

Department of Fish and Game

Mission

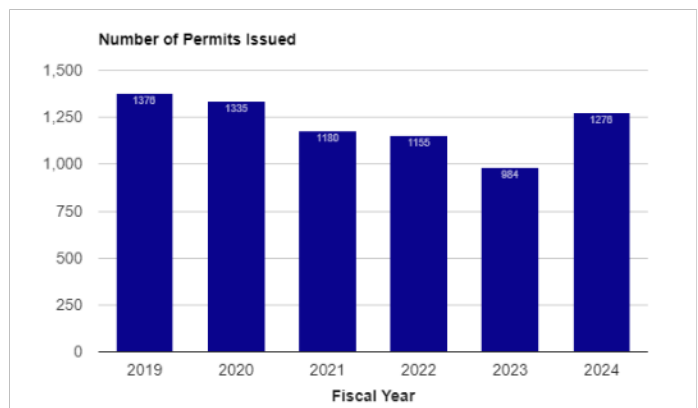
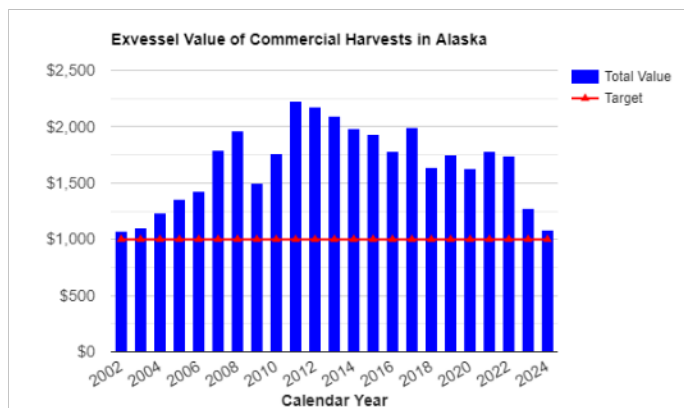
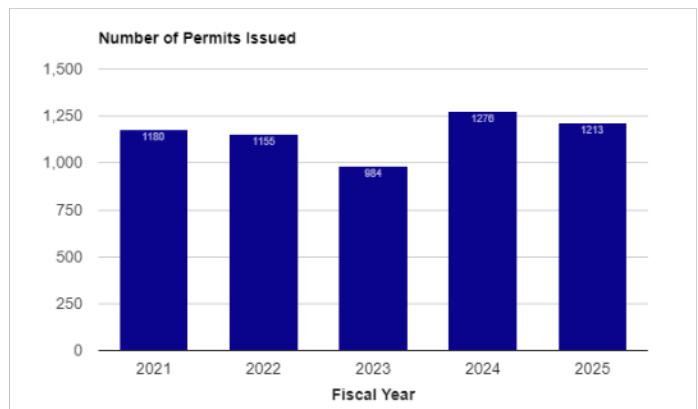
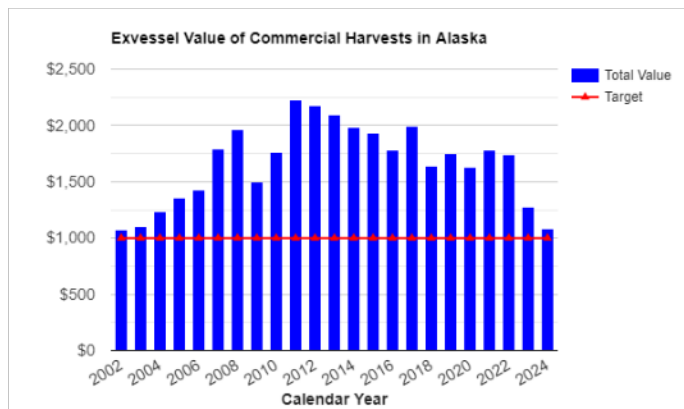
To protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of the state, and manage their use and development in the best interest of the economy and the well-being of the people of the state, consistent with the sustained yield principle. Alaska Constitution Article 8, Sec. 4; Alaska Statute (AS) 16.05.020(2)

