

ALASKA TROLLER

Newsletter of the Alaska Trollers Association

Fall 2019

ATA Priorities

To reverse the longstanding trend of reduced troll harvest

Allocation / management (ADFG & Board of Fish)

Membership recruitment & activation

Bycatch and interception (NPFMC)

Marketing (Genetically Modified Salmon & fish farms)

Transboundary River & habitat concerns

Steller Sea Lions & other marine mammals

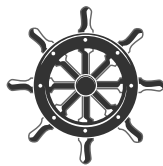
Mitigation Funding Possibilities

State Legislation

High Seas Driftnets

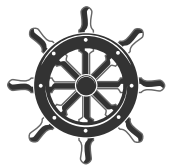
Data Preparation for effectiveness in all venues

Raffle and fundraising



FROM THE WHEELHOUSE

By Jim Moore, ATA President



I'm writing this morning instead of fishing. Gale and storm warnings are up for the coast and I am at anchor. Doesn't seem that bad- the forecast is off again. The 2019 season did not unfold as expected either. Do any of them? It seems to me that this season had more surprises than most. Extraordinary high abundance of Chinook was completely missed by Treaty models and we were again locked into a low harvest share as we were forced to participate in another involuntary catch and release program. Where will those fish end up? State biologists suspect a bump from West Coast of Vancouver Island or Strait of Georgia but I was seeing all year classes and fat healthy fish. At our fall/winter ATA board meeting we normally get presentations by ADFG on the health of our index stocks and meet with treaty folks. I am particularly looking forward to these meetings since the admitted failure of the pre-season models necessitates analysis and perhaps developing a new strategy. Your ideas are welcome here.

Another unexpected event this season is the strong surge of large Coho that are meeting river's escapement goals and causing gillnet openings to be extended as well as filling our holds (hopefully) and causing the troll season to be extended. The early indications were that Cohos were weak and small which was cause for extended closure. That was unfortunate for our fleet for several reasons. The loss of that number of fishing days cuts deeply into our income. The unnecessary loss of those days is discouraging. Should a stronger coho run have been anticipated? The fish were scattered over a huge area and depth. Would more detailed observation have helped such as the logbook program ATA once had with Sea Grant? We intend to explore this with the department at our upcoming ATA board meeting.

Provision had been made for trollers to fish chums in THAs during Coho closures but that did not work out so well this year. Chums were not as strong as expected in most areas and although they were moving in and stacking up in Crawfish, they were staging in West Crawfish which is outside the THA/SHA area and requires Board of Fish action for it to be opened. ATA anticipated this and with SPC had filed an ACR requesting the issue be taken up "out of cycle"

...Continued on Page 3



ATA's mission is to preserve, promote, and perpetuate the fishing industry in Alaska. We work for conservation, sound management, good public policy, and safety at sea for the general welfare and mutual benefit of all trollers.

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AN ATA SUCCESS

ATA successfully maneuvered the re-appointment of Deborah Lyons to the Northern Panel of the Pacific Salmon Commission. Deborah received her official appointment letter in mid-September!

Deborah has an exceptional history of representing trollers when she served on the Board of Fish and when she earlier served on the PST team. We appreciate her dedication and expertise and are very fortunate to have her back.

Thank you to the many ATA members who responded to our e-newsletter request and wrote the ADFG Commissioner and our Governor's Office on this issue in May. Your input dominated the issue! Our voice was heard! There is now hope!

Membership activation is critical to our fishery's survival and undoubtedly more issues will arise before long. We will bring more before our membership in our e-newsletters and activate this membership outreach method in the future. Through our cost effective email list, we will seek your assistance again so please ensure that your email is on file with our office for this type of rallying. There will be challenges ahead!

Amy Daugherty
Executive Director

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Do we have your current email?

ATA members, if you haven't received our ATA email newsletters, we don't have your email on file.



Please contact us at alaskatrollers@gmail.com or ata@gci.net with your current email.

From the Wheelhouse continued...

at the next board of fisheries meeting but that couldn't happen before 2020. NSRAA has also submitted a similar ACR, so most likely we can fish if this situation recurs next year. Nevertheless, this year we worked with NSRAA to pursue all possible courses of action to get this open. This cost our fleet an estimated 75,000 fish. It also contributed to a large build-up of fish which caused heightened ADFG concern over straying.

This fall our ATA board will also need to discuss several Board of Fisheries issues. There are a couple ACRs, one of which if taken up, threatens the aquaculture associations and would greatly impact treaty mitigation. It would immediately shut down Crawfish Inlet. ATA needs to put boots on the ground at these important meetings. We also intend to have a presence at Fish EXPO this year. And ideally, we could have a smart young person or two shadowing our Treaty troll reps, Deborah Lyons and Tom Fisher at Pacific Salmon Treaty meetings. It would be great to employ a staff person for Amy, our Executive Director, to spread her workload and cover more bases. (Amy has been doing a great job, by the way.)

