

# ALASKA TROLLER

Newsletter of the Alaska Trollers Association

Spring 2016

## ATA Participates in Congressional Briefing on GE Salmon

This spring Senator Lisa Murkowski and Representative Don Young hosted a congressional briefing to discuss the potential risks of the world's first FDA-approved genetically engineered animal for human consumption. This effort took steps to educate and build awareness about the inadequate approval process taken by the FDA to evaluate potential ecological and health impacts and to call for the proper labeling of genetically engineered (GE) salmon. The briefing brought together a group of panelists which included representatives from **Alaska Trollers Association**, [Food and Water Watch](#), Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, [Consumers Union](#), and the [Center for Food Safety](#).

"It's incredibly important that we gain a greater fact-based understanding of what we are dealing with when it comes to genetically engineered salmon. To me, this is inconceivable to make something as biologically perfect as wild Alaskan salmon and conduct a science experiment—creating a new species that can endanger our healthy fish stocks," **said Senator Lisa Murkowski**. "I am not going to serve it to my family when you can't guarantee it's safe. I don't think we should experiment with food safety and security." This year [Murkowski](#) introduced [S.2640](#) and multiple legislative amendments to require labeling of GE salmon, in addition to [blocking](#) early confirmation of the new head of FDA over the issue.

"I have long opposed the marketplace approval of GE Salmon, not only because of the flawed process in which it was approved but for the serious impacts it could have on wild salmon species, ocean ecosystems and the U.S. fishing economy," **said Congressman Don Young**. "Today's briefing was an important step in raising awareness for the FDA's misguided decision, while also building a broad coalition to institute mandatory labeling requirements for GE fish and seafood." [Young](#) has bills requiring labeling and also making it illegal to release GE salmon ([H.R. 4713](#) & [394](#)), in addition to legislation that would require NOAA to wait until congress provides guidance before issuing permits for offshore aquaculture ([H.R. 331](#)).

"The inappropriate process that was used is really the root of all of these problems," **said Dr. Jillian Fry, Project Director, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future**. "The ecological concerns were not properly taken into account when the FDA did their assessment. The inappropriate approval process is related to inadequate data and the lack of labeling will make it very difficult to evaluate safety."

"Anything that can compromise human health and fisheries affects my family, fishing communities and our state. It's extremely important to fishermen that consumers have the opportunity to know precisely what they are buying for their dinner table," **said Dale Kelley, Executive Director of ATA**. "Trollers are used to transparency. The only secrets we have are a few fishing tricks and maybe if we're lucky, today's hot spot. We catch fish and deliver them to the processor where each one is counted, weighed, and identified by species. What you see is what you get. A king salmon is a king salmon through and through, but GE salmon have a surprise inside. The public deserves a label, so they can make an informed choice."

### Chinook 2016

<b>All-Gear Treaty Quota</b>	<b>355,600</b>
Pre-season	
Abundance Index	2.06
Troll	263,197
Purse seine (4.3%)	15,291
Drift gillnet (2.9%)	10,312
Set gillnet	1,000
Sport	65,799
<b>Transboundary Rivers</b>	
Stikine River	1,100
Taku River	0



## From the Director's Desk ...

There is written into the [Pacific Salmon Treaty](#) a principal that hasn't been discussed for quite some time; it's the notion that while working to prevent overfishing, optimize production and provide benefits to the parties, the fisheries that existed in 1985 should not suffer 'undue disruption'. Well, I'm bringin' it back!

So, what's undue disruption, and how do you know if it's happening? Webster's defines 'undue' as something *more than is reasonable or necessary*. I suspect you know it when you see it in your fishery, but unfortunately our circumstances aren't always viewed the same by others, particularly those in charge of setting the annual quota.

The Alaska fishery has been disrupted many times under the treaty, but not always 'unduly' so. For instance, losing 100K from our historic average of king salmon in 1985 under the new treaty rebuilding program was a painful blow for sure, but probably necessary to help rebuild West Coast salmon stocks decimated by dams and development. That cut was supposed to be temporary. West Coast fishermen were promised more fish when the stocks recovered, which occurred quicker than expected for stocks harvested off Alaska. Where conservation ended and 'undue disruption' began was when the other parties refused to raise the annual quotas in a meaningful way, despite abundance approaching twice the pre-treaty level. The high abundance of wild stocks and the flooding of our region with hatchery fish from Canada and the Lower 48 turned the troll fleet on its head; the summer fishery shrunk to just 3½ days. Deep cuts under the Endangered Species Act to save two Snake River salmon a year took a toll, as did a burgeoning charter [catch](#). Less kings in summer meant increased incidental mortality during the troll coho fishery, so the Board of Fish threatened management changes. ATA convinced them to form a **Chinook Task Force** made up of trollers, who struggled to design a plan to balance the fleet interests and fulfill the [BOF directives](#) to lengthen the summer fishery and counteract the negative impacts of what we viewed to be 'undue disruption'.

