

**OVERVIEW
DEPT. OF
FISH &
GAME,
1/19/05**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF SPORT FISH

Overview Prepared for a Joint Meeting Of the House and Senate Resources Committees

The mission of the Division of Sport Fish is to protect and improve the state's recreational fisheries resources. Services provided under the Division of Sport Fish RDU are guided by the Division's legislatively established mission and a recently established strategic plan that outlines goals, objectives, strategies and desired outcomes.

Core services of the Division of Sport Fish are:

- **Fisheries Management:** The Division develops fishery regulations and management plans in coordination with the Alaska Board of Fisheries and other regulatory boards to manage the state's recreational and personal use fisheries within the constraints of sustained yield and Board adopted allocation decisions.
- **Stock Assessment:** The Division regularly assesses fish populations that are the basis of our state's recreational and personal use fisheries to assure for sustained yield from these resources.
- **Hatchery Production:** The Division maintains or supports hatcheries that produce chinook salmon, coho salmon, rainbow trout, Arctic char, and Arctic grayling to provide additional and more diverse recreational fishing opportunities in a manner that does not affect wild stocks or their fisheries.
- **Access Development & Maintenance:** The Division builds, buys, leases, and maintains physical access to fisheries for the benefit of Alaska's recreational and personal use fishers.
- **Habitat Assessment:** The Division provides habitat assessment and restoration expertise and assistance and manages the Department's legislatively-designated special areas.
- **Information and Education Services:** The Division supports an outreach program to inform and educate the public regarding sport fishing opportunities, regulations, and conservation (e.g., life histories of fishes and their habitats).
- **Enforcement:** The Division assists in enforcement of state fish laws and regulations to assure orderly and legal recreational and personal use fisheries occur.
- **Planning and Survey:** The Division monitors the preferences of Alaska's public regarding the management of Alaska's recreational and personal use fisheries through strategic planning and surveys of public opinion.

Challenges that significantly impact this RDU include:

- the threat to recreational fishing opportunities caused by loss of hatchery production,
- the decline in resident license sales,
- the sustainability of important stocks of fish targeted by recreational anglers,
- the allocation of harvest between various resource users,
- the maintenance of access to sport fisheries, and
- the maintenance and restoration of critical habitats that support fish and wildlife stocks.

The primary challenge facing this RDU is the threat posed to recreational fishing opportunities and the benefits they provide caused by eminent loss of hatchery capacity. Because of the loss of heated water and issues associated with aging infrastructure, the Division's hatchery program is unable to meet both current and projected demands. If not addressed immediately, sport fishing opportunity on both hatchery and wild stocks is in jeopardy. To address this issue, ADF&G is proposing to raise non-resident and resident sport fishing license fees. Without a license fee increase, sport fishing opportunity will be in jeopardy statewide.

The total request for the Division of Sport Fish RDU in FY06 is **\$43,178.0** in the operating budget plus **\$2,507.0** in CIP requests for access and conservation related projects. This represents an increase of **\$3,998.6** in our operating budget and a decrease of **\$2,496.5** in CIP requests.

The main reasons for the increase in the operating budget are increases in PERS costs (**\$750.0**), increases in salaries due to negotiated contracts (**\$950.0**), increased EPR costs (**\$260.0**), and several new projects aimed at assessment and regulation of instream flows, assessment of fish distribution, assessment and restoration of fish passage, monitoring of oceanographic conditions, and assessment of nearshore marine habitats (totaling **\$2,040.0**).

The RDU receives funding from several diverse sources, including:

- **Federal Receipts (\$21,035.8 or 48.7%):** comprised of the following sources: Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, Federal Subsistence, Pacific Salmon Treaty LOA, and grants from NOAA, EPA, BLM, NSF, Sea Grant, USFWS, DoD, and other federal agencies.
- **Fish and Game Fund (\$14,593.6 or 33.8%):** derived from the sale of state fishing licenses and king salmon tags.
- **Statutory Designated Receipts (\$2,773.4 or 6.4%):** these are receipts from non-governmental entities such as Cook Inlet Keeper.

- **Interagency Receipts (\$2,375.6 or 5.5%):** comprised of RSAs from miscellaneous state resources.
- **CIP Receipts (\$1,676.3 or 3.9%):** these are personnel costs associated with projects funded primarily under CIP grants such as the Governor's Sustainable Salmon Fund.
- **EVOSS Funds (\$331.0 or 0.8%):** these are funds related to the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Settlement.
- **Unrestricted General Funds (\$322.1 or 0.7%):** These are used solely to fund permitting activities on Alaska's legislatively-designated special areas.
- **Interagency Receipts/Oil & Hazardous Waste (\$64.3 or 0.1%):** These funds are from DEC to conduct oil spill planning and response activities.

The Division RDU is divided into four components:

1. **Sport Fisheries Component:** This component is our primary operating budget for our sport fisheries research and management programs. It represents 61.1% of the RDU budget.
2. **Special Projects Component:** This component is used to fund projects that support our mission, but are more transitory both in their nature and funding sources. It represents 23.6% of the RDU budget.
3. **Habitat and Restoration Component:** The primary goal of this component is to assess the habitat needs and requirements of fish and wildlife populations required to maintain the productivity and sustained yield of these fishery and wildlife resources. It also houses our access defense activities. It represents 14.7% of the RDU budget.
4. **Assert/Protect States Rights Component:** The primary goal of this component is the protection of the state's sovereignty to manage its fish and wildlife resources and their uses. It represents less than 1% of the RDU budget.

