

Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 153. Yakutat, AK 99689 * (907) 784-3000

Alaska Hatcheries:

- The Alaska hatchery program was designed to increase salmon abundance and enhance fisheries, while protecting wild stocks. The state PNP hatchery program was developed in response to depressed commercial fisheries, to meet the needs of the people of the state.
- Fisheries enhancement projects are **not** permitted if they are anticipated to have a significant negative effect on natural production. All fisheries enhancement programs are designed to **supplement** natural production not replace or displace them.
- Alaska commercial salmon harvests have improved greatly since the inception of Alaska's hatchery program and natural stocks remain healthy.. These programs only protect the fish during the early juvenile life stage; if fish are not fit they will not return from the wild as adults.
- As Alaska's salmon return to their place of origin, they are available for harvest as common property in personal use, sport, subsistence, and commercial fisheries.
- Hatcheries effectively contribute salmon to the commercial harvest and in turn can decrease fishing pressure on naturally spawning salmon populations.
- Hatchery contributions of adult salmon to commercial fisheries have been as much as 77 million fish, accounting for 48% of the total salmon harvested in common property commercial fisheries in 2010.
- Most hatchery production is pink salmon, with the majority harvested in Prince William Sound; and chum salmon that are harvested mainly in Southeast Alaska.
- In 2012, hatchery production accounted for 80% of the commercial fisheries harvest in Prince William Sound and 27% in Southeast Alaska.

*Vercessi, L. (2013). Alaska Salmon Hatcheries; Contributing to Fisheries and Sustainability. ADF&G.

Yakutat History

In 1984, the Yakutat Comprehensive Salmon Plan, at times referred to as Phase I, was adopted by the commissioner of Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Since 1984, many changes have occurred in the Yakutat Region including economic, environmental, geological and social changes, but changes were not made to the plan. The Phase I plan encouraged rehabilitation and stream enhancement projects. As the rivers in the Yakutat Region have changed through glacial rebound, the wild salmon stocks have diminished greatly in some systems. Some systems of wild stocks continue to fail even with rehabilitation and stream enhancement projects. Water volumes in Ophir Creek have significantly declined in recent years, causing a reduction in fish production (ADNR 1995). The West Fork of the Situk River has been drying up over the last 20 years affecting sockeye and coho salmon. A habitat improvement project in Humpy Creek inadvertently caused degradation to spawning habitat, which has led to a decline in pink salmon

production. The Phase I plan discouraged supplementation such as hatcheries and remote release strategies. While this reflected the view of the community at the time, opinions toward hatcheries and salmon fisheries enhancement in the Yakutat Region have changed, largely due to local commercial fishermen buying permits in other regions of the state with fully developed fishery enhancement programs that provide opportunity for better financial benefits. Without a Regional Aquaculture Association or a Regional Planning Team there had been little investigation into fisheries enhancement, particularly supplementation opportunities over the last 28 years in the Yakutat region.

In response to the great success of fisheries enhancement North and South of Yakutat and the economic downturn of the Yakutat salmon fisheries, local fisherman created the Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association (YRAA). With the YRAA formed and approved by the State the next major step was to update the [Yakutat Comprehensive Salmon Plan](#). The revision of this plan was a major undertaking that involved the cooperation of many State, Federal, and local organizations and individuals. The plan has been updated and approved by ADF&G, now allowing for new projects and goals in the Yakutat region.

The revised and updated [Yakutat Regional Comprehensive Salmon Plan, Phase II](#) is a combination of setting long-term goals objectives and strategies for the region and identifying potential projects and establishing criteria for evaluating the enhancement and rehabilitation potentials for the salmon resources in the region.

With this comprehensive salmon plan YRAA will be able to move forward with salmon fishery enhancement and supplementation. YRAA has already started project planning and received a [management feasibility analysis \(MFA\)](#) from the department for some potential remote release sites for either pink or chum salmon at Humpback Creek, Redfield Cove, Broken Oar Cove, Puget Cove, Monti Bay and Eleanor Cove.

A copy of the MFA can be accessed from the Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association website, <http://www.yraa.org>.

Project Development

YRAA has been working with engineers and hydrologists over the past three years to find a suitable site for an enhancement project. There are very specific water characteristics (quality and quantity) needed to operate a successful project and at this time our resources are going towards finding a suitable site. Once a site has been selected the permitting process will begin and a project will move forward.

