

**State of Alaska**  
**FY2020 Governor's Operating Budget**

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

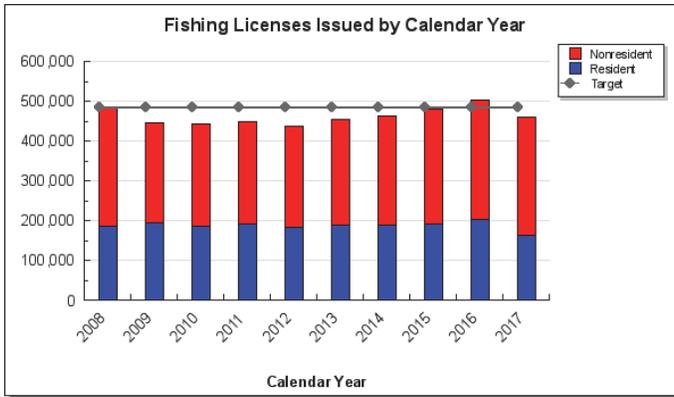
**Sport Fisheries Results Delivery Unit**

**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>.)



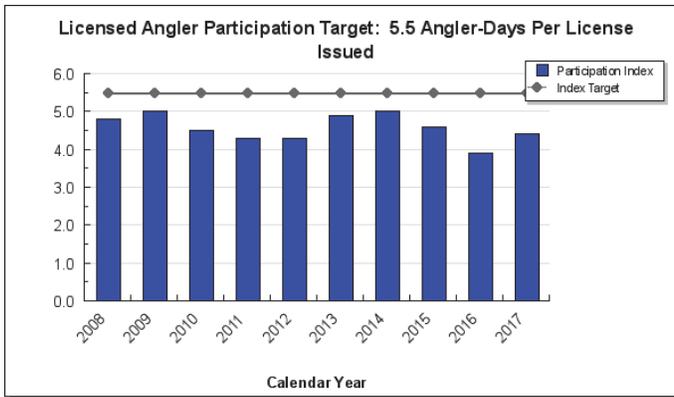
**Core Services**

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

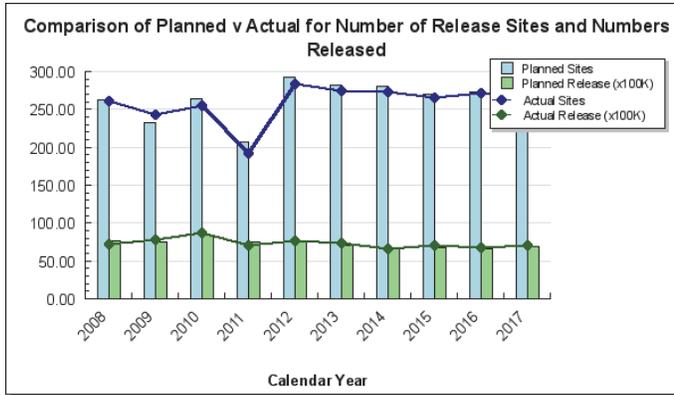
**Measures by Core Service**

(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 sport fisheries.**



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



### Major RDU Accomplishments in 2018

#### Major Core Service Accomplishments in 2018

##### Sustaining Fishing Opportunities

The division continued to conduct many quantitative stock assessment projects (weirs, counting towers, and aerial surveys) statewide to provide objective in-season data. This data is key to informing managers in decisions to provide fishery opportunity and manage stocks for sustained yield. Area Managers issued a total of 136 Emergency Orders and News Releases during 2018 that either restricted, liberalized, or informed the public of fishing opportunities during the season. Given the expected poor outlook for Chinook salmon, managers focused on where additional opportunity might be available for other species. As a result, opportunities for sockeye salmon fishing were liberalized in Redoubt Bay/Lake, Resurrection Bay, Larson Creek, Coghill, Saltery Cove, Wood, Nushagak-Mulchatna, Naknek, Kasilof, and the Russian Rivers. Similarly, opportunities for available coho salmon were made available via emergency orders in the Mat-Su Valley, Kodiak, Anchorage, and Juneau (hatchery) areas, and Unalakleet River.

In our ongoing efforts to reduce complex regulations, the division submitted six staff proposals to the Alaska Board of Fisheries to simplify confusing regulations, and all were adopted. Division staff in Interior and Southcentral regions operated a booth at the Great Alaska Sportsman's Show and Fairbanks Outdoor Show to answer questions on regulations, fisheries management, and fishing opportunities. Staff held meetings with various sport fishing groups in Southeast Alaska to discuss conservative management actions needed to achieve Chinook salmon escapement goals in 2017. The division also hosted meetings and public events to discuss rockfish conservation and deepwater release techniques with members of the public, purchased and distributed deepwater release mechanisms directly to anglers and guides, and disseminated information broadly as part of an outreach effort designed to encourage deepwater release of rockfish and thereby improve their survival.

The Division spearheaded two workshops that included biologists from both the divisions of Commercial Fisheries and Sport Fish where they initiated discussions regarding management issues and stock assessment needs for black and yelloweye rockfish.