The Division employs 228 permanent full time, 231 permanent part time, and 17 non-permanent employees. This represents a no-net increase in personnel from FY05. The Division maintains a HQ office in Juneau; regional offices in Anchorage, Douglas, and Fairbanks; and, area offices in Sitka, Ketchikan, Yakutat, Haines, Craig/Klawock, Palmer, Soldotna, Homer, Kodiak, Dillingham, Cordova, Bethel, Delta Junction, and Glennallen. The Division also has two hatcheries, Elmendorf and Fort Richardson, located in Anchorage.

The Division's proposed **FY06 CIP request is \$2,507.0**. The FY06 CIP request primarily funds access and conservation related projects. For FY06, the following projects are proposed:

January 19, 2005

- **Public Access Facility Development** - The division has requested a Public Access Facility Development CIP in the amount of **\$2,000.0**. As stated above, the Division of Sport Fish receives a significant portion of its funding from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (DJ/WB). This act mandates that a minimum of 15% of the annual federal apportionment to each state be set aside for power boating access (launch ramps, mooring facilities, marinas, docks, etc.). Each year a CIP request, comprised of 75% federal aid and 25% fish and game fund state match, is submitted for this program. To meet the federal mandate, we try to maintain a 5-year running 15% average of our federal apportionment. The actual CIP request seldom reflects 15% of the current apportionment from the federal aid fund since the CIP request is submitted prior to knowledge of the final federal apportionment.
- **Transient Boat Moorage Facility Development – \$167.0** -The project will provide new and rehabilitated transient moorage facilities for recreational boats over 26 feet in length. The work will be accomplished by working cooperatively with local communities. This funding will provide match that local communities could not provide.
- **National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant – Snyder Parcel – \$310.0** - The Snyder parcel is 135 acres of undeveloped wetland habitat on the Gustavus forelands. The parcel is used by waterfowl and shore birds and provides important habitat for sand hill cranes.
- **Crystal Lake Hatchery Transformer Replacement – \$30.0** - Transformers located on Crystal Lake Hatchery were recently tested and found to contain very high levels of PCB's. Petersburg municipal power and light has informed us that they are the state's responsibility and that the state would be liable if a spill occurred.



Overview of the Division of Commercial Fisheries

Doug Mecum, Director
Division of Commercial Fisheries,
ADF&G

Authority

ADF&G: Primary State Fishery Management Authority

NMFS: Primary Marine Federal Fisheries Management Agency

USFWS – OSM: Subsistence Fisheries Management on Applicable Federal Waters

State Regulatory Regime

BOF

- Fishery Management Plans
- Allocation Decisions
- Promulgating Regulations

CFEC

- Authority to establish moratoria or limited entry systems for state-managed fisheries

DPS-FWP

- Enforcement of Fish and Game regulations

Federal Regulatory Regime

MFCMA (1976)

- Exclusive Economic Zone within 200 miles of U.S. Coasts
- NPFMC – Presidentially appointed 11-member committee develops FMP's for 3-200 miles
 - BSAI Crab and Groundfish, GOA Groundfish, Salmon, Scallops

IPHC (1953)

- Canada and U.S. jointly regulate harvest and conduct research on halibut. Within nation allocations through NPFMC

PST (1985)