We need your continued and even additional support to do all of this. Let me leave you with this thought: The two Kings we allowed recently were the result of an ATA proposal adapted at Board of Fish a couple years back. These fish would otherwise have been left on the table. I am contributing the proceeds from the sale of my two fish to ATA. Can I challenge you to do the same?

Jim Moore, President ATA

Hello ATA Members,



Many trollers are wondering whatsup with the recent ten day/two fish king salmon derby. In years past troll Chinook harvest sometimes went over allocation and sometimes was under. In fact, if I remember correctly, there were years trollers left as many as 8,000 kings on the table.

In years of small quotas management has a difficult time allowing harvest of all king salmon without going dramatically over allocation. At the 2015 Board of Fish meeting in Sitka ATA successfully proposed that if the Department determined there wasn't enough quota left to have a competitive fishery a non-competitive mop up would occur. That's what happened this year. Management recognized that the 1,200 Chinook remaining wasn't enough for a competitive fishery so rather than giving up these kings the approximate 600 boats trolling would be allowed two fish apiece over a ten day period.

In 2015, thanks to management interference by ADFG Treaty Commissioner Charlie Swanton, we harvested 100,000 kings over our allocation. This was not a good thing and placed Alaska in an awkward negotiating position. During the rest of the 30 years of Treaty (excepting also the 32,000 kings Mr. Swanton took from trollers in 2017 and the 10% in 2018) ADFG management was incredible with overages v underages pretty much balancing out.

Trollers now know, thanks to this rotten Treaty agreement, if the troll fleet goes over our paltry allocation we are required to pay those fish back the next year. If we go under, however, we just lose them. SEAK harvesters are the only entity under this obligation. That's why we had that non-competitive Chinook fishery. Management doesn't want to go over the quota and we sure don't want to give up one more fish. This mop up is the only way we will be able to harvest all, or nearly all, of our Chinook allocation.

Keep On Trolling
Matt Donohoe, ATA Vice President

On Chinook Modeling

By Tad Fujioka, ATA Board Member & SPC Board Member

One of the major goals of our Alaskan Treaty negotiation team was to change way that the SE Chinook quota is calculated. In the past decade, the abundance forecasts provided by the Chinook Technical Committee's old computer model had become increasingly less accurate, resulting in chronic mismatches between our quota and the actual abundance of Chinook. What Alaskan negotiators achieved (at considerable cost) was the chance to have our Chinook quota be based on the actual abundance (as measured by catch per day per power troller) of Chinook in our waters. For a variety of political and biological reasons however, the time/area used in setting our quota ended up being limited the first 8 weeks of the winter season in District 13 (outer coast of Baranof and Chichagof).

Our expectation was that by using real fishery data, even if just from this small fishery, we would get a more accurate forecast of abundance than that generated by the old computer method. However, by the end of this July in our first year under this new Agreement, it was apparent that the true Chinook abundance had (again!) been under-forecasted. Why did the new method (referred to as Catch-per-unit-effort, or CPUE) fail to accurately predict the Chinook abundance this year?

One reason for the inaccurate forecast is that the winter and summer fisheries catch different stocks. The assumption behind the CPUE method is that ocean conditions will affect all stocks in a similar manner, but it appears that this was not necessarily the case in 2019. Coded wire tagged fish from the District 13 winter index period are typically mostly spring run Chinook. (56% in 2018), while the summer catch is dominated by fall run fish (more than 75% in 2019). The low CPUE of October and November of 2018 correctly predicted a low abundance of spring run Chinook. However, the winter fishery doesn't do a good job of predicting the abundance of fall runs when their performance deviates from that of the spring runs. As of mid-September, fall run Columbia River Chinook are projected to be nearly 6 times as abundant as the spring run based on fish counts at Bonneville dam. This would be the 2nd highest ratio in the last twenty years. The highest ratio was in 2013, which like 2019 also had very poor fishing through May. Recall that in that year, July catch rates were so unexpectedly high that the entire summer quota was caught in 6 days, leaving none for August.

It should be noted that the old CTC's computer model would have provided us with a 2019 quota very similar to that generated by the new CPUE method. So in that regard we would have been no better off under the old system than under the new one.

Many Thanks to...
Seafood Producers Cooperative
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Parting words from Steve Merritt

Fellow Trollers,

Having been on the ATA board for several years it is time for me to step down and donate my time to different causes. Some thoughts I would like to leave you with.

To this day many of the troll fleet are politically disengaged and remain uneducated on the many dangerous issues facing trolling. Yes, many of our fleet would rather ignore these stressful politics, than learn about and deal with them. There is no doubt that without more of our fleet getting involved defending this fishery, it will perish.

That said, I urge all of you non-members to join ATA because if the organization crumbles, so does your fishing future. The meager \$350 it takes to become a member, is a drop in the bucket compared to what you would lose without ATA fighting off anti-troll issues.

ATA does the best it can to inform and educate the fleet on these matters but that takes money. There are also office expenses, lawyer fees, executive director salaries, and the many meeting expenses ATA attends in your behalf. This all adds up and it is my opinion, that presently, your ATA organization is in danger of collapse due to lack of funds.

