

# FISH RAP

Change Service Requested

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

Vol. 30 No. 1  
May 2012

*Coho smolts are checked prior to moving to saltwater pens. These smolts are from the second Salmon Lake stock release group. Adults from the first release will return to Deep Inlet and Medvejie this summer.*



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## NSRAA Awaits Tax Assessment Approval

NSRAA is waiting for the final decision in its request to implement a tax assessment at the Hidden Falls terminal harvest area (THA) this year. If approved, the tax assessment would eliminate the need for cost recovery closures – providing more consistent openings and fewer closures for common property fisheries.

It's been more than a year since the NSRAA board directed Steve Reifentstahl, NSRAA General Manager, to pursue a tax assessment for the Hidden Falls THA. Its hope was to implement the tax last summer. But it has been a long and arduous process – involving more than a year of paperwork and meetings with the various parties involved, including the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Department of Law and Department of Revenue.

This spring, the Department of Revenue wrote a new regulation to enable the collection of the tax assessment at Hidden Falls. It was the last step required to implement the tax. At the time of printing, the regulation was out for a 30-day review, including public comment. NSRAA expects the final decision June 1st.

Though the majority of the NSRAA board (and, it seems, the general majority of fishermen) supports the tax assessment – intended to benefit fishermen – there has been some controversy. Not everyone is happy with the prospect of a new tax. Still, Steve says he expects it to go through. And he has made contingency plans just in case it doesn't.

If approved, purse seiners would pay a 20 percent harvest tax on all chum salmon from the Hidden Falls THA this season. The Department of Revenue would determine the assessment amount annually, depending on NSRAA's income, projected returns and expenditures.

The tax monies would eliminate NSRAA's need for cost recovery closures, though broodstock closures may still be necessary.

"The tax assessment will likely allow more common property openings and fewer closures," explains Steve. "Another benefit is there will be more openings at Point Augusta and Tenakee Inlet. Early in the season, ADF&G will only open these areas if Hidden Falls opens, because Hidden Falls draws much of the effort."

Instead of harvesting fish for cost recovery – funds critical to NSRAA's operation budget – NSRAA would obtain those monies through the tax assessment. Similar to the Southeast Enhancement Tax (SET), the processors would collect the money and forward it to the Department of

Revenue. The legislature would appropriate the funds to NSRAA the following year.

As with any tax, one of the biggest concerns is enforcement.

"With a 20 percent tax, there would be some incentive to cheat," says Steve. "There will likely be a lot of self-policing. If you're paying 20 percent, you want the guy next to you to pay his fair share, too."

Still, the bulk of monitoring will fall on NSRAA, which will patrol the openings and document the boats fishing there to ensure that fishermen are paying their share. Law enforcement officials are considering severe punishment for violators, including boat impoundment.

Meanwhile, Steve put out a request for bids for cost recovery. It will be business as usual for NSRAA if the assessment is not approved, with cost recovery closures in the schedule.



*The Reiver delivers the first Chinook to the new Halibut Point release site. Fish are reared at Medvejie and transferred to saltwater pens for imprinting and release.*



## Hatchery Reports

### Hidden Falls Struggles With Chum Incubation

Though Hidden Falls received an average amount of snow this winter, more than four feet fell in an 11-day period, making snow removal a daunting task. But even that seemed trivial as the crew struggled with problems in chum incubation.

Eggtakes were unusually difficult last year. With 10 percent more males than usual, staff struggled to meet eggtake goals. Unexpected poor fertilities during spawning led to a particularly challenging incubation season and NSRAA lost 3.3 million fry from its Takatz group. There were approximately 83.5 million chum remaining in incubation at Hidden Falls by spring.

On the contrary, Chinook survival was good. By March, the brood year (BY) 10 Chinook were at an average weight of 42 grams – the largest on record.

Hidden Falls is incubating 6.8 million BY11 coho, 2.9 million of which will be transferred to Deer Lake next May. The BY10 coho overwintered in saltwater are the largest size, with the best survival, to date. Unfortunately, bacterial coldwater disease led to a higher than average mortality among those BY10 overwintered in freshwater.

“Though disappointing, this winter’s struggles served to make our staff more diligent as we move ahead,” says Adam Olson, Hatchery Manager, adding that his staff looks forward to the facility’s largest chum eggtake ever this summer.



The tagging crew clips fins and injects coded-wire-tags into a group of Chinook.

Other projects include construction of the new feed warehouse, roof replacement on three housing units and progress toward the pier construction/dock replacement project.

*Hatchery Reports cont. on page 3*

### General Manager’s Notes



NSRAA did well in the state capital budget just signed by Governor Parnell. Thanks go out to Senator Stedman, Representative Thomas, Governor Parnell and other legislators. NSRAA will receive more than \$2 million in legislative grants for deferred maintenance at Hidden Falls and Medvejie hatcheries, and \$620,000 for spawning channels in the Haines/Skagway area. These monies demonstrate the State’s strong support for fishermen and the enhancement programs they and their coastal communities rely

upon. Some of these grant monies will be applied to capital projects that otherwise would have been covered by cost recovery revenues, resulting in more fish in the water for common property harvest. We are fortunate to begin the season with this kind of boost.