Ongoing disagreement over the treaty quotas spawned a disruptive 'fish war' in the 1990s. In 1995, Alaska tried a new abundance-based management approach and the tribes and states filed suit under the Baldrige Stipulation; the troll Chinook fishery was shut down in August. A Letter of Agreement set quotas from 1996-98. In 1999, the Pacific Salmon [Commission](#) agreed to use a mathematical model to allow quotas in Alaska and Canada to float up and down with the abundance of the unique stocks in each fishery. Trollers had to reduce a few pre-treaty expectations at some abundance levels, but the concept was sound and aimed to better conserve fish and more fairly distribute the coastwide production. From 1999-2008, quotas fluctuated within acceptable ranges; scientists and stakeholders worked to identify production issues, collect data, improve the Chinook model, and restore critical habitat.

In 2009, due to low productivity of stocks mostly harmed by degraded habitat, Canada and Alaska were again forced to reduce harvests. Alaska doesn't catch many of the fish in question, so the 15% cut harms the fleet while providing little-to-no gain for the stocks that need help; seems a lot like 'undue disruption' to me. Adding insult to injury, treaty commitments that might have added a few fish to the Alaska quota were largely ignored.

Now, despite several years of record breaking returns, Alaska continues to be denied a fair share of the fish we helped rebuild. Alaska's average quota since 1985 hovers around 270K - barely over the rebuilding quota of 263K; many surplus fish are being reallocated to other users or even worse, wasted. Impacts on the winter, spring, and summer fisheries have been extreme - with openings cut short due to strong stock abundance and a massive influx of federal hatchery fish that we tax payers help finance, but aren't allowed to add on to the quota. This further reduces access to wild Alaska stocks and hatchery fish - many which were intended to mitigate treaty losses. Undue disruption, indeed!

Alaska's treaty reps are working to deliver a better deal for Alaska in 2018. Key decisions will be made before year's end and it is important that [ATA](#) has the resources to attend essential meetings and do the work necessary to advocate the fleet's interest. **If you have not paid your dues and contributed to [ATA's](#) treaty or legal funds recently, please consider doing so soon;** mild cures and gratitude to those who already have.

Good Fishing!

*Dale*

*Many Thanks...*

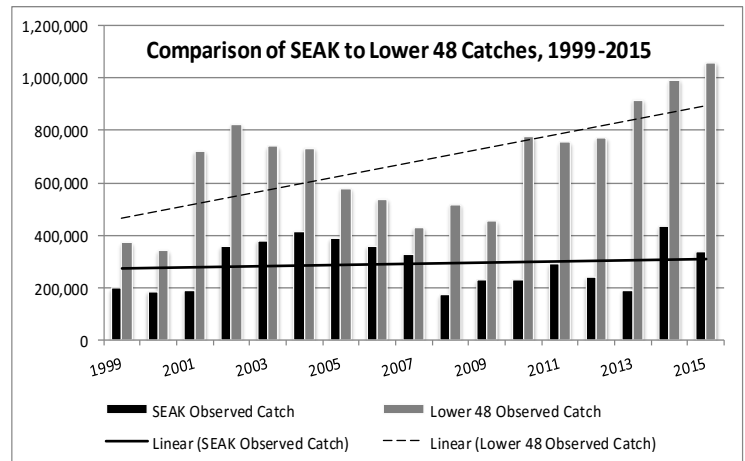
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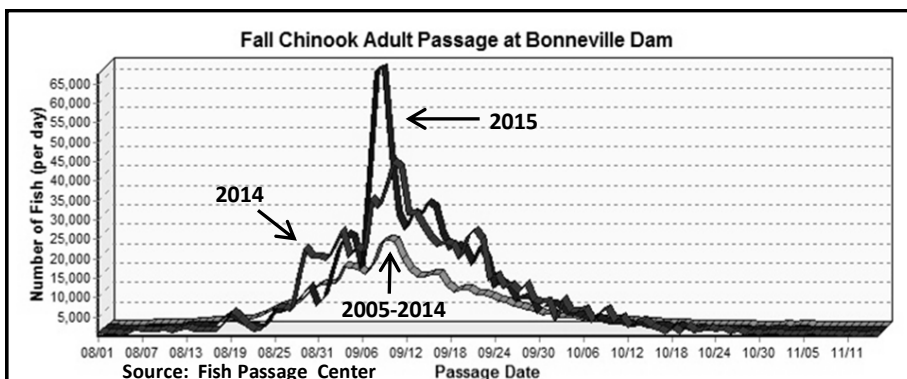
## Columbia River Continues to Smash Records

