



SPAWNING NEWS

SOUTHERN SOUTHEAST REGIONAL
AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

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Ketchikan, AK 99901
www.ssraa.org

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Neets forecast confronts cloudy crystal ball

Harvest calendar tries to balance opportunity, uncertainty and necessity

By **DAVE LANDIS**
SSRAA General Manager

In the world of SSRAA, we end up talking about Neets Bay a lot. It's pretty easy to see why when you consider that it is the biggest and busiest SSRAA facility. Neets Bay is also our primary cost recovery site, which makes it doubly important to both SSRAA and the south-end fishermen who depend on harvests of salmon species produced at Neets Bay Hatchery.

And speaking of salmon species: The runs that return to Neets consist of both summer and fall chum as well as chinook and fall coho. There is a whole

progression of users targeting these fish as they return, and a corresponding gauntlet of skilled catchers. First are the common property boats from all three gear groups. Second are the terminal fishermen looking for schools of salmon concentrating as they approach the bay.

The cost recovery harvesters are close behind, sometimes virtually chasing schools around the Neets Bay special harvest area (SHA). Next up in the gauntlet are all the hungry bears and marine mammals that congregate at the creek and at the fish pass leading up to the raceways.

Finally, when the escaping fish are safely contained within confined hatchery ponds, the broodstock crew finishes up by taking a massive quantity of eggs—nearly 200 million—to fertilize them and safely put them into incubators for the winter.

The forecast numbers for 2017 and not dramatically different from what we saw last year. Therefore, the question that we asked last year—“After broodstock and cost recovery, will there be enough summer chum to have chum troll and net rotations?”—is also the same. We don't know the complete answer, since bids for cost recovery fish have not been received at the time of this writing. The revenue goal that SSRAA established for 2017 is also very ambitious at \$9.7 million, which is set in part due to the cost recovery shortfall in 2016.

Needless to say, we also haven't had our first look at the volume of these returns. And to further cloud the picture, fish weights could also be a surprise. As many of you will recall, the 2016 season yielded summer chum weights that were only 75-80 percent of a very consistent “normal” weight. We would rather not have any more of that kind of surprise.

Will there be enough summer chum to have chum troll and net rotations? ... We don't know the complete answer, since bids for cost recovery fish have not been received. The revenue goal that SSRAA established for 2017 is also very ambitious at \$9.7 million ... in part due to the cost recovery shortfall in 2016.

Summer chum and chinook

During the March 8, 2017, SSRAA Board of Directors meeting, several modifications were made to the 2016 Neets Bay schedule. These changes are captured in the monthly schedules on pages 4-5. In large part, the alterations were due to Unuk River chinook concerns on the part of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game or because of SSRAA's 2016 cost recovery shortfall.

Here is a brief description of these changes.

- Neets Bay will be open to all gear groups through May and until noon on Saturday, June 10.
- Starting at noon on June 11, there will be five 24-hour net gear rotations (with the exception of a 6 a.m.-6 p.m. rotation on June 15). Breaks between these periods were strategically placed to offer “full day” rest times interspersed throughout. These are the Unuk chinook conservation measures that appear to have been effective previously.
- You will notice that the net rotations end during the last week in June rather than after the Fourth of July as they did last year. The primary reason for this decision was to maximize the cost recovery potential for summer chum while preserving hatchery chinook opportunity for net fishermen earlier in June.

• During all of these net rotations, trollers will also be able to fish in the terminal harvest area (THA), which will expand out to Chin Point on June 11.

• After the net rotations are finished at noon on June 26, trollers will be able to fish the THA exclusively, although cost recovery could start as early as June 28. With regard to fishing area, though, cost recovery will occur only within the THA inside Bug Island, whereas trollers can fish the entire THA out to Chin Point.

• Finally, a troll catch target of 200,000 chum was established. The greatest limiting factors on this troll harvest, however, are typically weather; the variability of effort and catch rate; and other factors that make this more of a self-limiting number.

Fall chum and coho

This begins with the cost recovery harvester who cleans up near the barrier net about Sept. 1 to remove the mix of very late summer chum and early fall chum.

After resting the area for several days, SSRAA will seine for fall chum broodstock. Broodstock collection will go on for at least several weeks. Excess males will be sorted from the seine sets with any early-arriving coho. Excess male chum and fall coho become incidental harvest during broodstock collection. These fish will be sold for cost recovery.

At this point, SSRAA could potentially open the

See 'Neets Bay' on 8

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SMOLTS FOR TOTS



Kids' Fishing Derbies bring dozens of families to ponds near Deer Mountain Hatchery.

Fishing derby for youngsters touts SSRAA's in-town Ketchikan hatchery

SSRAA king salmon provide kids with fun and provide the association with positive PR in the annual Kids' Fishing Derby in Ketchikan City Park, set for June 17 this year. The park's ponds will be stocked with chinook smolts raised for the derby in SSRAA's Deer Mountain Hatchery. Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District spearheads the annual event.

This fun family event is produced each year by volunteers from the U.S. Forest Service; the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; SSRAA; and the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Parks and Recreation Department.

Youngsters from 3 to 15 years old participate in the derby. The organizers also line up other family activities for the City Park site. SSRAA staff will open Deer Mountain Hatchery to the public on Kids' Fishing Derby day to promote public awareness of the facility.

SSRAA Spawning News is published by the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, a private, non-profit aquaculture corporation based in Ketchikan, Alaska.

Our web site is www.ssraa.org.

This publication is mailed free to all limited-entry salmon permit holders for purse seine, drift gillnet, power troll and hand troll in Alaska Districts 1-8. It is also mailed free to any person interested in SSRAA.

