

**State of Alaska**  
**FY2004 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 Division of Sport Fish is to protect and improve the state's recreational fishery resources.

### BRU Services Provided

The primary responsibility of the Division of Sport Fish BRU is to manage Alaska's sport and personal use fishing resources. The aim 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. To accomplish this the division provides the following services: 1) locally-based fisheries management, 2) stock assessment and research, 3) hatchery production, 4) maintenance and development of access, 5) habitat assessment and restoration, 6) information and education, 7) enforcement, and 8) fisheries planning and survey.

### BRU Goals and Strategies

#### GOALS:

The Division of Sport Fish recently completed a strategic plan. Goals of the division in this plan are to:

1. Sustain recreational fishing opportunities while optimizing social and economic benefits from these opportunities;
2. Conserve, manage, and improve Alaska's aquatic, riparian, and upland habitats to ensure sustainability of Alaska's fishery resources;
3. Foster a public that is consistently informed and involved with recreational fisheries; and,
4. Recruit, develop, empower, and retain a diverse, dedicated, motivated, empowered, and effective workforce.

#### STRATEGIES:

To achieve these goals, the division employs the following strategies/functions:

Locally-Based Fisheries Management: The division develops fishery regulations and management plans in coordination with the Board of Fisheries and other regulatory boards to manage the state's recreational and personal use fisheries in accordance with the sustained yield principal. 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 in accordance with 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.

Stock Assessment: The division regularly assesses fish populations that are the basis of our state's recreational and personal use fisheries to ensure sustained yield from these resources.

Hatchery Production: The division maintains three hatcheries that produce chinook salmon, coho salmon, rainbow trout, Arctic char, and Arctic grayling to provide additional and more diverse recreational fishing opportunities in a manner that does not affect wild stocks or their fisheries.

Access Development: The division builds, buys, leases, and maintains physical access to fisheries for the benefit of Alaska's recreational and personal use fishers.

Habitat Assessment and Restoration: The division assesses the habitat needs and requirements of fish populations

required to maintain the productivity and sustained yield of these resources.

Information and Education Services: The division supports an outreach program to inform and educate the public regarding sport fishing opportunities, regulations, and conservation and stewardship principles (e.g., life histories of fishes and their habitats).

Enforcement: The division assists in enforcement of state fish laws and regulations to ensure that orderly and legal recreational and personal use fisheries occur.

Planning and Survey: The division monitors fishery statistics (participation, catch, and harvest) and the preferences of Alaska's public regarding the management of Alaska's recreational and personal use fisheries.

### **Key BRU Issues for FY2003 – 2004**

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 fish targeted by recreational anglers, allocation of harvest between various resource users, maintenance of access to sport fisheries, and maintenance and restoration of critical habitats that support fish stocks targeted by recreational anglers.

Implementation of the 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.

The public is becoming increasingly aware of the tradeoffs between maximization of sport fishing opportunities and the perceived decline in quality of fishing experience, especially in the road accessible salmon fisheries of southcentral and interior Alaska. This issue is best illustrated in the continuing conflict between guided and unguided chinook salmon anglers on the Kenai River. The division is taking steps to allow for better dissemination of biological information and facilitation of communication and interaction among the user groups so that "win-win" management strategies can be developed and forwarded to the Board of Fisheries for consideration. This process of obtaining information for fishery managers may form a template for approaching these conflicts in other areas of the state.

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 assures that angler access is maintained and, where practical, expanded.

Federal management of subsistence fishing on federal public lands and waters is resulting in a loss of sport fishing opportunity across Alaska. Federal agencies have closed state managed sport and subsistence fisheries for king and chum salmon in the Yukon and Kuskokwim River drainages and for sockeye at Falls Lake, Gut Bay, Pillar Bay, and Redoubt Lake in southeast Alaska and have eliminated the use of nets in state managed subsistence fisheries in the Sarkar River. 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 sport fishing opportunity as possible while assuring for a subsistence priority and sustained yield.

The division will continue with year 3 of a four-year anadromous fish habitat assessment in Southcentral and Interior/Northern Alaska under a \$1 million Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant. Extensive anadromous fish surveys and habitat evaluations will be conducted in the Middle Susitna River drainage, Bristol Bay, Copper River and other priority drainages. The Kachemak Bay Research Reserve will continue to develop long-term research, oceanographic monitoring, education, outreach, and interpretive programs for Kachemak Bay and Lower Cook Inlet.

Work continued on updating the Restoration Guide, specifically for evaluating restoration projects on the Kenai Peninsula. Work with off-road vehicle (ORV) dealers and users and landowners on the lower Kenai Peninsula to reduce impacts of ORV trails on fish streams and water quality. Review of hydroelectric development proposals to avoid or minimize adverse effects on fish habitats and human users of fish will also continue.