The abundance of the far north migrating Chinook remains high with summer and fall [Columbia River stocks](#) dominating ocean harvests from Alaska to the river. What should be great news led to another series of acrimonious treaty meetings. At issue was the 2015 preseason abundance forecast and quota, which Alaska scientists and trollers firmly believed was too low. All the signs during the winter and spring fisheries pointed to a large return. The crush of fish in July confirmed suspicions that forecasts were way off and made it impossible to stay within the quota despite best efforts. This meant loss of August opportunity for the fleet and a year of explanations for ADFG, who was on the hot seat at both treaty and Council meetings until the final numbers were crunched. The treaty requires quota fisheries to be managed to a preseason abundance forecast and quota, but managers are actually held accountable for the postseason number – even if it's lower. How do they do that you might ask? On their first day, all troll managers are issued a crystal ball... seriously, it's a tough job. Managers are typically over or under a bit, but last season the 'overage' appeared to be about 100,000. Fortunately, the state was redeemed when the 2015 postseason estimate showed that there was in fact extreme abundance, just as Alaska's treaty technical team predicted. As a result, ADFG ended up going over the quota by just 254 fish. Quite amazing when you think about it; kudos to our biologists and managers!



2016 treaty discussions have also proved difficult. Despite a larger quota this season, there was still a healthy dose of politics applied to the equation and the number seems low; time will tell. Treaty negotiators are looking to insulate the quota from such wrangling's in the next agreement. Quotas must better reflect the health of the stocks we catch.

In 2014, 1.16 million fall Chinook returned to the river - more than twice the 10 year average. Fish counted at McNary Dam exceeded the management goal of 60,000 by more than 300,000 fish. The Upriver Brights (URB) returned a bumper crop of 684,200 adults, which provided more than enough for escapement and inriver fisheries. In 2015, 1.34 million fall adults cleared Bonneville and 750,000 made it past McNary. The 2016 winter fishery suggests even higher abundance for some stocks than in 2015, when about 40% of the CWTs recovered were from the Columbia River. Three key stocks look particularly strong. The URB run is projected to be 49% larger than the 10 year average. Winter trollers caught twice as many Columbia Summers this year and that stock is already making a strong showing inriver. West Coast Vancouver Island is here in force with 1,484 fish taken before the March 8th closure, compared to 204 last year and the previous 7-year average of 277. The spring fishery is inundated again with 'mass marked' fish (the clipped ones with no tags) from the Northwest.



Unfortunately, these huge returns and low quotas have done little to alleviate Alaska's concerns about over-escapement and defacto reallocation.

Research on URB stocks at Hanford Reach was conducted in the fall of 2014 in an attempt to better understand the effects of over-escapement. Production there goes down when escapement exceeds about 42,000 fish. Density dependence

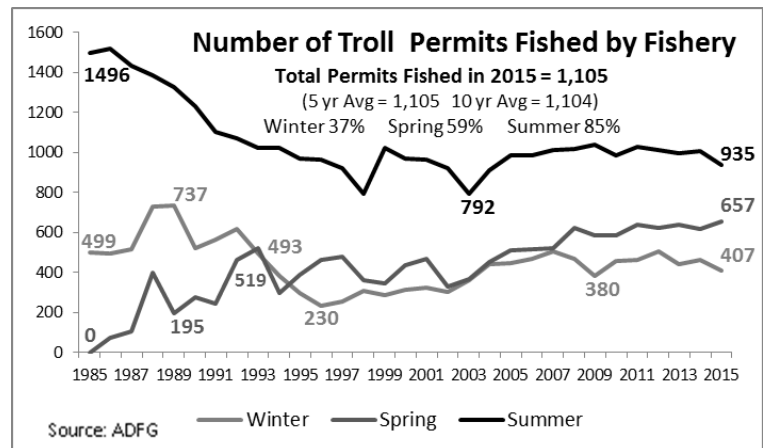
could be a factor, with fish impacted by disturbed spawning redds and egg displacement, retention of eggs, or lack of habitat and food for rearing juveniles. ATA supported the study and encourages more work in this area. In 2014, nearly 188,000 adults and jacks spawned at Hanford Reach - a record. Plus, 91,000 adults returned to hatcheries in the area, far above the 6,000 fish needed for egg-take goals. 2015 was another banner year and 2016 appears poised to continue the trend. (For more info see ATA's [Spring 2015](#) Newsletter).

