PROPOSAL 180

    5 AAC 29.090. Management of the spring salmon troll fisheries.

    Reduce triggers in the Southeastern Alaska Area spring commercial salmon troll fishery by five percent in years of high king salmon abundance, as follows:

Reduce the percentage triggers in the spring troll fishery by 5% only when the abundance index, or some similar measure of abundance, is determined by the Chinook Technical Committee of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC), to be at a level equivalent to 1.95 or higher as measured by the PSC Chinook model.

5 AAC 29.090. Management of the spring salmon troll fisheries

…

(d) In its management of the spring fisheries under this section, the department shall

    (1) first consider changes in the previous years' spring fisheries; the department shall open the fisheries if they meet the following requirements:

        (A) a directed fishery may occur only if an Alaska hatchery return is expected to exceed broodstock requirements;

        (B) at least one spring fishery shall be conducted annually, targeting the king salmon returning to each Alaska hatchery that meets its broodstock requirements;

        (C) in order to continue the fishery each year without modification of areas previously established, the contribution rate of hatchery stocks to the directed fishery harvest must exceed 20 percent;

        (D) **if the preseason king salmon abundance index is less than 1.95**, the department shall manage each spring salmon troll fishery as follows:
        …

        (E) if the preseason king salmon abundance index is 1.95 or greater, the department shall manage each spring salmon troll fishery as follows:

        i.   no more than 1,000 non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon may be taken in a fishery if the percentage of Alaska hatchery-produced salmon taken in that fishery is less than 20 percent of the king salmontaken in that fishery;

        ii.   no more than 2,000 non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon may be taken in a fishery if the percentage of Alaska hatchery-produced salmon taken in that fishery is at least 20 percent but less than 30 percent of the king salmon taken in that fishery;

        iii.   no more than 3,000 non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon may be taken in a fishery if the percentage of Alaska hatchery-produced salmon

taken in that fishery is at least 30 percent but less than 45 percent of the king salmon taken in that fishery;

iv.   no more than 5,000 non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon may be taken in a fishery if the percentage of Alaska hatchery-produced salmon taken in that fishery is at least 45 percent but less than 61 percent of the king salmon taken in that fishery;

v.   there is no limit on the number of non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon that may be taken in a fishery if the percentage of Alaska hatchery-produced salmon taken in that fishery is 61 percent or more of the king salmon taken in that fishery;

(F) [(E)] if the requirements of (A) – (D) **or (E)** of this paragraph are met, the department shall open the spring salmon troll fisheries until no later than one day before the opening of the summer salmon troll fishery;

(2) consider additional fishing periods based on the best scientific data and on input from salmon trollers;

(3) if the preseason king salmon abundance index ~~determined by the Chinook Technical Committee of the Pacific Salmon Commission~~ is at least 1.15 and the amount of the winter troll fishery guideline harvest level remaining on May 1 is 10,000 or more king salmon, apply the following provisions:

(A)   if the guideline harvest level remaining is at least 10,000 king salmon but not more than 15,000 king salmon, 250 additional non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon will be added to the maximum allowable number of non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon to be taken as provided in (2)(D) **or (E)** of this subsection;

(B)   if the guideline harvest level remaining is more than 15,000 king salmon, 500 additional non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon will be added to the maximum allowable number of non-Alaska hatchery-produced salmon to be taken as provided in (2)(D) **or (E)** of this subsection.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2014 and 2015, an abundance of Chinook salmon caused spring trolling areas to be restricted or closed prematurely, due to the high presence of treaty kings. The high abundance was largely attributed to Columbia River fall run Chinook, which were experiencing the largest returns since the dams were erected in 1938. ATA is requesting consideration of a small adjustment to the spring troll management plan, so that the fishery can avoid disruption should we see similar abundance in future years.

The spring troll fishery is structured in such a way as to allowing the targeting of Alaska hatchery Chinook, while minimizing the harvest of fish that count against the Pacific Salmon Treaty (treaty) quota. From April through June, small areas are opened to trolling near hatcheries or in corridors where Alaska hatchery fish are known to transit. The amount of fishing time allowed in each area varies and is determined weekly, with some openings lasting just 1-3 days per week. Guideline harvest levels for treaty Chinook have been established and those levels correlate to the percentage of Alaska hatchery fish contributing to the harvest in each spring area. Once the guideline level is reached, that area is closed to spring fishing.

The abundance of Chinook salmon in Southeast has been extraordinarily high in most of the recent years. In 2014, the model utilized by the Chinook Technical Committee of the Pacific Salmon Commission generated a pre-season abundance index of 2.57 and a quota of 439,400. As a result, seven spring areas across the region experienced time/area restrictions or closures, due to this strong showing of treaty Chinook that overwhelmed the spring hatchery harvest. 2013 and 2014 were the first years on record that the percent of Alaska hatchery kings in the spring troll fishery declined instead of increased, in mid to late June.

This extreme abundance continued into 2015 & 2016 and ADFG was compelled to manage the spring fishing areas conservatively. Both time and area restrictions were implemented in the face of large Columbia River returns, which had already caused the 2015 winter troll fishery to close on March 25th - the earliest closure since 1972. In 2016, the winter fishery closed on March 8, which was seven weeks earlier than the regulatory closure date of April 30th; making it the earliest winter troll closure since at least 1950.

Loss of opportunity in the spring hatchery areas reduces troller's access to the hatchery Chinook our industry pays for, many of which are raised to mitigate chronic reductions in the treaty Chinook salmon quota and do not count against the annual quota. In addition, any loss of access to Alaska hatchery Chinook further confounds the troll fleet's ability to achieve its enhanced salmon allocation under 5 AAC 33.364 (see also: 94-148-FB).

Allowing a small reduction in the spring hatchery percentage triggers, only when abundance is anticipated to be very high, should help ensure that the troll fleet maintains access to spring hatchery areas, while also adhering to the original purpose, which was to help target effort in those areas with the most hatchery stocks while minimizing the harvest of treaty Chinook.

Until recently, the abundance of West Coast Chinook salmon has been such that ADFG could manage the spring troll fishery well within the Board of Fisheries goals for the fishery using the current regulations. However, the 2014 and 2015 seasons proved that the coastwide Chinook resource is capable of extraordinary spikes in abundance. It is likely that these fish will be present in similarly large numbers at some point in the future and the troll fishery could be disrupted again. It is obvious that additional management tools are needed for use <u>in years of exceptional abundance</u>, thereby reducing the potential for disruption and providing better access hatchery king salmon that are the target of the spring fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Trollers Association   (HQ-F17-029)
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