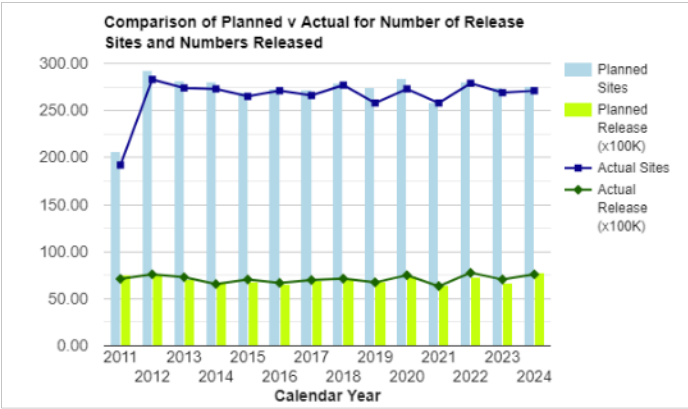
	Core Services (in priority order)	UGF	DGF	Other	Fed	Total	PFT	PPT	NP	% GF
1	Management	34,483.5	5,480.7	44,581.0	50,500.3	135,045.5	437.9	262.4	1.0	44.8%
2	Stock Assessment and Research	29,348.8	8,138.8	24,436.3	22,987.9	84,911.9	256.8	233.1	0.0	42.1%
3	Customer Service and Public Involvement	11,276.4	406.5	20,430.1	21,271.8	53,384.8	161.3	80.5	0.0	13.1%
	FY2026 Management Plan	75,108.7	14,026.0	89,447.4	94,760.0	273,342.1	856.0	576.0	1.0	

Measures by Core Service

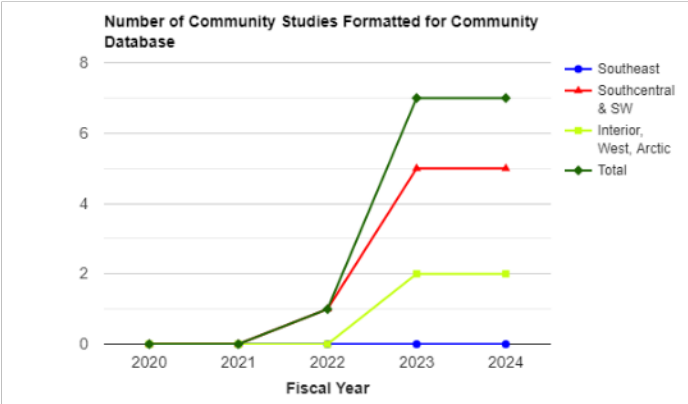
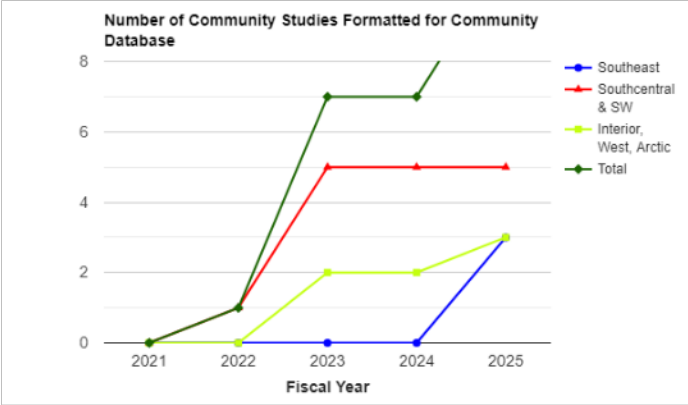
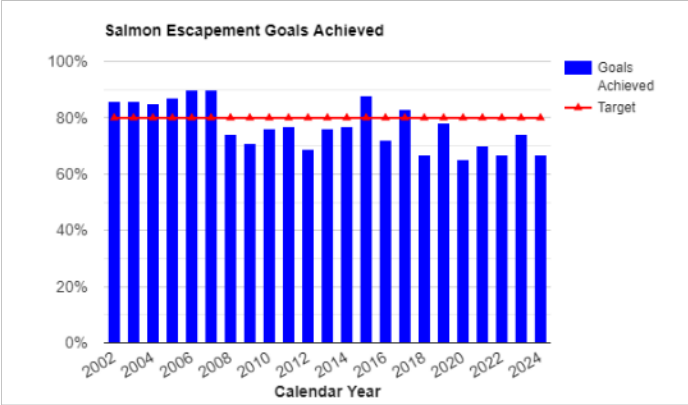
(Additional performance information is available on the web at <https://omb.alaska.gov/results.>)