To receive Spawning News, send a request with your name, your organization's name and your address to: Spawning News / 14 Borch St. / Ketchikan, AK 99901.

For changes of address for permit holders, notify: Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission / 8800-109 Glacier Highway / Juneau, AK 99801. The CFEC fax number is 907-789-6170.

SSRAA uses mailing labels from the CFEC. If your address is wrong, please contact CFEC; SSRAA cannot correct your address for CFEC.

SSRAA Board of Directors

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The 21-member SSRAA Board of Directors includes 13 commercial fishers along with representatives of interest groups and the public.

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Vacant	Fish Culturist (10 mo.)
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President’s message to the fleets

By **CHRIS GUGGENBICKLER**
President of the SSRAA Board of Directors

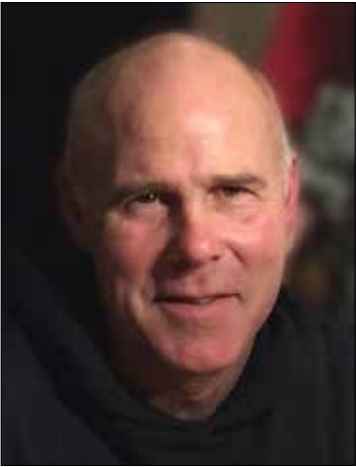
I would like to take this opportunity to share some of my observations as a board member of SSRAA.

When I was voted in as a gillnet representative in 2009 and seated in January 2010, it was a tense time between gear groups. Anita Bay and Deep Inlet rotations had just been changed by the Board of Fisheries to a ratio of two to one, from the prior one to one. During that time, many of the gear group representatives sat at separate tables before and after meetings and many of our committee and board meetings were contentious. We were not working together and there were hard feelings and personal attacks. Around 40 percent of our board members are non-gear group appointed members; they’re great people who bring a wealth of knowledge and diversity to the association, but it was unfortunate that they had to bear witness to these outbursts.

SSRAA also has a great staff, dedicated to the association and doing their best to increase survivals and efficiency while staying within budget constraints. They, too, were left uncomfortable through those tense times.

Since then, I and others have done our best to bring up the allocative range values of gear groups that were below their values—but through increased opportunities rather than by taking from other gear groups. Recently, we have done our best to work together toward reaching agreements that work for all gear groups in value and design. We now sit together during and after meetings because we all understand that we have larger battles than fighting each other and that we are all in this together.

These are unsteady times for all of us, with many issues affecting Alaska’s aquaculture associations. Some of these are the “blob” of



Chris Guggenbickler

“We now sit together during and after meetings because we all understand that we have larger battles than fighting each other and that we are all in this together.”

the last dollar. It is unfortunate that our fleets have so many overlapping individual allocation plans, some concentrating on one while choosing to ignore the others. Through all this, we should keep the overall picture in mind as salmon harvesters of Southeast Alaska. I bring this to your attention because I have always been a proponent of gear groups’ working together for the benefit of all and I believe that this is in everyone’s best interest.

I wish you all full hatches and safe travels this summer.

warm water in the North Pacific; ocean acidification; studies of straying salmon stocks; transboundary mining; renegotiating the treaty; low chinook survivals; and looming stocks of concern. We are also vitally interested in issues such as shrinking budgets in departments of the state government; increasing regulation; and ever-increasing political pressure to reallocate outside the commercial sector.

These are all things we should work on with each other to assure the overall pie shared by the gear groups is not diminished.

Unfortunately, it appears these relationships will move in a different direction in the 2018 Board of Fisheries process. Once again, individual gear groups will most

likely sharpen their swords to take each other’s share of the pie—to grow their own pieces in front of a jury, each hoping the jury will see it their way. In reality, we all would lose.

I liken it to a custody battle with the other parent, one with whom we are unwilling to negotiate until the lawyers have

SSRAA forecast for all species / all sites

		5 YR	4 YR	3 YR	CP	Terminal	Total	2016 Return
S Chum	Neets	120,000	700,000	500,000	356,400	963,600	1,320,000	1,556,400
S Chum	Nakat	34,000	160,000	32,000	113,000	113,000	226,000	305,000
S Chum	Anita	51,500	285,500	144,000	240,500	240,500	481,000	670,000
S Chum	Kendrick	52,000	600,000	190,000	589,400	252,600	842,000	1,379,400
F Chum	Neets	42,600	140,000	30,000	53,150	159,450	212,600	223,150
F Chum	Nakat	40,000	56,800	0	33,880	62,920	96,800	90,680

Species	Site	6 YR	5 YR	4 YR	CP	Terminal	Total	2016 Return
Chinook	Whitman	750	8,200	7,800	5,025	11,725	16,750	21,025
Chinook	Neets	800	10,000	11,400	6,660	15,540	22,200	28,060
Chinook	Anita	1,100	10,100	4,200	4,620	10,780	15,400	18,920
Chinook	Crystal	480	2,300	800	1,790	1,790	3,580	4,890

Species	Site	CP	Terminal	Total	2016 Return
Coho	Whitman	15,750	5,250	21,000	23,210
Coho	Neets	153,750	51,250	205,000	254,800
Coho	Nakat	15,750	5,250	21,000	23,000
Coho	Anita	15,075	5,025	20,100	15,100

Nominations sought for five board seats

Nominations are open for a handful of seats on the SSRAA Board of Directors.

SSRAA encourages salmon fishers to turn in nominations for five gear seats that come open in January 2018. Nominations are due in mid-October.

Gear groups will elect board members to two seine seats; one gillnet seat; one power troll seat; and one hand troll seat. All are three-year terms.

