' developing policy on Southern Resident Killer Whales. This specific group of whales is listed 'endangered' in both the US and Canada. A potential demand by NMFS to restrict Chinook fisheries is of grave concern to ATA. ATA monitors issues involving ESA listed salmon stocks in the Lower 48, some of which directly impact Alaska fisheries. Wrote in support of delisting Stellar sea lions in our region, which has occurred. Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and other sea lion forums will still bear watching.

Board of Fisheries: ATA developed submitted 2015 Board of Fish proposals and is currently preparing for the Southeast-Yakutat finfish meeting. The fleet is encouraged to work together on all troll proposals. Please contact the ATA office if you have question, or with any suggestions and/or concerns related to Southeast fisheries management.

Anti-Commercial Fishing Ballot Initiative: ATA and a number of groups, businesses, and political figures from around the state formed Resources for All Alaskans (RFAA). This group intends to do positive public relations for the seafood industry. RFAA has also been working in defense of the state who was sued by Cook Inlet sport representatives for denying a ballot initiative that would allow voters to eliminate a gear type. The matter will be heard in the Supreme Court. Initiative supporters have been given the go ahead by the court to gather signatures, in case they win. They will need a substantial proportion of signers from across the state in order to add the initiative to the ballot.

Legislation

ATA helped secure crucial ADFG funding for port sampling, aerial surveys, data analysis, and stock assessments needed to conduct troll and other fisheries. ATA supported bills for GE labeling and rapid response to invasive species, the Chinook Endowment Fund, the revolving loan fund, and more. We opposed efforts to prioritize personal use fisheries over other uses and a push for legislatively dictated salmon escapement goals. Many bills of concern will need attention in the upcoming legislative session. Declining state revenues and loss of federal funding could mean a tough budget fight.

Conservation and Environmental Issues

Mining: ATA worked with a coalition to try and secure high level review and State Department involvement on the proposed KSM mine. Seabridge Gold will mine in the Unuk River watershed and store tailings in massive dams on the Nass River, putting at risk shared salmon. KSM would be one of the largest gold and copper mines in the world, producing in excess of 130,000 tons of waste ore per day for 55 years. ATA also weighed in on the Mt. Polley dam breach, which now considered one of Canada's largest environmental disasters. Several other large-scale mines of concern loom along our border. Meetings were held in Alaska, WA D.C. and Canada with state, federal, and provincial agencies and an international scientific body. Staff spoke at an EXPO forum on the KSM mine.

Offshore Aquaculture: Congress has been focused on other matters, but is expected to revisit this issue soon. ATA will continue to provide feedback on fish farm legislation and policy to Congress, the agencies, and fishery management councils as needed.

GE Salmon and Foods: Weighed in on pending FDA decision on genetically engineered (GE) salmon. Continued involvement in coalition efforts to secure anti-GE salmon and GE labeling laws in Congress, AK, CA, WA, and other states.

Tongass: ATA expressed concerns to congress about pending Tongass legislation and the need to protect critical habitat, safe fishing areas, and anchorages.

Chilkat River: ATA submitted comments on potential threats to Chilkat River habitat and ADFG data collection sites, due to highway improvements proposed along 26 miles of sensitive spawning and rearing area.

Permits

EPA Discharge Permits: ATA worked with the Alaska delegation to secure another moratorium on incidental discharge permits for bilge water, grey water, and deckwash from small commercial fishing vessels.