

State of Alaska FY2002 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Fish and Game
Sport Fisheries
Budget Request Unit

Sport Fisheries Budget Request Unit

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BRU Mission

The mission of the Sport Fish BRU is to protect and improve the state's recreational fishery resources.

BRU Services Provided

Services provided by this component fall into six major categories:

- 1) Fisheries Management - Area management biologists, stationed in 21 communities throughout the state, monitor sport and personal use fisheries and take appropriate inseason regulatory actions to ensure specific fisheries objectives are achieved;
- 2) Fisheries Stock Assessment - Data gathering, harvest surveys, population estimates, and escapement surveys conducted on fisheries and fish stocks throughout the state are essential in making management decisions;
- 3) Habitat Assessment - Field surveys and studies geared to identifying fishing practices which pose threats to fisheries habitat, and developing strategies for reducing or eliminating habitat loss;
- 4) Enhancing and Optimizing Sport Fisheries - The value that accrues to the state from its sport fishery resources is enhanced through fish stocking projects and operating hatcheries;
- 5) Information and Aquatic Education - All division staff provide information to the angling public about sport fishing opportunities and the wise use of aquatic resources;
- 6) Sport Fishing Access Development - Acquisition and development of trails, parking areas, fishing sites, and boat launching facilities.

BRU Goals and Strategies

GOALS:

The goals of the Division of Sport Fish are to conserve, manage, and enhance recreational fishery resources in order to:

- 1) sustain the yield of naturally spawning stocks of sport fish species;
- 2) provide diverse sport fishing opportunities;
- 3) optimize economic and social benefits;
- 4) optimize both recreational fishing opportunity and effort within the constraints of resource conservation and allocations established by the Board of Fisheries.

STRATEGIES:

Fisheries Management: The primary responsibility of the division is management of sport fishing resources. The goal of management is to optimize angling opportunity and diversity while sustaining the yield from the resource and also remaining within allocation decisions adopted by the Board of Fisheries. Area management biologists are the principal resource managers. They are stationed in 21 communities throughout the state. Area management biologists monitor sport and personal use fisheries; utilize stock assessment, harvest surveys, and historical fishery performance to make decisions regarding fishing seasons, areas, and catch limits within the constraints of Board of Fisheries regulations or management plans; serve as an information source to the public and the Board of Fisheries; and design management plans to guide fishery development. These activities are coordinated through regional

offices in Douglas, Anchorage, and Fairbanks. Recreational fisheries management is supported by stock assessment activities conducted through research coordinators and project biologists.

Fisheries Information: The division collects data with harvest surveys, fish stock population estimates and spawner surveys on numerous fisheries and fish stocks across the state. Without detailed knowledge about the participation in recreational fisheries and the impact of those fisheries on naturally reproducing stocks of fish, area fisheries managers cannot make appropriate decisions required to sustain the yield of recreational fishery resources over time.

Optimizing Sport Fisheries: The value of sport fisheries is optimized when management actions provide reasonable fishing opportunity for anglers, as well as the diversity of opportunity. Naturally reproducing stocks of fish cannot often sustain intense urban fisheries. The division operates two hatcheries located in Anchorage: Fort Richardson, and Elmendorf, and contracts for the production of fish with several private hatcheries. Enhancement activities add angling opportunity in the interior of the state, in southcentral, and in southeast. In addition to new opportunity, enhancement is used to divert effort and harvest from naturally reproducing stocks of fish. The division supports several habitat restoration projects, primarily to repair habitat damaged by urbanization. The division also provides funds to several habitat projects designed to mitigate the effects of development projects as well as mining and logging activities. These projects add fish by restoring the environment or identifying and mitigating potential damage while, at the same time, educating the public on the importance of fisheries habitat.

Sport Fishing and Boating Access: The access program was developed as a public service and to meet a requirement of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act. The act mandates that a minimum of 15% of the annual federal apportionment to each state be set aside for power boating access (launch ramps, mooring facilities, marinas, docks, etc.). The division has expanded the program to include development of sport fishing access trails, building support facilities at access sites (parking lots, restrooms, camping sites, etc.) and acquisition of land for sport fishing purposes. Each year a CIP request, comprised of 75% federal and 25% state match, is submitted for this program.

Information and Education: Divisional staff provide information and participate in educational activities to support BRU goals. Information and education are provided through a number of forums designed to educate anglers on conservation concepts, fishing opportunities, and fishing methods. Many of these people ultimately assist the department by becoming active stewards of the resource.

Key BRU Issues for FY2001 – 2002

Sport fishing effort by residents and non-residents, including guided as well as unguided anglers, has increased consistently during the 1980's and early 1990's. This period of rapid growth has been followed by a period of relative stability in terms of participation. The primary issues for this BRU are to assure the sustainability of sport fishing resources and also strive to maintain the quality and character of Alaska's sport fishing opportunities. There are several specific current issues that significantly impact the BRU which include: decrease in resident license sales during the late 1990s, conservation of important stocks of coho and king salmon, allocation of harvest between various resource users, and maintaining access to sport fisheries.

