

On the Water

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One Trooper's day patrolling the inside passage

The sun was shining down on a nearly cloudless, late July day in Sitka when Alaska Wildlife Trooper Kyle Ferguson made a quick U-turn in the patrol skiff. The waves were high in some areas but in Redoubt Bay where he was going to check on people fishing, the water was smooth and the sun was warm.

“They didn’t wave,” said Trooper Ferguson. “That is usually a sign that they don’t want you to notice them. Let’s see what’s going on.”

Trooper Ferguson followed the smaller skiff into a little cove which sat about a quarter mile from a popular fishing area known as “the Falls” in Redoubt Bay. When the vessel with two men came to a stop, Trooper Ferguson pulled up alongside, greeted the two men onboard and inquired about their fishing success.

Four silvers, was their response. Scattered in the vessel were a few crushed beer cans, the vessel passenger was sipping out of a partially full one. Trooper Ferguson asked the skiff’s driver if he had been drinking. Just as the man’s watery eye’s suggested to Trooper Ferguson, the man said yes, but only two. The man was not stumbling around but to be on the safe side, Trooper Ferguson did something he doesn’t often find himself doing on most of his boat patrols; he conducted field sobriety tests on the open water.

Following the tests, Trooper Ferguson told the man that while he was concerned for his safety, there wasn’t sufficient evidence to support an arrest. He cautioned the man to not drink anything else while operating the skiff. “The waves are pretty big today, so stay alert. Now, on to the fish.”

The contact ended with both the skiff driver and passenger receiving a citation for not clipping their subsistence-caught fish or recording their catch before leaving the immediate fishing area. They weren’t too happy with their tickets but still thanked Trooper Ferguson for his time and professionalism.

Putting his boat in gear, Trooper Ferguson pointed his skiff toward the Falls and made his way over to see if he could catch someone not following the rules. He maneuvered his skiff in behind a small island across from where a handful of boats were set and fishermen and their families were out with poles and dipnets. He grabbed his binoculars and disappeared into the woods. He came back out about 15 minutes later.

“They are all behaving themselves.”

By Trooper Ferguson’s standards, a good day at work is when he doesn’t have to cite anyone. No citations means the people he has contacted are all following the regulations. By and large, this was a good day.



Trooper Ferguson makes his way back to his skiff after checking out some fisherman in Redoubt Bay.



Safety is a top priority so Trooper Ferguson, as well as our other Troopers, always wears life jackets when on the water.



In Alaska, Operating Under the Influence ([AS 28.35.030](#)) applies to watercrafts in addition to aircrafts and vehicles.