



2013 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 representatives serve as members of the Northern and Transboundary Rivers Panels. ATA monitored and provided input regarding the current treaty agreement. Ongoing concerns with the Southern US representative's intransigence on a key provisions, such as improved data collection on stocks impacting Alaska; and a commitment which, if implemented in 2011, would have provided more fish for Southeast fishermen. Many issues could heat up as we approach treaty re-negotiation. *ATA is requesting additional fleet support to finance critical treaty and legal needs.*

Chinook Mitigation Program: ATA co-chaired the Stakeholder Panel, which made recommendations on a \$15 million fund intended to help offset Alaska's treaty-related Chinook cuts. ATA successfully secured monies to improve ice delivery to trollers in Pelican and Craig; build and improve additional infrastructure for troll processing and logistical support; produce additional Chinook and coho salmon; and, provide nearly \$6.5 million in direct cash payments to trollers for fishing years 2009-2012. The program wraps up in 2014 with the 2012 payment and a few more infrastructure and enhancement projects. *Deadline to apply for the 2012 payment is December 4, 2013.*

North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP): Trollers are the only Alaska salmon fishermen managed under a federal FMP. ATA commented on the NPFMC recommended Salmon FMP, which was approved and is now subject to litigation filed by Cook Inlet gillnetters, who want to secure federal coverage for their fisheries. This will bear watching.

Trawl Bycatch: Monitored trawl bycatch issues in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska and provided comments to NPFMC on Gulf of Alaska management options, including support for a hard bycatch cap.

Endangered Species Act: In 2012 ATA staff attended three invitational workshops focused on Southern Resident Killer Whales. This specific group of whales is listed 'endangered' in both the US and Canada. NMFS is analyzing the results of the workshops and will decide whether or not to require fishery modifications. A potential demand by NMFS to restrict Chinook fisheries is of grave concern to ATA and the situation bears watching for possible action. ATA also monitored issues involving ESA listed salmon stocks in the Lower 48, which directly impact Alaska fisheries. ATA weighed in to support removing ESA protections for Stellar Sea lions in Southeast AK, which looks likely to occur soon.

Board of Fisheries: The ATA Board and staff are developing 2015 Board of Fish proposals for submission in early April 2014. The fleet is encouraged to work together on all troll proposals. Please contact the ATA office if you have questions about our proposals, or with your suggestions and/or concerns related to Southeast fisheries management.

Illegal Foreign Fishing: Turned in pictures of net-marked fish and retrieve foreign gear found on fishing grounds and beaches. ATA continues to advocate for increased high seas enforcement.

Legislation

ATA helped recapture 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. Ongoing and significant loss of federal funding could mean a tough budget fight for ADFG.

Conservation and Environmental Issues

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. The Board also reviewed Tongass 77, which proposes legislative protection for more critical habitat areas. ATA will wait to take a position on any specific concept until there is a bill to review, but has informed the congressional delegation of its general support for additional habitat protection.

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.

Unuk River: ATA forwarded to Canadian officials concerns about the proposed KSM mine, which might be permitted to operate in the Unuk River watershed. The mine would be one of the largest gold and copper mines in the world, producing in excess of 130,000 tonnes of waste ore per day for 55 years.

Permits

EPA Discharge Permits: Continued to monitor the 2008 court-ordered incidental discharge permits for bilge water, grey water, and deckwash from small commercial fishing vessels. A similar, yet different, issue means the possibility of new grinding/dischage/reporting requirements for small troll and longline freezer boats. ATA continues to work with the Alaska delegation and hopes to protect the fleet from these costly and unnecessary regulations.

Health & Safety

USCG Safety Rules: Recent legislation is expected to start working through the regulatory process in fall 2013. ATA will comment to the USCG and push for improvements.