Enhancement Tax

The State of Alaska allows regional aquaculture associations to collect a tax between 1% and 3% on all salmon caught within their region. Previous to the development of YRAA the City and Borough had been collecting a 1% tax on all salmon delivered in Yakutat. Since tax could only be collected on fish delivered in Yakutat, non-local fisherman could catch Yakutat fish and deliver them outside our region and not pay any tax. Also, since the other aquaculture

associations had their own taxes in place fishermen could claim the fish were caught within the Yakutat region and again not pay any tax.

YRAA has worked with the City and Borough to phase out their 1% salmon tax and has adopted a State collected 2% region-wide tax. This is lower than the 3% tax other aquaculture associations charge in hopes that now non-local fishermen catching Yakutat fish will claim them as well as allowing the YRAA sufficient funding for project development.

Although Yakutat fishermen have been paying a salmon tax for many years it now shows up on fish tickets because it is a State collected tax, and this has some fishermen concerned. This tax is used for YRAA project development and has been proven by the aquaculture associations North and South of Yakutat to be very good investments. For example, fishermen have received \$23 worth of Prince William Sound Aquaculture salmon for every \$1.00 of enhancement taxes they have paid since 1990. (McDowell, 2012)

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas please don't hesitate to contact us:

YRAA Office Hours: Wednesday-Friday 10am-2pm or call: (907) 784-3000

Email: YakutatRAA@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.yraa.org>

YRAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

SETNET: Jonathan Pavlik, Nate Endicott, Wayne Ivers and Sheri Nelson

HANDTROLL: Larry Bemis and Casey Mapes

POWER TROLL: Herb Holcomb and Sam L. Demmert

SPORT FISH REP: Pat Robbins

SUBSISTENCE USER:

REG/VILLAGE/SHARE HOLDER REP: Beverly Bremner

PUBLIC AT LARGE: Jesse Pavlik and Lowell Petersen

CITY/CHAMBER: Nick Holcomb

PROCESSOR: Harold Robbins

What is a hatchery?

Hatcheries in Alaska consist of taking fertilized eggs of salmon and incubating them in boxes with water flowing over the eggs until they hatch. At this point, depending on the species, the newly hatched salmon are transported to a net-pen in the ocean in close proximity to a fresh water source allowing them to imprint that specific location for return. In the case of chums the salmon are contained and protected in the net-pen and fed for approximately three months. Once the salmon have reached a pre-determined weight, usually just several grams, the nets are opened and the salmon fry released into the ocean. From this point the salmon continue their life cycle in the ocean for 3-5 years and then return to the spot at which they were released. Essentially a hatchery provides additional protection for wild salmon spawn allowing for a greater percentage to survive and return.

Hatchery Permits are required for the construction and/or operation of a private non-profit salmon hatchery in Alaska. Hatchery permits specify the species and number of salmon than can be incubated at the hatchery, as well as release sites, broodstock sources, and other conditions of operation. Once they are issued, hatchery permits do not expire, but they may be revoked. Hatchery permits are non-transferable, so if a hatchery is sold or leased, the new operator must apply for a new permit.

What can a hatchery offer Yakutat and its residents?

See attachments for financial benefits, including jobs and ex-vessel contributions.

Who would make the important choices regarding the running and maintaining of the hatchery?

All proposed hatchery projects must first be reviewed and approved by the YRAA board of directors. From this point the Regional Planning Team (RPT), which consists of representatives from different divisions within the Alaska department of Fish and Game and YRAA members, review the project. A rigorous permitting/application process with the State then proceeds and a project will only be approved by the Commissioner of Fish and Game once it meets all the necessary criteria for a hatchery. This process can sometimes take several years.

The application process includes:

- an analysis of the possible effects the hatchery would have on fisheries management
- submission of an application providing detailed information on the proposed hatchery
- review of the application by department technical staff
- regional planning team review of the hatchery's compatibility with the regional salmon plan
- a public hearing presenting the plans for the proposed hatchery
- commissioner approval or denial of the hatchery permit

A hatchery permit will not be approved if it is deemed to have significant negative effects on natural production. These effects are determined by State biologists, geneticists, and other professionals within the state hatchery division.

Hatchery permits always carry conditions to protect fish health and wild salmon stocks, such as requiring department approval of broodstock sources and release sites, and inspection of salmon before release.

What kind of salmon would be coming from our hatchery?

Alaska hatcheries are capable of enhancing all species of salmon, but the current focus of the YRAA has been on chum and pink salmon. These two are the hardiest and cheapest species to incubate allowing a greater profit margin for fishermen.

How long does a hatchery last? What kind of future investments are required to keep it viable?

Once a hatchery program reaches full operation it is designed to be self-funding. Tax is collected on the fish sold in the region and the hatchery performs cost-recovery harvesting to continue funding the operation of the project.