1. Management

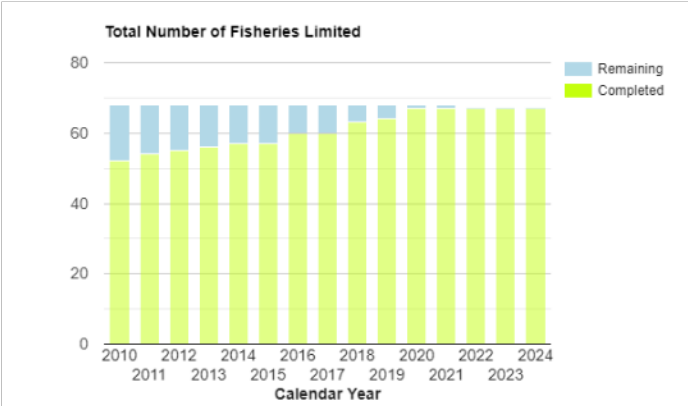
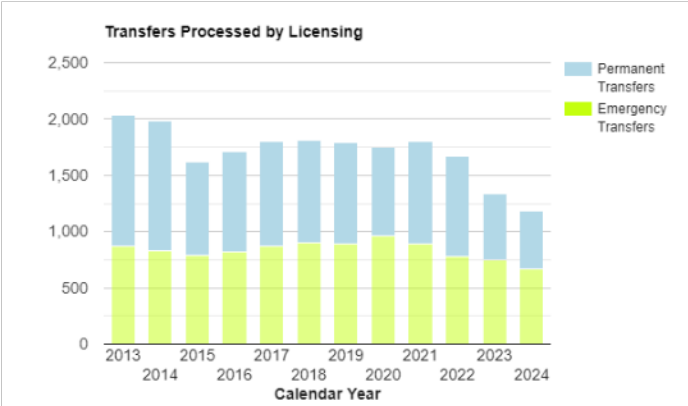
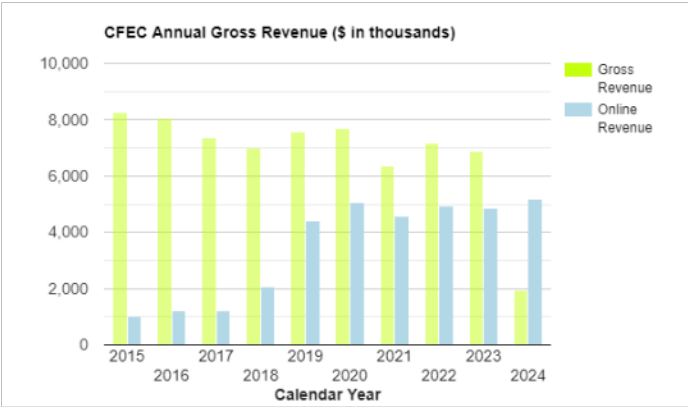
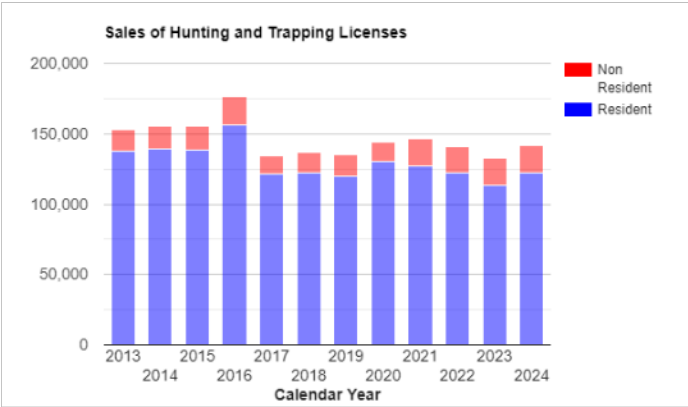
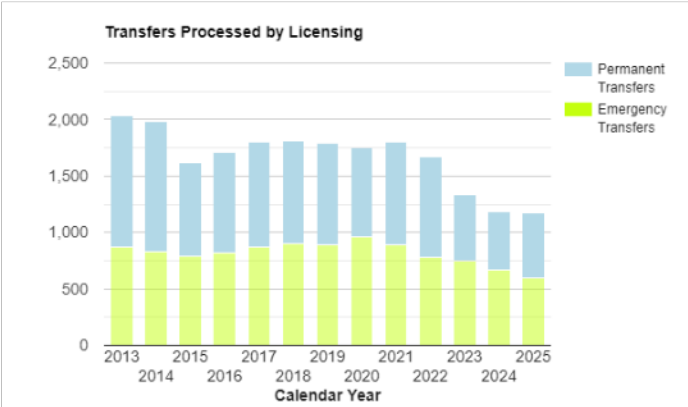
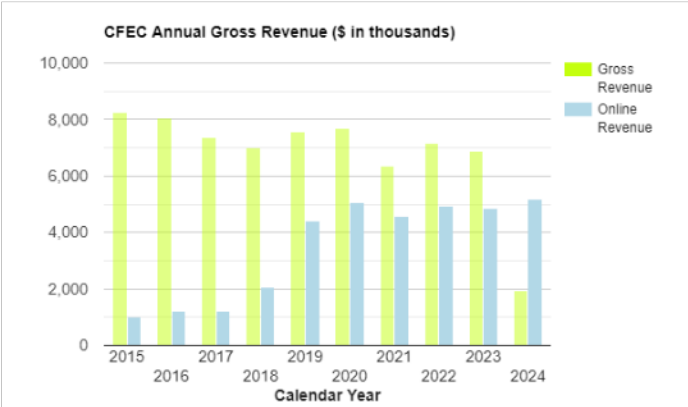