- Rebuilding stocks, harvest regimes, equity

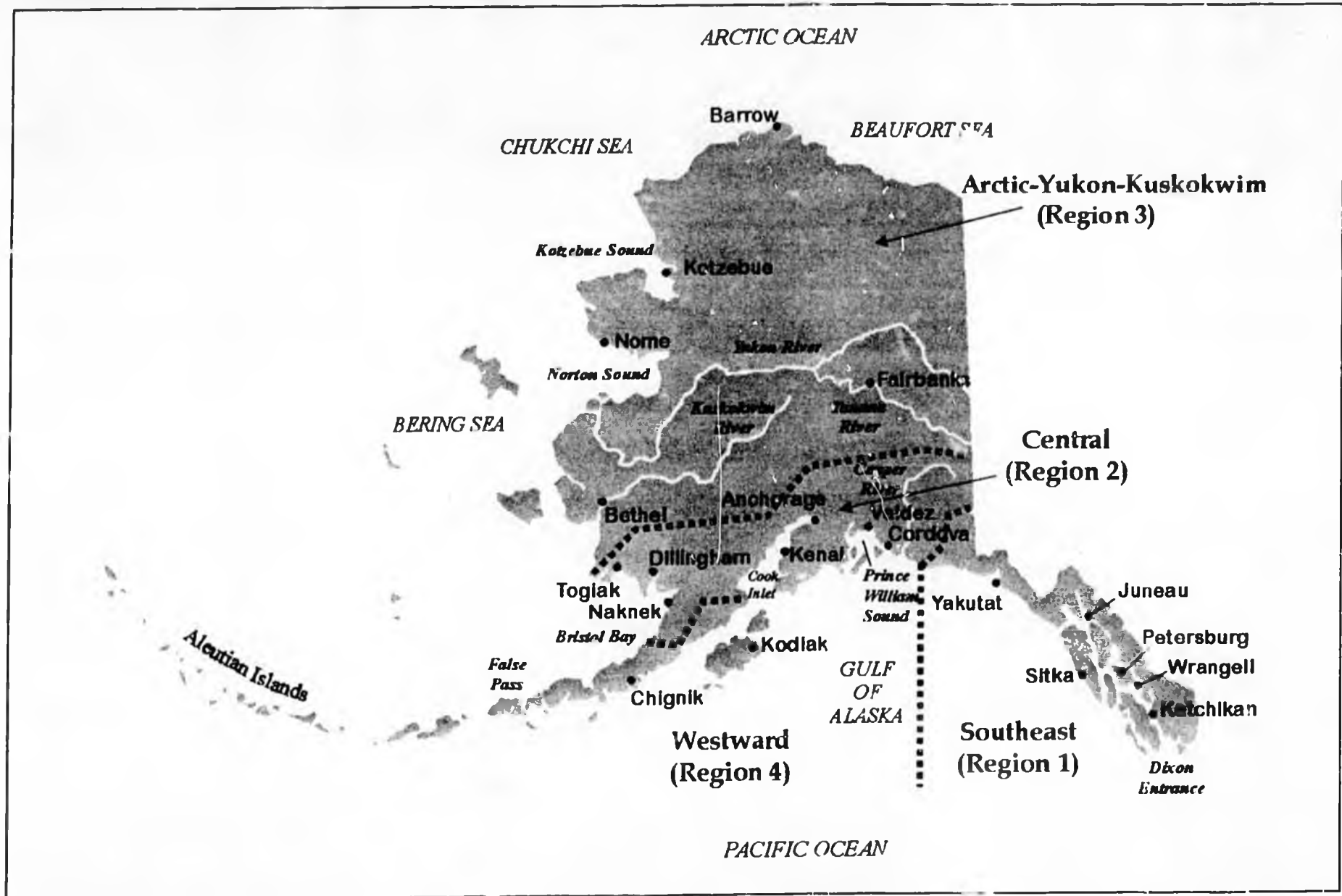
Responsibilities

- Commercial, Personal Use, and Subsistence Fisheries Management and Research
- Planning and Permitting of Fish Hatcheries and Mariculture operations
- Board of Fisheries
- Pacific Salmon Treaty and Alaska/Yukon Treaty Negotiations
- North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Organizational Structure

- Currently about 325 Fulltime and 525 Seasonal employees.
- Organized into a Headquarters Office in Juneau and 4 Regional Offices:
 - The Southeast Region (SEAK and Yakutat).
 - Central Region (Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound and Bristol Bay).
 - AYK Region (Western Alaska, Interior and North Slope).
 - Westward Region (Kodiak area, Bering Sea and Alaska Peninsula).
- Roughly 40 area offices around the state.

