



28 February 2010

ATTN: BOF COMMENTS
Boards Support Section
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
Delivered via Fax: 907-465-6094

RE: Recommendations on 2010 Statewide Finfish Proposals

Dear Chairman Webster & Board Members,
The Southeast Alaska Guides Organization, (SEAGO) represents charter operators, lodges, and our angler customers throughout the region. Our mission is to promote the tradition of sport fishing in Southeast Alaska through reasonable regulations that ensure the long-term sustainability of our fisheries and businesses.

We are commenting on proposals (see attachment) that either directly affect the overall health of the resource or our industry. In addition to ensuring the sustainability of our fisheries, we believe that it is important to fully understand the economic contribution and different business models employed by various user groups and to craft regulations that optimize the economic value of Alaska's resources for the greater good. Sportfishing in Southeast hosts 100,000 anglers each year and makes a substantial contribution to the communities where we live and work by adding \$300M in economic value and creating 3,000+ jobs annually. We respectfully request that the Board of Fisheries consider these proposals based on both sound science and financial facts.

We appreciate your commitment to ensuring that Southeast sport and guided sport anglers continue to have fair access to the resource. SEAGO welcomes the opportunity to work with all stakeholders to arrive at decisions that are in the best economic interests of our communities, the sustainability and conservation of our fisheries, and towards preserving Southeast Alaska as a premier sport fishing destination. You have SEAGO's pledge to work constructively to that end.

Thank you for taking our recommendations into consideration.

Sincerely,

John A. Blair
Executive Director
925-366-6638
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Attachment – SEAGO Recommendations on 2010 Statewide Finfish Proposals

SEAGO offers the following recommendations listed below. We may also wish to provide additional information via public testimony and Recorded Comments during the BOF meeting in Anchorage in March.

<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
164	OPPOSE <i>Unlawful Possession of Subsistence Finfish</i> We understand the desire to stop reported abuse of selling subsistence or personal use fish but we don't see how this proposal could be enforced. For example, how could species determined or number of fish be counted once processed? Reclassifying commercially-caught fish as subsistence fish appears to be counter to current statutory language.
165	OPPOSE <i>Delay opening personal use fishery until escapement goals met</i> ADF&G should retain management flexibility to use best science in determining when the fishery should open. Current Emergency Order management tools are satisfactory to meet established escapement goals and harvest objectives.
166	OPPOSE <i>Eliminate requirement to have a sport fishing license to fish in personal use fisheries</i> The sport fish license requirement provides the state with both enforcement capability and funding for management of personal use fisheries.
169	OPPOSE <i>Amend criteria for allocation of fishery resources</i> We oppose this regulation because it reduces flexibility of managers to exercise sound judgment in their decisions and the intention of the proposal is already addressed in Emergency Order authority.
170	OPPOSE <i>Clarify regulations establishing escapement goals</i> We oppose this regulation because it reduces flexibility of managers to use best science and sound judgment in their decisions and the intention of the proposal is already addressed in Emergency Order authority.
171	OPPOSE <i>Clarify escapement goals and establish ranges</i> We oppose this regulation because it reduces flexibility of managers to exercise judgment in their decisions and the intention of the proposal is already addressed in Emergency Order authority.



172 SUPPORT

Provide definition for escapement goal thresholds

We support this proposal to clarify establishment of lower bound sustainable escapement goals to distinguish between a SEG range and a lower bound SEG.

175 OPPOSE – (amendment proposed)

Establish bag limit for sablefish

No sport fishing conservation issues have been quantified to warrant approval of this proposal.

Sablefish quotas were addressed twice in 2009, first at the February BOF meeting in Sitka, and then again at the March BOF meeting and follow-up conference call in April. Through this process, the BOF established extremely conservative sport fish harvest regulations in Southeast for the first time.

2009 was the first year that sablefish data was collected for sport fish sector. Partial season estimates of sport caught sablefish indicate a catch of less than 1.0% of the total catch and therefore have a de minimus impact on this fishery. We recommend that no final action be taken on sport allocation of sablefish until adequate data on catch rates are accumulated and a thorough economic analysis is completed to determine optimal allocations between sectors.

Alternative Language – Very conservative initial quotas were established in 2009 to ensure conservation of the fishery and because there was insufficient historical sport catch information upon which to base a realistic quota. As first year data showed minimal sport harvest of sablefish we believe it is prudent to assess sport market demand through a change in catch parameters. Information gained from an additional data point will be very valuable when establishing future quotas. As an interim measure, we support alternative language to rescind resident limits, and establish nonresident limits as follows: daily bag limit 8; possession limit 16, and an annual limit of 16.

176 SUPPORT

Increase bag limit for spiny dogfish

No known conservation issue exists with this fishery. Liberalization of the bag limit would provide increased harvest opportunity but is unlikely to harm the stock because there is little recreational demand.

178 SUPPORT

Clarify emergency order authority

This as an ADF&G housekeeping proposal with clarification edits. We support this proposal to resolve internal inconsistencies in emergency order authority wording.



- 179** **OPPOSE**
Clarify emergency order authority
We oppose this regulation because it reduces flexibility for managers to exercise judgment in their decisions and the intention of the proposal is already addressed in Emergency Order authority.
- 180** **SUPPORT (as amended)**
Define electric fishing reel
As long as terminal gear is consistent with state sport regulations and bag and possession limits are adhered to, there is no reason for regulating the type of gear used to deploy and retrieve baits and fish.
- Alternative Language - We support this proposal with two wording changes:
a) The weight restriction should apply to the reel and attachments up to the first power cord disconnect and should not include the weight of power source and cabling. This modification is required for setups where the electric reel is powered by boat power or other non portable sources.
b) Reference to line guides should be changed to read: “one or more line guides”.
- 181,**
182,
183 **OPPOSE**
Prohibit use of electric reels
There is no conservation basis for these proposals and we consider them an unnecessary restriction. Proposal 180 is the preferred alternative.
- 184** **SUPPORT**
Prohibit use of felt soled wading boots
This proposal will reduce the probability of introduction of non-native invasive organisms.
- 185** **SUPPORT**
Clarify Use of underwater spear
We support clarification language offered by ADF&G
- 186** **OPPOSE**
Clarify Use of underwater spear
Preferred language is found in proposal 185 submitted by ADF&G
- 187** **OPPOSE**
Allow use of bait by disabled anglers
Special provisions are necessary for disabled anglers, but not this proposal.
- 188** **SUPPORT**
Modify halibut regulations to be consistent with federal regulations



This is a housekeeping change submitted by ADF&G to make state and federal regulations consistent.

189

OPPOSE

Require a client-guide agreement for each client on a sport charter trip.

We believe that this proposal would conflict with existing law. Current laws require a charter operation to be run by a licensed guide. We are aware of no enforcement or customer service issues with current laws. This proposal attempts impose solutions to a non-existent problem. The author offers no quantitative information to support his argument nor justification for added costs that would be incurred by both charter operators and AWT enforcement officers. Further, this proposal would place unnecessary restrictions on successful business models currently in place.

190

OPPOSE

Allow crew members to retain fish when clients are onboard

This is a way around bag limits restrictions, would reverse the state's position, and be in violation of Federal regulations on halibut.

191

OPPOSE

Define official time for sport fisheries

We are not aware of any enforcement issues so see no need to establish a regulation where no problem exists.