##### Communication and Public Service

The division continued to strive toward improving public service through the modernization of online services and improved communication. To date, the division has moved all of its licensing and permitting to the online store and built web tools to allow online harvest reporting for personal use permits. We have broadened our use of the GovDelivery email subscription service, originally launched in 2017, to deliver important and timely information such as emergency orders, news releases, fishing reports, and the *Reel*

*Times* monthly newsletter, and to send email reminders to report harvest to personal use permit holders. The division also implemented a social media strategy to increase public awareness about important conservation issues and events and increase public engagement, and launched several social media sites to improve engagement with the public.

The division has embarked on a strategic approach to improve how it delivers sport fishing regulations to the public and thereby improve understanding and compliance. Following recommendations of a business needs analysis conducted in 2017, the division obtained and began developing a content management system to house geographically-referenced regulatory content so it can be delivered dynamically through multiple platforms such as a website or mobile app. The division also contracted with DJ Case & Associates to conduct focus groups and an online survey of licensed anglers to determine how we might improve communication of sport fishing regulations in Alaska. The results of that survey can be found [here](#).

The division hired a full-time Project Assistant for the Ship Creek Fisheries Center (SCFC) at the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery in Anchorage to focus on facility design development as well as continued exhibit design, fabrication and installation of interactive displays and informational signage to improve the hatchery visitor experience. Both the SCFC and the Tanana Valley Fisheries Center (TVFC) at the Ruth Burnett Sport Fish Hatchery in Fairbanks were staffed for public tours and visitation during times of high visitor use. Because of these initiatives, the TVFC served nearly 2,000 visitors May through August (when seasonal personnel conducted counts) and the SCFC served over 24,000 May through October 2018. This represents a substantial increase in number of visitors from previous years and adds a valuable opportunity for improved public service, communication and collaboration between the agency and public.

### **Hatchery Production**

Sport Fish Division's enhancement program continued support for some of Alaska's most popular and reliable fisheries by increasing opportunities for anglers while reducing fishing pressure on wild stocks. The "*Statewide Stocking Plan for Sport Fisheries, 2018*" outlined objectives that include the number and locations of the division's enhancement efforts for the next five years and received additional public input. In 2018, the division's hatcheries with support from cooperating Private Non-Profit (PNP) facilities produced and released 7.1 million Chinook and coho salmon, rainbow trout and Arctic char at 277 different locations.

### **Habitat Research and Restoration**

The division plays a supporting role in the data collection and compilation of information used to protect and conserve water for fish. In 2018, nearly 600 miles of fish habitat on rivers and streams throughout the state were provided protection under state law, and 11 water right certificates were issued. A survey to document fish species presence occurred at 106 sites covering over 33 miles of stream habitat in the northwestern and central portion of NPR-A. Nearly 0.5 mi of streambank was conserved and sustained, and an additional 0.6 mi was restored in heavily used/modified sections of high-valued rivers, primarily in Southcentral Alaska. These efforts also removed 250 feet of material detrimental to fish during the process.

## **Key RDU Challenges**

### **Key Core Service Challenges in FY2019**

#### **Sustaining Fishing Opportunities**

Poor Chinook salmon production experienced statewide since 2007 continues to threaten sport fishing opportunity with personal impacts to anglers and economic impacts to businesses and communities throughout the state. Poor runs were again experienced in 2018, which required increasingly severe fishing restrictions over large areas such as Southeast Alaska and Northern Cook Inlet to achieve escapement goals and conserve stocks. Some areas, the Susitna River for example, were closed to fishing for king salmon altogether. Despite these restrictions, a number of Chinook salmon escapement and hatchery egg take goals were not achieved. Chinook salmon runs in 2019 are likely to remain low and will continue to

challenge managers with providing fishing opportunity while ensuring conservation goals. Preseason fishing restrictions will again likely be needed to ensure that Chinook salmon escapement goals are met, and stocking levels are maintained.

In 2012, the department identified a need to more precisely characterize Chinook salmon productivity and abundance trends, understand causes of the decline, and track population trends. Capital funds subsequently appropriated enabled partial advancement of the department's Chinook Salmon Research Initiative. However, Capital funds have been expended and knowledge gaps persist for stock-specific escapement, harvest and smolt assessments, other areas. Similarly, erratic coho salmon runs and high competition among fisheries in Cook Inlet have created substantial stock assessment gaps for that species. Capital funds previously appropriated combined with other funding sources provided key information such as spawner abundance, stock-specific harvest estimates, harvest rates, and return per spawner for the Susitna River drainage. Those funds are now expended and, in the absence of this information, available fishing opportunity in places like the Susitna and Kenai Rivers remains less certain, and management remains more conservative.

There are no fishery-independent assessments of state-managed groundfish including lingcod and rockfish. This presents a significant data gap for these species with complex life histories that make research and stock assessment inherently difficult.

### **Communications and Public Service**

Approximately 500,000 anglers participate annually in Alaska's sport fisheries. Many are new to the activity in any given year, and many participate in some but not all years. Interests vary among anglers: some fish to put food on the table, while others practice catch-and-release as a form of conservation; some fish to spend time outdoors and others for the challenge. As a result, Alaska residents and visitors alike face an inherent challenge in gaining and maintaining awareness of ever-changing fishing opportunities, and in understanding and complying with fishing regulations.

