

New group works for end of foreign fishing

JUNEAU — "An astounding number of king salmon destined for the rivers of Alaska are being taken by foreign fishing interests — both by joint ventures and by the high seas gillnet fisheries," declares Bix Bonney, a leading sportfisherman in Alaska. "We're demanding relief from the federal government."

"It's ludicrous that sport and commercial fishermen argue over the available king salmon in Southcentral, when hundreds of thousands of three- and four-year-old kings are being taken each

year as incidental catch," says Bonney.

In 1984 the estimated incidental catch of salmon in the Gulf of Alaska by joint venture fisheries alone was as high as 59,043, according to a letter cited by Bonney. Last year, 83% of the incidental catch of a pollock joint venture in the Shelikof Straits was taken during the last four months of the year, and 99% consisted of king salmon weighing almost six pounds apiece.

The incidental catch of salmon by joint ventures within the 200-mile Fishery Conservation Zone (FCZ) and by the high-seas foreign fleets operating both inside and outside the FCZ is drastically reducing the amount of king salmon available to Alaska fishermen. Major sportfishing

groups in the state, representing about 300,000 recreational fishermen, as well as the State Board of Fisheries, of which Bonney is Vice-Chair, have enacted resolutions demanding action from the federal government to curtail the abuses.

The USA Coalition, of which Bonney is a member, is pushing for an amendment to the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act which would eliminate foreign fishing and processing within the FCZ. The Coalition maintains that Americans should be deriving the benefit of fishery resources in U.S. waters, and predicts that phasing out foreign fishing will drastically reduce the incidental catch of salmon, crab, halibut and herring.