As many of you have heard, cost recovery prices for chum salmon are at a historic high in Southeast Alaska. This is largely driven by the roe market, which is red hot. The chum flesh market is being held down by a high volume of low-priced, imported farmed fish from Chile, Norway, and British Columbia. Not only is this dragging down chum flesh value, but also that of wild coho and Chinook. With some good fortune, pink and chum ex-vessel prices should be similar to last year.

We have released the Deep Inlet chum fry without the ominous presence of whales, so far. We introduced our trickle release strategy this year at Deep Inlet where zooplankton were abundant and we are optimistic for these recently released fry. It was the fourth year we used the trickle release strategy at Hidden Falls.

I am looking forward to a productive and rewarding year. Have a great fishing season, and please stop by if you get a chance.

*Steve Reifentahl*

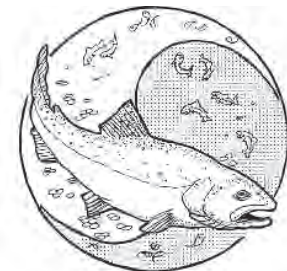
Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association

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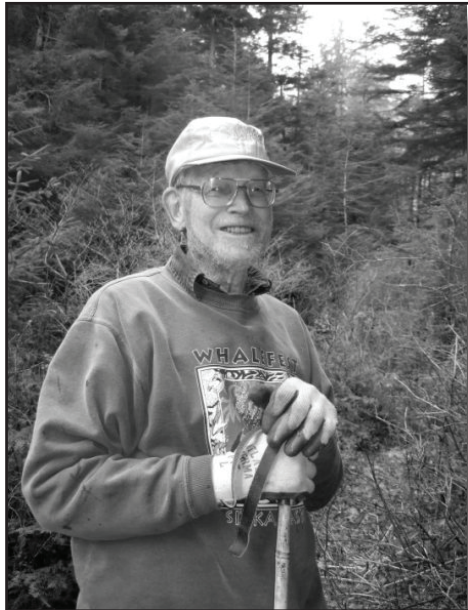
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## Bob Ellis Retires From NSRAA Board



Bob Ellis is stepping down from his place on the NSRAA Board of Directors after nearly 30 years. He has served on the board far longer than anyone – even outlasting many long-time NSRAA employees.

The fish biologist joined NSRAA's board after retiring from a career that included time with the Oregon Fish Commission and years of salmon research in Little Port Walter and Bristol Bay.

It was Bob's fisheries biologist background and conservationist views that brought him to NSRAA's conservation seat,

where he has worked to "protect the integrity of wild salmon stocks and the environment they depend on."

In the 26 years Bob has been on the board, people on NSRAA's staff have come and gone. Bob has seen employees that once worked with him for the federal government come to NSRAA and build careers there. He's seen others retire.

"It's been a lot of fun to see the kids I was working with turn into PhDs," Bob says, reminiscing. "It seems like every year the staff gets better and better."

Bob and his wife, Natasha, moved to Sitka when he quit his government job. Instead of his "regular job" as he calls it, Bob began working as a consultant diving log dumps, observing and documenting the accumulation of woody debris on the ocean floor. He began serving on the NSRAA board, and that of the Sitka Conservation Society.

Needless to say, Bob has always been busy. The ever-energetic man will be 85 this year. What does he plan to do now? "Try to relax and enjoy life," he says, chuckling.

Asked why he is leaving, Bob replies, "I want to leave while I can still walk out." He is only half-joking.

Bob and his current wife, Joan Vanderwerp, live on the outskirts of Sitka, toward Medvejie Hatchery. Their house is on the water, where Bob has enjoyed watching the salmon, their predators and the fisheries for the past 30 years. But their house has no driveway and Bob and Joan must walk up and down a steep hill to come and go.

The couple needs a home that is more accessible as they grow older. They have purchased a flat piece of property by the Sitka Airport, where they plan to build a new house.

"I'm sorry to have to leave, but I'm glad I can still walk out," Bob says.

He's not the only one sorry to see him go.

"He's been a tremendous supporter of NSRAA," says Steve Reifentstahl, NSRAA General Manager. "He brought a science perspective to the board and he always asked good, penetrating biological questions. It was very good to have him there. We are going to miss him."

NSRAA is seeking candidates for the Conservation Seat. If you are interested in the position or would like to nominate someone, please contact Steve Reifentstahl at [steve\\_reifentstahl@nsraa.org](mailto:steve_reifentstahl@nsraa.org) or (907) 747-6850.



*Chum fry from Medvejie are off-loaded into net pens at Deep Inlet.*

*Hatchery Reports, cont. from page 2*

## Medvejie: A Successful Start To The Season

It has been a good year so far at Medvejie, with warm water temperatures, minimal losses and good survival among fry.

"We've had a really successful season this year with our chum and our Chinook," says Bill Coltharp, Hatchery Manager. "They've all been healthy."

Medvejie staff is raising 48.3 million chum at Deep Inlet: 23.9 million for Hidden Falls and 24.4 million for Medvejie. Another 19 million chum will be raised for broodstock. NSRAA released approximately 67.5 million chum from Bear Cove and Deep Inlet, combined, this spring.

