

# **State of Alaska FY2017 Governor's Operating Budget**

## **Department of Fish and Game Sport Fisheries Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary**

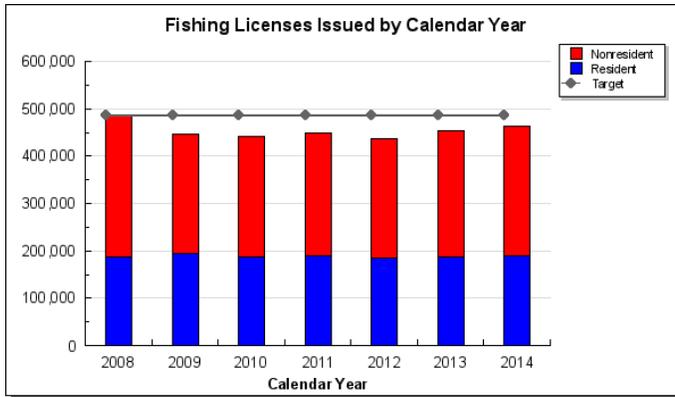
**Sport Fisheries Results Delivery Unit**

**Contribution to Department's Mission**

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

**Results**

(Additional performance information is available on the web at <https://omb.alaska.gov/results>.)



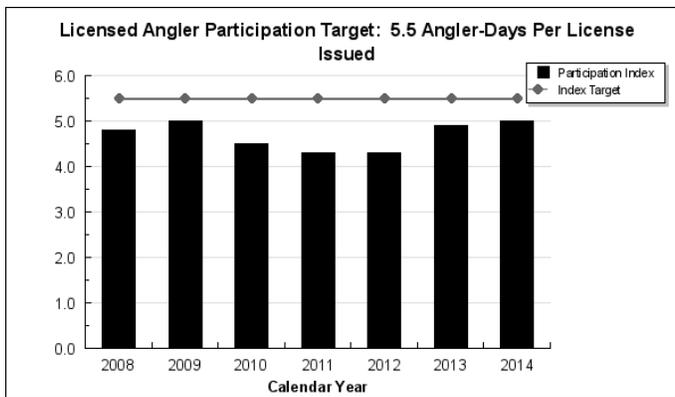
**Core Services**

- Manage wild fish stocks using scientifically and statistically sound research to ensure sustained use by Alaska's recreational fisheries.
- Diversify and enhance recreational fishing opportunities via supplemental stocking of hatchery-reared fish.

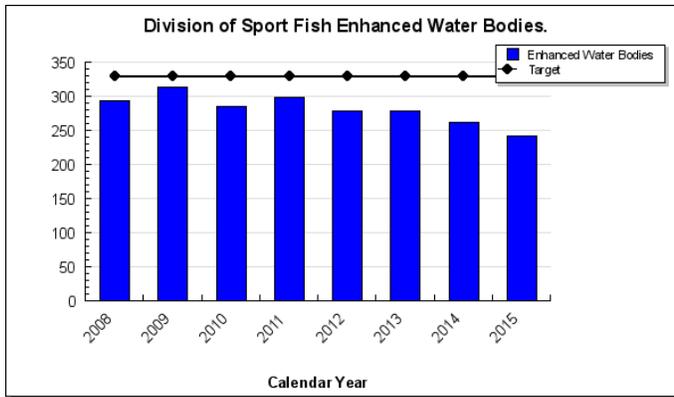
**Measures by Core Service**

(Additional performance information is available on the web at <https://omb.alaska.gov/results>.)

**1. Manage wild fish stocks using scientifically and statistically sound research to ensure sustained use by Alaska's recreational fisheries.**



## 2. Diversify and enhance recreational fishing opportunities via supplemental stocking of hatchery-reared fish.



### Major RDU Accomplishments in 2015

#### Fisheries Management

Chinook salmon returns in 2015 remained relatively low compared to long-term average run sizes, but improved incrementally relative to recent low runs. The improved runs resulted in fewer sport fisheries being restricted or closed in a number of streams throughout Southcentral Alaska, including Cook Inlet and Copper River fisheries, compared to the 2014 season. Improved Chinook salmon runs contributed to increased angler opportunities and satisfaction in 2015. Participation in Alaska's sport fisheries appeared to increase, based on improved (preliminary estimates up +20%) sales of fishing licenses and king salmon stamps. Chinook salmon opportunities in Southeast Alaska were similar to 2014 with larger than average southbound fish along the outer coast filling angler bag and annual limits frequently.

