

Highlighting releases, returns, policy and legislation affecting the Southeast Alaska salmon fisheries

Vol. 29 No. 1
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An assessment plan at Hidden Falls could provide more efficient funding for NSRAA, while also increasing early season fishing opportunities for the seine fleet.



Chum fishing at Hidden Falls.

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NSRAA Pursues Cost Recovery Assessment For 2012

In an effort to increase fishing time and area, NSRAA is working to implement a cost recovery assessment in the Hidden Falls Terminal Harvest Area (THA), beginning next year.

In 2005, the Alaska legislature passed a law enabling enhancement fisheries to impose a cost recovery assessment in a THA, but it has never been implemented.

“There was a constituency that wanted it done,” explains Steve Reifstuhl, NSRAA’s General Manager. “But nobody ended up using it.”

NSRAA’s board members saw the assessment as a possible solution to eliminate cost recovery closures at the Hidden Falls THA, although securing broodstock could still lead to a closure. At its meeting last fall, the board asked Steve to pursue what was necessary to implement the assessment this summer.

As he looked into it, Steve realized there wouldn’t be enough time for the three State of Alaska departments to implement the assessment this year, as no regulations had been written to support the law.

In April, NSRAA hosted a meeting to establish the roles and responsibilities necessary to implement the assessment in the summer of 2012. Among those in attendance were officials from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Department of Law, Department of Revenue, processors, fishermen and NSRAA staff.

“It was a very productive meeting,” Steve says. “I believe we’re on track to be able to implement this in 2012.”

NSRAA has been conducting its cost recovery operations for 25 years without an assessment. Why start now?

“Our ultimate mission is providing fish to common property fisheries in the largest numbers we can deliver, with the lowest expenditure,” Steve explains.

Broodstock collection and cost recovery are a critical part of that mission. Broodstock is essential for the programs’ future and cost recovery is critical to funding the operations.

Both broodstock collection and cost recovery operations often require closures – especially at Hidden Falls. When Hidden Falls is closed, other fisheries close, too.

“The real goal of the assessment is to provide more consistent openings,” Steve explains. “Not only does it allow fishermen to fish Hidden Falls THA more regularly, but it also allows them to fish other fisheries

that are open.”

Instead of harvesting fish to collect cost recovery monies, NSRAA will get those funds through the assessment. Ideally, the assessment will be a price per pound (rather than a percentage), Steve says, to facilitate accounting.

Similar to the Southeast Enhancement Tax (SET), the processors will collect the money and send it to the Department of Revenue. The legislature will appropriate the funds back to NSRAA the following year.

Steve admits NSRAA anticipates some difficulties. Among them is enforcement.

cont. on back page

Assessment Calculation Example		
2011	Fish	Pounds
Forecast	1,195,000	
Brood stock	150,000	
Harvestable Fish	1,045,000	8,360,000
CR Revenue Required	\$ 954,000	
Calculation: (CR Revenue Required / Pounds Expected) Rounded up to the nearest cent:		
Calc. Assessment / Lb.	\$	0.12
Additional amount to protect against a return under-forecast:		
Add (cents):	\$	0.02
Final Assessment / Lb.	\$	0.14

This chart shows the assessment calculation, using 2011 data. If the assessment began this season, the amount would be approximately \$0.14 per pound.

Hatchery Reports

Hidden Falls Prepares for Changes

The staff at Hidden Falls is preparing for a busy summer, with a combination of program changes and capital projects to be completed.

Another mild winter has allowed the Hidden Falls crew to focus its energy on its fish. If the mild temperatures continue, the resulting normal water temperatures should lead to optimal fish growth this summer.

Chum incubation went smoothly this winter and staff ponded 80.5 million.

The brood year 2009 (BY09) Chinook were up to 47 grams by early May – the largest overwinter size ever. NSRAA sent 400,000 of its 1.1 million Hidden Falls Chinook to Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture as it prepares to reduce the hatchery's Chinook and ramp up its coho production instead.

The BY09 coho overwintered with less than 0.2 percent mortality. Those fish sizes were also above average this year. By contrast, the BY10 coho suffered higher than expected mortality during incubation and initial ponding.

Once the ice melted off the lake in May, the staff discovered a gap in the dam.

"There's a void from the fill to the concrete," explains Scott Wagner, Hidden Falls Hatchery Manager. "It looks like an original patch job in the face of the dam eroded."

The staff was fortunate to have discovered it so soon. The hatchery



Hidden Falls staff discovered a gap in the dam this spring. The hole can be seen on the dam face in the middle right side of this photo.

was able to hire a contractor to temporarily patch the void and resurface the face of the dam before snow melt raised the level of the lake too high to work.

"We'll reevaluate and come up with a more permanent solution next year," Scott says.