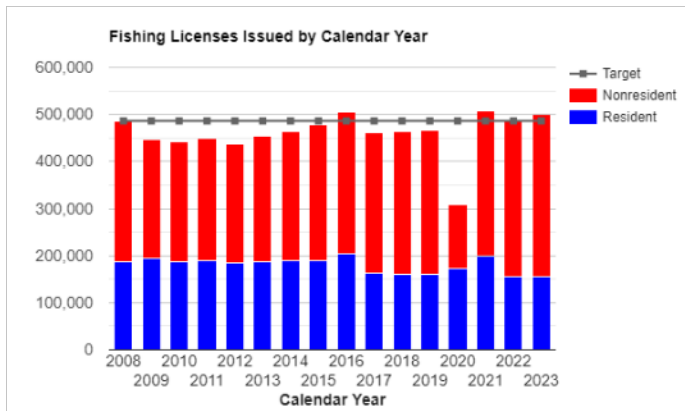


2. Stock Assessment and Research



3. Customer Service and Public Involvement





Major Department Accomplishments in 2025

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) continued to provide hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities to Alaskans and nonresidents – guided by its constitutional and statutory mandates to manage Alaska’s fish and wildlife resources for sustained yield and in the interest of the economy and wellbeing of the people of the State.

The ADF&G’s approach to management of Alaska’s fish and wildlife resources supports a substantial return on investment to State and local economies, turning a \$270 million-dollar budgetary investment that includes \$75 million in general funds into a return of over \$15 billion dollars. These resources fuel one of the nation’s most valuable commercial fishing industries; are a cornerstone of Alaska’s booming tourism industry; provide world class hunting, sport fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities; and sustain an unequaled subsistence way of life.

The necessary research, management, and public services structures were in place to conduct fisheries and hunts across Alaska. Commercial fisheries, guided by sustained yield principles supported jobs and local economies. Sport and personal use fisheries continued to operate, allowing anglers to fill their freezers, feed their families, and get outside. Subsistence fisheries and hunts occurred, allowing harvest opportunities to feed and support communities while passing on traditional and cultural practices vital to many Alaskans. Hunts opened throughout the State providing opportunities for Alaskans and nonresidents.

Resource Divisions	Annual Average Contribution to Alaska’s Economy
Commercial Fisheries	\$6.3 billion
Sport Fishing	\$2.5 billion
Wildlife	\$6.0 billion
Subsistence	\$0.3 billion
Total	\$15.1 billion

Defending Against Federal Erosion of State Management Authority

The ADF&G continued work to uphold Alaska’s rights granted at statehood and ensure federal compliance with laws such as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), thereby safeguarding State management of fish and wildlife resources. Federal actions often threaten Alaska’s management authority and resource development, imposing restrictive policies that conflict with federal and State laws and disregard the State’s management rights. The ADF&G’s cost-effective programs bring expertise and coordination to conserve fish and wildlife while avoiding unnecessary regulation.