Nominations must be in writing and must include the permit holder’s name; address; vessel name; and phone number. Include a brief statement of interest with self-nominations; if you’re nominating another fisher, provide a short summary of the nominee’s background. Limited-entry permit holders nominate only people in their gear groups. Nominees must be active southern Southeast commercial salmon permit holders.

Nominations are due at the SSRAA office on Oct. 16, 2017.

If you’re interested in serving on the board of directors, or want to nominate a fellow gear-group fisher, please mail a nomination to ...

• SSRAA, Attn: Liz Jones, 14 Borch St., Ketchikan, AK 99901

You may also send a nomination via email to ...

• lizj@ssraa.org

For more information, call the association at 907-225-9605.

FISHING CALENDAR 2017

JUNE 2017 - NEETS BAY Terminal Harvest Area (THA) Rotation Calendar—5AAC 33.370 Second Sunday in June THA Expands to Chin Point

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	Noon Troll Noon Noon Gillnet Noon			Troll 6am—6 pm Seine 6am—6 pm		Troll Noon Gillnet Noon
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Troll Noon Gillnet Noon	Noon Troll Noon Noon Seine Noon			Noon Troll Noon Noon Gillnet Noon		
25	26	27	28	29	30	
Noon Troll Noon Noon Seine Noon	Noon Troll Noon	June 26—June 30 Exclusive Troll between Bug Island and Chin Point.			COST RECOVERY—Within SHA	

May 2017—NEETS BAY Terminal Harvest Area (THA) Rotation Calendar—5AAC33.370 THA Open East of the Bug Island Line

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
28	29	30	31			
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						

July 2017—Neets Bay Terminal Harvest Area (THA) Calendar—5AAC 33.370 Troll Chin Point to Bug Island—Cost Recovery Inside Bug Island

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
						Troll
						COST RECOVERY—Within SHA
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Troll						
COST RECOVERY—Within SHA						
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Troll						
COST RECOVERY—Within SHA						
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Troll						
COST RECOVERY—Within SHA						
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Troll - Through July 31						
COST RECOVERY—Within SHA—Through July 31						
30	31					

TERMINAL HARVEST AREAS

NEETS BAY T.H.A. OPENING

For details, please see G.M. Dave Landis' article on page 1.

KENDRICK BAY T.H.A. OPENING

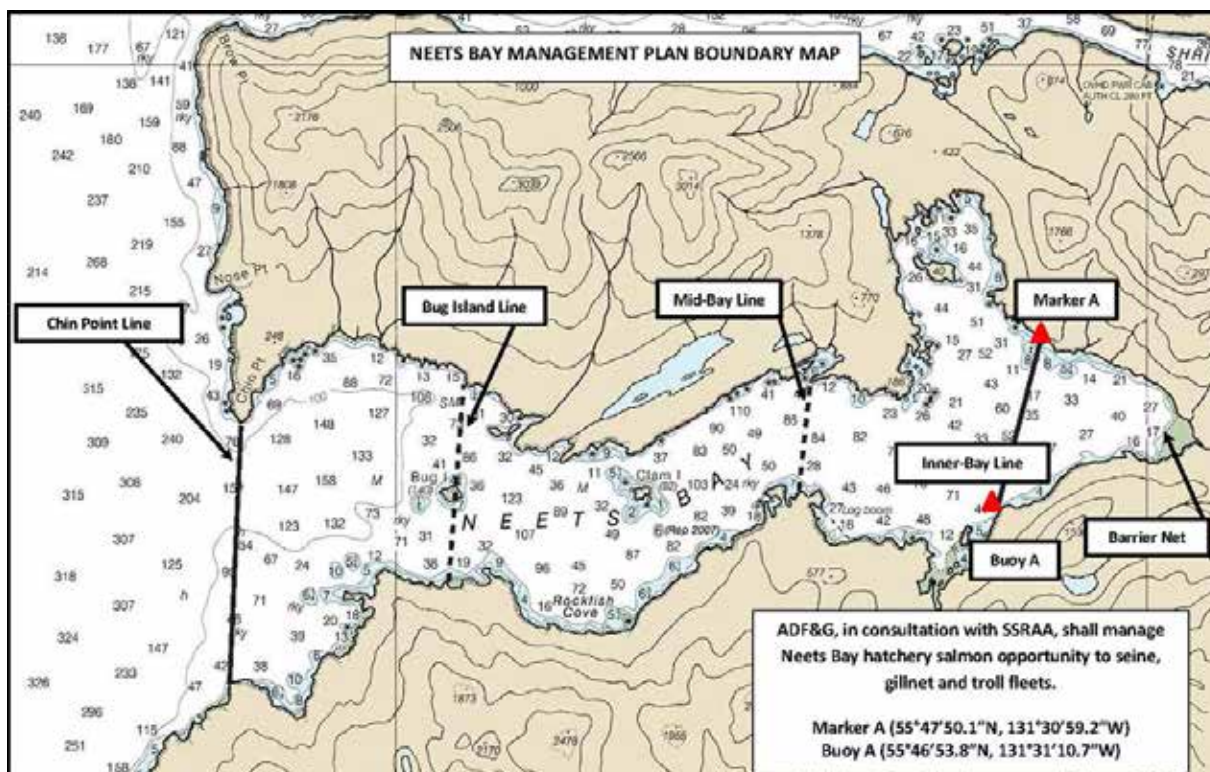
The return at Kendrick bay in 2017 is expected to be approximately 842,000 summer chum (590,000 common property and 253,000 terminal). Kendrick Bay is an exclusive purse seine fishery. Kendrick Bay will open on Thursday, June 15, 2017, and will remain open through Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2017.