Sport fishing regulations have increased in complexity, and recent restrictions to Chinook salmon fishing opportunity as well as guided halibut fishing opportunity have further challenged the ability to stay informed. Based on the 2018 survey, a majority of anglers (60 percent) find fishing regulations at least somewhat confusing. About one-quarter of respondents reported that the complexity of Alaska sport fishing regulations kept them from fishing at least occasionally (25 percent of the time), sometimes (50% of the time), or often (75% of the time). The division, however, remains committed to improving access to and understanding of Alaska's sport fishing regulations.

Passage of HB 260 during the 2018 legislative session increased awareness of the ability for anglers to carry digital copies of their license on mobile devices. However, technical challenges preclude the department from offering licenses in a valid, secure digital display format along with harvest recording functions currently required by regulation. The department is working to address these challenges and considering pursuit of a mobile app that will allow for the purchase and display of a digital license, along with the required harvest recording capabilities.

## **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2020**

### **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2020**

#### **Sustaining Fishing Opportunities**

The division is jointly seeking funding with the Division of Commercial Fisheries to re-initiate Chinook salmon projects previously supported as part of the Chinook Salmon Research Initiative and coho salmon projects in Southcentral for which funding has expired. If secured, funding will be used to re-implement

stock assessment projects that terminated as a result of expired Capital Funds, and thereby improve population monitoring and fishing opportunity for Chinook and coho salmon.

Research projects conducted in collaboration with Division of Commercial Fisheries will inform development of management strategies for black and yelloweye rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska. In FY2019, the Division continued to host internal discussions regarding management issues and stock assessment needs for groundfish species—primarily yellow and black rockfish. Given growing concerns over stock status, the Division is committed to further engaging state and federal agency staff with rockfish management expertise, reviewing and, if appropriate, modifying management strategies, and collaboratively exploring stock assessment needs.

### **Communication and Public Service**

Based on the results of the 2018 angler survey and the recommendations from the contractor, the division will continue to review regulations for the next three years and develop regulatory proposals to reduce and simplify regulations while continuing to provide fishing opportunity. This 3-year effort is to be completed in FY2021. The division will also rephrase content of the sport fishing regulation summary booklets and web site per recommendations and rephrase content of News Releases issued to communicate emergency order actions per recommendations.

The 2018 angler survey revealed strong interest among anglers for a smart-phone app as a means to communicate regulations. The division intends to follow through on the recommendation to develop a mobile app to deliver geo-referenced regulations. As currently envisioned, features will include: displaying (only) applicable regulations in current location, ability to search for prevailing regulations by location and species, showing emergency orders in effect in specific areas and/or species, purchase and store a digital, legally valid fishing license, and provide a harvest recording function for species with annual limits. Features may also include: fish counts, fish species identification, and/or tide charts. The mobile app will likely require a phased approach over 1-2 years until it would serve as a primary tool for anglers to receive sport fishing regulations. Our goal is to produce a mobile app that would provide the license and harvest recording functions in FY2020.

### **Modernization of the Statewide Harvest Survey**

Plans to modernize the Statewide Harvest Survey are initiated to develop web-based data collection protocols to improve response rate and angler recall of households selected for survey information. The division is currently forming a team to address possible new ways to solicit survey participant's input. This should improve accuracy and precision of the estimates moving forward and improve public support for the program.

<b>Contact Information</b>
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**Sport Fisheries  
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	FY2018 Actuals				FY2019 Management Plan				FY2020 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	2,010.3	21,446.1	13,953.3	37,409.7	2,174.1	23,412.1	16,646.5	42,232.7	2,214.3	23,684.2	16,869.8	42,768.3
Sport Fish Hatcheries	0.0	175.6	5,099.2	5,274.8	0.0	317.0	5,532.9	5,849.9	0.0	319.2	5,574.8	5,894.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,010.3</b>	<b>21,621.7</b>	<b>19,052.5</b>	<b>42,684.5</b>	<b>2,174.1</b>	<b>23,729.1</b>	<b>22,179.4</b>	<b>48,082.6</b>	<b>2,214.3</b>	<b>24,003.4</b>	<b>22,444.6</b>	<b>48,662.3</b>

**Sport Fisheries**  
**Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component**  
**From FY2019 Management Plan to FY2020 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>FY2019 Management Plan</b>	<b>2,021.1</b>	<b>153.0</b>	<b>23,729.1</b>	<b>22,179.4</b>	<b>48,082.6</b>
<b>One-time items:</b>					
-Sport Fisheries	-6.1	-3.0	-500.0	0.0	-509.1
<b>Adjustments which continue current level of service:</b>					
-Sport Fisheries	49.3	0.0	772.1	223.3	1,044.7
-Sport Fish Hatcheries	0.0	0.0	2.2	41.9	44.1
<b>FY2020 Governor</b>	<b>2,064.3</b>	<b>150.0</b>	<b>24,003.4</b>	<b>22,444.6</b>	<b>48,662.3</b>