

Brief for HB 173: SPORT FISH GUIDE LICENSES (Reauthorization of Program) March 3, 2011

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Background:

- Original legislation passed in May, 2004; effective January 1, 2005; with 1 year extensions in 2009 and 2010.
- Proposed by the Department for three main reasons:
 1. Information on guide numbers and their fishing activities was either not available or limited in many parts of the state;
 2. Establish minimum standards to operate a business or contract as a guide (safety, liability insurance, US Coast Guard license, etc.) as a means to increase professionalism and reduce speculative entry; and
 3. Provide comprehensive and credible data on guided sport fishing activities to regulatory agencies: Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC).

Legislation:

Sec.16.40.260 Sport fishing operator license;

Sec.16.40.270 Sport fishing guide license;

Sec.16.40.280 Reports;

Sec.16.40.290 Penalties for violations.

These legislative sections include licensing provisions and fees (AS. 16.05.340(a)) for sport fishing business owners (\$100), sport fishing guides working for the business (\$50), and business owners who are also a guide (owner/operator combo \$100). The mandatory reporting requirements, logbooks, are for both fresh and saltwater guide activities (freshwater logbooks were instituted in 2005). The penalties for sport fish guiding violations by business owners and guides include possible revocation of their license.

Companion Regulations:

5 AAC 75.075 Sport fishing services and sport fishing guide services; license requirements; regulation of activities.

5 AAC 75.076. Sport fishing services and sport fishing guides reporting requirements.

5 AAC 75.077. Sport fishing guide vessel registration requirements.

Present Benefits and Utility:

- A comprehensive list of all sport fishing guides working in salt water is part of the data requirements that allowed Alaska to receive an exemption from participating in the National Saltwater Angler Registry (up to \$25/saltwater angler in 2011).
- The logbook data for saltwater anglers has been used extensively within the IPHC and NPFMC for analyzing regulatory options and inform decisions on Pacific Halibut.
- Both freshwater and saltwater logbook harvest data has been presented and utilized by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Harvest estimate verification studies were conducted and found to be of moderate scientific quality (statistical precision was highly acceptable) compared to statewide sport fish harvest survey, and dock side creel programs.

Participation Statistics:

- An average of **1,602 sport fishing business licenses** (including owner/operator combo) have been sold (2006-2010); 88% of owners are Alaskan residents.
- An average of **1,853 sport fishing guide licenses** have been sold (2007-2010); 72% of guides are Alaskan residents.
- Based on logbook data, over **2.1 million clients took 536,960 guided fishing trips** (from 2005 through 2009); 67% of clients fished in saltwater, 33% fished in freshwater and 88% of all clients were nonresidents. The 2010 data is still being finalized.
- An average of **1,334 vessels in saltwater** were used for guided fishing trips (2005-2009).

Electronic Reporting (Modernization initiative):

- Modernization and timely reporting of recreational harvest data are a priority. We are actively working on this task:
 - In July, 2009 we developed a scannable saltwater logbook form which will reduce the time lag when logbook data is available from 2 to 3 months to 1 to 2 weeks. This new form was employed for saltwater forms statewide in 2010. Ten public meetings were held across the state to explain this new format and received nearly unanimous support from user groups and public. Freshwater logbooks will be converted to scannable format in 2012.
 - The point of sale hunting and fishing licensing program is still being sought and technical challenges addressed.