More than 3 million Chinook are being raised at Medvejie this summer. About 2.5 million yearlings will be reared in Green Lake, while another 550,000 will remain in freshwater at Medvejie over the winter.

NSRAA released 2.6 million Chinook fry from Medvejie this spring.

The broodstock for Sawmill Creek Hatchery's coho have been raised at Medvejie until the new hatchery opens this fall. The brood year (BY 10) smolts will be released this spring: 116,000 from Deep Inlet and 50,000 (for broodstock) from Bear Cove.

Summer projects at Medvejie include reconfiguring equipment to increase eggtake efficiency, building a new chum expansion feed barge, replacing the hydraulic generator with a fuel-efficient diesel version, and investigating the hatchery's fungus issues.

Bill is optimistic about the summer ahead.

"We're expecting a big return for our coho and Chinook," he says, adding that NSRAA was at the top of the list, already, this year for its winter king troll catch.



*Medvejie manager Bill Coltharp and assistant manager Ritch Phillips prepare to off-load Chinook smolts at Halibut Point.*





NSRAA Haines Gillnet representative Brad Badger and his family.

## Board Member Profile: Brad Badger

If you'd known Brad Badger in his youth, you probably wouldn't have predicted he'd become an Alaska fisherman when he grew up. Brad wouldn't have guessed it either. Though he was raised in the coastal states of Florida and New Hampshire, Brad didn't fish at all growing up – not even the lakes of New Hampshire.

It was skiing that prompted Brad's journey west.

Born and raised mostly in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Brad began skiing while studying at the University of New Hampshire. Eventually, he headed west for a winter as a ski bum in Sun Valley, Idaho. When the season ended, Brad went to Everett, Washington and then continued on to Haines, without much of a plan.

But once in Haines, his destiny quickly became clear.

Brad began gillnetting his first summer there. That was in 1988, when prices were at an all time high. Coming from a state where most jobs were in lumber, Brad thought fishing seemed like a great opportunity – it was outside, paid well and you could be your own boss.

His first few years in Haines, Brad would return to Sun Valley to work for the winter. And then he met Jessie. Disney happened to be filming in Haines that winter, so he was able to get work. He has been in Haines ever since.

Brad and Jessie married in 1992. They have two boys: Austin, 18, and Jordan, 15.

Though Brad purchased a permit in case one of his sons decides to fish, neither one seems inclined to follow in his footsteps. That's okay, says Brad. He wants to see his sons follow their own dreams.

Meanwhile, Brad has been in Haines and gillnetting for almost 25 years and he still loves it. Sure, it's physically and mentally demanding and requires long hours and longer summers, but "it sure beats punching a time clock," he says.

A lot has changed over those years, though.

"The fishery was a lot different than it is now," Brad explains. "Most of the guys' income then was from wild sockeye. Over the past 15 years, most of my production has been from hatchery-raised chum salmon, which has been raised by NSRAA or DIPAC (Douglas Island Pink and Chum, Inc). It's been a big part of my income."

Brad joined the NSRAA board as the Haines Gillnet representative in 2010. Being on the board is both challenging and rewarding, he says.

"You've got to stick up for your gear group," he explains, but "I like being involved in the process, knowing what's going on."

## NSRAA Awards Scholarships

NSRAA announced the winners of its annual scholarship program in early May. Three female students were chosen from the 11 applicants: Alaire Hughey, Sarah McDermott and Anna Szymanski.