Hatchery Reports cont. on page 3

General Manager's Notes



Salmon markets are looking exceptionally promising, but I am not telling you anything that you don't already know. The stars seem to have aligned for a record year for Southeast Alaska fishermen – a supply short of the wildly strong demand for all species of Alaska salmon is pushing near record prices. Already the winter king salmon troll fishery, which ended April 20th, shows a value at the dock of over \$4.4 million, second only to \$4.8 million in 2007. The beauty of across the board high salmon prices is NSRAA will need to take fewer fish for cost recovery and can leave more in the water for common property fisheries. In NSRAA's 25 years, cost recovery plus broodstock has averaged roughly 24 percent of total return. This year, however, it will be 7.5 percent, assuming our returns come in as forecasted.

Several promising new developments are on the horizon to get more fish in the water and provide more time and area opportunities. NSRAA staff is pursuing development of a new chum facility near Pelican or Excursion Inlet. We are working with state agencies to implement a cost recovery assessment at Hidden Falls in 2012, which should result in more openings and fewer closures. We secured two permit increases for 10 million chum eggs at both Hidden Falls and Medvejie; eggs will be taken this year and go into the water next spring. At a minimum, that should be another 400,000 chum in 2015. Finally, Deer Lake smolt production is expected to edge out the old record this spring, getting the project back on track as one of the top three troll contributors.

Have a great fishing season. I look forward to seeing you on the water.

Steve Reifentstahl

Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association

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Chinook fry from Medvejie are off-loaded on Prince of Wales Island. NSRAA had surplus fry and was able to replace fish lost due to a water shutoff mishap at the Port Saint Nicholas Hatchery.

Hatchery Reports, cont. from page 2

Medvejie Challenged by High Winds

While this year spared Medvejie the record snows and cold of recent winters, it did arrive with unusually high winds – presenting yet another challenge for fish rearing at the hatchery.

“The weather was brutal,” says Bill Coltharp, Medvejie Hatchery Manager. “We had amazing challenges in the sense of wind and weather.”

Medvejie experienced sustained winds that Bill estimates were around 35 – 40 miles per hour, with gusts up to 60 – 80 mph. So high, in fact, they broke the dock. The high winds, combined with an extreme cold snap, churned up the waters and dropped the hatchery’s rearing temperatures.

Incubation of Medvejie’s brood year 2009 (BY09) Chinook was challenging, with approximately 7.5 percent mortality, but the BY10 Chinook incubation was very successful. The hatchery staff ponded approximately 3.5 million BY10 Chinook.

The cold water temperatures, combined with fungal issues and crib deaths, also made chum rearing very challenging. Though this winter’s losses were less than in previous years, the hatchery has continued to struggle with fungal issues over the years.

“We think we’ve isolated it to the water sources,” Bill says of the fungal issues.

Still, NSRAA released more than 60 million chum this spring.

“Despite all the challenges, we’ve managed to come through pretty well,” Bill says. “Chum rearing temperatures have been extremely cold at Medvejie and Deep Inlet, but fish growth has been maintained at an optimal level. I’m very happy with my chum programs here, despite the cold water rearing temperatures.”



The Eyak pulls away from the dock with a load of feed for Deep Inlet chum rearing.

Board Explores Options For New Facility

In an effort to expand its operations outside of the Sitka area, NSRAA’s board created a facilities committee to explore potential locations for a new enhancement project. Pelican and the Excursion Inlet are among the areas being considered.

“The board would like to see development away from Sitka Sound, so there would be less conflict between gear groups and maybe more opportunity – especially for the troll fleet,” says Lon Garrison, NSRAA’s Operations Manager.

Lon and Steve Reifenstuhel, NSRAA’s General Manager, have visited Pelican and Excursion Inlet to explore the feasibility of beginning a new program in one or both areas.

This is not the first time NSRAA has had conversations with the people in Pelican about starting an enhancement project there.

“We’ve looked at Pelican several times over the past 10 years, but there were things that really didn’t allow it to bubble to the surface,” Lon explains.

Problems with reliable water and ownership of the Pelican fish seafood plant were among the reasons discussions never moved forward in the past. The plant has since closed and the hydro turbine penstock has been replaced, creating potential where there was none previously.

“Now we have something we might be able to work with,” Lon says. “Folks would really like to see a chum project there, or maybe some Chinook projects. So those are some of the things we are looking at.”

Another area of focus is in the Excursion Inlet area, north and inside of Icy Strait.

“That tends to be an area where there are a lot of fish moving through to their natal streams,” which, Lon says, can be a major disadvantage.

“It’s very problematic, because there are other stocks of fish that could be intercepted,” he says. “The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) will want a spot that’s in a terminal area where the stock is exclusively enhanced fish. It’s not going to be an easy task.”

Easy or not, Lon and Steve continue to investigate the possibilities and discuss their options with ADF&G officials.

“It will be a challenge to get ADF&G to even consider some of these things,” Lon says.

Lon and Steve are scheduled to present the findings of their investigations to the board at its meeting in November.

“The board really wants us to do this,” Lon says of the hope to expand NSRAA’s programs. “They would really like to see an enhancement project in Pelican or Excursion Inlet, or both places.”



Project leader Matt Golden feeds chum fry at Deep Inlet.

Board Member Profile: Sitka Native George Eliason

You might say that George Eliason predicted his future. He was in junior high when a teacher asked him to write two pages on what he saw in his future, 20 years out.

"I hit it right on the head," George says, "except I have three children, not four."