The Recreational Boating and Angler Access program completed four larger capital projects during FY2015: the Talkeetna Launch Boat Basin Dredging; the Rocky Lake Boat Launch Ramp Renovation near Wasilla; the Izaak Walton State Recreation Site Boat Launch Renovation in Sterling; and, the Skid Steer Loader Equipment Acquisition in Palmer.

#### Fisheries Research

The division further advanced understanding of Chinook salmon across the state through the use of Chinook Salmon Research Initiative (CSRI) funding and other capital appropriations. Publication of Chinook News, Issue No. 2 in winter, 2015 provided an update on work conducted under the CSRI. Projects were planned, reviewed for statistical integrity and implemented in 12 systems across the state. Information from those projects was used to inform management whereby assessments showed improved escapements over the prior year thus allowing for more harvest opportunities on a number of systems. One key accomplishment was completion of the transition to an upstream Chinook salmon escapement enumeration site on the Kenai River, improving the accuracy and consistency of estimates of total Chinook salmon abundance in that system. In addition, the division continued to capture and mark Susitna River Chinook and coho salmon to estimate inriver abundance and assess spawning distribution with CIP funding received in FY2014.

#### Fisheries Enhancement

The division continued to diversify sport fishing opportunities via production of fish at the William Jack Hernandez hatchery in Anchorage and the Ruth Burnett hatchery in Fairbanks. The division's enhancement program successfully stocked over 4.7 million Arctic char, grayling, Chinook and coho salmon, and rainbow trout into 222 lakes and 13 anadromous sites across the state during FY2015. These stocking efforts provide for diverse angler opportunities in both fresh and marine waters, and reduced effort and harvests on wild stocks. In 2015, state hatchery staff observed some of the first Chinook and coho salmon returns resulting from the release of smolt produced in recirculating hatchery systems - a milestone in Sport Fish Enhancement nationwide.

#### Communications and Outreach

Area office and regional Information Center staff continued to deliver high quality customer service by providing

information to, and communicating with, hundreds of visitors to the Anchorage and Fairbanks Information Centers. Information delivered ranged from recreational fishing in Alaska including fishing tips, regulations and inseason management actions, results of research projects, and public access.

As part of the department's larger Licensing Modernization project, the division helped implement electronic permitting and harvest reporting capability for the first time in 2015. In July, permits were made available to participants in the Cook Inlet and Chitina personal use salmon fisheries online. This enabled individuals to obtain permits online and print from home. Permit holders were also able to report harvests online for these fisheries.

### **Fish Habitat**

Division staff continued to conserve habitats important to sustaining sport fisheries through a number of efforts. Staff filed reservation of water (instream flow) applications with DNR on 43 waterbodies. Outreach efforts on the Kenai resulted in 3,420 feet of riverbank and riparian habitat restoration. Staff updated the Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC) and Atlas with 721 new miles of anadromous habitat that will receive protection under Title 16. And six fish passage restoration projects reconnected 33.6 stream miles and nearly 700 acres of lake habitat for fish.

Northern pike eradication and suppression efforts continued to make progress in Southcentral Alaska. Eradication efforts in Soldotna Creek were completed in Area 1 (one of two areas scheduled for rotenone treatment and restoration). Testing in 2015 confirmed that treatment in fall 2014 was successful, and Area 1 was reseeded with native fish still prevalent in Area 2. Otter Lake in Anchorage was treated in early October. Suppression of northern pike from the Alexander Creek drainage continued in 2015. This multi-year gillnetting effort has resulted in removal of over 15,000 pike. Annual aerial indices of Chinook salmon escapement have steadily increased in Alexander Creek, and juvenile Chinook salmon distribution has expanded throughout the length of the creek.