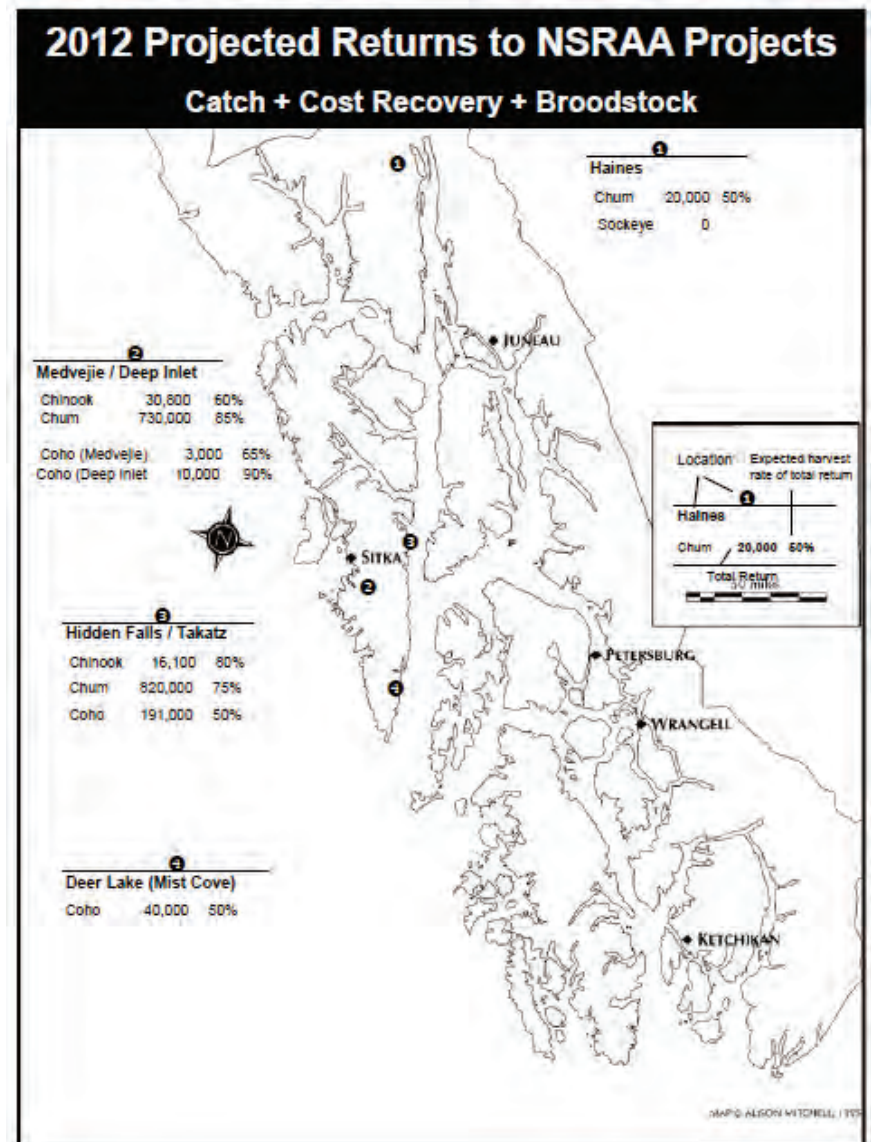
Alaire Hughey is graduating from Sitka High School this year and plans to study cultural anthropology at Linfield College in Oregon or Grinnell College in Iowa. Sarah McDermott is graduating from Juneau-Douglas High School and will study nursing at Seattle Pacific University. Anna Szymanski, of Haines, is currently a student at Williams College in Massachusetts. She is transferring to the University of Alaska in Fairbanks to study marine biology.

This is the second year since the organization expanded its scholarship program to include one scholarship for a vocational-technical school or two-year program. Two more are awarded for four-year programs.

NSRAA's board of directors established the scholarship program to help eligible salmon fishermen, NSRAA employees, and their children and families, with the costs of higher education.

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.





## Angoon Proposal Threatens Fisheries

If the Kootznoowoo Corporation had its way, there would be no commercial fisheries in Chatham and Peril Straits or at Hidden Falls. The corporation, representing the residents of Angoon, petitioned the federal government to shut down almost 100 miles of fisheries in Southeast Alaska. The government was expected to make its final decision in the case by the end of May.

“This, of course, is a threat to the fishermen and economy of Southeast Alaska,” says Steve Reifstahl, NSRAA General Manager, who attended a Federal Subsistence Board hearing in March and testified against the proposition.

Kootznoowoo’s petition argues that the fisheries in Chatham and Peril Straits and at Hidden Falls prevent the residents of Angoon, who depend primarily on wild sockeye from Kanalku Lake, to meet their subsistence needs.

“There are definitely sockeye caught in the purse seine fisheries,” acknowledges Steve. “What is not known, however, is how much of the sockeye in that catch is from Kanalku and it is likely to be very little.”

The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) was the first to review the Angoon case, before making its recommendation to the Federal Subsistence Board to defer a decision for three years. This delay would allow federal and state agencies time to determine how many sockeye are caught by purse seiners in Chatham and Peril Straits, use genetic sampling to identify those stocks that are caught, monitor escapement to Kanalku Lake and determine if there is anything that can be done to increase productivity.

Though the Federal Subsistence Board hearing was public, its decision was not. The Federal Subsistence Board makes its decision in a closed session and forwards its recommendation to the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. Secretaries Tom Vilsack and Ken Salazar review the petition while considering the recommendations. They make the final decision.

Steve questions the merits of the petition, arguing there is good escapement to Kanalku Lake and very little seine fishing occurs when the Kanalku sockeye travel through Chatham Strait. There are enough unknowns, however, that further studies could be worthwhile.

“Thousands of fish are getting back to Kanalku,” he says, “however, I testified that we’d be willing to look at the Kanalku system and see what we could do to increase productivity.”

In 2011, escapement to Kanalku Lake was slightly lower than normal, though the lower numbers may be the result of problems within the Kanalku system itself, rather than the fisheries. One of the problems Steve points to is a barrier that prevents some of the fish from making it to the lake to spawn. “The lake can’t be productive if the adults can’t get there to spawn,” he says.

“Whether the purse seine fishery is responsible is not possible to determine with the current information,” Steve says. “We disagree that we should shut down the fishery. If a problem is defined, we will help find a solution.”



Ritch Phillips and the Reiver crew transfer Chinook into the saltwater pens at Halibut Point.