Born and raised in Sitka, son of the late State Senator Dick Eliason and his first wife, Betty, George always knew he wanted to fish. He and his brother nearly grew up on his dad's boat.

"We fished every summer," he says. "I just loved growing up on the boat with my dad, learning all the ins and outs of fishing and the waters, and having good partners out on the ocean. It's just a great experience."

Dick began halibut fishing and had two successful trips while George was away at college. Though George was ready to leave college immediately upon hearing the news, his father convinced him to finish out the year before returning to Sitka.

"Back in those days, a person could get into any kind of fishery he wanted to do," George says of his decision to become a fisherman. "That kind of excited me."

George operated his father's boat while Dick was away in the legislature. When George was 25, he bought Dick's boat – Anna J – a 42-foot wooden hulled troller. He kept that boat for almost 20 years.

During that time, George married his high school sweetheart, Tamara, and they had three children, Jorgen, Nick and Lindy. Needless to say, fishing has been a family thing for George, Tamara and their children, too.

In 1995, George sold Anna J and bought a 50-foot steel boat and turned it into a freezer/ troller/longliner so he could spend more time at sea. His daughter named the boat Tammy Lin.



George Eliason with his dad, the late State Senator Dick Eliason, on the Tammy Lin.

George fishes in the summer and – as he puts it – politics in the winter.

He has served on the NSRAA board since 2000. He also serves on the board for the Seafood Producers Cooperative and has served on the board of the Alaska Trollers Association for many years.

George's father fished until he passed away in April. Now 58, George finds himself, once again, wondering what his future will look like.

"It's a dilemma," he says. "Do I want to keep doing this as hard as I am now? No, I don't. When my dad was with the 6-to-6 crowd, that seemed to work out pretty well for him. And then another part of me says, well, just retire from fishing and be a snowbird. That sounds pretty fun, too."

NSRAA Expands Scholarship Program

NSRAA updated its scholarship program this year to offer three scholarships annually.

At its November meeting, NSRAA's board voted to expand its scholarship program to include a scholarship for a two-year vocational or technical school. Until now, NSRAA awarded two \$2,500 scholarships annually.

"They wanted to offer more to the community," says Steve Reifentuhl, NSRAA's General Manager, of the board's decision. "They wanted to make sure there was an option for vocational or trade, if we got applications of that nature."

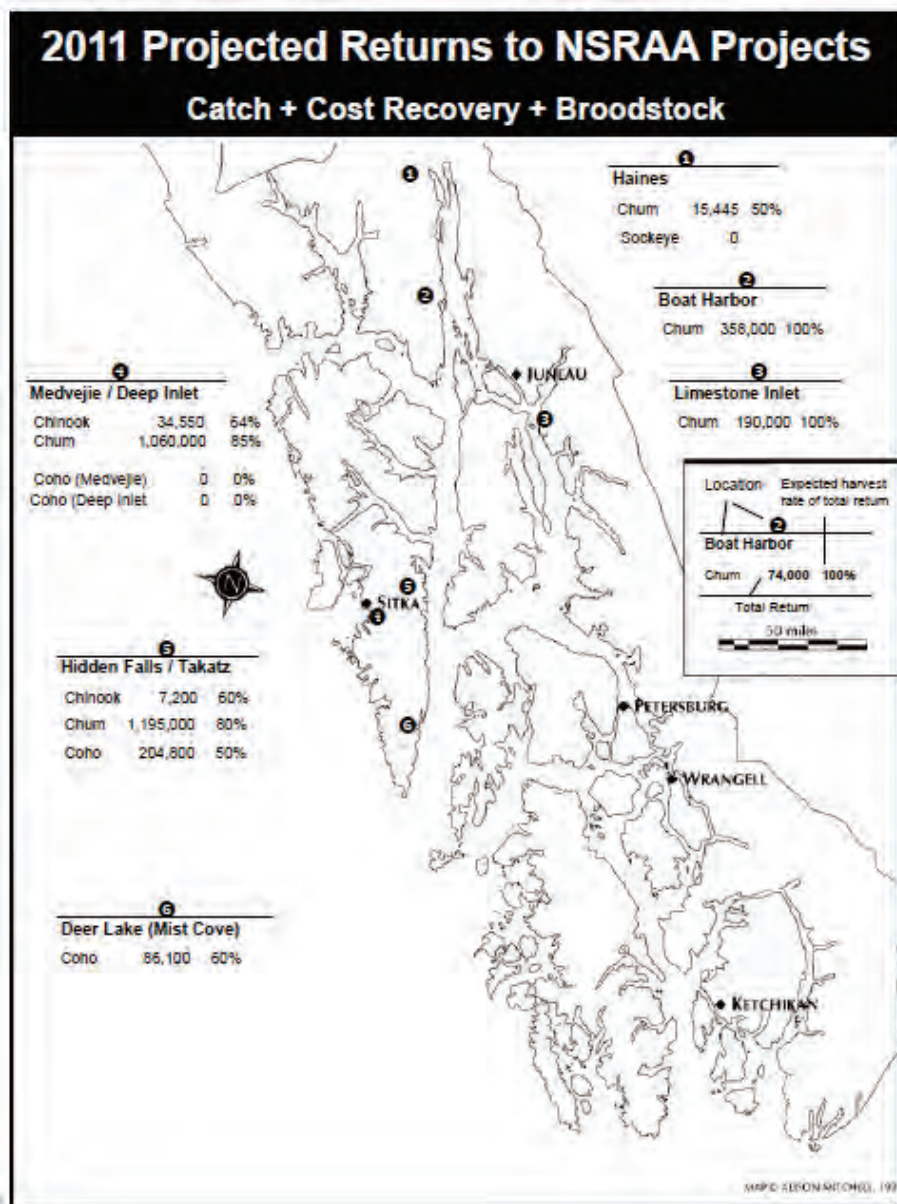
Beginning this year, NSRAA will award three scholarships each year. One scholarship will be for a vocational-technical school or two-year program. Two will be awarded for four-year programs.