NAKAT INLET T.H.A. OPENING

The Nakat Inlet SHA opens on Thursday, June 1, 2017, and is an exclusive gillnet/troll fishery. Projected returns are 226,000 summer chum (113,000 common property and 113,000 terminal); 96,800 fall chum (33,880 common property and 62,920 terminal). Expected coho return is approximately 21,000 (15,750 common property and 5,250 terminal). The SHA will remain open until Friday, Nov. 10, 2017.

ANITA BAY T.H.A. OPENING

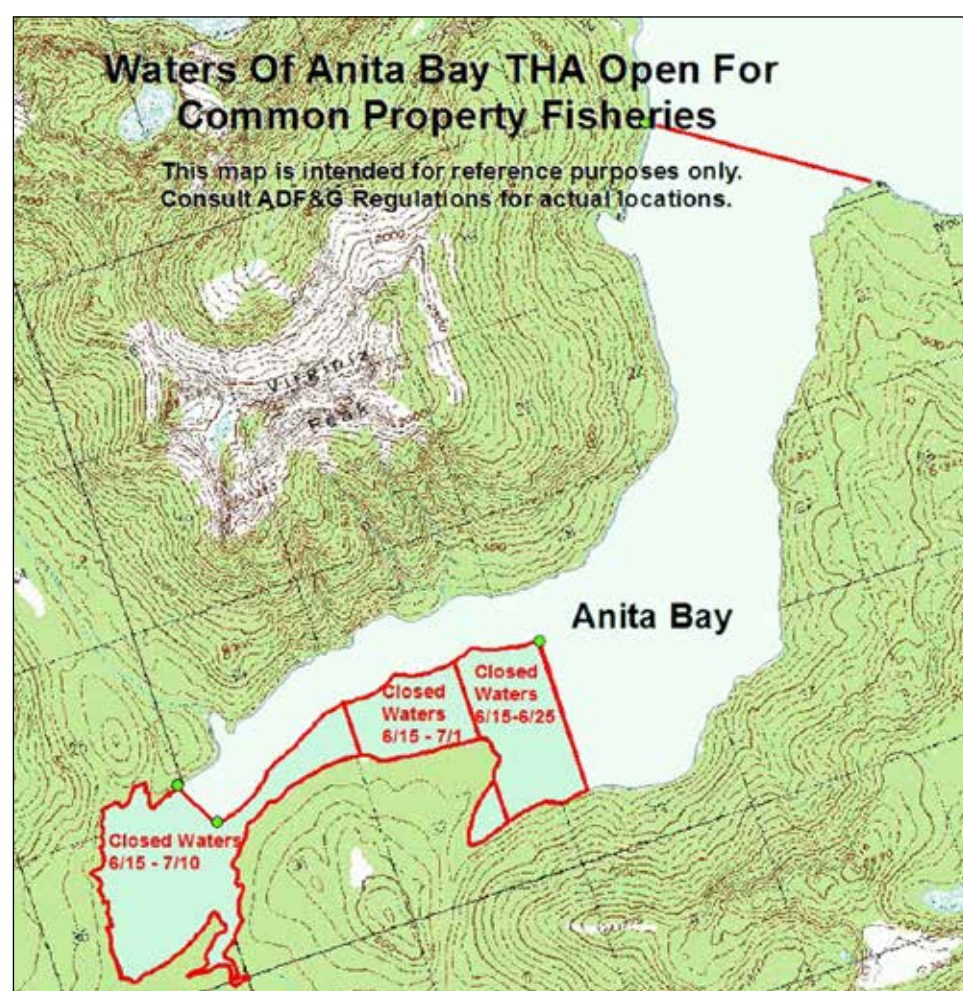
The Anita Bay SHA will open Monday, May 1, 2017. Gear access changes throughout the opening until it closes Friday, Nov. 10, 2017. The expected return for summer chum is 481,000 (240,500 common property and 240,500 terminal); for chinook, 15,400 (4,620 common property and 10,780 terminal); and for coho, 20,100 (15,075 common property and 5,025 terminal).



2017
TERMINAL HARVEST AREAS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						
28	29	30	31			
OPEN AT ALL TIMES TO ALL FISHERS UNTIL CLOSED BY EMERGENCY ORDER						

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
← OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS →						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
← OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS →						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS	↓ Ends Noon	Troll				Seine Noon
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Seine Noon	Noon Gillnet Noon	Troll		Noon Seine Noon	Noon Gillnet Noon	
25	26	27	28	29	30	
Troll						
Noon Seine Noon		Noon Gillnet Noon		Noon Seine Noon		



Terminal Harvest Area Rotation Calendar—5.AAC 33.383

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 ← Troll → Gillnet Noon
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
← Troll →						
Gillnet Noon	Noon Seine Noon		Noon Gillnet Noon		Noon Seine Noon	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
← Troll →						
Noon Gillnet Noon		Noon Seine Noon		Noon Gillnet Noon		Seine Noon
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
← Troll →						
Seine Noon	Noon Gillnet Noon		Noon Seine Noon		Noon Gillnet Noon	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
← Troll →						
Noon Seine Noon				Noon Seine Noon		
30	31					
See August Calendar		Noon Gillnet Noon		Noon Seine Noon		Gillnet Noon

Terminal Harvest Area Rotation Calendar—5 AAC.33.383

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
Troll						
Gillnet Noon	Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Troll						
Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon	Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	Break 18 Hour
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Troll						
Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon	Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon	Break 18 Hour
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Troll						
Gillnet Noon	Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon
27	28	29	30	31		
Troll						
Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	Break 18 Hour	Gillnet Noon-Noon	Break 18 Hour	Seine 6 am/6 pm	END Rotation

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
					OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS						
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS Until closed on November 10 or by emergency order						
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
OPEN CONTINUOUSLY TO ALL FISHERS Until closed on November 10 or by emergency order						

ADF&G posts numbers on harvests of hatchery salmon

Southeast biologists roll out statistics for gear-group allocations and ex-vessel values

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game presented allocations of hatchery-produced salmon estimated value in Southeast Alaska at the Southern, Northern and Joint Regional Planning Team meeting in Sitka on April 5. The department announced the preliminary 2016 and final 2015 enhanced salmon allocation and updated five-year rolling allocation averages.

