Draft Minutes
Yakutat Regional Planning Team Meeting
Tuesday, May 1, 2012
ANB Hall
Yakutat, Alaska 99689

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) RPT Representatives:
Judy Lum, Division of Sport Fish (SF), Douglas
Flip Pryor, Division of Commercial Fisheries (CF), Fisheries Management, Douglas
Ron Josephson, CF, PNP hatcheries, Juneau

Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association (YRAA) RPT Representatives:
Nate Endicott, Set Net, Yakutat
Herb Holcomb, Power Troll, Yakutat
John Pavlik, Set Net, Yakutat

YRAA Board: Yakutat
Jack Endicott, Public At Large
Wayne Ivers, Set Net
Kip Fanning, Sport Fish
Cathy Bremmer, Public At Large
Larry Bemis, Hand Troll
Sam L. Demmert, Power Troll
Sam O. Demmert, Set Net
Casey Mapes, Hand Troll
Nick Holcomb, Chamber/City

ADF&G Staff:
Sam Rabung, CF, PNP Hatcheries, Juneau
Brian Marston, SF, Yakutat
Nicole Zeiser, CF, Yakutat
Gordie Woods, CF, Yakutat
Patrick McCormick, CF, Yakutat

Other Participants:
Kathy Hansen, SEAFA, Juneau
Ed Hansen, SEAFA, Juneau
Myron Johnson, Yakutat AF, Yakutat
Bill Lucey, City of Yakutat
Walter Porter, Yakutat Chamber of Commerce
Pat Robbins, fisherman, Dry Bay
Harold Robbins, fisherman, Dry Bay
J. Curt Holcomb, fisherman, Yakutat

1.0 **Call to order/Introduction/Public Comment.** Flip Pryor (ADF&G) called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Pryor noted the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of keeping the minutes. Comments from the public were accepted throughout the meeting.

2.0 **ADF&G Presentation: RPT role and responsibilities**. Sam Rabung (ADF&G) gave a Power-Point presentation entitled "Regional Planning Teams: Their Role in Alaska's Salmon Fishery Enhancement Program". The primary focus of the presentation was the ADF&G mission statement, statutes, and regulations that guide enhancement projects. Alaska's enhancement program is stakeholder driven. Regional aquaculture associations determine what fishery enhancement is desirable in their region. ADF&G determines what is appropriate within their mandate to protect natural production. The Regional Planning Team (RPT) process is a cooperative effort between the regional association and ADF&G. Each RPT consists of six members, three appoint by the Commissioner of ADF&G, and three appointed by the regional association. RPTs act in an advisory role to the Commissioner of ADF&G on regional salmon fishery enhancement activities by: drafting and updating regional comprehensive salmon plans (CSP); reviewing hatchery permit applications and alteration requests; reviewing hatchery annual management plans; and reviewing certain fish resource permit applications.

Discussion: There was discussion on the cost of updating the CSP. YRAA estimated $150,000 for their plan. Kodiak recently spent $200,000 on their recent rewrite of their CSP. The cost of the Kodiak plan includes outreach travel associated with getting public comment. Yakutat will need to update language in the CSP to address physical changes to rivers and also changes in economic climate since the original plan was written in 1984. YRAA will need to develop an allocation plan at some point as all gear groups will be paying an equal tax but not necessarily harvesting at an equal rate. Allocation gets addressed to some extent by planning potential projects. YRAA is its own region; there are no plans at this time to combine YRAA with the other aquaculture associations in Southeast Alaska. The Yakutat area does not have any summer run chum salmon. Not having any summer chum salmon reduces the concerns of straying into a natural system, but also means there are no broodstock sources readily available. Some applicable points from the *Alaska Department of Fish and Game Genetic Policy* are: 1) not allow transport between major geographic areas (Southeast is identified as an area), 2) phenotypic characteristics of the donor stock must be shown to be appropriate for the proposed fish culture regions and the goals set in the management plan (referring to Comprehensive Salmon Plan), 3) no distance is set or specified for transport within a region, 4) proposals for long distance transport should be accompanied by adequate justification for using non-local stock. Getting a permit to receive eggs from an established Southeast Alaska hatchery is going to be a challenge given the distance involved. A fish resource permit (FRP) could possibly be used for some potential projects. FRPs have a limit of 500,000 eggs for pink and chum salmon, and 100,000 eggs for smolt species. FRPs have to be renewed annually, except for Hatchery Site Suitability Permits, which are good for two consecutive years. The market for pink and chum salmon is currently up due to new product demand which process the fish to exploit raw protein content. The hatcheries in Southeast and Prince William Sound are currently able to sell the spawned out carcasses from the hatcheries. Smolt species are much more expensive to rear because they require a full year of freshwater rearing. The cost of rearing smolt species includes additional fish food and rearing space (rearing tanks, freshwater, land, etc). Pink and chum salmon come out of the hatchery and go straight into saltwater, and then are short-term reared and released, so they are much cheaper to rear. The hatcheries in Alaska have been successful as a whole, but there are certainly projects that have failed. In the late 90's Hidden Falls Hatchery had huge returns of chum salmon. Last year, Hidden Falls Hatchery had two small commercial openings and just barely was able to collect broodstock. Limestone Inlet started with five years of poor returns, which almost ended the program, but then it took off in the sixth year. Programs can have fluctuating success over time. The Salmon Enhancement Revolving Loan Fund and grants are available to get hatchery