This is the 10th year of NSRAA's scholarship program. The board established the program in 2001, to help eligible salmon fishermen, NSRAA employees, and their children and families, with higher education costs.

This year, NSRAA received eight applications from around Southeast Alaska and Washington. The recipients of the 2011 scholarships are: Karl Jordan of Bellingham, who is attending Bellingham Technical College, Margaret Garrison of Sitka, who will attend Western Washington University, and Maximilian Worhatch of Puyallup, who is attending Washington State University.

Applicants must either hold a current State of Alaska Southeast Salmon Limited Entry Permit and have paid salmon enhancement tax in Northern Southeast Alaska in the year prior to application, or be an immediate family member or dependent child of an eligible salmon fisherman. NSRAA employees and their families and children are also eligible.

NSRAA's scholarship committee evaluates all applications. It selects recipients based on each individual's demonstrated aptitude in their chosen field of study, activities and community service, as well as their potential for leadership and success in post-secondary school.



NSRAA Submits Proposals to Board of Fish

NSRAA submitted four proposals to the state in April for the Board of Fish (BOF) to consider at its meeting next year.

Medvejie Chinook snagging

The first proposal intends to prevent foul hooking in Bear Cove via a line change.

Though foul hooking is not typically done intentionally, a group of fishermen has recently been intentionally snagging Chinook in Bear Cove.

“The atmosphere was not conducive to family outings,” says Steve Reifenstuhel, NSRAA’s General Manager. “There were a lot of hooks in fish. We would end up with small buckets of treble hooks.”

NSRAA was forced to get an emergency order from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to move the line out, so hand trollers would not be allowed in the area.

The emergency order is only a temporary solution, however. The BOF must approve the proposed regulation to eliminate the problem.

Alternative broodstock capture

NSRAA recently received another emergency order from the ADF&G, allowing the association to use a net pen device to capture broodstock. This will be the first season NSRAA uses the method, in hopes that it will shorten broodstock closures.

“We’re trying to come up with a methodology that will allow us to maintain fishery operations on a regular basis,” Steve says.

Cost recovery assessment

This regulation would allow a cost recovery assessment in a terminal harvest area (see related story).

Deep Inlet spring Chinook management plan

At NSRAA’s board meeting in April, the net groups agreed to give trollers more access to Chinook in Deep Inlet in early June.

“The net groups have volunteered to move out of that area in the first three weeks of June,” Steve says.

This proposal would allow trollers more access to Chinook in Deep Inlet in the first three weeks of June. The current regulation defines an area for seiners and gillnetters.

The BOF typically reviews as many as 500 proposals at its meetings every three years. The board will approve or deny NSRAA’s proposals at that time.



Matt Golden helps maneuver the barge into position during February setup of the Deep Inlet net pen complex.

NSRAA Increases Chum Production

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) approved a permit alteration request (PAR) allowing NSRAA to increase its chum production at two of its hatcheries – almost doubling the number of chum released for broodstock purposes at Medvejie.

The PAR for Medvejie allows NSRAA to collect a total of 20 million eggs (up from 10 million) to be incubated and released from the hatchery.

“We’ve been having difficulty getting enough broodstock back to Medvejie,” says Lon Garrison, NSRAA’s Operations Manager.

When there is insufficient broodstock at Medvejie, NSRAA staff must go to Deep Inlet to capture the fish and tow them back to the hatchery to meet eggtake goals.

“That’s something we’d really like to avoid, if we can help it,” says Lon, explaining that the process has both an increased cost to the association and increased risk of fish mortality. “We’ve been able to do it successfully each year, but there’s a risk with it.”

Lon estimates the PAR will increase the number of chum fry released from Medvejie to approximately 17 million – about double the current releases.

Another PAR, received last year, allows NSRAA to increase chum production at Hidden Falls as well.

