

Save our Kenai Kings

A conservation campaign story



2014 Alaska Board of Fisheries
Upper Cook Inlet

Alaska Fisheries Management

Sustainability, No Overfishing

- Federal fisheries management (NPFMC / NMFS / annual catch limits) and state fisheries management (BOF / ADFG / escapement goals – salmon) based on the goal of long-term sustainability, accountability measures and sharing the burden of conservation to prevent overfishing
- Alaska commercial fisheries account for half of seafood harvests in the United States
- Management allows for certification and marketing of Alaska commercial fisheries as sustainable



Fundamental Differences

Recreational and Commercial Fish Management

1. Angler days (daily bag limits) vs. poundage (ton)
2. Maximum sustained production (MSP) vs. maximum sustained yield (MSY)
3. Predictable seasonal management vs. flexible in-season management
4. Value-added economics vs. value economics

Fisheries are Big Business

- \$1 Billion industry (Cook Inlet)
 - \$800 million sport fishery
 - \$200 million commercial fishery
- 50 percent of all statewide angler days in UCI
- 200,000 resident / non-resident anglers
- Kenai River – largest sport and personal use fisheries in Alaska
- Top five states for non-resident angler expenditures
- KNWR top wildlife refuge per person expenditure



Fisheries Management

Upper Cook Inlet – Complex, Fully Allocated

- Commercial, sport, personal use, subsistence
- 5 salmon species – kings, reds, silvers, pinks, chums
- Major watersheds, each with unique salmon stocks
- UCI has one half of all statewide stock of concern designations by BOF
- Longest BOF meeting in 3 year cycle (14 days)

Alaska King Salmon

Ocean Productivity Key Issue in Low Abundance

- ✓ King salmon spend up to 85 percent of life cycle in the marine environment
- ✓ Statewide issue – healthy freshwater fish habitat, focus on cyclical ocean conditions (40-50 yr. cycles)
- ✓ 2012 statewide salmon research plan
 - \$30 million over 5 years to examine causes
- ✓ 2012 statewide economic disaster declaration
 - \$20 million in federal fishery disaster aid



King Salmon Conservation

Federal and State Entities Recognize Issue

- ❖ Low numbers of king salmon are conservation issue
- ❖ Federal level: NPFMC, NOAA, NMFS, Sec. of Commerce, U.S. Congress, Federal commercial fisheries (king salmon conservation accountability measures in Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska commercial fisheries – bycatch measures, fishing cooperatives)
- ❖ State level: BOF, ADFG, Alaska Governor and State Legislature, Alaska Court System

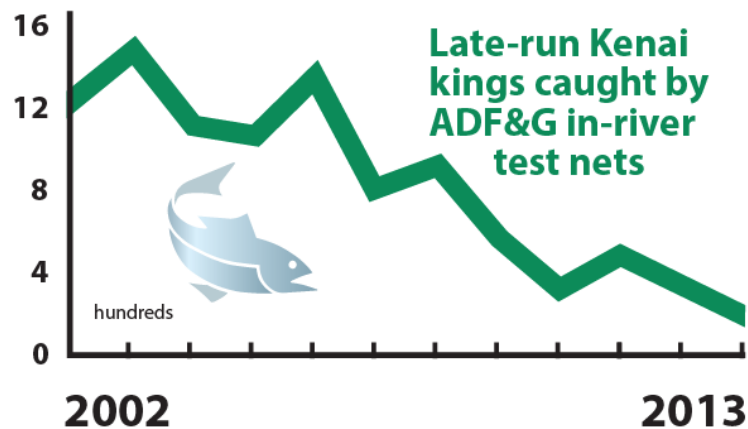
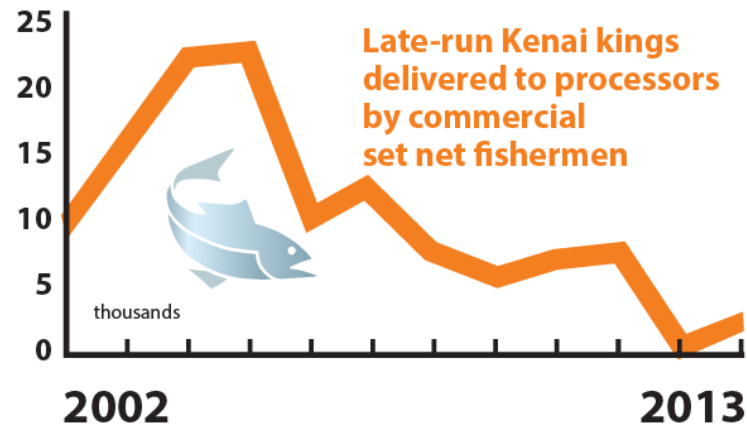
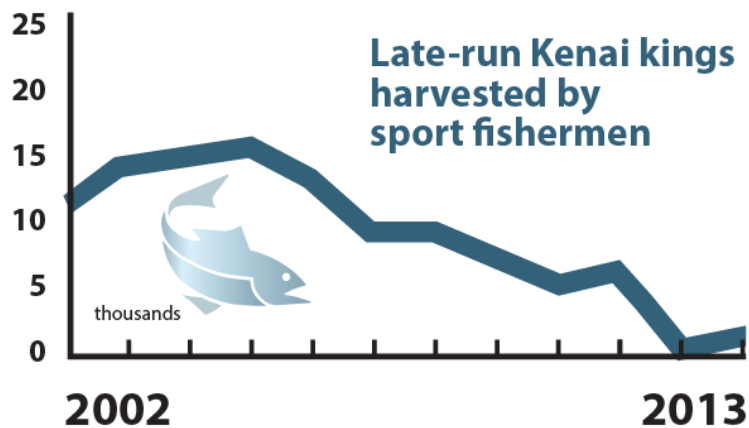