Key accomplishments include:

- Informed a 12-month status review on Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon initiated by the National Marine Fisheries Service to ensure it had the best available science to inform their decision to list or not list all or a portion of these stocks under the ESA.
- Avoided an ESA listing for Suckley’s cuckoo bumblebee in Alaska and provided information to reduce the potential of other unnecessary ESA listings for northern bog lemming, Chinook salmon, Pacific walrus, and more.

- Worked with the Department of Law to successfully overturn the expansive ESA Critical Habitat designations for ringed seals and bearded seals that placed unnecessary regulations across an area larger than Texas.
- Worked with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to abandon its proposed Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health (BIDEH) rule that would have undermined State management.
- Defended the ANILCA's "No More Clause" by commenting on the proposed designation of the Alaska Long Trail that would create a new Conservation System Unit under the ANILCA.

Legal Battles Over the State's Right to Manage

The State remains actively engaged in lawsuits to protect Alaska's right to manage its fish and wildlife resources:

- Defended the State's authority to manage in navigable waterways, recently filing a petition asking the United States Supreme Court to reconsider the ruling from the 9th Circuit United States Court of Appeals that conflicts with both the plain text of ANILCA and clear Supreme Court precedent.
- Opposed the Federal Subsistence Board's (FSB) ability to delegate its decision-making authority to outside bodies. While the appeal is now closed, the question remains unanswered.
- Challenged the Federal government's ability to open hunts, thereby supplanting State management on federal lands. The 9th Circuit United States Court of Appeals concluded that the FSB has authority to open **emergency** hunts on federal lands even when the hunting season is closed for conservation, directly conflicting with State management actions and jeopardizing its ability to sustainably manage wildlife.
- Successfully defended the ADF&G Commissioner's authority to repeal outdated regulations banning jet ski use in Kachemak Bay.
- Responded to the Metlakatla Indian Community's lawsuit asserting commercial fishing rights without limited entry permits; the State filed for summary judgment, and several Southeast Alaska tribes moved to dismiss the case.
- Won a lawsuit defending ADF&G's use of emergency regulations to allow intensive management activities to continue.

Managing for Sustainability and Subsistence Priority

The ADF&G's top priorities remain sustainability of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources and providing for subsistence harvest opportunities. When conservation measures are necessary, subsistence is the last to be impacted. In times of abundance, subsistence harvests operate with few or no restrictions, while others are managed closely based on in-season data. This year, the ADF&G:

- Carefully managed low-return salmon stocks vital to subsistence users.
- Prioritized research on declining salmon populations and maintained engagement with subsistence communities.
- Adopted regulations for cultural education fishing permits, providing limited salmon harvest in the Yukon and allowing for ceremonial use and transmission of cultural knowledge.
- Responded to Typhoon Halong by coordinating with impacted villages to open emergency hunts in the region where harvestable surplus exists, supporting displaced families and enhancing food security.

Subsistence Research and Monitoring

The ADF&G worked on 44 projects and published 12 reports related to subsistence research and monitoring to support informed management decisions. Efforts focused on incorporating information on customary and traditional uses into management plans and contributing to research on declining populations, emphasizing the implications to subsistence users. A new Community Subsistence Information System data hub was launched, featuring interactive tools and visual depictions. Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tools were also implemented to improve efficiency of data analysis.

Sustaining Fishing Opportunities Statewide

The ADF&G conducted stock (weirs, counting towers, sonar, aerial surveys) and fishery (statewide marine and freshwater surveys and creel census) assessment projects to gather in-season data that informed management decisions. Area managers issued emergency orders to restrict or liberalize fisheries and kept the public informed through advisory announcements, press releases, and social media. With many wild Chinook fisheries restricted or closed in 2025, hatchery-supported Chinook fisheries provided important harvest opportunities. Biologists from the Commercial and Sport Fish divisions also developed stock assessment models to improve sustainable management of rockfish species.

Food Security for Alaskans

Alaskans harvest an average of 10,000 Sitka black-tailed deer, 7,000 moose, and 6,600 caribou annually, providing approximately 5.7 million pounds of wild meat for local tables. To increase food security, the ADF&G expanded its

transplant program, translocating 19 Sitka black-tailed deer to the Southern Kenai Peninsula and releasing wood bison in Minto State Game Refuge with additional releases planned for next year. Cooperatively with members of the public, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, and the Alaska Board of Game, the ADF&G also supported several proposals to provide additional resident-only hunting opportunities for species identified as high use for human consumption.