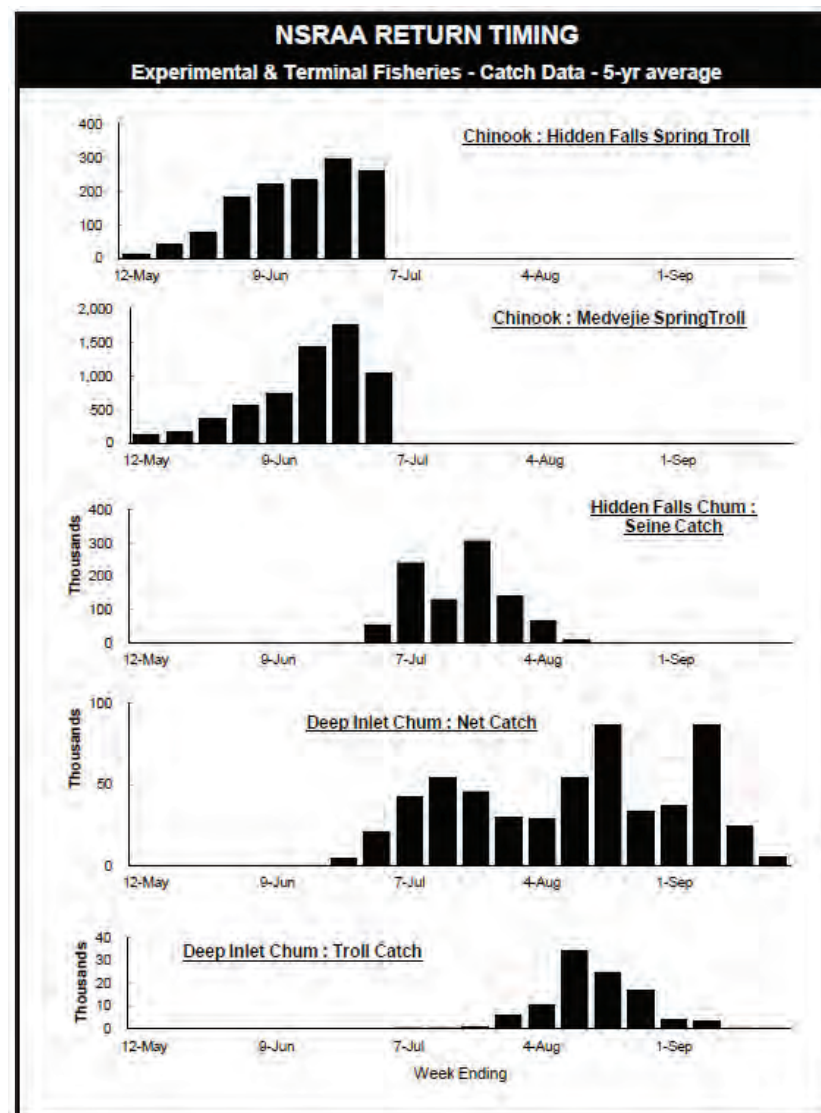
Projected Income - FY13		
Year	Income Source	Amount
2011	Enhancement tax	\$3,312,613.12
2012	Chum Cost Recovery	\$193,108.19
	From Reserves	\$0.00
2011	50% Excess CR'11	\$0.00
2011	FY13 Revenues - coho, chin	\$1,761,314.39
2011	FY13 Revenues - incidentals	\$65,309.03
2011	FY13 Revenues - roe	\$9,153.53
2011	FY13 Revenues - carcass	\$393,539.74
	Facilities & New Production Acct.	\$277,400.00
2011	Rental Income	\$40,500.00
2011	Investment Earnings (net of fees)	\$53,379.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$6,106,317.00</b>

Projected Expenses - FY13	
Expense Source	Amount
Operational Budget	\$5,454,917.00
Capital Budget	\$248,600.00
Contingency	\$0.00
<b>Southeast Cove Operations</b>	
	\$125,400.00
<b>Southeast Cove CIP</b>	
	\$277,400.00
Hidden Falls Chum Assessment Contingency Account	
<b>Total</b>	
	<b>\$6,106,317.00</b>

### NSRAA FY13 Budget

NSRAA has a 6.1 million dollar budget for fiscal year 2013 (July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013). Because of NSRAA’s forward-funding policy, all revenues required to balance the budget are already in hand - except for the relatively small amount of revenue to be collected from this summer’s chum cost recovery.





## Field Project Updates

### Deer Lake: A Tough Winter

Winter was an unusually busy time at Deer Lake. A November storm knocked some trees into the Wavemaster pens, forcing the crew to release two pens of fry several months earlier than planned. Staff released three more pens in January, submerging only one for the winter.

“Winter was a busy and tough time,” said Carrington Gordon, Project Leader. “The crew worked long hours in challenging conditions at a time when camp is usually wrapping up. Their work ethic and commitment to the project allowed us to get everything done in time for lake freeze-over.”

Overwintering may not have gone according to plan, but the fry survived the winter well and were still healthy by spring. Approximately 2.8 million coho fry – just under 1 gram each – were transferred from Hidden Falls in May to be overwintered at Deer Lake.

This summer, the crew will also work to improve the dock facilities, rebuild the lake sampling float and maintain trails.