## Brief History of the Winter Fishery

The commercial troll fishery began in Ketchikan near the turn of the 20th century. Early on there was just one season with some dates and rules. In 1950, the Alaska Fisheries Board closed the outside waters in winter to protect Northwest salmon. Those days, about 2.5% of each year's troll kings were caught in winter. Catch has ranged from 9,401 (7% of king harvest) in 1996 to 71,831 (39%) in 1992. In the early 1990s, abundance was high and the average winter catch increased nearly 60% over a three year period. Since 2004, the winter fleet has averaged 18% the year's catch; about 70% is usually caught in D-113. Alaska hatcheries contributed a high of 24% to the 1991 winter fishery, but just 5% in 2015. 428 permit holders made winter landings in 2016.

### Regulatory Timeline

1906	36 hr per week closures - all waters/fisheries
1950-1972	Outside waters closed Oct 31-Mar 15
1973-1980	Outside waters closed Nov 1-Apr 14
1973	Yakutat Bay opened to winter troll
1978	Winter line modified - expanded area from Cape Ommaney to Hazy Islands to Cape Addington.
1981-2003	Winter fishery officially established Oct 1-Apr 14; Oct 1 designated start of accounting year to avoid inseason mgmt.
1981	Surfline modified to include portions of D-16 between Fairweather and Cape Spencer.
1991	Winter line modified - Cape Edgecumbe to Pt Woodhouse changed to Loran lines; 11-A permit fishery closed
1992	Start of the winter fishery delayed until Oct.11 to provide additional fish for summer fishery.
1994	Board of Fish approves Chinook Task Force Troll Mgmt Proposal. Winter catch average had grown to 63K (1992-94) compared to 35K (1985-91). The proposal closed many productive areas to save fish for summer, per <a href="#">BOF directives</a> .
2003	Winter Fishery end date changed to April 30, or when Guideline Harvest (GHL) range of 43-47K fish is caught.
2004	Winter lines modified - Yakutat Bay - Pt. Manby to Ocean Cape; 11-A open to April 14; Gastineau Channel closed.
2006	HT's permitted to use two downriggers with two fishing rods - winter only.
2012	Hatchery fish caught in winter allowed as add-on to the GHL.



## Spring Fishery Basics Tad Fujioka, F/V Merlin, Sitka Board Member

Anyone who has fished along the outer coast during the last several years - or even listened to the stories of those who have, are by now well aware that there have been lots of kings out there. The Columbia River has had record or near-record runs every year since 2013. These fish have substantially contributed to our catch rate- not just in July, but also in spring and winter. Most of the fleet is aware of the earliest-on-record closures of the winter fishery, and a possible solution to that is addressed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Less well understood is the way that abundant treaty fish complicate the spring season and reduce our opportunities at that time of year. Under current management, the various spring hatchery districts are each allotted a separate base quota of treaty Chinook. Typically the base quota is 1,000 fish. (Though a few large districts like Chatham Strait are comprised of multiple historic districts currently combined for ease of management, and hence get a 2,000 or 3,000 fish base quota.) As the percentage of Alaskan hatchery fish (which don't count against either the spring district's quota or the overall troll quota) in the catch increases, a district can qualify for an increased quota of treaty fish. Specifically, when the AK hatchery fish percentage reaches the 25%-35% level, the district's treaty quota doubles. When a district's AK hatchery percentage is 35%-50%, the base quota is tripled, etc.

