

## **PROPOSAL 112**

### **5 AAC 29.060 Allocation of king salmon in the Southeastern Alaska-Yakutat Area and 5 AAC 47.055. Southeast Alaska King Salmon Management Plan**

Modify the sport allocation of king salmon and provisions for management, as follows:

Each spring the Pacific Salmon Commission produces an annual abundance forecast for not just the upcoming summer season, but a separate forecast for the season that is still a year away (the one-year-out forecast). This proposal utilizes the current year abundance forecast *and* the one-year-out forecast to set a non-resident harvest target for the one-year-out season. The intent is that the average annual proportion of the hook-and-line Chinook allocation caught by sport fishermen (including residents) over the 6-year period that includes the previous 4 years, the current year and the season that is a year away, will be 20%. The first four numbers in the average are the known actual percentage of the hook-and-line allocation caught by sport fishermen in previous four years. The fifth number is the ADF&G-calculated estimate of the percentage of the hook-and-line allocation that will be caught by sport anglers in the season that is just getting underway with the non-resident annual limits that were set the year prior and using the updated abundance data.

The target harvest for the sport fishery in the season that is a year away would be whatever number would make the 6-year rolling average come out to 20%.

Staff would be directed to estimate the amount of non-resident effort and the likely harvest from that effort under different combinations of annual limits throughout the season. With input from the charter industry (similar to how the guided halibut regulations are crafted) ADF&G staff would establish non-resident annual limits for the one-year-away season. (In other words, set the limits for the 2026 summer season in the spring of 2025.) While the limits could not be such that the anticipated harvest would cause the 6-year average to exceed 20%, the charter industry could request that the limits be set conservatively, intending to “bank” some percentage for subsequent years while respecting the 20% average.

Example: If in the spring of 2025, the sport catches in 2021-2024 were known to have been 19.5%, 13.8%, 29.0%, and 17.0% of the hook-and-line allocation respectively, and given the updated abundance forecast the 2025 catch is anticipated to be 20.3%, then the 2026 target would need to be 20.4% of the hook-and-line allocation to make the 6-year average come out to 20.0%. (Since the average of 19.5, 13.8, 29.0, 17.0, 20.3 and 20.4 = 20.0) If in April of 2025, the one-year-away forecast for 2026 indicated that the hook-and-line allocation would be 180,000 fish in 2026, the non-resident annual limits for 2026 would be set such that the anticipated total sport harvest would be no higher than 20.3% of 180,000 or 36,540 kings.

This proposal does not seek to alter the existing resident bag limits which would continue to be set at the beginning of the current season, nor change the two-rod provisions of the current sport king salmon management plan. Neither the resident nor non-resident fisheries would be subject to in-season management for allocative reasons, but both could be closed if the SE all-gear harvest ceiling has been reached.

Accounting for past years’ harvest when setting the annual limits provides the management tools necessary to achieve the 20% average goal, but by setting the annual limits more than a year in advance, charter clients will know how many kings they will be allowed to catch when they are considering booking a trip.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** One of the long-established goals of the SE Sport King Salmon management Plan has been to manage the sport fishery to attain

an average harvest of 20% of the hook-and-line allocation, but the word “average” has never been defined, leading to conflicting and ambiguous interpretations.

Furthermore, the current SE Sport King Salmon Management Plan contains a sunset clause which will cause the plan to expire in 2025 unless the BoF replaces it. Additionally, the current version of the plan as implemented by staff in 2022, eliminates all provisions to dynamically guide the sport harvest towards the long-standing goal of attaining the average harvest of 20% of the hook-and-line Chinook allocation. Without meaningful abundance-based adjustments to the non-resident annual limits, the proportion of the catch taken by sportfishermen has varied wildly from 14% in 2022 to 29% in 2023. This volatility combined with the absence of any corrective mechanism makes it very doubtful that the 20% goal will be attained.

Some sort of proactive management action is needed in order to achieve the 20% goal. The king salmon fishery is simply too dynamic to wait 3 years for the BoF to make adjustments. However, the charter industry has previously opposed efforts to use in-season management tools to achieve the 20% goal on the grounds that this can leave clients who have pre-booked their trip feeling short-changed.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** The concept of utilizing the one-year-away forecast to set the non-resident annual limit for the season that is more than a year away was discussed at the March 2024 Sitka AC meeting, but the conversation did not progress to specific details.

**PROPOSED BY:** Tad Fujioka

(EF-F24-055)

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