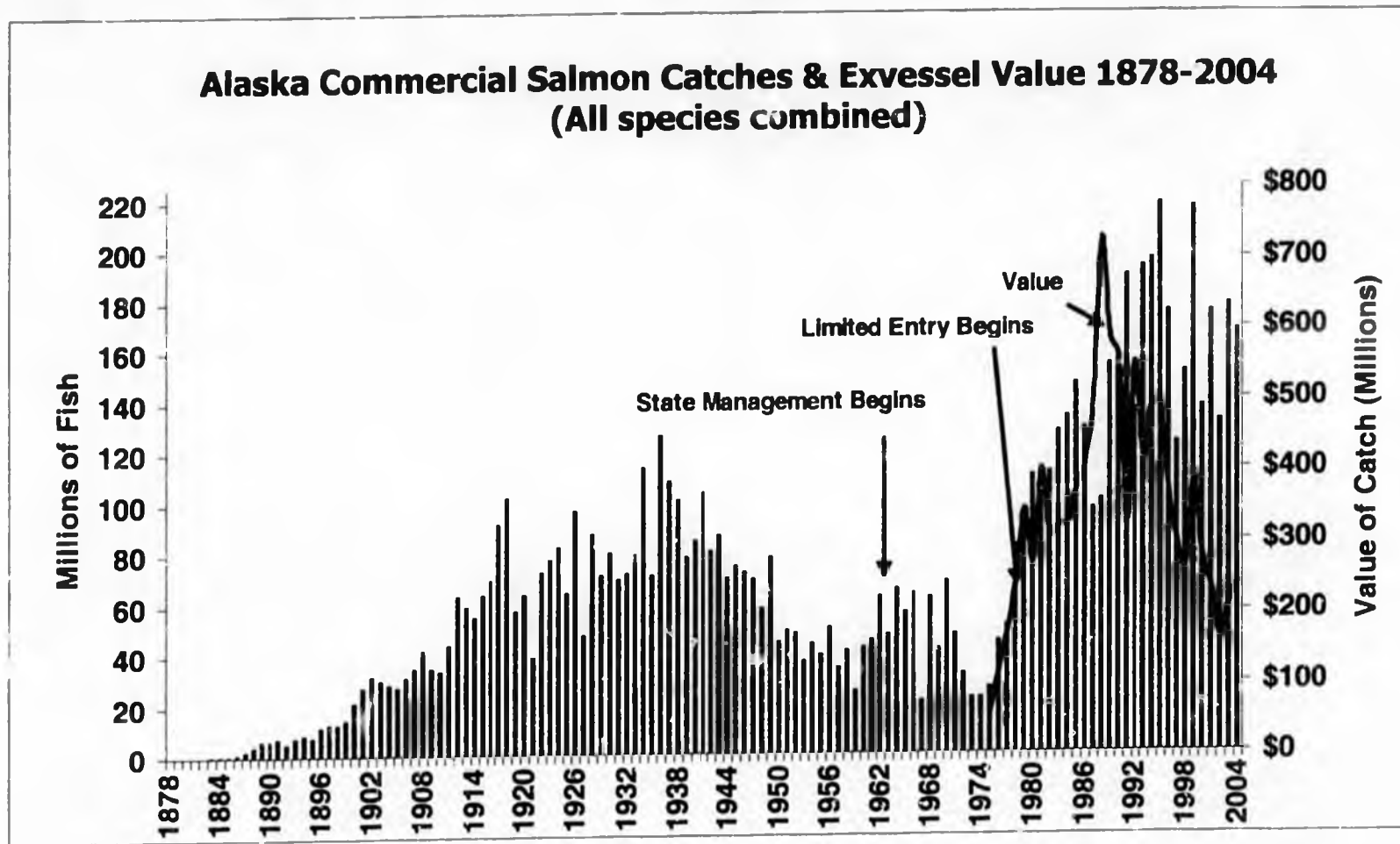
Commercial Fishery Management



Division of Commercial Fisheries FY 2006 Budget Request

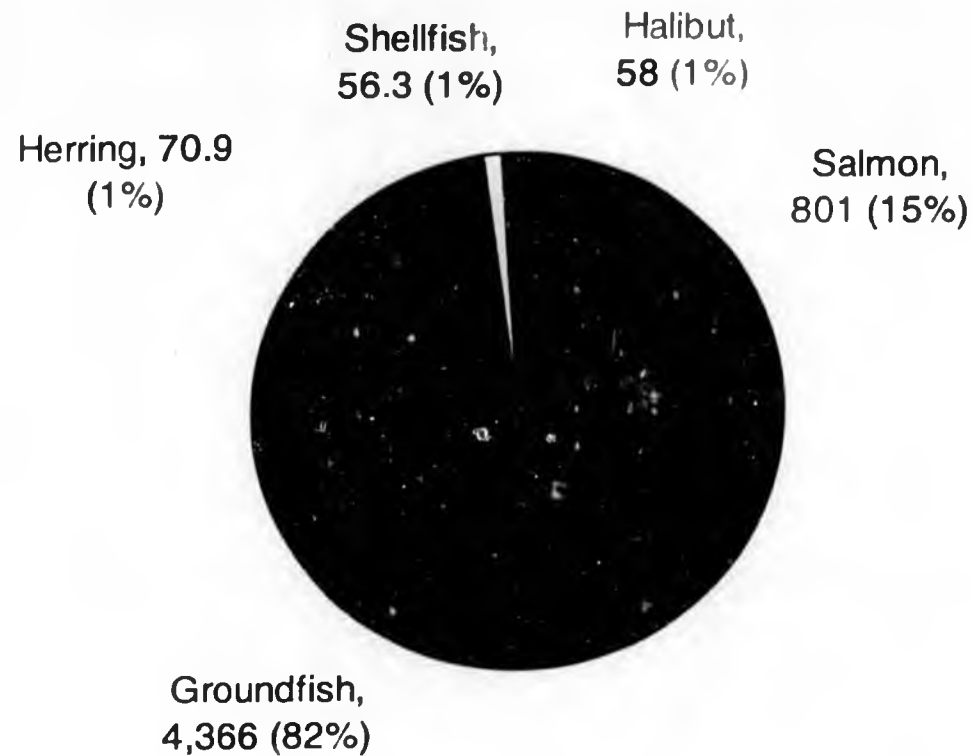
(In thousands)	Governor's Management	
General Fund	\$23,910.7	\$22,469.5
Statutory Program Receipts	\$1,676.4	\$1,648.7
Test Fish Receipts	\$2,500.9	\$2,500.9
Federal Receipts	\$14,858.1	\$14,301.7
Fish and Game Fund	\$1,540.5	\$1,523.0
CF Loan Fund	\$1,865.9	\$1,865.9
Interagency Receipts	\$1,669.3	\$1,669.3
CIP Position Costs	\$2,994.5	\$2,396.7
Exxon Valdez Settlement	\$381.1	\$204.4
Receipt Services	\$590.3	\$588.1
Totals	\$51,987.7	\$49,168.2
Personnel		
Full Time	300	305
Seasonal	512	519
Temporary	0	0