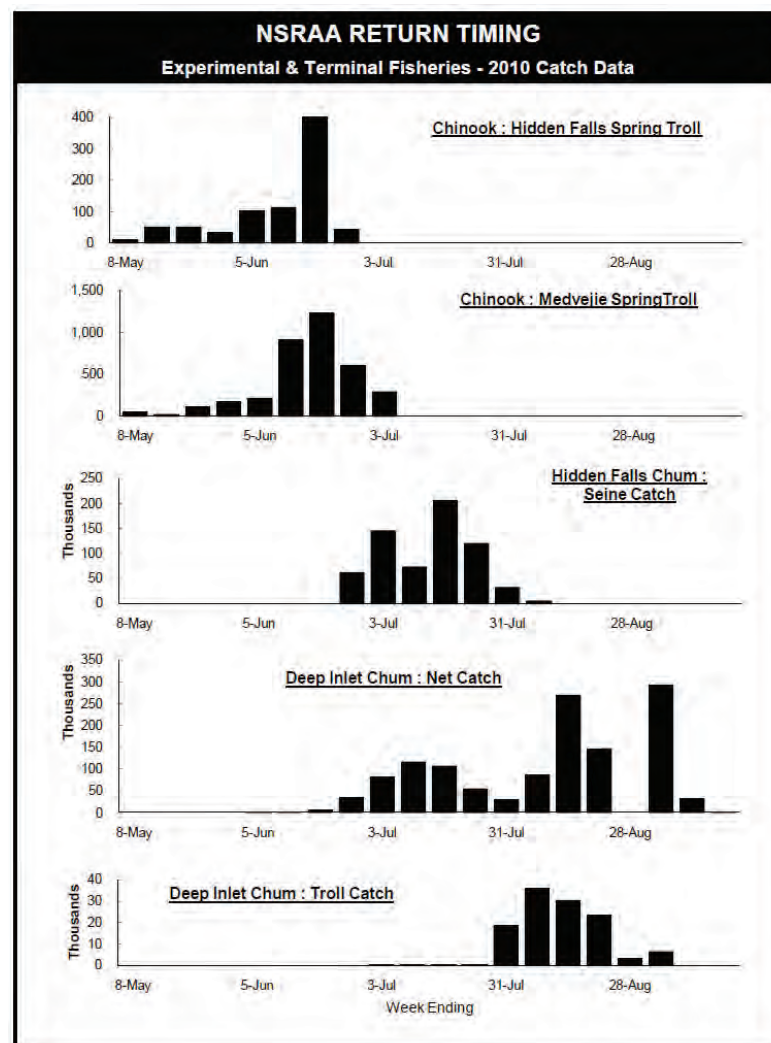
“The facility was previously permitted for 91 million eggs,” Lon says. “Now, we can take 101 million.”

NSRAA will have to invest in some infrastructure (incubators and net pens) to support the increased production.

Crews will take the additional chum fry from Hidden Falls to Takatz – increasing the release there to approximately 8 million or more – to help spread out the fleet. NSRAA is considering expanding the fishery there to seven days a week, says Steve Reifenstuhel, NSRAA’s General Manager.

NSRAA has seen an increase in humpback whale activity and presumed predation at Hidden Falls during releases. The fry released from Takatz may not be as susceptible to whale predation, Steve says.

The increased chum production at Hidden Falls will primarily benefit the seine fleet, Lon says.



Field Project Updates

Deer Lake overwintering a success

A successful overwintering at Deer Lake means the project was off to a good start before the season even began this year.

NSRAA began overwintering fish in net pens at Deer Lake three years ago. The first year, the covers were not tight enough and most of the fish escaped once submerged. The warm winter last year kept the fish so active they escaped the net pens in search of more food or starved to death.

The project staff modified its equipment and winter procedures this year, to prevent such reoccurrences.

The crew installed new zippered covers to secure seams and added pendulum weights to maximize net volume and prevent fish stress. Staff was also prepared to feed the fish until the lake iced over, to ensure the fish had sufficient food for the winter.

In May, Josh Homer, Project Leader, estimated there were 1.6 million fish in the net pens. The crew started smolt emigration mid-May.

This season also marks the start of a new, experimental program for Age II coho smolts at Deer Lake.

In NSRAA's rearing programs, cohos usually smolt and emigrate to the ocean after one season in fresh water, Josh explains. As an experiment, the crew will artificially hold back about 50,000 of the coho in hopes it will increase their marine survival.

"In our traditional lake rearing, Age II fish typically survive about twice as well as Age I fish, averaging about 27 percent," Josh explains.

The Deer Lake crew is scheduled to receive four new Wavemaster net pens this summer, which will allow the project to increase its production from 2.1 million fry to 3 million in 2012.



2011 should be NSRAA's last year for remote wildstock coho eggtakes at Salmon Lake.

Salmon Lake proceeds as usual

Plans for the Salmon Lake Weir project remain unchanged from last year. This will be NSRAA's fifth year managing the project and Josh Homer's second year as Project Leader.

NSRAA is required to operate the Salmon Lake Weir as a part of its agreement with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) under the Sawmill Cove Hatchery's Basic Management Plan. The study's objective is to monitor for hatchery-produced coho and to estimate the number of wild fish returning to the lake.

Extreme weather conditions made for a challenging season last year. But even if the crew experiences similar conditions this summer, Josh expects operations will still run smoother.

"It was an entirely new crew last year, including myself," he says, explaining that three of the crew of four are returning this year.