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. The state sport fish program continues to work with the International Pacific Halibut Commission to collect baseline biological data and with Council staff on important halibut issues.

## Major BRU Accomplishments in 2002

### Research and Technical Services (RTS)

Since 1977, the division's Research and Technical Services unit 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. Biometricians in RTS provided technical support for over 90 stock assessment and research projects for the division. Biometricians, fisheries scientists, and fisheries biologists in RTS served on committees reviewing the department's escapement goals and represented the state on national and international technical committees. Other RTS staff provided editorial and cataloging services for more than 30 technical reports produced by the divisional staff this fiscal year. RTS staff monitored and reported harvest in several personal-use fisheries through a permitting program. Estimates of harvest by guided anglers were recorded for the fourth 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. 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 and on gauging angler perceptions in national and international journals.

### Region I: Southeast

Sport Fish staff conducted the regional review of escapement goals for king and coho salmon, as mandated by the Sustainable Salmon Policy. With the exception of the Blossom River, all chinook and coho stocks were within their established escapement ranges during recent years. Coho salmon escapements throughout the region were near record levels in 2002. Sport Fish staff initiated a public review of the regional king salmon fishery and the SE King Salmon Management Plan. The review developed into a Board of Fisheries Task Force charged with proposing modifications to the plan to reduce harvest by non-resident anglers and maintain the sport harvest within its allocation. A new steelhead stock assessment project was implemented to determine specific steelhead life history characteristics and develop a methodology for establishing escapement goals.

### Region II: Southcentral

Regulatory issues in Upper Cook Inlet were addressed in February 2002. Changes were made to sport fishery management of chinook salmon in the Susitna drainage and on the Kenai Peninsula. In response to improving stock status in the Susitna drainage, liberalizations were made to remote chinook salmon fisheries in this drainage. Major changes were made to early run chinook fisheries on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers in response to concerns about the loss of big fish and possible ballooning of effort from one river to another. Modifications were made to the Kenai River Sockeye Salmon Management plan that provided more flexibility and a precautionary approach to managing sport and personal use sockeye salmon fisheries in the Kenai River. Sockeye salmon returns to Cook Inlet were greater than anticipated and the flexible approach allowed for liberalization of fisheries. Coho salmon stock status in Cook Inlet was reviewed by the Board of Fisheries and no major changes to the precautionary approach adopted in 2000 were made. Coho salmon returns to much of the Gulf of Alaska were significantly better for the third straight year after three years of poor returns.

### Region III: Interior

Staff conducted both resident species and salmon research in FY02 to prepare for regulatory issues that will be proposed at the PWS/Copper River Board of Fish meetings. In preparation for this board meeting staff also worked cross-divisionally to review PWS and Copper River drainage salmon escapement goals relative to the Sustainable Salmon Policy. Furthermore, the region implemented a new long-term project that will help enumerate chinook salmon escapement in the Gulkana River, which is part of the Copper River drainage. Staff continued working on 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. Staff from Region III were instrumental in helping to develop the draft Divisional Strategic Plan, which will be used to help prioritize and direct research, management, and budget objectives.

With assistance from the Regional Federal Liaison, Region III continued working cooperatively to assess key fisheries in Region III that are used by both sport and subsistence fishers.

**Statewide: Habitat Assessment**

Several new projects were started during FY02 including road culvert assessment for efficient fish passage on the Kenai Peninsula; fish habitat restoration projects in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Copper River Basin and the Municipality of Anchorage Borough; anadromous stream inventories throughout the Yukon River basin; a survey of ATV stream crossing locations in the upper Sustina River drainage; an evaluation of urban and agricultural impacts to Wasilla Creek; an evaluation of restoration projects in the Mat-Su Borough; and a fish distribution and habitat survey of the middle Susitna River and west side Cook Inlet drainages and selected portions of the Matanuska-Susitna valley and an assessment of ATV impacts to fish spawning and rearing habitat in lower Kenai Peninsula drainages. A four-year project was initiated to identify and catalog anadromous fish habitat in large areas of southcentral, southwest, western, northwestern and interior Alaska. Conversion of the maps to support the Anadromous Water Catalog, which will be maintained by DNR, into GIS format has been largely completed statewide. All government oil spill contingency plans and new industry contingency plans were reviewed.