Statewide Fisheries



Statewide Fisheries

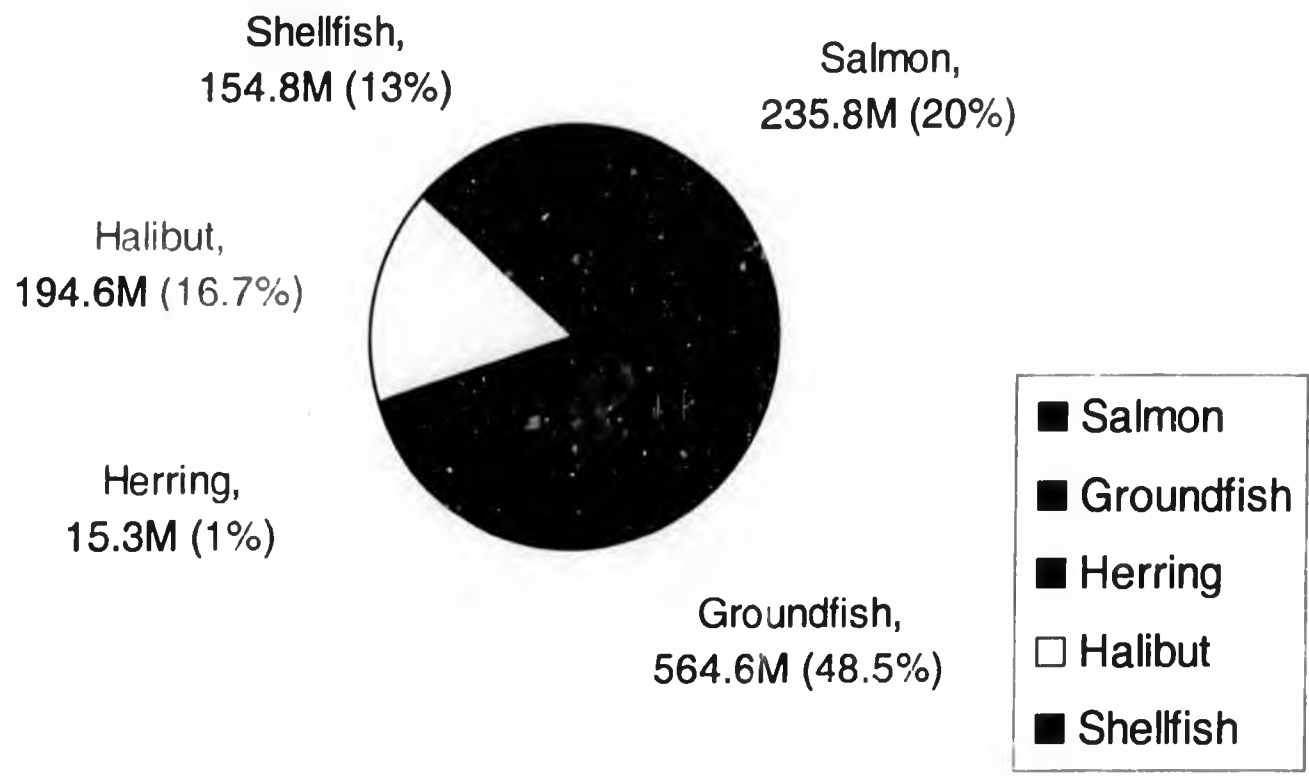
2004 Alaska Commercial Fisheries Harvest
(millions of pounds & percentage of total)



- Salmon
- Groundfish
- Herring
- Halibut
- Shellfish

Statewide Fisheries

2004 Alaska Commercial Fisheries Exvessel Values
(M=millions of dollars & percentage of total)



**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Commercial Fisheries**

Doug Mecum, Director

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Boards Support Section Overview: FY 06

BOARDS OF FISHERIES AND GAME

The Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game consist of seven members each, serving staggered three-year terms. The Boards' main role is to conserve and develop the fishery and wildlife resources of the state. This involves setting seasons, bag limits, methods and means for the state's subsistence, commercial, sport, guided sport, and personal use fisheries, hunting, and trapping uses of fish and wildlife. It also involves setting policy and direction for the management of the state's fishery and wildlife resources. The boards are charged with making allocation decisions, and the department is responsible for management based on those decisions.

The Board of Fisheries meets four to six times per year, and the Board of Game meets two to three times per year, to consider proposed changes to fisheries and wildlife regulations around the state. The boards use the biological and socioeconomic information provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, public comment received from people inside and outside of the state, and guidance from the Alaska Department of Public Safety and Alaska Department of Law when creating regulations that are sound and enforceable.

FY 06 Major Issues: Boards

Three major fisheries initiatives will be ongoing for FY06:

- Joint implementation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council of the Bering Sea king and Tanner crab rationalization program, which will require management changes by the board to address bycatch issues and management issues.
- Coordination of federally-managed groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska with state-managed groundfish fisheries in order to protect state waters as the rationalization program is developed for Gulf of Alaska groundfish.
- Board review of Alaska's commercial salmon industry to consider policy issues and recommend research needed in restructuring the industry.
- A major wildlife-related initiative is the Board of Game's implementation of changes in the intensive management law—specifically, the board continues to review its regulations to bring them into compliance with new standards set in establishing predator control programs and in issuing same-day airborne hunting permits.
- The Board of Game's Subsistence Implementation Committee continues its ongoing efforts to solve Tier II permitting processes.

FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Advisory committees are local "grass roots" groups that meet to discuss fishing and wildlife issues and to provide recommendations to the boards. There are 81 committees throughout the state, each with expertise in a particular local area. Advisory committees are intended to provide a local forum on fish and wildlife issues. Their purpose as established by the legislature includes:

- developing regulatory proposals
- evaluating regulatory proposals and making recommendations to the appropriate board
- providing a local forum for fish and wildlife conservation and use
- advising the appropriate regional council on resources
- consulting with individuals, organizations, and agencies.

FY 06 Major Issues: Advisory Committees

A major challenge has been to adequately involve local fish and game advisory committees in the work of the Boards of Fisheries and Game. Current funds allow only one advisory committee meeting per year for many committees where travel costs are high, and limited travel to attend board meetings.

State of Alaska

FY2005 Governor's Operating Budget

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.

Core Services

- Provide opportunity to utilize fish and wildlife resources;
- Ensure sustainability and harvestable surplus of fish and wildlife resources;
- Provide information to all customers;
- Involve the public in management of fish and wildlife resources; and
- Protect the state's sovereignty to manage fish and wildlife resources.

FY2005 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

FY2005 Department Budget: \$143,035,500

Personnel:

Full time	850
Part time	829
<u>Non permanent</u>	<u>115</u>
Total	1,794

Significant Changes In FY2005

The Department of Fish and Game total FY05 budget of \$143.0 million is a \$10.5 million increase over FY04. Major funding comes from \$57 million in federal funds (40%), \$26.7 million in Fish and Game funds (19%), and \$28.6 million in general funds (20%). Nearly 90% of the department's general fund is invested in management of commercial fisheries.

A significant portion of the FY05 budget increases are attributable to personal services cost increases for retirement, SBS, unemployment insurance and other factors. Federal funds were increased to offset a \$1 million general fund leasing reduction, and to include recurring Bering Sea Crab and Nearshore Fishery projects, previously requested in the capital budget, in the operating budget for the Division of Commercial Fisheries.

A summary of the major changes between FY04 and FY05 enacted by funding source is listed below. The detail for these changes is included in the component detail sections of the budget.

General Fund increase	\$1,484.1
Federal Fund increase	\$4,676.6
Fish and Game Fund increase	\$1,425.2
CIP Receipts increase	\$658.4
I/A Receipt increase	\$593.8
Statutory Program Receipt increase	\$582.3
Test Fish Receipt decrease	(\$151.8)

Our positions go up and down depending on the season. Many of our positions are part time seasonal the number of seasonal people increase in the summer season.

Divisions with prioritized programs

Commercial Fisheries \$49.2 million in total funds, including \$22.5 million in general funds. 305 PFT / 519 PPT

- 1) Stock Assessment and Applied Research
- 2) Harvest Management
- 3) Laboratory Services
- 4) Aquaculture Permitting
- 5) Data Processing
- 6) Education and Information Services

Sport Fisheries \$39.2 million in total funds, including \$266 thousand in general funds. 224 PFT / 235 PPT

- 1) Management
- 2) Stock Assessment
- 3) Habitat Assessment
- 4) Hatchery Production
- 5) Access Development and Maintenance
- 6) Planning and Survey
- 7) Education and Information Services

Wildlife Conservation \$30.9 million in total funds with no general funds. 178 PFT / 50 PPT

- 1) Wildlife Population Inventories
- 2) Harvest Management
- 3) Participation in Regulatory Process
- 4) Species-Specific Research to Address Management Problems
- 5) Implementation of Intensive Management Programs Where Necessary
- 6) Education and Information Services

Subsistence \$4.3 million in total funds including \$1.1 million in general funds. 28 PFT / 9 PPT

- 1) Collect Information on Subsistence Harvest
- 2) Conduct Research on Subsistence Harvest and Patterns of Use
- 3) Determination of Customary and Traditional Uses
- 4) Participation in Regulatory Process
- 5) Education and Information Services

Commercial Fisheries Limited Entry Commission \$2.9 million in total funds with no general funds. 29 PFT / 4 PPT

- 1) Limit Entry into Commercial Fisheries for Resource Conservation and Economic Viability
- 2) Administer Limited Entry Permit and Vessel Licensing System
- 3) Adjudication of Claims Related to Limited Entry Program
- 4) Participation in Board of Fisheries Process
- 5) Education and Information Services

Commissioner's office \$1.1 million in total funds with \$468 thousand in general funds. 10 PFT

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill council \$4.4 million in total funds with no general funds. 10 PFT

Boards/Advisory Committees \$1.6 million in total funds with \$939 thousand in general funds. 6 PFT / 4 PPT

Administrative Services \$6.1 million in total funds with \$1.1 million in general funds. 60 PFT / 8 PPT

Facilities maintenance and rent \$4.3 million in total funds with \$2.2 million in general funds. No positions

Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation

Overview



Alaska Division of Wildlife Conservation
Office of the Director
P.O. Box 25526
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WILDLIFE

Division of Wildlife Conservation

The Game Division was established in 1960 as one of three original divisions of the department. The name was changed to the Division of Wildlife Conservation in 1989.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation consists of the headquarters office in Juneau, and four regional offices located in Douglas, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Nome. There are also 23 area offices located throughout the state, giving the division a strong presence in rural Alaska. The division has about 230 employees. Of these, 6% are in leadership or managerial positions, 19% are in administrative positions, 49% are biologists, 15% are wildlife technicians, 11% are involved in biometrics or other technical fields.