In years of typical treaty fish abundance, most of the spring districts very near hatchery release sites (like Ketchikan and Sitka Sound ) qualify for additional treaty quota under this provision. This provides adequate quota to allow for them to remain open 7 days/wk during the entire spring season. This consistent record has ended in these recent years when unprecedented numbers of treaty fish have been available, thus reducing the AK hatchery percentage to historic lows. The hatchery fish are still there in typical numbers, but as a percentage of the catch, they are being diluted out. When even the districts that contain hatchery release sites are unable to qualify for additional quota and are closed or restricted, this greatly limits opportunity for the ever-increasing spring troll fleet. Without continued access to these waters where hatchery fish are most abundant, we lose access to both treaty and hatchery fish alike at a time of year when prices are still well above summer levels.



## Winter Fishery Poll

The ATA Board considers each portion of the troll fishery to be important and significant. Recently we have received requests for ATA to support moving more fish into the winter fishery. Please take the time to read and answer this quick survey, to help inform our decision process regarding winter management and distribution of the Chinook quota as we develop Board of Fisheries proposals and/or positions.

### IN SUPPORT of Harvesting More Fish in Winter

In 1994, the winter fishery was held to a GHL of 43-47,000, with the intent of making sure the summer fishery lasted 10-20 days and reduced the number of chinook non-retention days during coho.

Summer prices are not what they used to be. We get our first 70% of the summer fish - about 100k fish - in less than a week. This doesn't help a market flooded with farmed fish and sockeye. The average winter price in October and April is at least double the summer price - December thru March it's nearly triple.

Why not harvest more fish when they're worth more? Some say, "I have my own markets." The number of those who do is around 8%. The majority of us sell fish at \$3.75 lb. in the summer. Others say, "I don't come up until summer. I don't want to battle winter weather." Winter fishermen fish in the summer too. Those who don't, make that choice. Winter fishermen would lose summer Chinook that were moved, but they'd choose to do so, because it would be worth more to the vast majority of the fleet.

What about the specter of losing coho days because of too much incidental mortality? A small percentage of the fleet catches most of the fish in summer. If we need more Chinook retention days, how about adding to the list of areas of high abundance that are closed? Shut down Fairweather Grounds, as an example, and you might catch Chinook all of July. That would benefit the majority of the fleet, but undoubtedly cut deeply into the pockets of those who harvest the most.

Why should we move fish to winter? In the winter, there is nothing else for a troller except Chinook. In the summer, there are coho and chum opportunities. Moving fish to the winter fishery is financially a no brainer for us as a fleet.

*Casey Mapes, F/V Mai Tai*

### IN OPPOSITION to Harvesting More Fish in Winter

Trollers who want to move fish into the winter fishery seem to be reacting to early winter closures and salmon pricing, which leads them to believe this move will increase overall value to the fleet. We disagree. That point of view does not consider a few important points, like how in low coho abundance years we'll need more kings in the summer to make up for that short fall, or that moving fish to the winter fishery is a reallocation that would benefit only the winter fleet and detracts from the larger fleet that fishes the summer. The winter fishery has become concentrated into just a few hot spots fished by large numbers of boats - sometimes only the most aggressive fishermen are willing to endure its intensity. More fish won't change that.

Here are some additional reasons we oppose moving more fish to the winter fishery:

- The winter markets get flooded in April when the fish show up, so these added fish would not necessarily get a higher price than in summer.
- Increasing the winter number will allocate Chinook to the areas where winter CPUE is already the highest.
- Increasing the winter number will reallocate Chinook to the big boats that are most efficient in bad winter weather.
- Will force more people into winter fishing to make up for fewer Chinook in summer, which could shorten the winter fishery and further depress the price.
- Will draw more big boats to Sitka for the winter.
- Could potentially jeopardize the coho season, due to the Board of Fisheries mandate to reduce incidental mortality and maintain a minimum 10-20 day summer king season.
- There may be better ways than reallocating fish to the winter fishery to distribute catch and extend the winter fishery thru April.

For these reasons, we do not believe that putting more fish into the winter fishery is in the best interest of the fleet as a whole.

*Thatcher Brouwer, F/V Deep Sea, Joel Kawahara, F/V Karolee, and Steve Merritt, F/V C'est La Vie*

## THE POLL

Should treaty Chinook be moved to the winter fishery? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, how many?