**Key Performance Measures for FY2004**

**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 124 SLA 2002(HB 515)

**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 2001, 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	1*	33%
II (Southcentral)	40	27	68%
III (Interior)	9	8	89%

\*Fish Creek, near Juneau, had a harvest of 1,252 king salmon in 2001 and Blind Slough, near Petersburg, had a harvest of 3,597 king salmon in 2001. However, the only king salmon that enter Fish Creek and Blind Slough are hatchery fish. Neither location supports 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 124 SLA 2002(HB 515)

**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 2001, 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)	40	31	78%
III (Interior)	9	8	89%

**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 124 SLA 2002(HB 515)

**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 2001, 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	1*	33%
II (Southcentral)	40	24	60%
III (Interior)	9	7	78%

\*Fish Creek and Blind Slough do not support natural king salmon production. Therefore there are no escapement goals. However, king salmon entering Fish Creek and Blind Slough are enumerated in order to determine total hatchery production.

**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 124 SLA 2002(HB 515)

**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 1999 – 2001 are listed below.

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>
# of Resident Licenses sold	172,717	177,700	173,470
Resident License Revenue	\$2,324,715	\$2,380,516	\$2,388,474
# of Non-Resident Licenses sold	269,153	280,939	274,968
Non-Resident License Revenue	\$6,887,333	\$7,109,649	\$6,991,014

**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 124 SLA 2002(HB 515)

**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 173,470 residents purchased sport fishing licenses in 2001. Therefore, **43.3 percent** of all residents purchased sport fishing licenses in 2001.

**Benchmark Comparisons:**

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**Background and Strategies:**

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**Sport Fisheries**  
**BRU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars in thousands*

	FY2002 Actuals				FY2003 Authorized				FY2004 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
<b><u>Formula Expenditures</u></b>	None.											
<b><u>Non-Formula Expenditures</u></b>												
Sport Fisheries	0.0	10,270.0	11,664.5	21,934.5	0.0	12,004.3	12,014.8	24,019.1	0.0	12,125.0	12,295.8	24,420.8
S.F. Special Projects	0.0	1,534.6	892.4	2,427.0	0.0	2,278.0	2,259.8	4,537.8	0.0	3,670.6	3,404.7	7,075.3
Sport Fisheries Habitat	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	264.2	1,177.3	2,164.1	3,605.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>11,804.6</b>	<b>12,556.9</b>	<b>24,361.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>14,282.3</b>	<b>14,274.6</b>	<b>28,556.9</b>	<b>264.2</b>	<b>16,972.9</b>	<b>17,864.6</b>	<b>35,101.7</b>

## Sport Fisheries

### Proposed Changes in Levels of Service for FY2004

In FY02, funding was made available through the Southeast Sustainable Salmon Fund to initiate an ecosystem wide monitoring program for coastwide salmon stocks. In FY04, additional funding has been requested to continue instream flow protection work in the Juneau, Petersburg, and Haines areas, and to develop alternative methods for establishing salmon escapement goals throughout southeast.

Implementation of the Wildlife Conservation Restoration program in FY03 has made additional federal funding available to the department through the Division of Wildlife Conservation. In FY04 funding will be available to the division to expand our efforts to provide educational benefit to recreational fish and wildlife users throughout the state. Funding will provide for support for conservation education expansion of volunteer led aquatic education and water quality monitoring programs, development of educational/interpretive material on the threat posed by invasive aquatic species, technical assistance for instream flow, outfitting of an aquatic education mobile classroom, development of a non-game and resident fish curriculum, and outdoor stewardship education.

In FY04 the division may receive additional federal funds to expand halibut harvest monitoring programs in the sport fisheries of Southeast and Southcentral Alaska, as well as initiate groundfish stock assessment projects in specific areas experiencing user group conflicts.

In FY04 the Crystal Lake Hatchery BRU will be combined with the Sport Fish BRU due to the reduction in funds over time and the fact that we have a solution in place with our contractual relationship with SSRAA.

Select functions from the re-engineered Habitat and Restoration Division were reprogrammed into the Division of Sport Fish in the FY04 budget. The reprogrammed functions are related to the division's mission and goals. No specific program changes are anticipated for FY04.

## Sport Fisheries

### Summary of BRU Budget Changes by Component

#### From FY2003 Authorized to FY2004 Governor

*All dollars in thousands*

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2003 Authorized</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>14,282.3</b>	<b>14,274.6</b>	<b>28,556.9</b>
<b>Adjustments which will continue current level of service:</b>				
-Sport Fisheries	0.0	120.7	281.0	401.7
-S.F. Special Projects	0.0	20.9	15.3	36.2
-Sport Fisheries Habitat	264.2	1,177.3	2,164.1	3,605.6
<b>Proposed budget increases:</b>				
-S.F. Special Projects	0.0	1,371.7	1,129.6	2,501.3
<b>FY2004 Governor</b>	<b>264.2</b>	<b>16,972.9</b>	<b>17,864.6</b>	<b>35,101.7</b>