



# Alaska Trollers Association

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Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game  
Boards Support Section  
PO Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811  
Sent via email

Dear Chairman Kluberton and Board of Fish Members:

The Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) supports ACR15, which would allow a small reduction in the spring troll fishery hatchery triggers, but only when abundance is anticipated to be very high. The proposal is designed to prevent loss of opportunity similar to what we have recently experienced, due to a high abundance of treaty king salmon.

ATA represents hook and line fishermen who operate in state and federal waters off Southeast Alaska. This low volume, high value fishery is quite important to the region. There are nearly 2,000 troll permits and up to 1,000 fish each year. The fleet is 85% resident; roughly 1:35 people in Southeast work on a troll vessel.

The troll Chinook fishery is divided into three distinct segments – winter, spring, and summer. The spring portion is unique, as it occurs exclusively in inside waters and the fishing areas are small and tightly controlled as a means to target hatchery kings. Many of these fish are produced to mitigate the troll fleet's losses under the Pacific Salmon Treaty (Treaty) and do not count against the annual quota. Spring fisheries are important to local communities, not only because they provide fish in addition to the quota, but because they occur in protected waters and prices are typically quite good.

ACR15 was submitted in response to an unforeseen event in the spring troll fishery resulting from the abundance and availability of treaty Chinook in our region. Many spring fishing areas were adjusted in 2014 and 2015, due to the presence of Columbia River Chinook, which are returning at levels that have not been seen since the first dam was placed in 1938. There are about 30 spring areas. In 2014, seven (7) areas were subject to time/area restriction or closure. Partly as a result of these actions, just 25% of the Chinook landed during the 2014 spring fishery were Alaska hatchery fish – the smallest proportion since the start of the spring fisheries. Similar modifications occurred in 2015. In both years, the loss of time and area were exacerbated by broad area closures to protect Unuk River Chinook. The intent of the ACR is to help ensure that the spring fisheries continue to function in the way the Board intended them to.

To put an additional point on the sheer numbers of treaty fish that are present in our fishery, the 2015 winter fishery closed 5 weeks earlier than ever before. We fully expect to see strong abundance in the coming year and fear additional closures and the loss of access to valuable hatchery fish.

A high abundance index (1.95) was chosen to ensure that caps would only be increased in years of exceptional production. The abundance index has reached 1.95 or more just four times since 1979. The increase in the spring caps would be modest and only taken in years when there are lots of quota fish, so it is unlikely to negatively impact the BOF goals for the summer troll fishery.

No one anticipated returns to the Columbia River like we are seeing today. A variety of factors are at play (e.g. increased spill), which leads us to believe that abundance will be sustained at higher levels than we've seen for decades, at least for the next couple of years.

ACR15 would simply allow ADFG the flexibility to help prevent unnecessary disruption of an important component of the troll fishery. We believe that flexibility will be needed in 2016, which compels ATA to request out of cycle action by the BOF.

Thank you for your consideration of ATA's point of view. Don't hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information or answer any questions.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale Kelley".

Dale Kelley  
Executive Director