Preliminary enhanced salmon allocation estimates for 2016

- Seine, 39 percent
- Gillnet, 42 percent
- Troll, 19 percent

Preliminary five-year rolling allocation averages (2012-2016) by gear group:

- Gillnet, 39 percent (target allocation range 24-29 percent)
- Seine, 43 percent (target allocation range 44-49 percent)
- Troll, 18 percent (target allocation range 27-32 percent)

Final 2011-2015 rolling allocation averages by gear group:

- Gillnet, 40 percent
- Seine, 42 percent
- Troll, 18 percent

Preliminary total ex-vessel value for all enhanced salmon was estimated to be \$27 million in 2016.

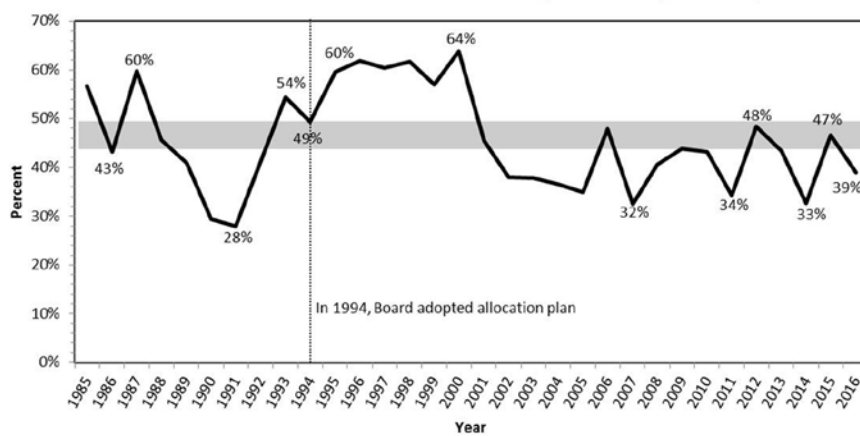
About 10.5 million hatchery-produced fish went to seiners; 11.3 million to gillnetters; and 5.1 million to the troll fleet.

A complete summary of the 2014 Alaska salmon enhancement program is available on the ADFG web site. The address is: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingHatcheriesOtherinfo.reports.

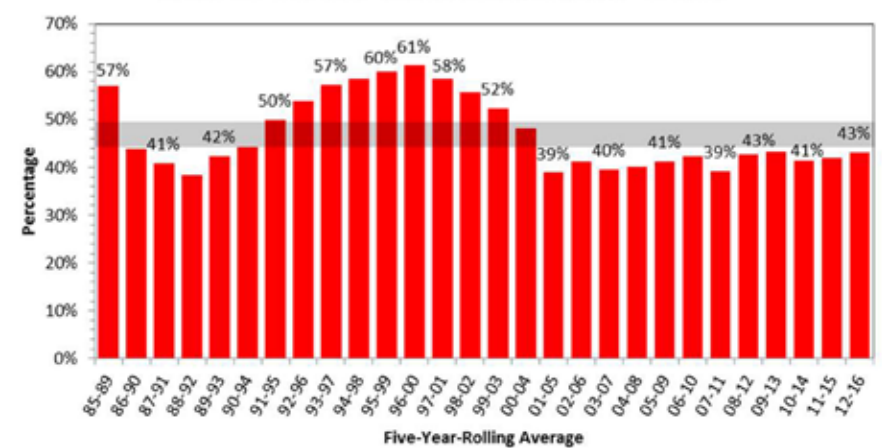
Source for data: ADF&G

SEINE

Annual Seine Allocation of Enhanced Salmon (defined range 44-49%)

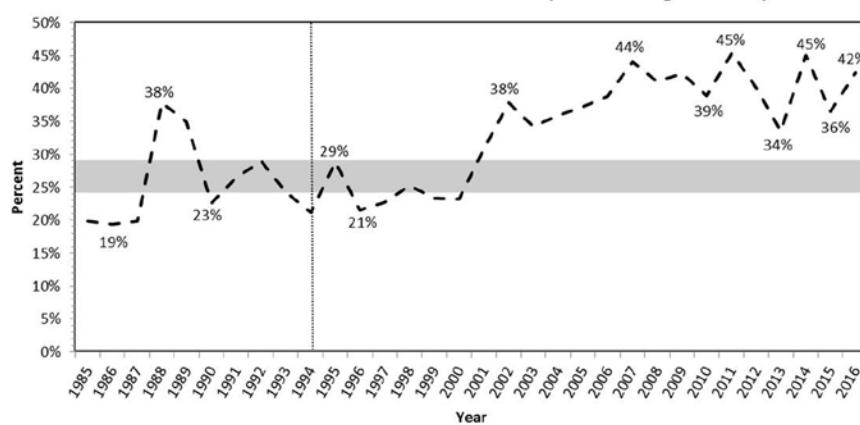


Seine Harvest Value of Southeast Alaska Hatchery-Produced Salmon in Five-Year-Rolling Averages (range 44-49%)

