

Alaska Sportfishing Assoc. takes stand on subsistence

ANCHORAGE—Indicating support for actions taken by the Alaska Board of Fisheries prior to the *Madison* decision of last March, the Alaska Sportfishing Association (ASA) has released a six-point position statement on the subject of subsistence, as it relates to fisheries.

"We hope these six positions can be adopted as an amendment to the State's subsistence statute," explained the group's executive director, Russ Redick, formerly southcentral regional supervisor for the Sport Fish Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. "We plan to work with legislators to

based on meeting the protein needs and, in some cases, significant cultural needs of the harvesters. One species should be substitutable for another comparable species, and harvest should occur on those species most abundant and best able to withstand the harvest.

* Certain areas exist where the fishery resources are so sensitive that the efficient harvest methods associated with subsistence fishing (i.e.: gill nets) would destroy those resources. The Board of Fisheries must continue to have the authority, upon a formal finding of fact, to close such areas to subsistence fishing while

needs.

*Rainbow/steelhead trout shall not be subject to a subsistence priority. The Board of Fisheries shall continue to have the authority to allocate the harvest of this species to any user group without priority on a case-by-case basis.

*Subsistence fishing in Cook Inlet waters should be limited to the areas adjacent to English Bay, Port Graham, and Tyonek, as previously designated by the Board of Fisheries. All other non-commercial net fishing in Cook Inlet should be conducted under personal-use regulations.

"The last statement is the only recommendation of ASA relating to a specific area of the state,"

commented Hunter. "We must face the fact that Cook Inlet is unique. More than half the state's population resides in this drainage, and most of these people have access only to Cook Inlet fishery stocks. According to Fish & Game data, some 140,000 anglers and several thousand commercial fishermen use Cook Inlet fisheries — in addition to persons wishing subsistence fishing privileges.

We have no objection to continued subsistence harvest by any Alaskan in the three communities originally set aside as subsistence communities," he continued. "However, in basic fairness to all Alaskans living in the Cook Inlet

area, and to avoid the inevitable future chaotic controversy associated with priority-mandated gill-net fisheries, subsistence fishing should not be permitted in the remainder of Cook Inlet."

"Cook Inlet sport fisheries need to be managed very carefully as they take the greatest pressure from residents and visitors alike."

Redick emphasized that the group believes gill-net or dipnet fisheries may be desirable in certain times and sites in Cook Inlet, but ASA believes that it is critical that these fisheries be permitted on a non-priority basis under personal-use regulations.

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seek enactment of such an amendment," he continued, "as well as continue to work closely with the board (of fisheries) on this highly controversial subject."

In addition to concurring with the five consensus points on subsistence put forth by the Alaska Outdoor Council — of which ASA is a member — the sportfishing groups released the following six position statements on the subject:

* Subsistence harvests should be

still allowing less efficient methods of harvest, such as sportfishing with pole and line.

* The definition of subsistence gear in AS 16.05.940(22) is proper and should not be amended. That definition does not normally allow pole and line to be used as subsistence gear.

* A set of personal-use fishing regulations is needed to allow the harvest of fish when they occur in numbers exceeding escapement and commercial/consumptive