\_\_\_\_ 5K  
\_\_\_\_ 10K  
\_\_\_\_ 15K  
\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you actively troll? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No Boat Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Add to ATA email list? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### FOLD - TAPE- STAMP - MAIL

(No deadline, but Oct. 1 would be optimum for ATA Board consideration)

## The Wheelhouse View President Steve Merritt, F/V C'est La Vie

It is said curiosity kills the cat, but I believe apathy will kill the fisherman. The modern day fisherman can't afford to be apathetic. There were fewer political problems for trollers in the past to worry about – no quotas, ESA, or safety regs. They mostly just fished. Truly a slice of heaven if you ask me.

You have to pay attention and get involved or the price could be high. There are lots of things in the stew pot and many of them are in a constant state of change from year to year. Whether these potential changes are good or bad is up to the individual's interpretation. It is when you don't pay attention that you risk suffering the changes that you don't like.

For instance, this winter fishery questionnaire. It is very important that ATA get lots of input from the fleet when making decisions on potential changes to the fishery. It is not in the fleet's best interest if this survey is only returned by 20% of the people who receive it - low response might mean the opinions of the few impact the many. To be apathetic and not give input through this survey means you are willing to suffer the consequences come what may. In life, there are many things that seem trivial, but can impact you in a big way. This little questionnaire has that potential, so fill it out and send it in.

Alaska Trollers Association  
130 Seward #205  
Juneau, AK 99801

STAMP

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# Welcome New Members

(As of April 30, 2016)

New	Boat	Home Port	Type
Stephen Gianarelli Gary Slaven	Cora J	Craig Petersburg	HT HT/S
Brad Anderson Jim Farmer Alaska Glacier Seafoods	Saturday William	Sitka Craig Juneau	PT PT P/S

## Upgrades

Gary Slaven	Cora J	Petersburg	PT/S
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[cestlavie@aptalaska.net](mailto:cestlavie@aptalaska.net)

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[aljac47@yahoo.com](mailto:aljac47@yahoo.com)

*Aljac, Northern Rural*

### Joel Kawahara, Secretary

[joelkaw@earthlink.net](mailto:joelkaw@earthlink.net)

*Karolee, Lower 48*

### Tad Fujioka, Treasurer

[tadsitka@gmail.com](mailto:tadsitka@gmail.com)

*Merlin, Sitka*

### Matt Lawrie

[matt.thusela@gmail.com](mailto:matt.thusela@gmail.com)

*Born Again, Sitka*

### Ken McGee

[kenmcgee@gci.net](mailto:kenmcgee@gci.net)

*Northstar, Juneau*

### Mark Roberts

[capecross@gci.net](mailto:capecross@gci.net)

*Cape Cross, Petersburg*

### Brett Stillwaugh

[sunrise77akus@hotmail.com](mailto:sunrise77akus@hotmail.com)

*McKenna S, Wrangell*

### Ben Peters

[toyotatacoma28@hotmail.com](mailto:toyotatacoma28@hotmail.com)

*Jaeger, Lower 48*

### Thatcher Brouwer

[thatcher.brouwer@gmail.com](mailto:thatcher.brouwer@gmail.com)

*Deep Sea, At Large*

### Matt Donohoe

[Matthew\\_Donohoe@yahoo.com](mailto:Matthew_Donohoe@yahoo.com)

*Helen A, At Large*

### Ben Atwood

[blondebenjo1983@hotmail.com](mailto:blondebenjo1983@hotmail.com)

*Aquilla, Ketchikan*

### Casey Mapes

[yak2you2@yahoo.com](mailto:yak2you2@yahoo.com)

*Mai Tai, Handtroll*

### Staff

**Dale Kelley, Executive Director**

[ata@gci.net](mailto:ata@gci.net)

### Treaty Representatives

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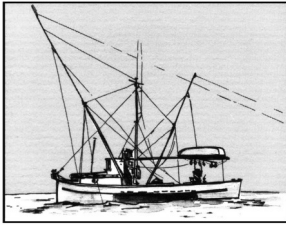
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May 10, 2016



## Alaska Trollers Association

130 Seward #205  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907)586-9400 ph / 4473 fx  
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Silver	400	200	110	1000	500	
Gold	450	250	160	2500	1000	
Platinum	550	350	300	5000	2500	
LIFE	5000	2000	750			
1st YR Initiation Rate	175	75				
Retired Troller	50	50	50			

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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Other Fisheries: \_\_\_\_\_ Call-In Program? Yes ☐ No ☐

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DONATION: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Please use my extra donation for: Legal ☐ Treaty ☐ General Purposes ☐ Publicity ☐

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