Implementation of the newly adopted Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy (5 AAC 39.222) is a new issue that the department and the Board of Fisheries has been working with in recent months. This policy will help ensure the sustainability of the state's salmon stocks. The Board will utilize the policy when dealing with Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Bristol Bay stocks at their January, 2001 meeting. This policy will undoubtedly be utilized during the 2001 - 2002 Cook Inlet and Kodiak meetings as well.

The coho salmon stocks supporting popular recreational fisheries in Cook Inlet, Bristol Bay and Southwest Alaska have declined substantially in number in recent years. The division has curtailed harvest and initiated both intensive management actions and stock assessment to address the situation. The Board of Fisheries allocation of chinook, coho, and sockeye salmon between various users in Upper Cook Inlet has required increasingly intensive stock assessment and harvest monitoring of recreational fisheries. The associated conflict between users has required additional resources to provide increasingly more precise information to the Board of Fisheries.

Management of recreational chinook salmon fisheries in Southeast Alaska is made more complex by the constraints associated with the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and allocation conflict among users. Maintaining the existing sport fishery in light of these complex restraints requires very precise and

extensive harvest monitoring as well as participation in the technical processes of the treaty and ESA. Chinook salmon enhancement and intensive stock assessment projects are the primary means of increasing angling opportunity and harvest.

Because of land management policies on some federal as well as private lands, it is increasingly difficult to maintain access to all sport fisheries in Alaska. Addressing these situations as they arise can occupy a significant amount of time and resources for area and regional biologists.

Federal management of subsistence fishing on federal public lands and waters could result in a loss of sport fishing opportunity. When, where, and how much is not clear at this time but the State sport fish program will strive to bring the best available scientific information to the federal subsistence decision process in an effort to maintain as much opportunity as reasonably possible.

Halibut are a very important resource to sport fisheries across coastal Alaska. The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council manages all fishing for halibut, including sport fishing. In 2000, this federal management body created by Congress, adopted allocations of halibut for the guided angler component of the sport fishery in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska. This action will have direct and indirect effects on sport fishing opportunity. The State sport fish program is currently working with Council staff on an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for charter vessel businesses in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska.

Major BRU Accomplishments for FY2000

The division represented the state nationally on technical matters before the Pacific Salmon Commission, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Research and Technical Services (RTS)

The division has produced a statewide harvest study on an annual basis since 1977 that estimates sport fishing effort, harvest and catch in all areas of the state. Division staff use these estimates to determine trends in fishing pressure and harvest. Regulatory bodies use them to create regulations to assure sustained yield. In 2000, RTS staff discovered several errors in the computer programs used to generate harvest and effort estimates during 1996 - 1998. These errors were fixed and the corrected estimates for these years have been published.

Region I: Southeast

The division used data from stock assessment programs to establish escapement goals for all major king salmon producing rivers of SE Alaska. These escapement goals were subsequently accepted by the US/Canada Chinook Technical Committee. The division successfully implemented several new wild stock indicator coded wire tag projects to improve inseason management of coho salmon fisheries in SE Alaska. A cooperative agreement was negotiated that allowed the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) to take over operation of Crystal Lake Hatchery. The state is providing approximately two-thirds of the operating funds (Fish and Game Fund and the Governor's Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund) and SSRAA is providing the remaining funding. The division administered fishing guide and guide business registration programs, and charter vessel logbooks to better monitor participation and harvest of Pacific halibut and chinook salmon.

Region II: Southcentral

A regulatory package to increase escapements of coho salmon to Cook Inlet drainages was developed by the Board of Fisheries in consultation with the department and implemented during the 2000 fishery. The division administered numerous personal use permitting systems and monitored participation and harvest in personal use shellfish and dipnet fisheries. The recreational fishery for sockeye salmon in the Kvichak River drainage was closed by emergency order due to very low escapements. Coho salmon returns to much of the Gulf of Alaska were significantly better than those observed in the last four years. A web camera site showing the real-time development of a salmon from egg to alevin was successfully implemented. The division also began an assessment of cutthroat trout resources along the proposed Carbon Mountain Road near Bering and Martin rivers on the Copper River Delta.

Region III: Interior

- Developed a strategic research plan for the Copper River chinook salmon fishery. This was a cross-divisional effort that has resulted in a fishery research plan for the next five years. Research results will allow Copper River chinook salmon stocks to be managed at high levels of sustained yield.
- Developed a plan to issue Chitina subsistence dip net permits from several department offices. This plan was expanded to provide these permits through vendors. The goal of this change was to provide greater service to the public at a reduced cost while maintaining the quality of information for effective management of the fishery.
- Supervised and successfully negotiated a one-year extension to the Chitina land use agreement with Chitina and Ahtna native corporations. This agreement affords public access across private lands for the purpose of participating in the Chitina dipnet subsistence fishery.
- Worked with the Legislature to address a fee increase in the Chitina access program through SB 301. This legislation provides fees for a fully user group supported access program and provides funding for the necessary services.
- Implemented an Information and Education program for interior Alaska, focusing on improving services to the angling public and establishing outreach programs in rural areas.
- Opened a new area management office in Bethel that is responsible for management and research responsibilities for the Lower Kuskokwim. This position will facilitate increased communication and partnerships with rural residents in the Kuskokwim.