### **Division Operations**

The division continues to identify and realize workflow efficiencies and implement organization structural changes to adjust to funding declines. Recent attrition across the division core services is allowing us to continue to realize program efficiencies and restructuring as a means to continue achieving division goals.

## **Key RDU Challenges**

### **Overview**

- Continue to achieve the division goal to sustain recreational fishing opportunities while optimizing social and economic benefits despite fluctuating revenues.
- Improve customer service through advances in the licensing modernization (myADFG) project.

### **Fisheries Management**

Chinook salmon runs in 2016 are likely to continue at relatively low levels, although larger runs observed in 2015 indicate a possible increase in the size for some runs in the future. Relatively low run expectations coupled with a number of stocks designated as stocks of concern by the Board of Fisheries will likely challenge managers with providing anglers opportunity while attaining fishery and escapement goals. Pre- and inseason restrictions to sport fishing opportunity will likely be needed in places to ensure Chinook stocks are conserved.

Sport fishing business and guide licensing statutes sunsetted December, 2014. As a result, sport fishing businesses and guides are no longer held to minimum professional standards previously contained in the statutes and are no longer required to pay a fee. The standards helped protect consumers and ensure a credible sport fishing guide industry, and the fee helped offset costs associated with administering the licensing program and a logbook reporting program that provides important information used for fishery management. In FY2016, the division funded the logbook program in the absence of fee revenues to ensure continued collection of logbook reporting data. The division is conducting outreach to the sport fishing guide industry about the current guide and guide business registration and reporting program, and pending legislation (House Bill 41) that would reinstitute statutes requiring licensing of guides and guide businesses.

### **Fisheries Research**

Capital funding through the Chinook Salmon Research Initiative and other legislative initiatives to support Chinook salmon stock assessment is expected to be largely expended in FY2016 and FY2017. This presents a challenge to the division in that discontinuation of affected chinook salmon projects will result in less information available to

understand stock dynamics and changes in productivity, and for use in managing fisheries. Chinook salmon returns in 2015 remained relatively low compared to long-term average run sizes, but improved incrementally relative to recent low runs. Without funds to replace those fully expended, the division's ability to perform objective-based research that supports sport fisheries management will be impacted.

### **Fisheries Enhancement**

Fluctuating revenues continue to challenge the division's ability to provide for diverse sport fishing opportunities via supplemental production of hatchery-reared fish. Budget reductions to the division's enhancement activities in FY2016 resulted in elimination of the Artic grayling stocking program comprised of 55,000 catchables and 20,000 fingerlings, and a reduction in rainbow trout stocking of more than 157,000 fingerlings. These reductions impact fishing opportunity at 69 lakes in Southcentral and Interior Alaska.

### **Communications and Outreach**

Continued level of informing the public about Alaska's recreational fishing opportunities, angler access, regulations, and fisheries management in a timely manner and using modern approaches to communication will be essential to maintaining and increasing angler participation and satisfaction. Our focus will be to inform and to fully staff our information centers, but declining budgets have nearly eliminated educational fishery programs in the schools.

### **Fish Habitat**

The Division coordinates aquatic habitat activities and local partnerships formed in Alaska under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP). Third-party funds used to support collaboration among state agencies, federal and local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and stakeholders expire in March 2016. If additional funding cannot be found, the department may no longer be able to provide direct support to local fish habitat partnerships.

Invasive species, most notably Northern pike and Elodea, continue to present a key challenge to sport fisheries and fish habitat in FY2016. Efforts to eradicate and suppress northern pike in Southcentral Alaska are ongoing in part due to the availability of outside funding sources such as the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund. The division is working with DNR as the lead agency on efforts to address Elodea.

## **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2017**

### **Overview**

- Revisions to the "Division of Sport Fish Strategic Plan: "2015-2020" will be finalized and implemented to guide division activities for the next planning period (through 2020).
- The division will need to adjust research priorities for the twelve Chinook salmon indicator stocks identified in the Chinook Salmon Research Initiative (CSRI) plan to reflect remaining CIP funding.