The crew plans to capture and spawn up to 260 adult coho for NSRAA's Sawmill Cove Hatchery broodstock. The separate gametes (mature eggs and spermatozoa) will be transported from Salmon Lake to Medveje Hatchery for fertilization and incubation.

Other planned projects include rebuilding portions of the cabin, replacing the oil stove with a wood stove (which Josh estimates could save NSRAA about \$500 a year in fuel costs) and replacing a portion of the weir pickets.



The crew at Deer Lake on the deck of the tender *American Patriot* hooks up a load of fish food to helicopter-sling up to the lake.

NSRAA looks for success at Haines

NSRAA's chum projects in Haines are among the few that remained unchanged this year. The staff will focus on successful incubation and meeting eggtake goals – two areas that have proven challenging in the past few years.

The goal of the Haines project is to collect and seed 4.24 million chum eggs in streamside incubators at the Herman Creek, 31-mile and 17-mile sites.

The incubation portion of the project has suffered several setbacks in the past two years; a water system failure at the 17-mile box killed all the eggs in 2009 and water flow interruptions to the 31-mile site dropped the survival rate there to 76 percent last year.

Between all three sites last year, however, the incubation survival rate was 90 percent. Even with a low marine survival, that represents one of the highest productions from this project in more than 30 years. (NSRAA began managing the project in 2008.)

While eggtakes on the Chilkat River were better than expected, the returns to the Klehini River and Herman Creek were down considerably and NSRAA was unable to collect enough eggs to seed the 31-mile incubation boxes.

This year, staff plans to improve the plumbing and redesign and replace the water intake structure at the 17-mile site to prevent additional water system failures and incorporate a reliable thermal marking system.

Lon Garrison, NSRAA's Operations Manager, admits the project is challenging, but remains determined.

"The 17-mile site is unique," he explains. "The fish have to go through a culvert when they come back and they don't always make it. But there's not really another place to put it. It's wonderful groundwater – that's what we developed the site on. It would be nice, one of these years, to get all the incubators filled up, but it's very dependent on wild fish returning to the areas where we get broodstock."



Rinsing eggs to seed incubators at Herman Creek.

NSRAA 2011 Return Projections								
Site	Projected Return	Low	High	Commercial	Sport	Cost Recovery	Brood Stock	2010 Return
Chum								
Hidden Falls	1,195,000	700,000	1,700,000	955,000	-	90,000	150,000	980,500
Medvejie/Deep Inlet**	1,060,000	560,000	1,560,000	907,400	-	82,600	70,000	1,562,679
Boat Harbor*	358,000	205,000	482,000	358,000	-	-	-	275,000
Limestone Inlet*	190,000	112,000	220,000	190,000	-	-	-	156,000
Haines Projects	15,445	10,445	20,445	6,178	-	-	9,267	16,364
	2,818,445	1,587,445	3,982,445	2,416,578	-	172,600	229,267	2,990,543
Chinook								
Hidden Falls	7,200	4,700	9,700	4,450	250	500	2,000	6,758
Medvejie	34,550	24,550	44,550	22,112	1,250	7,188	4,000	21,875
	41,750	29,250	54,250	26,562	1,500	7,688	6,000	28,633
Coho								
	<i>Marine Survival:</i>	6-8%	2-6%	12%				
Hidden Falls (8%, 6-12%)	204,800	153,600	307,300	92,200	4,000	98,600	10,000	195,398
Deer Lake (8%, 6-12%)	86,100	64,600	129,200	43,100	1,000	42,000	-	41,133
Medvejie (6%, 2-12%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deep Inlet (6%, 2-12%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,057
	290,900	218,200	436,500	135,300	5,000	140,600	10,000	237,588
ALL SPECIES TOTALS:	3,151,095	1,834,895	4,473,195	2,578,440	6,500	320,888	245,267	3,256,764

NSRAA return projections and expected utilization. Chinook and coho numbers are expected to be up from a year ago; chum returns are forecast to return in similar numbers to 2010.

Cost Recovery Needs Minimal for 2011

A combination of record fish prices and lower budgetary needs means more time for fishermen this year.

NSRAA depends on its annual cost recovery operations for funding. While the number of Chinook and coho harvested for cost recovery is entirely dependent on the number of surplus fish that return to the hatcheries, NSRAA must actively harvest enough chum to meet its cost recovery goals. Often, this requires closures to commercial fisheries.

But those closures should be minimal this year, as NSRAA only needs to harvest about 25 - 30 percent of its usual goal.

Of the more than 2 million combined chum estimated to return to Hidden Falls and Deep Inlet this season, NSRAA plans to harvest less than 175,000 for cost recovery.

“Those are extremely low numbers, compared to what we usually take,” says Chip Blair, NSRAA’s Data Analyst. “Over the past 10 years, we’ve averaged 640,000 chum per year.”

This year’s lower harvest numbers are the result of a record high price per pound and lower budgetary needs.

“Cost recovery needs for chum were down because of higher revenue from other sources,” Chip explains. “With the lower needs, we’re anticipating that there will be shorter cost recovery closures.”

