

**State of Alaska
FY2003 Governor's Operating Budget**

**Department of Fish and Game
Sport Fisheries
Budget Request Unit Budget Summary**

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 BRU 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: Staff conducts field surveys and studies geared to identify fishing practices which pose threats to fisheries habitat, and develop 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; and 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 FY2002 – 2003

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: the 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 maintenance of access to sport fisheries.

Implementation of the newly adopted Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy (5 AAC 39.222) and the Salmon Escapement Goal Policy (5 AAC 39.223) continue to be issues that the department and the Board of Fisheries are working with. These policies will help ensure the sustainability of the state's salmon stocks. These policies will be utilized extensively during the 2001 - 2002 Cook Inlet and Kodiak Board of Fisheries meetings.

Recent declines in production of sockeye salmon in major drainages of Cook Inlet and Bristol Bay are having a significant effect on recreational fisheries in these areas. The division closed recreational fisheries in these areas by emergency order in 2000 and 2001. The division has completed an inriver management plan for the Kvichak River and will be addressing the current management plan for the Kenai River in 2002 to adequately manage sport fishing opportunity in the face of declining stocks. The Board of Fisheries allocation of chinook, coho, and sockeye salmon between various users in Cook Inlet and Bristol Bay 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 April 2001, this federal management body created by Congress, adopted an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for charter vessel businesses in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska. The State opposed this program and voted against its adoption. This action will have direct and indirect effects on sport fishing opportunity. The State sport fish program is currently working with Council staff on a halibut subsistence program.

Major BRU Accomplishments in 2001

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)

Since 1977 to the present, RTS has annually estimated 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. RTS staff supported network communications for the division as well as provided specialized programming for divisional staff. Biometricians in RTS served as a surrogate staff for a panel of international specialists reviewing the department's proposed escapement goals for salmon in Western Alaska. These same biometricians provided technical support for over 90 stock assessment and research projects for the division. Other RTS staff provided editorial and cataloging services for the 30 technical reports produced by the divisional staff this fiscal year. Estimates of harvest by guided anglers were recorded for the third year by RTS staff in a charter vessel logbook program, and RTS staff provided technical assistance in comparing these estimates to estimates from other sources before the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Staff represented state positions on committees and panels of the Pacific Salmon Commission; the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation; and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. RTS staff were instrumental in establishing minimal levels of instream flows for fish production in streams in SE Alaska proposed for hydropower development. RTS and divisional staff worked in concert to publish scientific works on sonar, biotelemetry, fish hormones, and gauging angler perceptions in national and international journals.

Region I: Southeast

Over the past several years the division has 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 and will be instrumental in establishing terminal exclusions of fish harvested in Alaska's sport, subsistence, and commercial fisheries. The division successfully implemented several new wild stock indicator coded wire tag projects to improve inseason management of coho salmon fisheries in SE Alaska including a series of sentinel stock monitoring projects funded with the Southeast Sustainable Salmon Fund. The Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) completed its first year of operation of Crystal Lake Hatchery. The state is providing approximately two-thirds of the operating funds (Fish and Game Fund and the Southeast Sustainable Salmon Fund) and SSRAA is providing the remaining funding. The division's trout and steelhead monitoring programs have documented a gradual increase in stock abundance since implementation of more restrictive regulations in the mid-1990's.

Region II: Southcentral

Regulatory issues in Bristol Bay were addressed in January of 2001. The most significant change to regulations was the development of an inriver management plan for Kvichak River sockeye salmon. Development of this plan was fortuitous because the recreational fishery for sockeye in the Kvichak River was restricted for the second consecutive year and the plan helped avoid a total closure of the fishery. The Kenai River experienced below average sockeye salmon production in 2000 and 2001, precipitating a closure of the recreational fishery in these two years. Coho salmon returns to much of the Gulf of Alaska were significantly better for the second straight year after three years of poor returns.

Region III: Interior

Staff worked with the Board of Fisheries in revising the Kuskokwim Chinook Salmon Management Plan and, in conjunction, developed a strategic research plan for the Kuskokwim River chinook salmon fishery. This was a cross-divisional effort that has resulted in a fishery research plan that will focus on a drainage-wide estimate of abundance for chinook salmon. Staff also initiated the development of an Arctic grayling management plan that will enable the management of Arctic grayling stocks within the framework of the goals of the Sport Fish Division. The position of Regional Federal Liaison was created to facilitate and increase communication with Fisheries Information Services and the federal regulatory process. Staff developed a strategic plan for our Information and Education program for interior Alaska, which focused on improving services to the angling public and establishing outreach programs in rural areas.

Key Performance Measures for FY2003

Measure:

For river systems that support a sport harvest of 100 or more king salmon, the number and percentage for which an escapement goal is established.