*Coho feed in the Medvejie raceways in March. These fish were released in May.*



*Chinook cost recovery at Bear Cove.*

### Haines: Property Sales Cause Uncertainty

NSRAA's season at Haines is starting off with some uncertainty; two of the sites used in its projects there are on University of Alaska (UAK) land that is for sale or has already been sold.

A section of one of NSRAA's spawning channels is located on UAK land that has recently been sold to a private developer for industrial use. Though the new property owner is not allowed to destroy the channel, any development on the land could affect water flow and NSRAA's ability to access and manage the site.

NSRAA has incubation boxes at the 31-mile site, which is on property still for sale. It has used the site through a land use agreement that was due to be renewed in May.

NSRAA Operations Manager, Scott Wagner, visited both properties in May. At the time, the property sold for industrial use had been cleared of trees and vegetation, though no construction had begun.

Scott visited the 31-mile site to determine the exact location of the incubators, which may, in fact, be on Department of Transportation land, not UAK land as was initially believed. NSRAA must determine the owner of the property before it will know whether the incubation boxes can remain or must be moved.

Despite the changes the property sales may require, NSRAA staff is focused on attaining eggtake goals at all its Haines project areas this year.

### Salmon Lake: Focus On Monitoring Escapement

With the return of the first brood year of coho for the new Sawmill Creek Hatchery, NSRAA no longer needs to collect eggs from Salmon Lake as it has the past three seasons. The crew at Salmon Lake will focus on monitoring escapement.

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.

“We don't anticipate a problem,” says Scott Wagner, NSRAA Operations Manager. “It's somewhat unusual for a hatchery fish to stray up there. In recent years, stray coho have represented less than one half of a percent. Since these are the same genetic stock as Salmon Lake, there should be less concern than with hatchery fish of a different genetic stock straying into the system.”

Though NSRAA has been operating the weir and monitoring escapement to the lake for the past five years, this is the first year for Sawmill Creek broodstock to return. Though the fish should return to Deep Inlet or Medvejie, where they were released, staff could see some strays at Salmon Lake.

NSRAA expects to collect 765,000 eggs from the return of this year's Salmon Lake broodstock.



*Gillnetting for chum at Deep Inlet. The 2012 season opened for fishing on May 27.*



NSRAA 2012 Return Projections				Commercial	Sport	Cost Recovery	Brood Stock	2011 Return
Site	Projected Return	Low	High					
<b>Chum</b>								
Hidden Falls	820,000	299,000	1,359,000	645,000	-	15,000	160,000	371,251
Medvejie/Deep Inlet**	730,000	103,000	1,414,000	645,000	-	15,000	70,000	368,683
Haines Projects	20,000	15,000	25,000	8,000	-	-	12,000	15,445
	1,570,000	417,000	2,798,000	1,298,000	-	30,000	242,000	755,379
<b>Chinook</b>								
Hidden Falls	16,100	13,600	18,600	13,350	250	500	2,000	10,735
Medvejie	30,800	20,800	40,800	16,940	1,250	8,610	4,000	39,097
	46,900	34,400	59,400	30,290	1,500	9,110	6,000	49,832
<b>Coho</b>								
	<u>Marine Survival:</u>	6%	4%	10%				
Hidden Falls	191,000	127,400	318,500	86,000	4,000	91,000	10,000	245,679
Deer Lake	40,000	26,400	66,000	20,000	1,000	19,000	-	77,561
Medvejie	3,000	2,200	5,500	1,980	300	-	720	-
Deep Inlet	10,000	6,500	16,300	7,500	1,000	1,500	-	-
	244,000	162,500	406,300	115,480	6,300	111,500	10,720	323,240
<b>ALL SPECIES TOTALS:</b>	<b>1,860,900</b>	<b>613,900</b>	<b>3,263,700</b>	<b>1,443,770</b>	<b>7,800</b>	<b>150,610</b>	<b>258,720</b>	<b>1,128,451</b>

NSRAA return projections and expected utilization. Boat Harbor and Limestone Inlet chum are no longer shown because DIPAC has taken over full operation of these projects.

## Smallest Cost Recovery In Years

This season's cost recovery goal is among the smallest on record, thanks to a combination of record tax revenues, strong fish prices and other income from the 2011 season.

NSRAA only needs \$193,000 from chum cost recovery this year. The amount is split proportionally between Hidden Falls (\$102,000) and Deep Inlet (\$91,000), according to forecasted returns.

That translates to less than 200,000 pounds of chum or 25,000 fish – compared to a 10-year average of 4.9 million pounds or 600,000 fish. It's NSRAA's smallest cost recovery in 10 years.

The Deep Inlet chum cost recovery goal is so small – less than 100,000 pounds – it won't even require a closure this summer. The harvest will be conducted either outside the Terminal Harvest Area (THA), as opportunity presents itself, or inside the THA on a Saturday.

There will be no closure at Hidden Falls either, if the tax assessment is approved (see related article). If it is not, the harvest will be scheduled during regular, non-seine days.

Chinook and coho cost recoveries are determined by run size and commercial and sport interception rates. NSRAA harvests the fish that make it past the fisheries. Current forecasts indicate this year's Chinook and coho cost recovery harvests could be between 60 and 100 percent of 2011 levels.