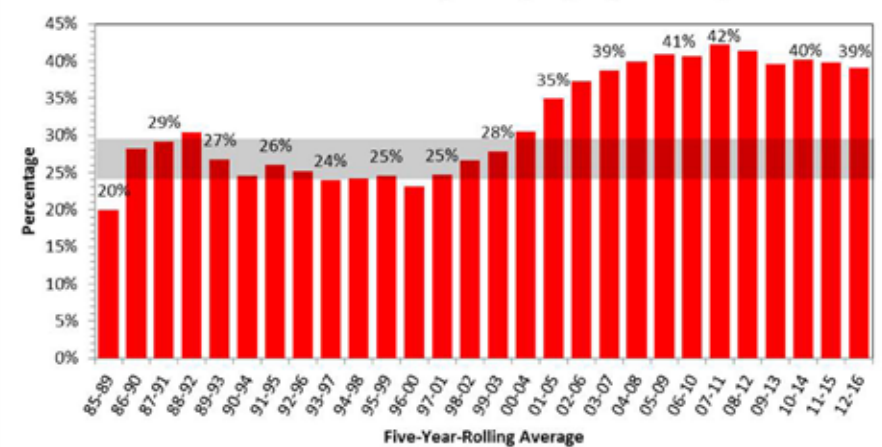


GILLNET

Annual Gillnet Allocation of Enhanced Salmon (defined range 24-29%)

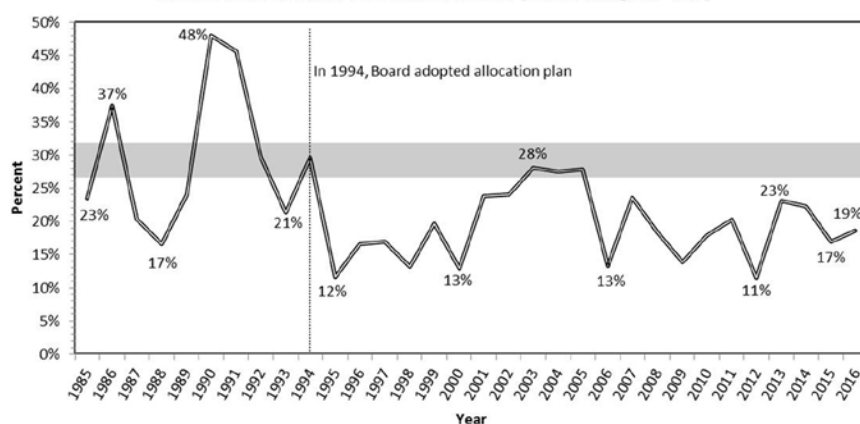


Drift Gillnet Value of Southeast Alaska Hatchery-Produced Salmon in Five-Year-Rolling Averages (range 24-29%)

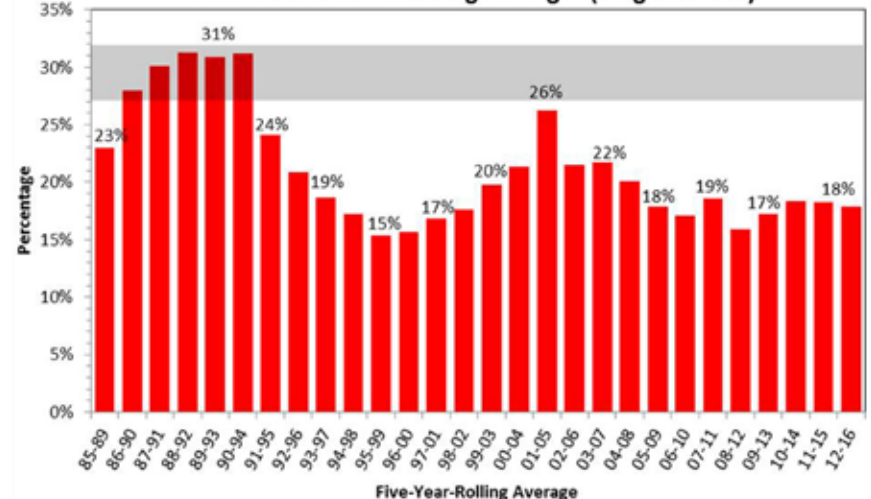


TROLL

Annual Troll Allocation of Enhanced Salmon (defined range 27-32%)



Troll Harvest Value of Southeast Alaska Hatchery-Produced Salmon in Five-Year-Rolling Averages (range 27-32%)



ssraa PEOPLE NEWBIES SAMPLE CAMP | THE 'NET & NETS: A VET REFLECTS

Camp couple minds the fish and finds an adventure

By TAYLOR PEARSON

Kendrick Bay Fish Culturist

First, the introductions. My name is Taylor. My boyfriend is Tim Emmons Doerschurk. We are fish culturists at the Kendrick Bay remote camp. Our dog is named Fig.

And now, some personal history. I grew up about 30 miles outside of Indianapolis. I received a B.S. in agriculture from Purdue University; my major was wildlife and my minor was fisheries and aquatic sciences.

Growing up, Tim split his time between Nantucket, Mass., and south Texas. He worked on oil pipelines and on ranches, gaining vast mechanical and technical knowledge. Essentially, he keeps the camp running while I manage fish culturing and science. We make a really great team.

Our dog, Fig, is a one-year-old blue heeler. He loves to run laps around the net pens, chasing a variety of wildlife.

Tim and I met in Texas while I was working on a feral hog research project. We came to Alaska on a whim. I was tired of 100-plus temperatures in west Texas and had always wanted to visit Alaska.

SSRAA hired me as a port sampler last summer and as a tagger last winter. When I heard that the Kendrick Bay job was available, I immediately made it known that Tim and I would love the opportunity to work there.



HOME SWEET BARGE—Taylor and Tim, with Fig, mind 29 million fish for SSRAA and explore the bay for themselves.

