

Joint Boards study subsistence and other statewide fisheries and game regulations

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Governor Sheffield says that he will decide by the end of this week whether to appoint a special Task Force on Subsistence.

The governor met April 18 with John Shively, Chair of the Joint Boards of Fisheries and Game, and Don Collingsworth, Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game, to discuss a Joint Boards' recommendation that a Subsistence Task Force be appointed.

Although Sheffield said that he favored such a Task Force during his campaign, in office he has stated that his appointed Fisheries and Game Boards and Commissioner should have the lead responsibility for resolving subsistence

issues in accordance with the state subsistence law.

Both the Alaska Federation of Natives in a letter to the governor February 18 and the State Attorney General in an opinion for the governor on February 25 said the state subsistence law was adequate and that the major problem was in public misperceptions of the law. Also they recommended a regulatory change and that was implemented by the Joint Boards on March 24.

The Joint Boards repealed the definition of "rural" which had been inserted into the regulations at the spring 1982 Joint Boards meeting in the belief that it was necessary for compliance with federal legislation. The new State Attorney General found, how-

ever, that as long as the term "rural" was in the regulations there was no need to define it.

The action of the Joint Boards retains eight criteria in the Joint Boards' regulations for identifying "customary and traditional subsistence uses by rural Alaska residents."

These criteria include a long-term seasonal pattern of personal vs. commercial use of fish and game resources that are reasonably accessible from the user's residence. Additionally, the use pattern should include means and knowledge or skills handed down from generation to generation, and the fish and game resources used should provide substantial economic, cultural, social, and nutritional elements of the user's life.

In addition to considering proposals to change the definition of "rural" in the subsistence law, the Joint Boards considered a number of amendments to regulations governing the local fish and game advisory committees and the six regional advisory committee councils made up of the chairpersons of the local advisory committees.

The local advisory committees were listed for the first time in the regulations and the number of committees was increased from 68 to 72.

The residency requirement for the local committees was dropped in favor of a regulation which allows membership on the basis of local reputation and knowledge and experience with the resources of the area.

The Joint Boards did not agree to restrict regional council authority to subsistence matters.

Eulalie Sullivan, assistant executive director of the Fisheries Board, said that one of the more controversial regulatory sessions involved measures to limit the incidental take of king salmon in the Cook Inlet-Kenai River commercial sockeye fishery and to tighten the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery. "Everybody lost something on this one," she said.

The opening of the set net fishery on the east side beaches of Cook Inlet will be delayed from the present June 25 opening until July 5 south of the Kasilof River and July 10 north of the Kasilof River.

The drift gill net fleet will not be allowed to fish within two miles of the above beaches before the set net openings.

Based on 10 year averages, these changes are expected to save more than 1,700 kings from being incidentally caught while causing the commercial fisheries on the east side beaches to lose about 57,000 sockeye.

For sports fishermen, the annual possession limit for legal-sized king salmon remains at five in the Cook Inlet area and only two can be taken from the Kenai River.

Sport fishing from registered guide boats in the Kenai River downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake will be prohibited on Sundays in July and sport fishing from any boat

will be prohibited on Mondays after July 5.

These measures are expected to result in a savings of 1,700 king salmon in the sport fishery.

With respect to the chum and sockeye commercial salmon fisheries in the Lower Yukon-Kuskokwim area, the Fisheries Board determined that there was no need for further limitations on the False Pass-Unimak Island fisheries in order to increase Yukon-bound salmon. There will be a flexible one-week closure period between the summer and fall chum fisheries.

A 24-hour Yukon subsistence fishing period on alternate Saturdays for both kings and summer chums, and a 24-hour subsistence fishing period every

weekend during the fall chum runs were added.

The Board was particularly concerned about the incidental net catch of king salmon in Southeast. Gillnetters and seiners were put on notice that if they did not cooperate to lessen their incidental catch of kings that the Board would take action in December.

Additionally, the Department was told to close areas where kings are the primary target species if the harvest level is being taken quickly and it appears that an extensive single species fishery could occur.

Two proposals to open the Southeast-Yakutat commercial fishery beyond its westward boundary at Cape Suckling, 144 degrees north longitude,

were voted down.

In other action related to Southeast fisheries, the Board defeated a proposal to repeal the 8-on/6-off fishing periods for Districts 12 and 14 but delayed the start of this fishing pattern until July 15.

Proposals to allow trolling in Section 11-B during gillnet openings and to prevent use of gillnets at stream mouths were rejected as were proposals that would have closed sport fishing in the Chilkat and in Mitchell Bay.

A proposal that would have limited commercial fishing until subsistence uses were met was rejected although the open fishing area for the Angoon subsistence coho fishery was increased. King salmon fishing on the Taku River system was

restricted.

In response to three days of departmental testimony on the serious decline of westward shellfish, "exclusive" registration areas were voted in for the westward king and tanner crab fisheries and to set seasons for each crab fishery.

A vessel registered in an "exclusive" area may fish that area as well as any open areas. A vessel registered to fish a "super-exclusive" area who fishes that area may not fish anywhere else, and if it fishes anywhere else it may not fish in the "super-exclusive" area.

The super-exclusive area means that Kodiak king and tanner crab fishermen both will not be permitted to fish south of Cape Kumlik.