Key Performance Measures for FY2002

Measure: Begin construction on a minimum of one new boating access facility or upgrade of an existing facility per year.

(Not yet addressed by Legislature.)

Current Status:

See Benchmark

Benchmark:

Existing boating access facilities statewide:

- 50 boat launch ramps
- 24 accessible restrooms
- 1,500 parking spaces
- 13 boarding docks
- 25 sewage pump-out and dump stations

Background and Strategies:

Background:

The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act requires that 15% of the federal funds received by the state be used for boating access projects. Since the beginning of the Boating Access Program in 1987, the Division of Sport Fish has built or renovated 50 boat launch ramps at 36 access sites throughout the state. These access sites also provide 24 accessible restrooms, 1500 parking spaces and 13 boarding docks. In addition, 25 sewage pump-out and dump stations have been provided at selected access sites and harbors.

An additional 14 projects, that were funded through FY00, are either under construction or will be started within the next year. Authority to expend CIP funds for seven new boating projects is being requested for FY02. There are about 50 projects on the current backlog list waiting for funding. New project requests are received on a regular basis from local communities.

Strategies:

The division works with local communities and sportsmen's groups to solicit ideas for new boating access projects. These new projects are added to a list of potential access projects maintained by the division which is evaluated and prioritized annually. Authority to expend CIP funds for seven new boating projects located across the state is being requested in FY02. It will be necessary to delay funding some projects until enough federal funding is available to meet the division's program goals.

Status of FY2001 Performance Measures

	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>On track</i>	<i>Too soon to tell</i>	<i>Not likely to achieve</i>	<i>Needs modification</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin Construction on a minimum of one new boating access facility or upgrade of an existing facility per year. • Maintain statewide harvest in 2001 at or above previous 5-year average of chinook, coho, sockeye, pink, and chum salmon, halibut, lingcod, rockfish, and razor clams. • Maintain or exceed the numbers of recreational anglers, the number of sport fishing trips by anglers and the number of angler days of sport fishing effort in Alaska in 1999. • Maintain the statewide sport catch of steelhead, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, lake trout, Arctic char/Dolly Varden, Arctic grayling, and northern pike. • If funding becomes available, conduct at least 10 projects with sport fishing groups, schools, or local governments to improve sport fishing. • For river systems that support a harvest of 100 or more king salmon, the number and percentage for which an escapement goal is established, will be considered. • For river systems that support a harvest of 100 or more king salmon, the number and percentage for which enumeration occurs annually will be considered. • For river systems that support a harvest of 100 or more king salmon, the number and percentage of escapement objectives achieved annually will be considered. 		X			
		X			
		X			
		X			
		X			
		X			
		X			
		X			

Sport Fisheries
BRU Financial Summary by Component

All dollars in thousands

	FY2000 Actuals				FY2001 Authorized				FY2002 Governor			
	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds
Formula Expenditures None.												
Non-Formula Expenditures												
Sport Fisheries	0.0	12,075.6	11,125.6	23,201.2	20.0	10,765.3	11,844.7	22,630.0	20.0	10,520.8	12,114.5	22,655.3
S.F. Special Projects	0.0	64.5	267.9	332.4	0.0	1,046.0	384.6	1,430.6	0.0	3,056.6	819.5	3,876.1
Totals	0.0	12,140.1	11,393.5	23,533.6	20.0	11,811.3	12,229.3	24,060.6	20.0	13,577.4	12,934.0	26,531.4

Sport Fisheries

Proposed Changes in Levels of Service for FY2002

A new BRU for the Crystal Lake Hatchery was established by the legislature during the 2000 session. Funding for this facility was transferred from the Sport Fisheries BRU to the new Crystal Lake hatchery BRU.

There has been a significant increase in dollars and positions in the Special Project component due to the availability of funds for Federal Subsistence Monitoring projects and Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery projects.

Sport Fisheries

Summary of BRU Budget Changes by Component

From FY2001 Authorized to FY2002 Governor

All dollars in thousands

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2001 Authorized	20.0	11,811.3	12,229.3	24,060.6
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:				
-Sport Fisheries	0.0	-244.5	269.8	25.3
-S.F. Special Projects	0.0	10.6	4.7	15.3
Proposed budget increases:				
-S.F. Special Projects	0.0	2,000.0	430.2	2,430.2
FY2002 Governor	20.0	13,577.4	12,934.0	26,531.4