WORKING IN A REMOTE CAMP IN ALASKA has

been a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us. I grew up in central Indiana, surrounded by flat fields—not the most exciting place. Every day in Kendrick Bay, I wake up and look outside and I'm blown away.

Working in a remote camp in Alaska has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us. I grew up in central Indiana, surrounded by flat fields of corn and soybeans—not the most exciting place. Every day in Kendrick Bay, I wake up and look outside and I'm blown away with the beauty of the setting.

Now, to describe the camp. We live on an old fuel barge with a house resting on half of it. The house is a life-size Monopoly house—even the same green color. The first floor provides storage space for tools and fish food, and houses the generator. Our living area on the second floor consists of two tiny bedrooms, a bathroom and a kitchen. It is a cozy little house and we enjoy it a great deal; it has just enough space for us.

The barge is connected to 14 net pens in three rows: two rows of six pens and one row of two. Net pens are essentially fish holding bags held up by metal supports with crosswalks between them. We are raising exclusively chum salmon and currently have more than 29 million fish in our care.

Our day-to-day life in raising salmon is pretty routine. We spend most of our time weighing and distributing food and cleaning nets. The work is enjoyable and the days pass by quickly. Tim and I spend a good deal of our free time in our skiffs, fishing, beachcombing and exploring.

See 'Camp couple' on 8

Pulp romances and tailed tentmates: it's all in a career in AK aquaculture

By MATT ALLEN

SSRAA Assistant Hatchery Manager

My first experience in Alaska was seasonal work at the AFK Hatchery on Evans Island in Prince William Sound in 1999. I wasn't naive. I spent part of my youth in the back woods of New Hampshire, but I knew that didn't necessarily prepare me for remote Alaska.

What seems now like a brief flirtation with rural New England was actually several years in a log cabin with a small black and white TV, propane for lights and cooking, a small generator, an outhouse and an old-style laundry tub with a wringer. In the winter, we rode to town on snow machines because no one plowed the road. The list goes on.

When I arrived at the AFK Hatchery, I was pleasantly surprised to find modern living accommodations and luxuries such as satellite internet, a decent telephone, a full commercial kitchen and a bunkhouse rivaling a college dorm. There was a vast library of books and VHS tapes for personnel who were weathered in or not so adventurous.

Most of the books were romance novels, which struck me as sort of odd, since the crew was predominantly male and I hadn't seen them pick up anything with words on it. Had something recently changed? Many of the VHS tapes had two or three movie titles. Many were comedies or action thrillers. Others had one title on the label but an entirely different movie on the tape. A moment of clarity struck me: the women read and the men watched TV—probably a little bit of stereotyping on my part.



Matt Allen

I WAS BACK IN THE BOONIES ... sandwiched between the bunkhouse and a large shop. Extension cords emerged from the tent like tentacles, plugging into every available outdoor outlet to provide my modest abode most of the power it needed—until I tripped a breaker.

I did my fair share of watching TV and very little reading, but spent even more time exploring the vastness of Prince William Sound.

Flash forward more than a decade to Neets Bay, my next hatchery home. Neets Bay wasn't as remote as AFK, yet it still had some of the same amenities—or what are now necessities: slow and intermittent internet via a proxy server and two static-filled, shared phone lines. A very small library

was present and a handful of videotapes in the Neets Bay lounge. All were supplanted in a few short years by satellite TV and slowly improving internet. Neets Bay wasn't as vast as Prince William Sound, but there was still plenty of exploring to be done and adventures that come with it.

I moved to town in 2015 to bask in the marvels of First City living. High-speed internet and smart phones. Cable or satellite TV. Restaurants. Traffic. Tourists. I could do my own shopping—and for one meal at a time if I chose.

Now flash forward to April 2016 and the Swan Lake hydroelectric plant out Carroll Inlet near Ketchikan. I had purchased a Weatherport tent structure about the same dimensions as structures used at Neets Bay to shelter feed during rearing. The idea was that it would provide accommodations for a month while I cared for two net pens full of chinook. There was the possibility that in the future a room might be made available in the SEAPA bunkhouse and the Weatherport would go to Neets Bay to be put to better use. I used treated lumber and 10 sheets of plywood to construct a deck for the steel-framed, vinyl tent—a large wall tent. I laid out a tarp floor. I had a small refrigerator, freezer, two-burner hot plate, coffee maker, crock pot and

See 'Aquaculture career' on 8

Camp couple CONTINUED FROM 3

Our greatest enjoyment comes from the abundant wildlife in the bay this year as a result of an ample herring run. For the first two months, we had a constant pod of sea lions making laps around the net pens—much to Fig's annoyance. Numerous humpback whales have swum past. I have identified 13 bird species, 11 fish species, and eight mammal species. Our newest resident is a fearless river otter who likes to eat his catches on our boom logs. Fortunately, other than a few seagulls, we have had no trouble with the wildlife trying to eat our salmon—or our dog.

A number of people told me when we got the job that Kendrick is windy. I shrugged it off, saying I could handle it, that I had worked in difficult weather before—but I had no idea. Tim grew up on an island in the Atlantic and had a better idea of what to expect. There have been days when the wind is so strong that rolling waves break over the net pens. At times, the house rocks so badly I have trouble walking from the kitchen to the bedroom. The most difficult aspect of working here, however, has been communicating with our families and friends. We have no internet or cell phone service. The surrounding mountains make our satellite phone useless except on the nicest days. Fortunately, we have a Delorme InReach that we can text on; it is very reliable, but difficult to type on and not as personal as a phone call.

Though it can be challenging at times living disconnected from the “real world,” we are grateful to have an opportunity to work in an untainted wilderness. Tim is amazing at fixing just about anything, and though we have had a few mechanical issues in the camp, things continue to run smoothly.

