Amendment 15 to the Fishery Management Plan for
The Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ off Alaska

Additions are in red. Words indicated with a strikethrough (e.g. strikethrough) should be deleted from the FMP.

8.1.8 Bycatch Management

Bycatch in the directed commercial salmon fisheries primarily consists of groundfish species and the incidental catch of immature salmon. State and federal management measures minimize bycatch to the extent practicable and minimize the mortality of bycatch.

A combination of factors work together to keep both the number of fish taken as bycatch and the associated mortality of those fish at a negligible amount. First, ADF&G fish tickets serve as a standardized reporting method documenting all retained harvest from both state and EEZ waters. A standardized reporting methodology means an established, consistent procedure or procedures used to collect, record, and report catch and bycatch in the fisheries. There are no reporting requirements for the at-sea discards of bycatch in the troll fishery, however, discards may be voluntarily reported on fish tickets. At-sea discards and bycatch concerns are very low in this fishery due to the selectivity of gear, seasonality, and the implementation of closed areas during times of the year when bycatch is generally highest.

ADF&G regulations require that fish tickets record the type of gear used as well as the number, pounds, delivery condition, and disposition of fish species harvested and retained for both commercial and personal use (5 AAC 39.130(c)). Maximum retainable allowances (MRAs) of certain non-salmon allow for bycatch to be treated as incidental catch so that those species are able to be utilized. In addition, non-retention requirements when MRAs are achieved create incentives to avoid those species taken as bycatch. Specified closure areas during those times of the year when bycatch is generally highest serves to significantly reduce the amount of bycatch taken. Finally, the nature of the gear utilized in the troll fishery allows for discarded species to be released with limited mortality. Additional management measures are not necessary to document bycatch interactions within salmon fisheries.

8.1.9 Sport Fisheries

The ADF&G Division of Sport Fish manages the sport fisheries. Alaska statute defines sport fishing as the “taking of or attempting to take for personal use, and not for sale or barter, any fresh water, marine, or anadromous fish by hook and line held in the hand, or by hook and line with the line attached to a pole or rod which is held in the hand or closely attended, or by other means defined by the Board of Fisheries” (AS 16.05.940(30)).

Under criteria adopted by the Board, the ADF&G Commissioner may increase or decrease sport fish bag limits or modify methods of harvest for sport fish by means of emergency orders. An emergency order has the force and effect of law after field announcement by the commissioner or an authorized designee. These changes may not reduce the allocation of harvest among other user groups. An emergency order may not supersede bag and possession limits or methods and means established in regulatory management plans established by the Board.

The ADF&G Commissioner or an authorized designee may decrease sport fish bag and possession limits and restrict methods and means of harvest by emergency order when (A) the total escapement of a species of anadromous fish is projected to be less than the escapement goal or the lower limit of the escapement range for that species listed in management plans that have been adopted by the Board or established by
ADF&G; or (B) the recreational harvest must be curtailed in any fishery for conservation reasons. ADF&G may issue a "catch-and-release only" emergency order when the estimated hooking mortality is not projected to reduce the population of fish below the number required for spawning escapement or, in the case of resident species, below the level required for maintenance of the desired age and size distribution of the population.

The ADF&G Commissioner or an authorized designee may increase sport fish bag and possession limits and liberalize methods and means of harvest by emergency order when (A) the total escapement of a species of anadromous fish is projected to exceed the optimum escapement goal by 25 percent or the upper limit of the escapement range for that species listed in management plans that have been adopted by the Board or established by ADF&G, if the total harvest under the increased bag and possession limit will not reduce the escapement below the optimum escapement goal or the upper limit of the escapement range; or (B) hatchery-produced fish escape through existing fisheries to designated harvest areas in numbers that exceed brood stock needs, any natural spawning requirements, or cost recovery goals of private nonprofit hatcheries. The intent of this subparagraph is to allow harvest when there are no other competing user groups.

The Division of Sport Fish has conducted a mail survey (Statewide Harvest Survey or SWHS) to estimate sport fishing annual effort (angler-days), harvest (fish kept) since 1977, and total catch (fish kept plus fish released) since 1990. Harvest and catch estimates are available for species commonly targeted by sport anglers. Effort, harvest, and catch estimates are available by region and area, but are not specifically available for the EEZ. In Southeast Alaska, the Division of Sport Fish has conducted a creel survey and port sampling program to estimate effort (angler days), harvest, and catch. The combination of the SWHS and creel surveys constitute the standardized bycatch reporting methodology for the salmon sport fishery. The standardized reporting methodology means established, consistent procedures used to collect, record, and report catch and bycatch in the fisheries.

Given the available data for sport fishing activity in the EEZ, harvest estimates can only be provided for 2010. Estimating the sport harvest of salmon for the East Area was not possible prior to 2010, and is recently only possible due to modifications made to maps used with the Saltwater Charter Vessel Logbook program. Modifications were made prior to the 2010 fishing season, whereby existing logbook maps were edited using GIS to include the NOAA-NMFS groundfish statistical areas adjacent to the ADF&G salmon statistical areas along the outer coast of Southeast Alaska.

**Sport Fishing Guide Operations**

Per Alaska statute (5 AAC 75.075(c)), the Division of Sport Fish is also responsible for overseeing the annual licensing of sport fish businesses and guides. A ‘sport fishing guide’ means a person who is licensed to provide sport fishing guide services to persons who are engaged in sport fishing (AS 16.40.299). ‘Sport fishing guide services’ means assistance, for compensation or with the intent to receive compensation, to a sport fisherman to take or to attempt to take fish by accompanying or physically directing the sport fisherman in sport fishing activities during any part of a sport fishing trip. Salmon is one of the primary species targeted in the states’ sport fisheries. All saltwater and freshwater sport fishing charter vessels must be registered through ADF&G.

In addition, all freshwater and saltwater sport fishing guide operators are required to maintain an ADF&G-issued logbook of their clients’ catch. The Division of Sport Fish conducts a program to issue saltwater and freshwater charter logbooks, which provides comprehensive effort, harvest, and catch estimates for guided anglers in saltwater. These Saltwater Guide Logbooks serve as the standardized bycatch reporting methodology for the guided sport fishery. Logbook data are available specifically for state and federal waters in Southeast Alaska since 2010. Data reported in the logbooks are used by ADF&G for the development and management of fisheries, discussion and decisions by state and federal regulatory bodies, program evaluation, and development of new department policies.