Statewide Commercial Salmon Harvest, Fishery Value, and Stock Status

Alaska harvested 195 million salmon in 2025—an 88 percent increase from 2024—totaling approximately 793 million pounds, the 12th highest on record by number of fish. The harvest was valued at \$541 million, a 78 percent increase from the previous year, though still the 13th lowest value since 1975 when adjusted for inflation. While prices per pound improved compared to 2024, permit holder participation declined slightly, and global market conditions continued to influence pricing and participation trends.

Implementation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty

This year marked the seventh year of implementing the renegotiated Pacific Salmon Treaty, which is more data-intensive than the previous agreement. Multiple projects were carried out region-wide to collect the stock and fishery assessment data required to implement the Treaty. The ADF&G managed the Northern Boundary area and Transboundary River fisheries in compliance with the Treaty's provisions, avoiding overages and successfully reducing harvest of Chinook stocks. The Alaska delegation to the Pacific Salmon Commission began preparations to update the Northern Boundary, Transboundary River, and Chinook chapters of the Treaty as the current agreement expires December 31, 2028.

Alaska Marine Salmon Program / Salmon Ocean Ecology Program

This program leads Alaska's research on the ocean life of salmon based on information from four regional marine salmon surveys across Alaska and through collaborations with state, federal, and international ocean research efforts. It serves as a primary source for data, information, and guidance on a wide variety of marine salmon issues including competition at sea, marine heatwaves, and marine ecosystem changes and regularly communicates with stakeholders, regulatory bodies, media, and the public.

- Completed the first annual Western Gulf of Alaska juvenile salmon survey and the third annual Southern Bering Sea juvenile salmon survey.
- In combination with the long-running surveys in the Northern Bering Sea and Southeast Alaska, this is the first year that a comprehensive assessment was available for juvenile salmon in marine waters from all salmon-producing regions of the State.
- Completed retrofitting the R/V Equinox, which will be used to support this program.

Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Genetic Stock Identification Research

Across Alaska, Chinook salmon runs are decreasing, necessitating conservative management of fisheries. For more than a decade, the Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon fisheries have been severely restricted or closed to achieve escapement goals. This year, the ADF&G began a five-year comprehensive effort to sample, assess, analyze, and report the stock composition of all significant marine harvests of Chinook salmon in the Gulf of Alaska. This will provide a gulf-wide understanding of fisheries harvests, stock compositions, Chinook productivity, marine distributions, and potential impacts on Alaskans. The Divisions of Commercial Fisheries and Sport Fish started coordinating and planning for this new program, and initial assessment projects will begin in the spring/summer of 2026.

Boards of Fisheries and Game: Open Regulatory Process and Meaningful Public Engagement

The boards held a combined 39 meeting days and acted on 511 regulatory proposals. The boards received over 5,400 written public comments and heard 535 public testimonies, including 60 from Advisory Committees. The Board of Fisheries focused on finfish and shellfish regulations in select management areas: Prince William Sound and Upper Copper/Upper Susitna Rivers, Southeast and Yakutat, and all other shellfish statewide. The Board of Game addressed statewide provisions, hunting and trapping regulations for the Central and Southwest regions and held a special meeting to adopt regulations allowing for intensive management of wolves and bears to aid the recovery of the Mulchatna caribou herd, which is a vital subsistence resource.

Habitat Permitting and Responsible Development

The ADF&G issued 1,101 Fish Habitat Permits and 98 Special Area Permits guided by site-specific factors and the best available science to allow responsible development and proper conservation of fish habitat and fish passage. The average review time was 7.8 days for Fish Habitat Permits and 13.5 days for Special Area Permits. Title 16 habitat and special areas permitting play an important role in resource development, transportation infrastructure, and energy projects across the state.

Increasing Public Access to Sport Fishing Opportunities

The Boating and Angler Access program leverages federal Dingell-Johnson funds to improve, operate and maintain 398 recreational boating and angler access sites in Alaska, providing the public with safe and legal access to sport fishing opportunities. Three major capital projects were completed this year including replacing a fish grinding building in partnership with the City of Homer, upgrading Jim's Landing boat launch with the USFWS, and installing a new sewage pump-out station at Shoemaker Harbor with the City of Wrangell.

Aquatic Invasive Species Control Efforts

The ADF&G removed nearly 2,000 invasive northern pike to reduce predation on Chinook and coho salmon, completed lake surveys across Southcentral, and initiated research to better understand pike movement and prevent new populations from being established. The invasive species coordinator collaborated with partners to raise awareness, support early detection, and provide training and supplies for European green crab and advance data collection on Zebra and Quagga mussel habitat risks.