Deep Inlet Schedule

The Deep Inlet rotational schedule will be exactly as it was in 2010 (adjusted for dates), with one exception: NSRAA has made a slight change to scheduling troll opportunity inside the terminal harvest area (THA) in August. This change may affect the re-opening schedule after cost recovery (CR) is complete.

Last season, trollers fished the first two re-opening days after NSRAA completed CR. This remains an option for the 2011 season. If NSRAA can identify a two-day period with abundant fish in the THA while there is no CR fishing, however, it will open the THA for trolling at that time – with a 24-hour notice. (For example, this might occur if there is pink fishing and CR boats are not available to fish CR.) Doing so would fulfill the commitment to the trollers and allow net fishing to resume two days earlier.

The re-opening schedule will remain the same as 2010 if trollers do not fish earlier as described above. If trollers do fish their two days during the CR closure, the rotational schedule will resume the day after CR/brood collection is complete, with seiners fishing first: SN-SN/GN-GN. This schedule will continue until the end of the season (September 29 or earlier depending on the return).

Chinook management begins the week of May 29. There will be three weeks of Chinook management (Seine on Sun and Wed, Gillnet on Mon-Tue, Thu-Fri, and Troll on Sat).

Chum management will begin on Sunday, June 19, with Seine on Sun/Thu-Fri, Gillnet on Mon-Tue-Wed, and Troll on Sat. This schedule will continue through August 6, when the rolling schedule will begin SN-SN/GN-GN, until NSRAA closes for cost recovery (CR).

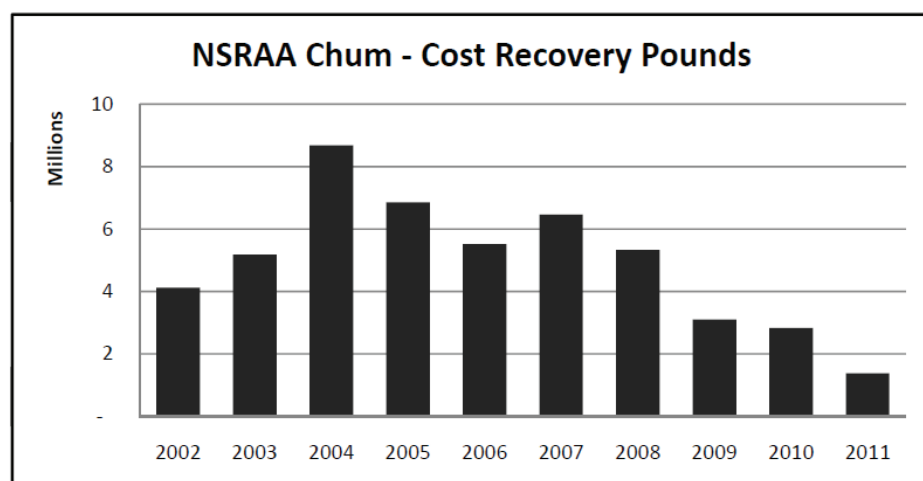
The exact timing of the CR closure will depend on run timing. NSRAA anticipates the CR closure to begin at the close of gillnet fishing on one of these dates: August 10, 14, 18 or 22.

THA Opening Dates

May 29 (Sunday) - first Deep Inlet seine opening.
May 30 (Monday) - first Deep Inlet gillnet opening.

June 19 (Sunday) - first Hidden Falls seine opening.

See NSRAA’s Fisheries page at www.nsraa.org for full THA schedules.



NSRAA will only harvest about 1.4 million pounds of chum (about 175,000 fish) for cost recovery in 2011.

NSRAA Revamps its Chinook, Coho Programs

After a review of the cost and benefits of its various programs this winter, NSRAA is eliminating its zero-check Chinook program and putting more funds and focus into its successful programs instead.

NSRAA began the zero-check Chinook program at its Medvejie hatchery in 1999, with the first release in 2000. Production gradually increased to about 2 million fry annually since 2006, using advanced incubation to promote maximum growth.

“When you really grow these fish quickly, you can get them to smolt,” says Lon Garrison, NSRAA’s Operations Manager. “They go out the very first summer.”

For the NSRAA staff, the program seemed worthwhile. The cost savings were substantial, even if fish survivals were mediocre.

“The first group was released at an average weight of 21 grams,” Lon says. “They had a marine survival of 3 percent, so we were pretty excited. For the next several years, though, we had real difficulty getting smolts that size and we never saw marine survivals that high again.”

In fact, the average survival for the zero-check program dropped to 0.5 percent over the years – significantly lower than the 2.4 percent average marine survival for Medvejie’s other Chinook programs. When Lon examined the numbers, he realized the zero-check program was no longer worth continuing.

Meanwhile, Medvejie’s yearling Chinook program has included two components. Crews would transfer about 1 million of the fry to net pens in the warmer waters of Green Lake, while another portion was raised at Medvejie.

“We found that the fish reared at Green Lake have a marine survival rate that’s nearly double those reared at the hatchery,” Lon explains. “It made more sense to put more fish into the Green Lake program.”