Staff in regional and area offices are responsible for most of the wildlife research and management activities within their respective regions. Additionally, there are five statewide programs: Waterfowl Management, Marine Mammal Research, Information Management, Nongame, and Hunter Information and Training.

Funding for the division comes primarily from two major sources – sales of Alaska hunting and trapping licenses, and the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program. This program collects a 10% federal excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. These tax dollars are returned to state fish and game agencies to help pay for wildlife management and research programs. Other division funds are derived from the sale of waterfowl conservation stamps and permit application fees. In 2000, the division began to receive funds from another federal source (State Wildlife Grants) for management of species that are not hunted or trapped and for wildlife education. The division also receives substantial funding from Congress for research on some marine mammals. The total authorized budget for the division in FY'05 was about \$30 million.

Major Programs

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

Wildlife management involves a wide variety of biological and administrative activities. Management biologists, primarily in area offices, collect information on wildlife population size, trends, productivity, and levels of mortality from hunting and natural causes. They also serve as a point of contact with the public on wildlife management issues, assess public interests and needs, sell hunting and trapping licenses, issue harvest tags and permits, make public presentations, deal with nuisance and injured wildlife, and provide information and recommendations to supervisors. Management biologists compile and analyze biological information and present it to the Board of Game so it can establish population-based, ecologically sound, and socially responsible hunting and trapping regulations.

The division supports a staff of wildlife research biologists in order to collect information related to specific ecological questions or concerns. This information enables us to more effectively and responsibly manage and conserve wildlife populations and their habitats. Research projects cover a wide range of objectives, from collecting site-specific data for management decisions to understanding complex ecological relationships. Research efforts are generally developed and applied with the goal of maintaining or improving our ability to manage Alaska's wildlife resources.

Big Game Management and Research

The division expends most of its human and financial resources on big game management and research. Since most of our revenue has been derived from the sale of Alaska hunting licenses and tags to big game hunters, this has been a necessary and appropriate emphasis. Moose, caribou, deer, and brown bears are the big game species that receive the most public use, and they have received the most management and research attention.

We conduct wildlife surveys annually. For the larger moose and caribou populations, specific population estimates are conducted roughly every three years using the latest scientific techniques. Dall sheep, mountain goats, elk, bison, and muskoxen are periodically surveyed to measure population status, trends, and productivity. Black and brown bear populations are difficult to estimate because they often live in heavily vegetated areas in the summer and den during winter. For bears, we obtain population information from intensive research projects in selected areas, and we are developing methods to extrapolate this information to larger areas. In addition, we conduct research to 1) develop techniques to better estimate wildlife populations, 2) improve our understanding of wildlife-habitat relationships, and 3) improve our understanding of predator-prey relationships.

Intensive Management

During the last two years, the division has made significant progress in implementing active management programs promulgated by the Board of Game under the intensive management statute. In the winter of 2003-2004, wolf reduction programs began in Unit 19D east (McGrath) and Unit 13 (Nelchina Basin). In late 2004, new programs in Unit 16B (west side of Cook Inlet) and Unit 19A (mid-Kuskokwim) were added, and a fifth program in Units 12/20E will begin in early 2005. For the first time, a brown bear control program was authorized by the Board of Game at its meeting in November 2004. The purpose of all of these programs is to allow important moose and caribou populations that are presently held at low densities to be able to grow and provide an increased harvestable surplus for hunters.

Small Game Management

Hunting small game, such as ptarmigan, grouse, and snowshoe hares, is a popular activity for many hunters in Alaska, including an increasing number of non-residents. Populations of most species of small game are cyclic, fluctuating between low and high levels. The division monitors general population levels through trend counts in key areas, incidental observations during surveys for other species, and by talking with hunters. We have a program to improve ruffed grouse habitat in Interior and Southcentral Alaska by manipulating aspen stands, and have successfully transplanted ruffed grouse from Interior to Southcentral Alaska.

Furbearer Management

Nineteen species of furbearers are trapped in Alaska, with trapping effort partly a function of pelt value in the fur trade. We use aerial sampling techniques to estimate population levels of wolverines, wolves, foxes, and lynx in selected areas, which we extrapolate to other areas with similar habitats. Harvest information is collected from fur export records, fur buyer records, and fur sealing reports for those species for which the law requires "sealing" by department staff or other designated persons. An annual survey is distributed to about 1,500 trappers to provide additional insight about the relative abundance and trends of Alaska's furbearers. Presently, we have a few research projects focused on furbearers, including one to develop better techniques for estimating population size and trends of wolves, coyotes, foxes, and wolverines, and another to improve our understanding of marten habitat associations and population dynamics associated with forest management.

Waterfowl Management

The division has a strong interest in the management of migratory game birds and exerts its own management jurisdiction as well as participating in the federal waterfowl regulatory process. Alaska's wetland habitats and the multitude of ducks, geese, cranes, snipe, and other birds produced here are of critical importance to the state. Migratory birds provide food, recreation, and economic benefits to Alaskans.

