

Helen Phillips

From: Daniel George
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2014 1:45 PM
To: House Finance Legislation
Subject: FW: Response to inquiry about use of drones in fishing

From: Mulligan, Ben (DFG) [<mailto:ben.mulligan@alaska.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2014 12:43 PM
To: Daniel George
Subject: Response to inquiry about use of drones in fishing

Daniel,

Per our conversation, the Board of Fisheries has the authority to address the use of unmanned aircraft in spotting fish and in ways that unmanned aircraft may be used to assist a person in fishing. I have provided some additional information as background that we sent to Rep. Hughes's office from a request we received earlier last interim about the use of unmanned aircraft in fishing and hunting.

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Sport Fishing

In discussions with the Sport Fish Division we could not come up with a way in which an unmanned aircraft would be directly used to fish. The other way in which they could be used is in the locating of fish to then fish for them in a conventional way. This method is currently allowed when it comes to manned aircraft and sport fishing so unless the Board of Fisheries feels that unmanned aircraft shouldn't be used, I don't suspect they will ban its use. In general when it comes to the methods and means in which sport fishing is regulated in Alaska, the Board of Fisheries has to establish regulations giving that method and mean approval for use. So if a person thinks of a way to use an unmanned aircraft to sport fish, that method would have to be approved by the Board of Fisheries before it can be legally used.

Commercial Fisheries

The main way in which unmanned aircraft could be used in commercial fisheries would be to be used to spot schools of fish for commercial fishermen to harvest. This spotting of schools of fish by conventional aircraft has been addressed by the Board of Fisheries over the years as the issue arose in certain areas and fisheries. For example, in the regulations pertaining to commercial fishing in the Bristol Bay area there is a regulation, 5 AAC 06.379, that states that "A person may not use or employ an aircraft to locate salmon for the commercial taking of salmon or to direct commercial fishing operations in the Bristol Bay area one hour before, during, and one hour after a commercial salmon fishing period." There are similar regulations in place for the Alaska Peninsula (5 AAC 09.378), Kodiak (5 AAC 18.332), Cook Inlet (5 AAC 21.379), and Prince William Sound (5 AAC 24.510) areas also.