Eliminating the zero-check program and increasing the Green Lake production from 1 million to 2.5 million won’t increase NSRAA’s costs, but the ultimate benefits to the fleets are substantial.

“The actual value of that additional production could be worth upwards of a million dollars or more to the fleets, so that’s a significant benefit,” Lon says, adding that Medvejie will continue to raise about 550,000 Chinook at the hatchery.

The Hidden Falls Chinook program has not seen the same success as Medvejie.

“Early on, it did well, but we’ve had real difficulty getting many fish back,” Lon says. “On the other hand, Hidden Falls has been exceptional at producing coho.”

When Lon compared the cost of reducing Chinook production and using that money to increase coho production instead – again – the benefits to the fleets were substantial. Beginning this summer, Hidden Falls will reduce the Chinook program from 1 million to 650,000 and increase its coho production by 500,000.

“Those extra coho could mean an increase of value of more than \$900,000 to fisheries,” Lon says. “In the meantime, we should be able to reduce the cost of operating the hatchery by about \$50,000. We only grow coho to about 20-22 grams. Chinook, we grow to about three times that size, so it’s really the cost of feed that ends up being the major savings.”

The marine survival of coho at Hidden Falls has averaged above 10 percent.

“Those fish are readily accessible to the troll fishery, so it’s a great project,” Lon says. “It will be very cost effective.”

Meanwhile, the Deer Lake coho program will increase to 3 million fry in the summer of 2012. This could result in an increase of adult production by 70,000 fish and a value of nearly half a million dollars.

Lon estimates the combination of all the changes to the coho and Chinook programs at Medvejie, Hidden Falls and Deer Lake will cost NSRAA only an additional \$22,000 a year overall.

“Yet the overall net value to the fishery, based on average marine survivals, could be worth about an additional 2.5 million dollars,” he says.

John Carle Joins NSRAA Board

NSRAA welcomes John Carle as its newest member to the board. John was elected to fill one of five at-large Seine seats.

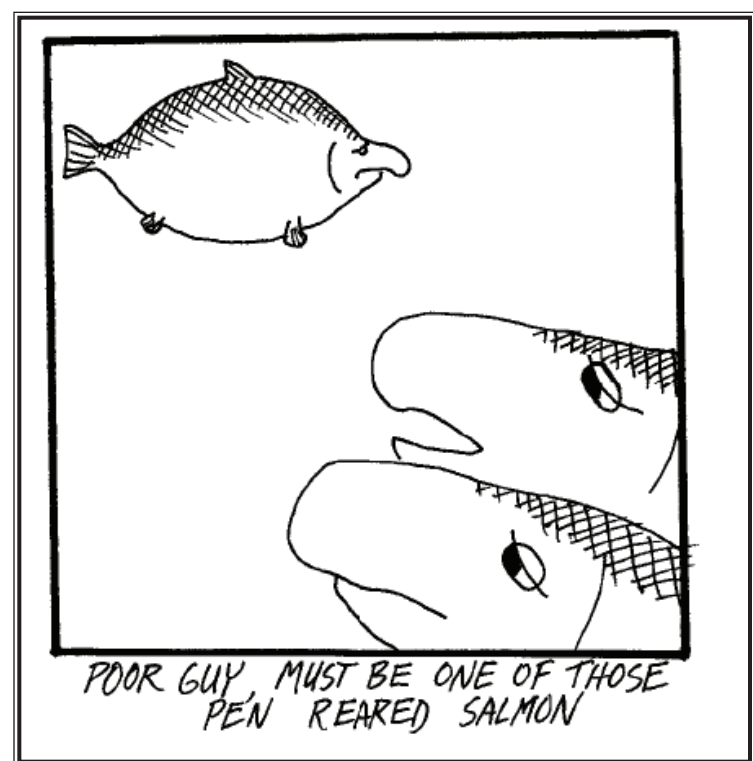
He has lived in Hydaburg all his life and has worked with other fishery boards in the past.

“Staying involved allows me to provide input on issues that may hopefully lead to more fishing opportunities in the future,” John says of his interest in serving on the NSRAA board, adding that he hopes his time on the board will give his fleet more complete representation.

John invites fishermen to contact him at any time with their questions or concerns.

UNCLE RINCUS

by R.Rose



Cost Recovery Assessment - continued from front page

“The assessment will only apply to the THA,” he explains. “So the concern is that perhaps some will fish there, but claim they caught the fish somewhere else.”

NSRAA is working with wildlife troopers in anticipation of the problem.

“A lot of responsibility is going to fall on NSRAA to patrol the area and write down the boat names that fish there and turn those into the ADF&G, so there’s documentation of who is fishing in the area,” Steve says.

The ADF&G is working on penalties for violations. According to Steve, the penalties for misreporting will be severe from the start.

Meanwhile, Steve remains optimistic.

“This initiative is being driven by fishermen,” he says. “It is a great benefit to them, so I believe the infractions will be minimal.”

The assessment will vary from year to year, depending on NSRAA’s budgetary needs and how much was collected the previous year.

“We’re going into it with great optimism that this will work,” Steve says. “We are a fishermen’s organization. The true benefit is there should be more fishing time and that, really, is our mission.”