programs through years of poor returns. The biggest hurdle to getting a chum salmon release going in the Yakutat region is to identify an appropriate broodstock and an appropriate release location. The biggest concern with a new release is possible harm associated with straying into local wild stock spawning waters, including the Situk River. Generally, new production projects start small and then returns are evaluated before increases are allowed. The best way to design an enhancement project is to "reverse engineer" the project. Start with who will catch the fish and plan on having the appropriate processing capacity. A seine vessel will be necessary to clean up returning fish and keep them from straying. Gear changes outside a SHA/THA require Alaska Board of Fisheries action. Gear changes within a SHA/THA can be authorized by the commissioner.

3.0 **Appoint Chairman**. The YRAA unanimously **Approved** appointing **Flip Pryor** as chair.

4.0 **Amend or approve agenda**. No amendments proposed. **Vote**: agenda was **Approved** by unanimous consent.

5.0 **Update on status and past, current and planned studies**. Bill Lucey (Yakutat City Planner), gave a Power-Point presentation entitled "City and Borough of Yakutat Planning and Natural Resources; Project Update to the Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association and Yakutat Regional Planning Team". The city recently received a state funding request to pay for the unfunded portion of a broad reaching project that included: preliminary work on a remote chum salmon release site, genetic sampling of local salmon stocks, initial funding of Yakutat Holding Group, planning and design of a coastal education and development center, a mariculture development program, and a project to develop self-sufficient power. Monitoring extreme low flows in Ophir Creek indicate that as years go by, there are more low flows, they last longer and the water levels are lower. The habitat is changing near Yakutat due to uplift. Other recent projects in the Yakutat area include road decommissioning, tree thinning, habitat restoration, watershed mapping, and fish pass projects. Additional discussion occurred around funding sources for aquaculture projects and where that money might be spent.

Discussion: There was general discussion around the changing geological conditions in the Yakutat area, how that might affect fisheries, and things that might be done to increase production. The sockeye salmon in Situk Lake spawn in the first ten feet of gravel; the gravel below is full of sediment. If the lake is spawning limited, adding or cleaning gravel could be a habitat restoration project.

8.0 Discuss updating the Yakutat Regional Comprehensive Salmon Plan (1984): The CSP was discussed in depth the previous day at the regional association meeting. A list of all possible projects will need to be compiled for the CSP, and then those projects can be prioritized. Not all the projects have to be large projects such as a chum salmon release; smaller restoration projects should also be included. A remote chum salmon release site is a situation that can create a significant return of fish that can be maintained for a long time. Other projects such as stream-side incubators or restoration projects are harder to evaluate and may only have short-term results. Incubation boxes require a physical location to place the boxes that has access to a continuous source of gravity fed water. The first step for initiating a hatchery permit is for the hatchery association to request the department do a Management Feasibility Analysis (MFA) for the new proposed project. It's during

the MFA process where the department determines a suitable broodstock. Norton Sound Aquaculture Association, which has a considerable number of outlying communities, sent letters out to various groups looking for input on enhancement projects for their CSP.

H. Holcomb **MOVED** and Endicott **SECONDED** to recommend **ACTION;** the chair will draft a letter of support from the YRPT to request funding of $150,000 from the Chinook Mitigation Fund to update the Yakutat Regional Comprehensive Salmon Plan. **VOTE**: the vote was unanimously **CARRIED.**

9.0 Additional Business. None.

10.0 Next meeting is tentatively set for October 6, 2012 in Yakutat. The meeting is to correspond with the Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Meeting the previous day.

11.0 Adjourn at 4:25 p.m.