

Pilgrim River Salmon Counting Tower
Project Summary Report, 1998

by

Peter J. Rob

Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Commercial Fisheries Division, AYK Region
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1599

Regional Informational Report¹ No. 3A99-07

January 1999

¹The Regional Information Report Series was established in 1987 to provide an information access system for all unpublished divisional reports. These reports frequently serve diverse ad hoc informational purposes or archive basic uninterpreted data. To accommodate timely reporting of recently collected information, reports in this series undergo only limited internal review and may contain preliminary data; this information may be subsequently finalized and published in the formal literature. Consequently, these reports should not be cited without prior approval of the author or the Commercial Fisheries Division.

OFFICE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY (OEO) STATEMENT

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducts all programs and activities free from discrimination on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood or disability. For information on alternative formats available for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-4120, (TDD) 1-800-478-3648, or (fax) 907-586-6596. Any person who believes s/he has been discriminated against should write to: ADF&G, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526; or O.E.O., U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Objectives	1
Methods	1
Results	1
Discussion	2
Acknowledgments	2
Literature Cited	2
Figures	3

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Area location map of the Pilgrim River counting tower project site, Port Clarence. 1998.....	3

INTRODUCTION

The Pilgrim River counting tower is a cooperative project funded and operated by the Kawerak Corporation. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) provided equipment and data analysis for this project.

This was the second year a salmon counting tower operation was attempted on the Pilgrim River (Rob 1998). The project is intended to obtain timely and accurate escapement information required for the active management of the salmon stocks throughout the season. The Pilgrim River originates at Salmon Lake and drains into Imuruk Basin approximately 45 miles north of Nome (Figure 1). Historically this drainage has been the major producer of sockeye salmon in Port Clarence.

OBJECTIVES

To obtain daily and seasonal information concerning the timing and magnitude of the chum, pink, sockeye, king and coho salmon escapement to the Pilgrim River.

METHODS

The Pilgrim River counting tower camp is located on Marys Igloo Village Corporation land, approximately ½ mile upstream from the end of the Pilgrim Hot Springs road (Figure 1).

A tent camp with two tent frames and an outhouse was set up at the end of June. A 15 foot high scaffolding tower was erected on the bank of the river to serve as an observation platform. A 50 x 8 foot vinyl canvas flash panel was placed on the river bottom directly in front of the tower. A weir to direct the fish over the flash panel was built from the mid-stream end of the flash panel to the opposite bank. An array of 120 volt lights was mounted on a post below the tower to illuminate the flash panel during periods of low light and darkness.

The counting schedule was 18 half-hour counts each day from 12 noon to 0600 hours the following day. A 24 hour count and one day off were scheduled weekly.

RESULTS

No usable data was collected this year at the Pilgrim River counting tower.

DISCUSSION

This was the second year of operation for the Pilgrim River counting tower. High water, problems with an incomplete weir, a shifting flash panel, and species identification difficulties rendered any data collected unusable. In the future species identification and enumeration may be improved at this site by installing a resistance board weir. The tower site could also be moved upstream several miles to suitable locations above the majority of chum salmon spawning. This could provide an accurate estimate of sockeye salmon escapement to Salmon Lake.

The value of an escapement monitoring project on this watershed is evident. A five year cooperative project between ADF&G, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDCC), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began in 1997. A major component of this project is fertilizing Salmon Lake to ultimately increase the numbers of sockeye salmon returning to the Pilgrim River system. An escapement monitoring project could serve as a valuable evaluation tool for the success of this project. The escapement monitoring project could also provide valuable information for the management of fisheries in the Port Clarence District.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ADF&G thanks Kawerak Corporation for attempting this project and in particular the tower crew for their efforts. A draft of this report was reviewed by Larry Buklis.

LITERATURE CITED

- Rob, P. 1998. Pilgrim River Salmon Counting Tower Project Summary Report, 1998. Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Commercial Fisheries Management and Development Division, AYK Region, Regional Information Report No. 3A98-10.

Figure 1. Area location map of the Pilgrim River counting tower project site, Port Clarence, 1998.

