

Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program Memorandum of Understanding

The effects of fisheries on the various stocks of sockeye and chum salmon in western Alaska have been of concern for several decades. While there are differing views on policy questions pertaining to the conservation and harvest of western Alaska salmon, there is a strong commitment by interested parties to obtain the data and scientific analyses necessary to inform the public policy debate and help Alaskans generate solutions to reduce conflict and assure the sustainability of the stocks and the fisheries upon them.

The Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program (WASSIP) established by this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will develop sockeye and chum salmon genetic stock identification (GSI) baselines, sample salmon fisheries in western Alaska, and analyze fishery samples against the baselines to determine stock of origin of sockeye and chum salmon harvests to the finest resolution possible. **Recognizing the importance of these results to conservation considerations the program shall, to the extent possible, extend stock contribution estimates to stock-specific harvest rates in the study areas.**

While there is currently a limited ability to determine the origin of sockeye and chum salmon stocks from a broad geographic area, a more detailed genetic baseline and more refined analytical techniques are needed to identify specific Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands, Bristol Bay and Chignik sockeye stocks and Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) chum salmon stocks in the regions' fisheries. With this information, Alaskans will have better tools to develop options for management plans that conserve specific stocks and address allocation issues.

This Memorandum of Understanding has grown from a multi-party collaborative effort among stakeholders, federal agencies, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This MOU is entered into by signatories to a letter sent to the Alaska congressional delegation in 2005 regarding funding for a proposed Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program. The signatories include:

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Aleut Corporation
- Aleutians East Borough
- Association of Village Council Presidents
- Bering Sea Fishermen's Association
- Bristol Bay Native Association
- Concerned Area M Fishermen
- Kawerak Incorporated
- Lake and Peninsula Borough
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

Purpose

The purpose of the WASSIP MOU is to provide a mechanism for participants to engage in a collaborative decision-making process to expend allocated funds for the purposes of identifying the stock contributions of western Alaska sockeye and chum salmon to fisheries in and around western Alaska. The western Alaska region, for the purpose of this MOU, encompasses the geographic area from Kotzebue Sound south to the Chignik management area, and including the Alaska Peninsula and eastern Aleutian Islands (Salmon management areas X, Z, Y, W, T, M, and L).

Guiding Principles

Funds allocated to WASSIP as a result of efforts of the signatories will be spent according to provisions of this MOU, based upon a consensus of the participants, and should be spent in a manner to best illustrate the stock of origin (i.e., stock composition) of sockeye and chum salmon harvested in western Alaska. It is important that research under this initiative be coordinated closely with similar research being funded under other programs. Funds administered under this MOU will not be used to replace funds for other research and management programs. And, signatories to this agreement will continue to actively seek other funds to undertake necessary stock composition research regarding western Alaska salmon fisheries.

A twelve member Advisory Panel (AP) will make decisions regarding adopting and implementing WASSIP. The Advisory Panel will make its final decisions after considering comments and recommendations made by a Technical Committee (TC).

Participation and collaboration of regional interests will be encouraged. The AP will meet as often as necessary and all meetings of the WASSIP AP will be open to the public.

Advisory Panel

Membership of the Advisory Panel will consist of a federal representative and a representative of each of the signatory groups. The AP will operate by consensus.

The Advisory Panel will: 1) appoint four Technical Committee members to act as scientific advisors at various steps in the program, 2) adopt a Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program after considering the recommendations of the TC, 3) approve a clearly defined budget and realistic timeline prior to implementation, and 4) provide for an independent peer review of the study design and final research results.

The AP will develop a data-sharing agreement among the signatories to promote the sharing of information among interested parties. The AP will also review project results, and ensure data and results are freely available to the public.

Technical Committee

The Technical Committee (TC) will consist of four members nominated and chosen by the Advisory Panel.

Members of the TC will be selected based upon their knowledge, expertise and ability to fulfill the responsibilities of the TC as outlined in this agreement.

Membership will represent scientific disciplines including, but not be limited to, genetics, salmon migration, statistics (including research design and data analysis), and stock assessment. Members of the TC may not be employed by the signatories to this MOU.

The TC will regularly review the Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program throughout the life of this MOU, including reviewing project design and results of analyses, and make relevant recommendations to the AP to ensure research is conducted effectively and efficiently.

TC members are expected to exercise their best professional judgment to advance understanding of western Alaska sockeye and chum salmon stocks, independent of the governmental, academic, or private sector they may represent.

Reasonable financial support for TC members, if necessary, may be considered an acceptable expenditure of WASSIP funds.

Mutual Understandings

The effective date of this agreement will be from the date of the final signature. No revisions to this MOU will apply without the written consent of all signatories.

Staff of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will facilitate all WASSIP meetings.

Analysis of fishery samples collected under this MOU will not begin until three years of funding for WASSIP have been secured, and reporting of results will not take place until three years of data collection are analyzed. A decision to proceed with analysis of fishery samples will be made by the AP and will take into consideration advice of the TC.

A semi-annual progress report will be provided to all participants. A final, completion report will include an inventory of sockeye and chum salmon samples collected by each organization.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game and any of the Technical Committee members who are available will provide a presentation of final results to the WASSIP AP. The AP will review the draft final report plus any comments from the TC or other reviewers. A final report will then be presented to the Alaska Board of Fisheries and published for public distribution.

Tissue samples collected from fisheries with WASSIP funding will provide valuable data for identifying stock composition of catches throughout western Alaska. As genetic techniques continue to develop and genetic baselines continue to expand, additional analyses will be possible. Therefore, because the fishery samples are of limited quantity, are often costly to obtain, and are irreplaceable in a historical context, the signatories to this MOU believe that these samples should not be shared with other researchers unless their proposed project meets the scientific rigor outlined under WASSIP. These fishery samples are viewed as a complete set, and proposed research uses of this set of samples should encompass the entire area covered under WASSIP (i.e., western Alaska, as specified above). The Department of Fish and Game should consult with WASSIP signatories to determine any future use of these samples.

Any signatory may terminate its participation in this MOU by providing to the other parties notice in writing. However, the State of Alaska agrees that in the event the State was to terminate early, the State would again initiate discussions with the parties, with the intent of developing an alternative agreement.

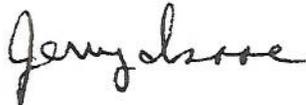
Signatures


Mckie Campbell, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

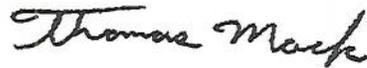

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Karen Gillis, Interim Executive Director
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