

## **ACR 1**

Prohibit Valdez Fisheries Development Association from incubating, rearing, and releasing pink salmon resulting from additional egg take capacity permitted in 2018 and cap egg take capacity at the level permitted in 2017 (5 AAC 24.366).

**CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.** Alaska Administrative Code Number AS 44.62 – Authorizes Board of Fisheries to amend terms of permit relating to the source and number of salmon eggs.

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.** The magnitude of releases of hatchery produced pink salmon in Prince William Sound (PWS) poses a threat to wild stocks of salmon in the Gulf of Alaska. Further expansion of pink salmon production by PWS hatcheries increases the risk to wild salmon. This is contrary to the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Policy. As evidence, we cite the very high rates of inter-regional straying of hatchery pink salmon into Lower Cook Inlet, and scientific research studies and agency reports that document the adverse impacts on wild salmon and other wildlife from increased food competition in the North Pacific Ocean, where there are record high salmon abundance levels and an increasingly variable ocean environment. The next schedule meeting of the BOF is in October 2018, well after the planned additional egg take of 20 million for increased PWS hatchery pink salmon production occurs this summer. The BOF must act at its earliest opportunity to address this risk to wild salmon.

**WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?** The preferred solution is for the Alaska Board of Fisheries to deny the Solomon Gulch Hatchery the further incubation, rearing and release of the pink salmon resulting from additional egg take of 20 million in 2018 and beyond.

The Board of Fisheries may, after the issuance of a permit by the commissioner, amend by regulation adopted in accordance with AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), the terms of the permit relating to the source and number of salmon eggs.

**STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.**

- a) **for a fishery conservation purpose or reason:** for a fishery conservation purpose or reason: *There is an unacceptable level of straying of pink salmon produced by Prince William Sound hatcheries to areas outside of PWS, in particular Lower Cook Inlet.*

Pink salmon that showed up in streams across Lower Cook Inlet in 2017 weren't all local stocks — in some streams, up to 70 percent were releases from PWS hatcheries. PWS hatchery marked fish were present in every Lower Cook Inlet stream sampled. In Fritz Creek, 70 percent of the 96-fish sampled were from PWS hatcheries. In Beluga Slough, 56 percent of the 288-fish sampled were from PWS. In Dogfish Lagoon Creeks, Barabara Creek and Sadie Cove, hatchery pink salmon from the Solomon Gulch Hatchery in PWS composed 34.4, 14.2 and 12.5 percent respectively, of fish sampled. Overall, PWS hatchery pink salmon comprised 15 percent of the pink salmon escapement in LCI in 2017.

*Massive releases of pink salmon released from hatcheries located in Prince William Sound appear to be jeopardizing marine survival of wild stocks of sockeye and Chinook salmon bound for the rivers and streams flowing into the North Gulf Coast of Alaska.*

Recent scientific publications (building on past published reports and internal ADFG reviews) have provided cause for great concern over the biological impacts associated with continued release of very large numbers of hatchery salmon into the North Pacific Ocean, including the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska.

Should the Board accept this Agenda Change Request and schedule a hearing on the subject for the Statewide Finfish Meeting in March of 2019 the stock composition of pink salmon sampled on the spawning grounds in Lower Cook Inlet during 2018 will be available. With the 2018 commercial harvest of pink salmon running well above what was expected this year it is highly likely that a significant proportion of the catch and subsequent spawning population will be fish of PWS hatchery origin once again. This will be NEW INFORMATION available at the time of the hearing and further establishes a CONSERVATION PURPOSE for this agenda change request.

Additional information supporting a conservation purpose for this agenda change request:

- 1) 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 that can be incubated at the hatchery, as well as the number released, release sites, broodstock sources, and other conditions of operation. b) BOF authority as it relates to hatcheries. AS Sec. 16.10.440
- 2) The Board of Fisheries may, after the issuance of a permit by the commissioner, amend by regulation adopted in accordance with AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), the terms of the permit relating to the source and number of salmon eggs.
- 3) The Joint Protocol on Salmon Enhancement (#2002-FB-215) entered into by the Alaska Board of Fisheries and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) on June 28, 2002 establishes a framework design to inform the public and coordinate department and board interaction on certain aspects of salmon hatchery policy and regulation.
- 4) The State of Alaska law mandates that hatcheries shall operate without adversely affecting natural stocks of fish - 5 AAC 39.222. Policy for management of sustainable salmon fisheries. (c) (1) (D) effects and interactions of introduced or enhanced salmon stocks on wild salmon stocks should be assessed; wild salmon stocks and fisheries on those stocks should be protected from adverse impacts from artificial propagation and enhancement efforts.
- 5) The total number of pink salmon eggs that were taken for rearing in PWS hatcheries in 2016 was 740 million. That same year, 643 million pink salmon fry of hatchery-origin were released into PWS.
- 6) PWS fishermen have the highest hatchery fish catches. In 2017, 45 million salmon returned to the five hatcheries in PWS, accounting for 87 percent of the total salmon harvest. Ninety-three percent of pink salmon were hatchery-origin, and 68 percent of chum salmon were hatchery origin. In all, PWS hatchery harvest added up to 62 percent of the total with a dockside value of \$64 million.

**b) to correct an error in regulation:**

**c) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:**

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?** The issues related to Board of Fisheries participation in review of hatchery management plans for Private Non-Profit Hatcheries is not included in any of the three-regular cycle calls for proposals. The only ways that this issue can come before the Board are the Emergency Petition process, acceptance of an Agenda Change Request from the public or a Board generated agenda item.

**STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.** Pink salmon of Prince William Sound hatchery origin are harvested primarily in the commercial purse seine fishery taking place within Prince William Sound. Pink salmon of Prince William Sound hatchery origin that stray into Lower Cook Inlet are harvested primarily in the commercial purse seine fishery in that area. Nothing about this agenda change request affects the harvest of hatchery produce pink salmon in any area.

**IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.**

**STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.** Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA) is dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of the world's premier sportfishing river – the Kenai. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit fishery-conservation organization that works to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of fish resources in the Kenai River and elsewhere in Alaska, through advocacy of sport and personal-use fisheries and the promotion of science-based fish management.

**STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING.** The issue at the heart of this agenda change request is whether the expansion of hatchery production of pink salmon by the Private Non-profit hatcheries in Prince William Sound is in the best interest of the wild stocks of salmon or if the sheer magnitude of the hatchery releases and the documented straying poses a clear and present threat to other stocks and species. These issues have never been heard by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. It has not been considered as either a proposal or as the result of acceptance of an Agenda Change Request. The issues at the heart of this agenda change request were recently found by the Board to not meet the criteria for a finding of emergency. Acceptance of an Agenda Change Request does not require a finding of emergency, only that a fishery conservation purpose or reason exists.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Kenai River Sportfishing Association