## Deep Inlet Schedule

The Board of Fish made two decisions this spring that affect the Deep Inlet Terminal Harvest Area (THA) schedule:

- Chinook management: Revised the western Deep Inlet THA boundary through the third Saturday in June to increase troll fishery access to enhanced king salmon. The western line is moved in to 135° 20.75' W longitude to allow trolling between Long Inland and Samsing Cove.
- Chum management: Extended the 1:1 ratio of seine to gillnet fishing rotation in the Deep Inlet THA through 2014

Fishing in Deep Inlet begins on Sunday May 27 this year, with Chinook management in effect through Saturday June 16. During this period, the fishing schedule will be 4:2 gillnet to seine, with seine openings on Sunday and Thursday and gillnet openings on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Saturday will be a troll day.

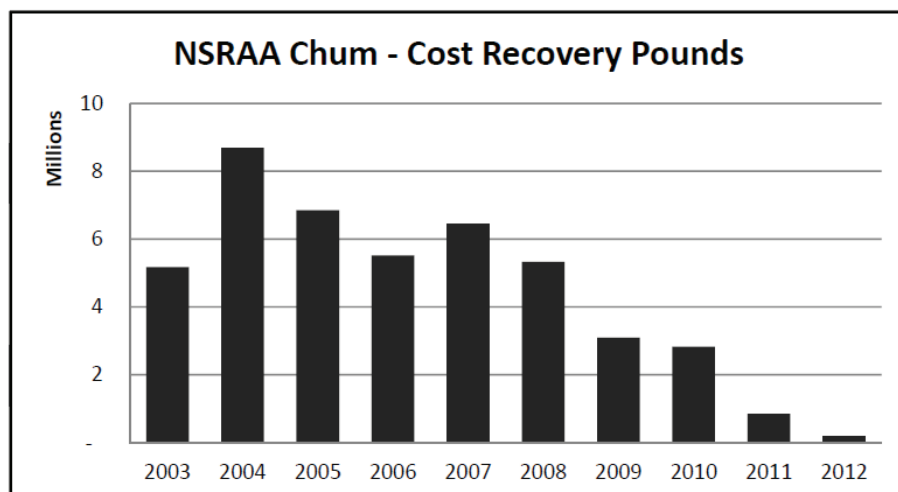
Thanks to this year's small cost recovery goal, there is no need for a cost recovery closure at Deep Inlet, resulting in the simplest chum schedule there in years. Beginning on June 17 and continuing for the entire season, the schedule will be 3:3 gillnet to seine, with seine openings Sunday, Thursday and Friday, and gillnet openings on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Saturdays the THA will be open to trolling and to cost recovery as needed.

Should the need arise for a broodstock closure in Deep Inlet, NSRAA will attempt to close the THA after a gillnet day, and reopen with a single troll day followed by a seine day. The schedule will then be adjusted, as needed, to return to the normal schedule described above.

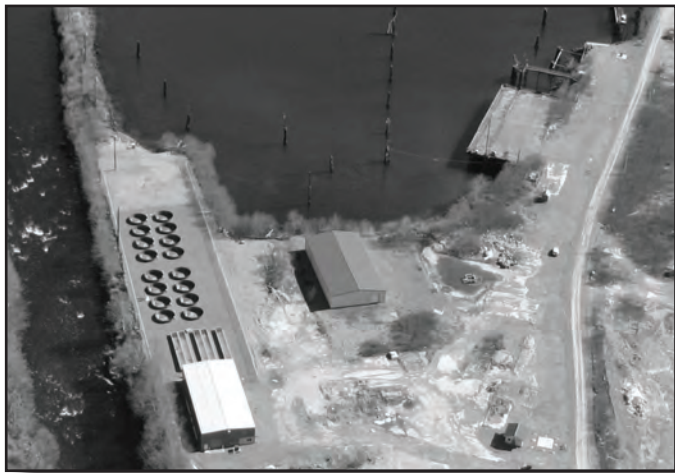
## THA Opening Dates

- May 27 (Sunday) - first Deep Inlet seine opening.
- May 28 (Monday) - first Deep Inlet gillnet opening.
- June 17 (Sunday) - first Hidden Falls seine opening.

See NSRAA's Fisheries page at [www.nsraa.org](http://www.nsraa.org) for full THA schedules.



NSRAA will harvest less than 200 thousand pounds of chum (about 25,000 fish) for cost recovery in 2012.



## Sawmill Creek Hatchery Opens This Season

Salmon season is always exciting at NSRAA, but this year is particularly so, as the staff awaits the first return of coho for its newest hatchery, Sawmill Creek. It's been a long wait.

The hatchery, located in the Sawmill Cove Industrial Park between Sitka and Medvejie Hatchery, was completed several years ago, but its opening was postponed due to an unexpected problem with bacterial kidney disease (BKD).

NSRAA was originally approved to get broodstock for the Sawmill Creek Hatchery from Plotnikof Lake, but the rate of BKD was as high as 75 percent. BKD is a disease that occurs naturally in the wild, but can be devastating in a hatchery, so NSRAA was forced to find a new source for broodstock.