Key Department Challenges**Federal Overreach Continues to Threaten State Authority to Manage and Develop Resources**

Despite strong State management and health populations, inappropriate federal actions under the ESA, MMPA, and ANILCA impose restrictions on resource development and fisheries and wildlife harvest. The ADF&G programs are actively engaged and continue to provide robust data and information, challenge unwarranted federal actions, and conduct necessary research. Addressing federal overreach requires significant resources and legal action.

Recruitment and Retention of Skilled Staff

The ADF&G maintained operations in 2025 thanks to dedicated staff taking on extra responsibilities, but key positions face small applicant pools and increasing competition from higher-paying federal and private employers. Housing shortages, high living costs, and inflationary pressures further complicate recruitment and retention efforts, especially in rural areas and for seasonal positions. Recognizing the need for more policy positions, ADF&G worked with the University of Alaska to develop a Master's program in Marine Policy and is supporting several staff in their pursuit of this degree.

Administrative Burdens are Impacting Workloads and Operations

Administrative processes for travel and payroll continue to cause delays and errors leading to an additional workload on program staff. These issues, combined with staffing constraints noted above, reduce staff's ability to respond to emerging issues and capacity for core services.

Sustaining Fishing Opportunities

Poor Chinook salmon production statewide and recent declines in coho salmon in select areas have led to fishing restrictions, negatively impacting fishermen, communities, local economies, and subsistence culture over the last five years. However, there has been some rebound in salmon across the State, except for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim region where escapement is still below goals, requiring continuation of fishing restrictions in these systems.

Maintaining Sustainable Commercial Fisheries

Close stock monitoring is essential to prevent overfishing, achieve maximum sustained yield, and provide harvest and population estimates critical for effective management, especially for weak stocks and those that support subsistence uses. Limited availability and costs of charter aircraft have reduced salmon aerial survey capacity, resulting in missed harvest opportunities and data gaps that affect management decisions. Increasing dependence on State-owned assets means continued investment is critical.

Aging Vessels and Aircraft Require Continued Investment

The ADF&G operates six large research vessels and 16 aircraft essential for fish and wildlife assessments. Additional maintenance and replacement funding has been vital to protecting State investments and programs. However, two vessels are at risk of missing drydock, and pilot shortages hinder the ability to complete surveys and field work. Budget constraints present ongoing challenges, which risk compromising the safety and effectiveness of management efforts.

Rising Costs and Declining Revenues Strain Program Delivery

Inflation, reduced license sales, and uncertainty in federal grant funding are limiting the ability to maintain programs and services and complete planned projects. Construction and material costs have significantly increased, reducing

the number of access and maintenance projects that can be completed. Declining commercial fishery tax revenue and test fish receipts are impacting program budgets and the ability to effectively manage fisheries, particularly subsistence and personal use which do not generate revenue. The ADF&G continues to prioritize high-return fisheries and explore efficiencies to reduce reliance on general funds.

Aquatic Invasive Species Pose a Growing Threat to Alaska's Ecosystems

Northern pike, European green crab, and zebra/quagga mussels are spreading and require continued monitoring, public engagement, and rapid response to prevent long-term ecological damage. Funding levels fluctuate based on limited grant funding opportunities, and collaboration with other state and federal agencies is necessary to address threats from aquatic invasive species across jurisdictions.

Data Analysis Capacity and Growing Demand

Managing multiple databases, some of which are outdated, along with rising requests for real-time analysis necessitate skilled in-house programmer expertise and are pulling program staff away from core services. Meeting the needs of regulatory boards, policymakers, and the public requires additional investment in data systems and personnel. The ADF&G continues leveraging new technologies and data modernization efforts to optimize operations as funding allows.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2027

The main areas of focus for ADF&G will continue to be:

- Restoring open communication and dialogue with Alaskans
- Protecting the State's right to manage natural resources
- Maximizing economic and social benefits
- Prioritizing research and expanding fishery assessment programs to support informed management decisions
- Maintenance funding for vessels and aircraft
- Fostering the next generation of hunters, trappers, fishers, and professionals
- Continuing to look for budget efficiencies
- Initiating regulatory reform through implementation of Administrative Order 360

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