Our Waterfowl Program collects information on important waterfowl populations; monitors important migratory game bird issues, including habitat development proposals; and participates in the migratory game bird hunting regulation process through the Pacific Flyway Study Committee/Council and other agencies and organizations involved in setting migratory game bird hunting regulations. The Waterfowl Program makes up the state's technical staff to the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council, which is the body responsible for developing spring subsistence regulation proposals under an amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty.

Nongame Management and Research

More than 80% of Alaska's 275 regularly occurring species of birds are not hunted, as are more than half of Alaska's 90 mammal species and all eight of its amphibian species. Using new federal funds, the division has begun to collect baseline information on a handful of species about which little is known or evidence suggests declines may be occurring. The intent of this program is to prevent additional species from being listed as threatened or endangered.

Marine Mammal Management and Research

The federal government assumed management of marine mammals in Alaska in 1972 with passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act; however, the division maintains a strong presence in marine mammal conservation because of its great importance to Alaska. The majority of funding for the division's marine mammal research efforts comes from federal sources obtained through grants. This program conducts numerous long-term, nationally and internationally recognized research projects. The results of these projects have substantially increased our knowledge of the biology and ecology of Alaska's marine mammals, which has subsequently: 1) improved the understanding of how marine mammals interact with commercial fisheries; 2) provided important information to Alaska Natives for their subsistence use of marine mammals; 3) been integrated with wildlife viewing programs that provide the public with opportunities to view and photograph marine mammals; and 4) provided a credible, objective source of information for organizations concerned about the impacts of various human activities on marine mammals.

Wildlife Habitat – Wildland Fire Management

Diverse, productive habitat is a prerequisite for healthy wildlife populations. Historically, periodic burning by wildland fires has been the main influence responsible for maintaining quality habitat for wildlife in many parts of the state. However, settlement and development by humans creates an increased need for fire protection, which ultimately reduces the land's ability to sustain diverse, productive wildlife populations, at the same time that human demand for wildlife is increasing. Since the department, for the most part, is not a land manager, the division works with other natural resource managers and agencies to implement appropriate fire ecology programs. We also work with other agencies and private organizations to implement programs designed to restore or enhance habitat conditions for wildlife, and conduct research to evaluate the efficacy of various habitat management techniques.

Hunter Information and Training

Our Hunter Information and Training program is responsible for providing education and information to hunters to increase hunter safety and knowledge, and decrease the wounding loss of game. The program is divided into two main efforts, classes and clinics. A formal system of hunter education classes qualifies successful students to hunt in areas where hunter education certification is required. This certification is valid in other states where hunter education is a prerequisite to hunt. Additionally, there are specialized hunter education courses, taught by volunteers, for archery and muzzle-loading firearms that make hunters eligible to participate in hunts restricted to these types of equipment. The second area of emphasis is a system of hunter clinics presented on a variety of subjects. Clinics increase hunter knowledge, effectiveness, and satisfaction while reducing conflicts among user groups.

The division operates three shooting ranges, the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage, an indoor range in Fairbanks, and a new indoor range in Juneau. These shooting ranges provide training for hunter education classes and a place for the public to enjoy shooting.

State Wildlife Refuges, Critical Habitat Areas and Sanctuaries

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages 31 state wildlife refuges, critical habitat areas, and wildlife sanctuaries, known as special areas, for the protection of fish and wildlife, their habitats, and public use of the areas. Although the Department of Natural Resources retains land ownership of refuges along with other state lands, as well as the ultimate land management authority, our department manages these special areas to provide high-quality habitat for fish or wildlife populations. With a few exceptions, hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreational activities are encouraged, so long as they are in keeping with the primary reason for establishing each special area. Notable special areas overseen by the division include Walrus Island State Game Sanctuary, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge, Anchorage Coastal State Wildlife Refuge, Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge, Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary (Pack Creek).

Information Management

Our Information Management program provides centralized data processing, statistical, and computer programming support services to the division's wildlife management and research programs. It is the clearinghouse and central repository for big game and furbearer harvest information. This program administers and conducts the lottery for all Drawing Permit Hunts in Alaska, and administers the Tier II Subsistence Permit Hunt scoring and allocation system for the department. The program also supports the regulatory process by providing a liaison between the activities of the Alaska Board of Game, the division, and the public, and has the central role in supporting and communicating regulatory process activities within the division. Information Management also provides GIS-based data analyses and digital mapping capabilities for the division.

Public Service

Public service is an important part of the division's mission and function. Regional and area personnel regularly respond to questions and requests for information on a variety of topics, from wildlife hunting and trapping regulations, to hunting and viewing opportunities, to general wildlife questions and nuisance wildlife complaints. Our staff also provide hunting licenses at many offices, along with big game harvest tags and permits.

Information and Education

Educational opportunities are among the most frequently requested services we provide to the public. Education is an integral component of effective wildlife management and people appreciate and value wildlife more when they understand more about it. Educating the public about wildlife and wildlife management techniques increases their involvement in conservation, and also helps improve compliance with wildlife laws and regulations. Our current programs include outdoors skills clinics and public presentations. Programs within the school system include Project WILD, a program targeted at K-12 teachers and their students, and the Alaska Wildlife Curriculum, consisting of Alaska-based information that complements national curricula.