Sec 70.b.1. Ch 90 SLA 2001(HB 250)

Alaska's Target & Progress:

The division's target is to establish escapement goals within in the next 5 years for 100 percent of river systems supporting an annual harvest of 100 or more king salmon. The current status of this measure is reflected in the table below. These numbers are derived from data collected in 2000, which is the most current analyzed data available.

Region	# of Streams with a Sport Harvest of at least 100 King Salmon	# of Streams with a Sport Harvest of at least 100 King Salmon, which have an Escapement Goal	Percentage of Streams with Escapement Goals
I (Southeast)	3	2*	67%
II (Southcentral)	45	28	62%
III (Interior)	5	5	100%

*Fish Creek, near Juneau, had a harvest of 442 king salmon in 2000. However, the only king salmon that enter Fish Creek are hatchery fish. Fish Creek does not support natural king salmon production. Therefore, there is no escapement goal.

Benchmark Comparisons:

Alaska's in river escapement goals cannot be compared with escapement goals in others states because every river system has its own unique characteristics and factors that influence overall escapement.

Background and Strategies:

The Division of Sport Fish conducts periodic review of king salmon fisheries that support an average harvest of 100 king salmon. The goal is to collect sufficient information to establish escapement objectives that assure sustained yield in these fisheries.

Measure:

For river systems that support a sport harvest of 100 or more king salmon, the number and percentage for which enumeration occurs annually.

Sec 70.b.2. Ch 90 SLA 2001(HB 250)

Alaska's Target & Progress:

The division's target is to annually count escapements for 100 percent of river systems supporting an annual harvest of 100 or more king salmon. The current status of this measure is reflected in the table below. These numbers are derived from data collected in 2000, which is the most current analyzed data available.

Region	# of Streams with a Sport Harvest of at least 100 King Salmon	# of Streams with a Sport Harvest of at least 100 King Salmon, which are Enumerated Annually	Percentage of Streams that are enumerated Annually
I (Southeast)	3	3	100%
II (Southcentral)	45	33	73%
III (Interior)	5	5	100%

Benchmark Comparisons:

Alaska's in river escapement goals cannot be compared with escapement goals in others states because every river system has its own unique characteristics and factors that influence overall escapement.

Background and Strategies:

The Division of Sport fish conducts fishery performance and stock status assessments of fisheries that support an average harvest of 100 or more king salmon. The goal is to enumerate king salmon escapements in streams that support these fisheries.

Measure:

For river systems that support a sport harvest of 100 or more king salmon, the number and percentage of escapement objectives achieved annually.

Sec 70.b.3. Ch 90 SLA 2001(HB 250)

Alaska's Target & Progress:

The division's target is to achieve escapement goals within the next 5 years for 75 percent of river systems supporting an annual harvest of 100 or more king salmon. The current status of this measure is reflected in the table below. These numbers are derived from data collected in 2000, which is the most current analyzed data available.

Region	# of Streams with a Sport Harvest of at least 100 King Salmon	# of Streams with a Sport Harvest of at least 100 King Salmon where Escapement Goals were Achieved	Percentage of Streams where Escapement Goals were Achieved
I (Southeast)	3	2*	67%
II (Southcentral)	45	23	51%
III (Interior)	5	0**	0%

*Fish Creek does not support natural king salmon production. Therefore there is no escapement goal. However, king salmon entering Fish Creek are enumerated in order to determine total hatchery production.

** Of the five streams that did not meet the escapement goal, an under escapement occurred on only one stream. King salmon escapement could not be determined on the remaining streams due to poor weather and water conditions.

Benchmark Comparisons:

Alaska's in river escapement goals cannot be compared with escapement goals in others states because every river system has its own unique characteristics and factors that influence overall escapement.

Background and Strategies:

The Division of Sport Fish actively manages king salmon fisheries that support an average harvest of 100 king salmon. This includes proactive management through the Board of Fisheries regulatory process as well as in-season emergency order action. The goal is to annually achieve escapement objectives wherever they are established.

Measure:

The number of fish licenses sold and the total revenue generated.

Sec 70.c.1. Ch 90 SLA 2001(HB 250)

Alaska's Target & Progress:

The division's target is to maintain or increase the number of sport fishing licenses sold to residents and nonresidents. Numbers of licenses sold and corresponding revenues generated for 1998 – 2000 are listed below.

	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
# of Resident Licenses sold	174,885	173,362	177,366
Resident License Revenue	\$2,431,653	\$2,405,690	\$2,460,336

# of Non-Resident Licenses sold	249,552	264,792	276,754
Non-Resident License Revenue	\$6,566,436	\$6,823,431	\$7,047,002

Benchmark Comparisons:

We have looked at license sales, fees and structures of Washington and California. The license requirements and license fee structures are vastly different from those of Alaska, and therefore do not lend themselves to comparison.

Background and Strategies:

The division tracks the number of license sales each year, and maintains this information in an historical data base in order to spot decreasing license sales trends. We've recently conducted a survey of sport anglers designed to gather demographic and preference data which will assist with identifying who is losing interest in sport fishing and why, and where best to direct our public relations efforts.