In the spring of 2009, ADF&G Commissioner Cora Campbell approved NSRAA's request to switch its broodstock from Plotnikof to Salmon Lake, just a few miles away from Medvejie. The adults there were large and robust, with a significantly higher fecundity among its females than those from Plotnikof Lake.

Still, the broodstock change was a significant setback for Sawmill Creek. The hatchery opening was delayed three years as NSRAA began collecting broodstock all over again.

Unlike Medvejie and Hidden Falls Hatchery, Sawmill Creek is an incubation and fresh water rearing facility only. In order to prevent broodstock from straying to Salmon Lake and mixing with the wild population there, only the fish for broodstock are released from Medvejie. The rest are released, remotely, from Deep Inlet.

NSRAA's forecasts indicate approximately 13,000 coho from the Salmon Lake broodstock should return this year, says Scott Wagner, NSRAA Operations Manager.

NSRAA plans to collect 765,000 eggs from this season's return. A portion will remain at Medvejie for broodstock, while the remaining 700,000 will be transferred to Sawmill Creek, where they will be fertilized, incubated and raised for a 2014 release.

NSRAA will increase production at Sawmill Creek incrementally, starting with a target release of 500,000 fry in 2014 and doubling that release each year for three years. Sawmill Creek should reach full production with a release of 2 million coho fry in 2016.

The gradual increase in production at Sawmill Creek serves two purposes; It allows NSRAA and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to monitor Salmon Lake for strays, and it keeps numbers at Sawmill Creek manageable so that fry can be transported to Medvejie next year when the water source to Sawmill Creek is turned off. (Sitka is raising the height of the Blue Lake Dam by 80 feet to increase capacity and anticipates the water will be unavailable for one to two months.)

NSRAA's Bill Lyden will oversee the start-up and operation of Sawmill Creek. Bill worked for NSRAA about ten years ago and has since worked for Douglas Island Pink and Chum (DIPAC) and Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA). He returns to NSRAA this season as a fish culturist and will be the sole employee in charge of the hatchery until the production increase.

"The opening of Sawmill Creek is an auspicious event for NSRAA," says Steve Reifentstahl, NSRAA General Manager. "It is NSRAA's third major hatchery and our second in Sitka. It will bring significant economic benefits to fishermen and the local economy. Within five years, we should see over 100,000 coho returning to Sitka Sound."

## Cooperative Project To Increase Chum Production

This summer, NSRAA will begin a five-year joint cooperative project with Gunnuk Creek Hatchery, which should increase chum production in Southeast Alaska by at least 10 million.

Run by Kake Non Profit Fisheries Corporation, a subsidiary to Kake Tribal, Gunnuk Creek Hatchery has struggled for years to collect enough eggs to meet its maximum capacity of 65 million.

"I don't think they've ever been able to release their full permitted amount," says Scott Wagner, NSRAA Operations Manager.

Steve Reifentstahl, NSRAA General Manager, met with the hatchery's board to propose the cooperative project. As part of the agreement, NSRAA has received a permit for an additional 45 million chum eggs, specifically for Gunnuk Creek. It will raise the fry – which will be differentially otolith marked – at Hidden Falls at no cost to Gunnuk Creek. When the fish return, otoliths will be sampled to determine the percentage of NSRAA's contribution and the processor will pay the organization accordingly.

"It's a potential revenue source for NSRAA, depending on production costs, survival and fish prices," says Scott.

Gunnuk Creek's permit allows it to release up to 10 million at Gunnuk Creek and the remainder remotely. NSRAA would release its portion, remotely, from Southeast Cove.

Though there are a variety of problems that could be contributing to Gunnuk Creek's inability to meet its permitted capacity, one of the main problems has been poor fish survival.

"We're going to try to produce larger fish to increase survival rates," says Scott. Known as the "late-large" technique, fry are released at a larger size (the goal is 4 grams) and later date than normal. NSRAA has had varying success with this technique. "We'll learn something if it works at Southeast Cove because late-large is very successful at some sites and not at others."

The project's biggest benefit is it will increase the number of fish available for fisheries by as much as 10 million.

"The hope is that we will get more fish in the water," says Scott, adding that if Gunnuk Creek is able to reach its eggtake goals any year during the five-year agreement, NSRAA would not collect its portion for that year's release.

## NSRAA Welcomes Jim Moore To Board

Jim Moore has been trolling since he moved to Alaska in 1970. When the legislation was passed to allow private, nonprofit hatcheries, he and his wife dreamed of opening a "ma and pa hatchery in a remote cove somewhere."

Instead of opening a hatchery, though, the couple raised three kids. Two are now commercial fishermen, like Jim, and their daughter is a doctor. They have seven grandchildren.

"Because my whole family has benefitted from this wonderful organization (NSRAA), I felt that it would be cool to give something back – to put a little time and effort into the organization," Jim says of his decision to campaign for NSRAA's Rural Troll seat last winter.

Jim was elected to replace incumbent Wade Martin, who had held the seat since March 2009.

Some might argue that being a board member is more of a chore than anything, but Jim's excitement is palpable. He seems genuinely thrilled at the prospect of being part of the board, representing his gear group and working with NSRAA.