And sure, it is difficult for all trollers to agree on each and every issue that arises, but on the majority of issues, I am sure that ATA's approach you will find compatible.

If you don't like some of ATA's handling of things, get involved and run for the board. Do not abandon the organization and the volunteer board members donating their time and money to represent you.

Remember this if anything, board members, executive directors and staff will come and go throughout the years. All of which are easily replaced in comparison to reestablishing an entirely new organization. ATA has represented the troll fleet since 1925 and I hope you see fit to continue that. ATA is your organization and you need to fund it.

Sincerely, Steve Merritt
Past ATA President

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ATA	\$1000 second prize	Mike Bobo, Craig
Port Townsend Shipwrights	rt free haul out, up to 50'	Martin Gowdy, Seattle
ATA	\$500 third prize	Fran Fox, Ketchikan
The Landing	\$400 lodging & breakfast	Arlene Woodward
Alaska Commercial Electronics	VHF ICOM IC-M324	Jeff Favour, Sitka
White's dba Harry Race Drug	gift basket	Deborah Lyons, Sitka
City of Craig	one ton of ice	Kenny Quigley, Craig
Skookum Canvasworks	large waterproof tote bag	Karl Martinsen, Sitka
Hammer & Wikan	cash	John Murray, Sitka
Piston & Rudder Service	\$50 gift certificate	Brian Lynch, Petersburg
Petro Marine	\$50 gift certificate	Matt Peavey, Craig
Petro Marine	\$50 gift certificate	Craig Ring, Ketchikan
Petro Marine	\$50 gift certificate	Chris Wittlesey, Petersburg
Petro Marine	heavy duty hoodie	Deb Spencer, Pelican
Petro Marine	heavy duty hoodie	Shellee Atwood, Ketchikan
Petro Marine	heavy duty hoodie	Dennis Northrup, Ward
ATA	Collector Book on Salmon	Tracey Goldsmith, Juneau
Raven's Brew Coffee	gift set: coffee, mug, tee	Harriett Wadleigh, Craig
Old Harbor Books	\$30 gift certificate	Deborah Gifford, Port Alexander
Silver Horde	spoons	Andrew Richards, Washington
Silver Horde	spoons	Ken Waters, Sitka
Silver Horde	spoons	Fran Fox, Ketchikan
Silver Horde	spoons	Brian Merritt, Wrangell
EC Phillips	canned salmon	Will Johnson, Wrangell
EC Phillips	canned salmon	Dan Cushing, Seattle
EC Phillips	canned salmon	Craig Ring, Ketchikan
EC Phillips	canned salmon	Olin Martinsen, Sitka
EC Phillips	canned salmon	Mike Rentel, Juneau
Tom Pope	half off survey fee	Joel Kawahara, Washington
Tom Pope	half off survey fee	Bert Bergman, Sitka

CRAWFISH INLET CHUM FISHERY

By Jim Moore, President ATA & NSRAA Board Member

The way the chums were harvested this year at Crawfish was unexpected and disappointing for some. Trollers still benefitted greatly and reportedly some seasons were saved. Nearly 150,000 fish were taken by our fleet. Complex inter gear group politics occurs in the aquaculture associations especially over allocation issues. Guidelines were set up so that each gear group would benefit from projects in proportion to their 3% tax contribution over a baseline period. Because trollers have been chronically below their targeted percentages the NSRAA board agreed that new production as Crawfish came online be directed toward trollers. The fish that trollers couldn't catch were to go toward "cost recovery" and help fund other projects as well. This would eliminate need for THA cost recovery in other areas allowing more fishing for seiners and gillnetters in those areas. If the amount of fish proved too overwhelming for cost recovery to clean up then the general manager could allow common property seine opening in part of the SHA. If a large buildup in the upper portion of West Crawfish threatened straying then it would be addressed by a cost recovery operation and not by turning the whole seine fleet loose in a common property fishery. It was understood that seining would not occur simultaneously in West Crawfish and any portion of the SHA/THA area so that trolling would be minimally impacted.

Here is how things went wrong. Though the return was only 56% of what was forecast it was still overwhelming. ADFG feared that too much fish built up in West Crawfish. NSRAA conducted cost recovery without much effect. Over NSRAA objection ADFG opened seining in Shamrock to mop up the buildup and requested a common property seine opening in the SHA as well. Trollers were generally unsuccessful in SHA/THA for various reasons including an algae bloom that turned the water there opaque green and lots of jelly.

The project is still in its infancy and we are all on a learning curve. It seemed like ADFG was a little heavy handed and uninformed as to how their openings affected the troll catch. The fish were allowed to buildup without any harvest for that critical week during the Coho closure. The algae and jelly is different each year and trollers are learning how to manage this. The gear is improving in effectiveness. How will things unfold next year? Expect the unexpected.

We're grateful for the support of ATA's Business Members and encourages your patronage of these fine establishments...

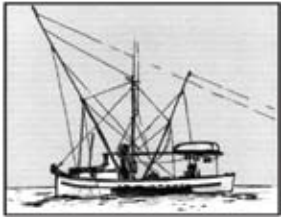
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