Overall, working in Kendrick Bay has been a rare and humbling experience. It has been one of the more challenging jobs I've ever done, but also one of the most rewarding. It is amazing to see how much and how quickly the fish grow. One of the payoffs for putting so much time and effort into this job is being able to see the outcome in the fish daily. So far we have been out here for 10 weeks and still have about seven to go. We will release most of our fish in about three weeks.

It will definitely be a bittersweet moment when all the fish swim away.

Career in aquaculture CONTINUED FROM 3

microwave. LEDs provided inadequate light, so a KPU contract electrician found an old chandelier with incandescent bulbs—a vast improvement. My infrared heater and box heater were insufficient in the uninsulated tent. At night, both units blasted onto the cot where I slept and provided some comfort—but my minus-10 degree Celsius bag used on a musk ox hunt kept me from freezing.

I was back in the boonies, like many times before—but just a little different. I was sandwiched between the comparatively plush SEAPA bunkhouse and a large shop. Extension cords emerged from the tent like tentacles, plugging into every available outdoor outlet to provide my modest abode most of the power it needed—until I tripped a breaker. I used a public restroom outside the tent for everything but showers, which I took infrequently in the bunkhouse. My laundry schedule was similarly sporadic.

The Weatherport's green vinyl heated up nicely in the sun—until it became a sweat lodge. The green tint also caused color blindness that struck as soon as I stepped out into a green-washed world. When it rained, the beat of raindrops reminded me of the sound of pinks jumping outside the bunkhouse at AFK in '99.

Mice didn't find me for about a week. Maybe I still emitted an odor of house cat. I had done a pretty good job of keeping things boxed up or seemingly out of reach, but one gets careless. There was no way to keep the mice out; all I could do was to take away the incentive for late-night visits—which is harder than one would think. I tried to practice live and let live, but when I woke up to a mouse crawling over my arm and head, I'd had enough. I got mouse traps. Despite my experience with trapping, there was a small learning curve—mostly trying not to trap myself. The incursions lasted about a week and dropped off dramatically. Once or twice a night during that time I was awakened by a thwack and sounds that must have been death throes.

I had a few human guests during my stay: a friend and his daughter who were out adventuring; Cody from Whitman Lake Hatchery, who helped sample fish. It was like camping for them, but a little different for me. My stay was April 18 to May 15, with a day or two for trips to town. The result was a renewed appreciation for my apartment, a reinforced appreciation for remote living and the release of approximately 400,000 30-gram chinook smolts.

I have yet to experience some of the truly remote adventures that fish culturists before me had to endure, enjoy and dread. It's unlikely I will have such experiences outside of hunting, as those opportunities fade into the past. But ask someone new to the industry and they might think the Carroll Inlet experience is a primitive and not that palatable opportunity. History is too often forgotten and that is, at the very least, tragic. Most if not all of SSRAA's programs started from humble, remote beginnings. Fish culturists were in some ways pioneers or benefited from pioneers before them. I can honestly say that, not having experienced anything quite like Carroll Inlet before, I relied heavily on those who had—and it was a success because of them. Don't roll your eyes next time someone starts a “back in the day” story. Listen, appreciate and realize you could be there too one day. Enjoy a successful remote rearing and harvest season!

PRODUCTION UPDATE

Spring rearing and releases

At the time of writing, SSRAA has not yet released any smolts currently rearing at our various sites. Summer and fall chum should be released the third or fourth week of April and coho and chinook in late May or early June.

Projected releases for 2017 are shown in the table below.

Rearing conditions have been more “normal” this season. Weather conditions have been cooler and saltwater temperatures significantly colder than during the past few years. The results of this cooler weather pattern are reflected in the growth rate of the smolts, which are smaller than their counterparts were on the same dates last year. Last year we released most smolts earlier than usual due to warm seawater temperatures and rapid fish growth and this year we are on track to meet target release sizes, but at a slightly later “normal” date.

There will be a more detailed accounting of all releases on the SSRAA website by mid-June, when all of the fish have been released.

FIN-VENTORY — SMOLTS ON HAND APRIL 2017

Brood Year Species	BY16 S Chum	BY16 F Chum	BY15 F Coho	BY15 S Coho	BY15 Chinook
Neets Bay Hatchery	61,000,000	14,000,000	4,300,000		700,000
Whitman Lake Hatchery			270,000	235,000	800,000
Burnett Inlet Hatchery	19,300,000	4,700,000			
Crystal Lake Hatchery			160,000		600,000
Deer Mountain Hatchery- Ketchikan Creek			70,000		
Klawock River Hatchery			4,700,000		
Neck Lake Rearing Facility				1,850,000	
Nakat Remote Rearing	8,000,000	8,100,000	600,000		
Anita Bay Remote Rearing	21,700,000		575,000		450,000
Kendrick Bay Remote Rearing	29,500,000				
Carroll Inlet Remote Rearing					360,000
City Creek Remote Rearing					110,000
Port St. Nicholas Hatchery					92,000
TOTALS	139,500,000	26,800,000	10,605,000	2,085,000	3,112,000

Neets Bay CONTINUED FROM 1

Neets Bay SHA to fall rotations as soon as fall chum broodstock is secure and egg-take goals are assured. It is very likely, however, that cost recovery during the summer chum harvest will not be equal to the revenue goal due to the very large goal of \$9.7 million. But if the run is strong, there could be rotations harvesting fall coho and fall chum.

The barrier net is generally removed and all fishing is over on or about Oct. 10.

The Anita Bay THA will be managed the essentially the same as it was in 2016, with rotational net fisheries as seen in the calendars in this newsletter.