### **Fisheries Management**

The outcome of two key legislative bills this upcoming session – House Bill 137, sport fishing license fees; and House Bill 41, sport fishing guide services – will impact the division's goal to ensure the sustained use of Alaska's sport fisheries while optimizing economic and social benefits. Impacts will directly affect revenues from guide license fees and the sale of sport fishing licenses and king salmon tags. These revenues are used to collect logbook information and conduct sampling activities in key ports, both of which provide data to inform fishery management decisions. These revenues also match federal funds and support activities statewide.

### **Fisheries Research**

Loss of CIP funding from the CSRI will result in the termination of Nushagak Chinook stock assessment, port sampling for Chinook in Southcentral region, and coded-wire tagging of Chinook at WJHSFH for Cook Inlet releases, and elimination of juvenile sampling activities on the Copper River.

### **Fisheries Enhancement**

Elimination of the Arctic Grayling program and reduced rainbow trout fingerling releases from both the Ruth Burnett and William Jack Hernandez hatcheries will require strategic adjustments to production and releases in FY2017 enhanced fisheries. The division is planning to conduct a review of its fisheries enhancement core service to optimize angler benefits from its hatchery programs.

### **Communications and Outreach**

Efforts will continue to be focused on the development of modern communication tools (mobile apps, video, social media) that work to improve information delivery to anglers. Current plans involve utilization of Gov Delivery to provide more timely notification of regulation changes, upcoming events and other note-worthy news. We will also continue to produce “how-to” videos and enhance our collection of informational materials on the internet to promote participation in sport fishing.

**Fish Habitat**

Northern pike suppression and eradication is expected to continue in FY2017, largely under grant funding. Suppression efforts will continue on Alexander Creek at reduced levels. Rotenone was applied to Otter Lake in the fall of 2015, and an evaluation of that application will be conducted in the spring 2016 to assess further applications and monitoring. Soldotna Creek’s Area 2 is expected to be treated in FY2016 and FY2017. New eradication efforts in Southcentral Alaska will shift toward Anderson and King lakes in the Cottonwood Creek drainage using grant funds. The goal in the latest effort for the Cottonwood system will be to assess current conditions and to conduct public scoping.

**Division Operations**

A large operational challenge within the division at this time is implementation of IRIS, the new statewide accounting system. A number of unforeseen changes in FY2017 are likely as the system and workflows mature. In addition to IRIS challenges, a new departmental system has been in development that will also require a number of changes as well as training during the startup phase.

Contact Information
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**Sport Fisheries  
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	FY2015 Actuals				FY2016 Management Plan				FY2017 Governor			
	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
<b>Formula Expenditures</b> None.												
<b>Non-Formula Expenditures</b>												
Sport Fisheries	5,474.7	18,277.5	12,973.0	36,725.2	5,736.7	19,775.7	16,764.5	42,276.9	4,140.7	21,275.7	16,764.5	42,180.9
Sport Fish Hatcheries	2,028.4	158.5	3,340.7	5,527.6	55.8	256.9	5,417.4	5,730.1	55.8	256.9	5,417.4	5,730.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,503.1</b>	<b>18,436.0</b>	<b>16,313.7</b>	<b>42,252.8</b>	<b>5,792.5</b>	<b>20,032.6</b>	<b>22,181.9</b>	<b>48,007.0</b>	<b>4,196.5</b>	<b>21,532.6</b>	<b>22,181.9</b>	<b>47,911.0</b>

**Sport Fisheries**  
**Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component**  
**From FY2016 Management Plan to FY2017 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>Unrestricted Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2016 Management Plan</b>	5,792.5	0.0	20,032.6	22,181.9	48,007.0
<b>One-time items:</b>					
-Sport Fisheries	0.0	0.0	-500.0	0.0	-500.0
<b>Adjustments which continue current level of service:</b>					
-Sport Fisheries	-1,596.0	0.0	2,000.0	0.0	404.0
<b>FY2017 Governor</b>	<b>4,196.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>21,532.6</b>	<b>22,181.9</b>	<b>47,911.0</b>