

SALMON TROLL PLAN INFORMATION

The following information is presented to outline salient points of interest which surfaced during the course of the public hearings on the Salmon Troll Plan.

It seems likely that some or all of these points will bear consideration in the event the Council chooses to deviate from the Options presented in the plan.

SHAKER PROBLEM

Collation of testimony presented during the hearings indicates a majority of trollers have identified one particular area where shakers are a problem.

That area is a portion of the Fairweather Grounds known as the "Inner Bank".

According to an examination of troller's logbooks, and information volunteered during oral testimony, the ratio between shakers and legal fish caught on the Outer Bank is 1 to 10. The ratio on the Inner Bank in 1976 was 1 to 2 and in 1977 1 to 4.

Based on ADF&G data and data collected from logbooks by Dr. Steven Freed, fisheries technologist for the Alaska Trollers Association, a closure on the Inner Bank of the Fairweather Grounds can be justified now (but can be expected to be opposed adamately by trollers)

FROM THE TROLLER'S LOGBOOKS SUPPORTING SUCH A CLOSURE.

BARBLESS HOOKS

The coho, alone among Pacific salmon, has a trait of twisting when hooked. This trait differs from the rather straightforward struggle of other salmon and is the cause of much concern among trollers about the use of barbless hooks for coho. Nothing in the testimony indicated an aversion to barbless hooks for chinooks, as a matter of fact, some fishermen offering testimony said they already use barbless hooks. The barbless hook facilitates release of sub-legal fish and decreases the incidence of mortality for hooked fish where such release is not sufficient to injure the fish beyond hook penetration.

GEAR RESTRICTION IN THE FORM OF BARBLESS HOOKS CAN BE MADE ON A TIME BASIS IN THE FWG FISHERY, WITH THE EFFECTIVE DATE TO COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF COHO SEASON.

REPORTING PROCEEDURE

Many of the trollers indicate they are aware that information on the fishery is not available to ADF&G in sufficient amounts to be helpful in determining management regimes. They have volunteered to assist in the gathering of data from this fishery and need only a method devised which will assure the individual of protection from others who might gain access to this information.

Specifically, the data needed concerns actual numbers of fish and the location at which they were caught. The present fish ticket is designed to yield this information, but in actual practice, numbers of fish are seldom if ever marked on the ticket by the buyer. This is a violation of Alaskan law that has never been known to be enforced.

Statistical catch areas are more likely to be marked but do not, for a variety of reasons, indicate where the fish were caught. Where the omission of the number of fish is probably a habit of oversight, marking the statistical catch area is more a matter of convenience than accuracy. In short, multiple-area trips are marked up by last area fished or guessed at by the buyer. The statistical area is most likely to reflect a broadness of scale by indicating only the general area from which the fisherman sailed into port, i.e., "up the coast," "down the coast," "inside" or "outside."

The trollers' logbook program is designed to yield this information and will probably do so from this point to the future. Additional pressure on buyers to mark actual fish numbers on the fish tickets would greatly reinforce this much-needed information.

EMERGENCY CLOSURES

&

OBSERVER PROGRAM

A majority of trollers agree with the concept of regulation by emergency in-season closures. A good number of them mentioned that having observers aboard vessels in the fishery would allow the observers to determine precisely the status of the fishery and to suggest closures based on first-hand information. Closure notices for specific areas could be broadcast to the fleet via radio and be effective immediately.

SALMON HEAD ON-OFF

Troll salmon are tagged with micro-wire tags in the head. Most troll caught salmon are delivered head-off and dressed. This negates the value of the tagging program. Tagged fish are identifiable by a clipped fin. Fishermen probably won't interrupt their operation to retrieve and set aside fin-clipped fish unless there is a premium involved. The suggestion is to provide a bonus payment to the fisherman for retrieving tagged salmon and delivering them for examination.

The alternative to delivering the fish is to have the head delivered. This is better than not having

the head at all, but yields only migration data and does not give other important data such as size (length, girth, weight) or age and condition. If there is a good degree of cooperation among the fishermen, these fish can be returned in sufficient numbers to aid immensely to the information coming out of the fishery.

LINE RESTRICTION

There appears to be no rationale for restricting the numbers of lines which can be used in the troll fishery. In most cases, the number of lines is self-limiting according to the size of the boat and the area fished.

SPORT BOAT FISHING

It appears that this would be an excellent time to make some adjustment in the burgeoning sport boat fishery. Very few of the sport boats fish the FCZ; that activity is more a characteristic of the recreational fishery in the Pacific Northwest off the coasts of Washington, Oregon and California. Keeping the sportfisherman off the FCZ in the Alaskan offshore fishery would not work a hardship on the sportsman. Local exceptions could be made for the purpose of the salmon derbies held in virtually every port in S.E. Alaska.

OPTION I

Present Option I:

All waters OPEN April 15-Oct. 31

EXCEPT All waters N & W of Cape Spencer
open April 15-June 30.

All waters W of Cape Suckling closed.

Coho season June 15-Sept. 20

EXCEPT All waters N & W of Cape Spencer open
June 15-June 30.

All waters W of Cape Suckling closed.

Trollers to a man opposed closures regardless of area or option involved. Testimony indicated a coho fishery between Icy Point and Cape Spencer that would go unutilized if Option I adopted. Fish use streams in that area, they are big fish and no shaker problem present.

OPTION II

Present Option II:

All waters OPEN April 15-Oct. 31

EXCEPT All waters N & W of Cape Spencer closed.

Coho season June 15-Sept. 20

EXCEPT All waters N & W of Cape Spencer closed.

There was vigorous testimony in opposition to the closure proposed N & W of Cape spencer.

The inshore area near Lituya Bay and Cape Fairweather is known as the "Inner Banks". This area is conceded to have a shaker problem and it appears that a closure could be effected here without total opposition. (All closures are likely to be opposed.)

LIMITED ENTRY

Limited Entry, as proposed in the plan and modeled after the State of Alaska's system, appears to be acceptable to the trollers.

HANDTROLLERS

There is a natural rivalry between handtrollers and powertrollers which has been aggravated in recent years due to the erosion in the distinction between hand and power trolling. The original handtroller who worked a small boat has given way to the larger powerboat operator who is capable of competing on the offshore grounds in some instances. With the hand troll and sport fleet accounting for one-third of salmon caught, one can easily see where this rivalry is headed. Restriction of the sport fleet to the State waters, if deemed necessary, might occasion some thought toward restricting the hand troll fleet to inside waters.

LOGBOOKS

This could easily come under the reporting procedure section, but the question of whether to make the logbook program mandatory or not is bound to arise.

Given the independent nature of the trollers, a well-known trait of this group of virtually un-regulated fishermen, making the logbook program voluntary as a condition of adherence to Federal law would doom the data base.

The atmosphere at the present time would indicate that a spirit of cooperation exists, and that the logbook program imposed on the trollers by their own association(s) has every chance of succeeding.

STATISTICAL AREAS

Re-doing the statistical areas to more accurately reflect the precise location of catch locations is critical.

OTHER OPTIONS

OPTION III: Status quo pending collection of new or further data.

OPTION IV: Status quo plus observer program and emergency in-season closures to be determined.

OPTION V: Modified Option I.

OPTION VI: Modified Option II.

Modifications to either Option I or Option II might include imposing Limited Entry, observer program, continuing minimum length limit of 28-inches, certain area closures not involving total statistical areas (Inner Bank, West Bank, etc.), gear restrictions

such as single hooks, no net fishing, tighter reporting procedures, requiring tagged fish to be brought in head on, etc.