King Salmon Crisis

Upper Cook Inlet

- ✓ Historic low king salmon returns
- ✓ Outdated king salmon fishery management plans in Upper Cook Inlet
- ✓ All king runs impacted – developed / undeveloped fish habitats; motorized boats / non-motorized boats / no boats
- ✓ Large runs, medium runs, small runs
- ✓ Wild stocks, hatchery stocks

Major indicators show steep decline in Kenai River king salmon



Kenai Kings - What's at stake

- Loss of Alaska's iconic Kenai River king salmon
- Sustainable recreational fishing on Kenai Peninsula for future generations
- Access to a fair share of the valuable resource
- Economy of Kenai Peninsula and its visitor industry
- Sustainability marketing in UCI commercial fisheries



Campaign goal:

Update fishery management plan to reflect low number of Kenai River king salmon



Campaign priorities

- Adequate numbers of Kenai River king salmon must be allowed to spawn
- Ensure shared burden on conservation groups that harvest Kenai kings
 - East side set netters
 - In-river sport anglers
 - Personal use dipnetters



Campaign strategy

- Produced video
- Letter-writing campaign
- eBlast
- Tourism industry outreach
- Advertising
- Media relations

Board of Fisheries hearings



Strong social media



Media relations

Board passes 44 proposals
- Peninsula Clarion

More protection for early run kings
- Peninsula Clarion

Fish board approves Kenai king salmon plan
- Associated Press

State fish board limits Cook Inlet commercial fleet to save Mat-Su salmon
- Anchorage Daily News

State fisheries board approves long-awaited Kenai king plan
- Anchorage Daily News

Kenai king salmon conservation measures passed
- Juneau Empire

Kenai kings focus of Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting
- KTUU

AK Board of Fisheries votes to 'pair restrictions'
- KTVA



Board of Fisheries results

- Minimum escapement goal not lowered on early-run kings
- Escapement goal of 16,500 included in late-run Kenai king plan, better protect later returning large females
- Additional in-river fish habitat closures, sport restrictions
- Paired restrictions for commercial, sport, personal use and fisheries adopted into late-run Kenai king salmon management plan
- Use of shallower gillnets authorized in set net fishery, additional flexibility in commercial fisheries management tool box



Ongoing management

Pre-season early-run Kenai River king salmon closure by ADFG

- Kenai River closed to king salmon sport fishing May 1 to June 30 (early-run)
- All major king salmon sport fisheries in Cook Inlet in 2014 have restrictions or closures
- Wait and see how ADFG manages late-run Kenai kings in July



Kenai River king salmon

Conservation for the future



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