Measure:

The percentage of Alaska residents between the ages of 16 and 59 who purchase fishing licenses.
Sec 70.c.2. Ch 90 SLA 2001(HB 250)

Alaska's Target & Progress:

The division's target is to maintain or increase the number of sport fishing licenses sold to residents. Alaska residents between the ages of 16 and 60 are required to purchase and have in their possession a sport fishing license if they want to participate in any sport or personal use fishing in the state. According to the 2000 US Census Bureau report there are 400,610 Alaska residents between the ages of 18 and 64 years of age. DF&G license sales records indicate that 177,366 residents purchased sport fishing licenses in 2000. Therefore, **44 percent** of all residents purchased sport fishing licenses in 2000.

Benchmark Comparisons:

We have looked at license sales, fees and structures of Washington and California. The license requirements and license fee structures are vastly different from those of Alaska, and therefore do not lend themselves to comparison.

Background and Strategies:

The division tracks the number of license sales each year, and maintains this information in an historical data base in order to spot decreasing license sales trends. We've recently conducted a survey of sport anglers designed to gather demographic and preference data which will assist with identifying who is losing interest in sport fishing and why, and where best to direct our public relations efforts.

Measure:

Begin construction on a minimum of one new boating access facility or upgrade of an existing facility per year in each of three regions (Southeast, Southcentral, and Interior).

Alaska's Target & Progress:

See Benchmark.

Benchmark Comparisons:

Existing boating access facilities statewide:

- 51 boat launch ramps
- 25 accessible restrooms
- 1,500 parking spaces
- 14 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 51 boat launch ramps at 37 access sites throughout the state. These access sites also provide 25 accessible restrooms, 1500 parking spaces and 14 boarding docks. In addition, 25 sewage pump-out and dump stations have been provided at selected access sites and harbors.

An additional 13 projects, that were funded through FY00, are either under construction or will be started within the next year. Authority to expend CIP funds for four new boating projects is being requested for FY03. 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 outdoor sports organizations to solicit ideas for new boating access projects. These new projects are added to lists of potential access projects maintained within each region of the state. These lists are evaluated and prioritized annually. Authority to expend CIP funds for four new boating projects located across the state is being requested in FY03.

Sport Fisheries
BRU Financial Summary by Component

All dollars in thousands

	FY2001 Actuals				FY2002 Authorized				FY2003 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
<u>Formula Expenditures</u>	None.											
<u>Non-Formula Expenditures</u>												
Sport Fisheries	0.0	10,411.6	11,627.4	22,039.0	20.0	10,520.8	12,114.5	22,655.3	20.0	12,004.3	12,014.8	24,039.1
S.F. Special Projects	0.0	843.7	304.0	1,147.7	0.0	3,056.6	1,174.5	4,231.1	0.0	2,278.0	2,259.8	4,537.8
Totals	0.0	11,255.3	11,931.4	23,186.7	20.0	13,577.4	13,289.0	26,886.4	20.0	14,282.3	14,274.6	28,576.9

Sport Fisheries

Proposed Changes in Levels of Service for FY2003

In FY2003 the Division anticipates an increase in Aid to Sport Fish Restoration funds, also known as Dingell Johnson/Wallop Breaux funds. A significant portion of this additional funding will be used to conduct needed research to improve our understanding of wild rainbow trout stocks and their production. Funding will also be used to expand our instream flow program to provide necessary information to file for instream reservations in waters important for fish production.

In FY2002, funding was made available through the Southeast Sustainable Salmon Fund to initiate an ecosystem wide sentinel monitoring program for coastwide salmon stocks. In FY2003, additional funding has been requested to conduct assessment projects in the Haines and Petersburg areas, and for increased instream flow protection work in Southeast Alaska.

Implementation of the Wildlife Conservation Restoration program in FY2002 has made significant amounts of new federal funding available to the department through the Division of Wildlife Conservation. In FY2003 increased funding will be available to the Division of Sport Fish to expand our efforts to provide educational benefit to the general recreational fish and wildlife user throughout the state.

Sport Fisheries

Summary of BRU Budget Changes by Component

From FY2002 Authorized to FY2003 Governor

All dollars in thousands

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2002 Authorized	20.0	13,577.4	13,289.0	26,886.4
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:				
-Sport Fisheries	0.0	934.1	-83.9	850.2
-S.F. Special Projects	0.0	-778.6	235.3	-543.3
Proposed budget decreases:				
-Sport Fisheries	0.0	0.0	-15.8	-15.8
Proposed budget increases:				
-Sport Fisheries	0.0	549.4	0.0	549.4
-S.F. Special Projects	0.0	0.0	850.0	850.0
FY2003 Governor	20.0	14,282.3	14,274.6	28,576.9