

Allocation Plan and Hatchery Operations (7 proposals)

PROPOSAL 75

5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan.

Amend the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan, as follows:

[Remove] and **add** the language in 5 AAC 24.370. PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND MANAGEMENT AND SALMON ENHANCEMENT ALLOCATION PLAN. Under

(h) If the drift gillnet or purse seine gear group harvest value of enhanced salmon is **50 [45]** percent or less of the **[previous five-year]** average exvessel value comparison of the common property enhanced salmon stocks harvested **since inception starting in 2006**, as calculated by the department under (c) of this section, then in the year following this calculation the fishery shall be managed as follows:

(1) if the drift gillnet gear group harvest value is **50 [45]** percent or less, then in the year following the current calculations, the drift gillnet gear group shall have exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon returns from June 1 through July 30, during fishing periods established by emergency order; and

(2) if the purse seine gear group harvest value is **50 [45]** percent or less, then in the year following the current calculations, the purse seine gear group shall have exclusive access to the **[Esther Subdistrict] Port Chalmers Subdistrict** to harvest enhanced salmon returns from June 1 through July 20, during fishing periods established by emergency order.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? (h) If the drift gillnet or purse seine gear group harvest value of enhanced salmon is 45 percent or less of the previous five-year average exvessel value comparison of the common property enhanced salmon stocks harvested, as calculated by the department under (c) of this section, then in the year following this calculation the fishery shall be managed as follows:

(1) if the drift gillnet gear group harvest value is 45 percent or less, then in the year following the current calculations, the drift gillnet gear group shall have exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon returns from June 1 through July 30, during fishing periods established by emergency order; and

(2) if the purse seine gear group harvest value is 45 percent or less, then in the year following the current calculations, the purse seine gear group shall have exclusive access to the Esther Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon returns from June 1 through July 20, during fishing periods established by emergency order. The current plan incorporates a five-year rolling average when determining allocation values which determine which user group is allowed to fish in the allocation shared districts.

The current enhanced salmon allocation plan includes a five-year rolling average for determining PWSAC enhanced salmon value percentages for which user group is allowed access to the shared

enhanced salmon districts of the Port Chalmers Subdistrict and the Esther Subdistrict. The Port Chalmers Subdistrict is a remote release chum fishery, and the Esther Subdistrict is the PWSAC hatchery that produces all the enhanced chum salmon in PWS.

The use of a five-year rolling average has resulted in denying the drift gillnet fleet their allotted 50% share of the PWSAC enhanced salmon value. Since the current enhanced salmon allocation plan was adopted in 2006 through 2022 the drift has been denied 65.4 million in PWSAC only value (COAR Report). That comes to an average of 3.85 million a year in lost revenue for the drift fleet. With the 65.4 million PWSAC enhanced salmon lost revenue and the 241.5 million VFDA enhanced salmon allocated to the seine fleet, the current plan has allocated 306.9 million dollars in enhanced salmon to the seine fleet over the drift fleet. This proposal requests that the five-year rolling average be replaced by an average since inception of the plan beginning in 2006. And reduce the plan to one shared fishing district by removing the Esther Subdistrict from the plan.

If the seine fleet were to gain access the Esther Subdistrict chum fishery while harvesting millions of VFDA enhanced pink salmon whose value is not included in the plan would be devastating for the drift and set net fisherman. VFDA is the largest and most successful pink hatchery in Alaska. The seine fleet would be allocated all the enhanced chums at the AFK Hatchery remote release, the Port Chalmers remote release and the Esther Hatchery chums returning to the Esther Subdistrict, along with all the enhanced pinks at Solomon Gulch Hatchery, AFK Hatchery, Cannery Creek Hatchery and shared access to the enhanced pinks at the Esther Hatchery. The drift fleet would have shared access to the Main Bay Hatchery and the Esther Hatchery enhanced pinks. The drift fleet does catch a small portion of enhanced red salmon on the Copper River returning to the Gulkana Hatchery which has been a bust for the last several years. And it's been discussed on shutting it down at PWSAC due to low returns. Basically, the seine fleet would have complete access to two remote release chum fisheries and one chum hatchery, three pink hatcheries and shared access to another pink hatchery while the drift fleet would have shared access to one red salmon and one pink hatchery.

The first enhanced salmon allocation plan adopted by the BOF in 1990 was not fair to the seine fleet or the drift fleet. It included all wild and enhanced salmon and the promise that there would be no re-allocation and any shortfalls would be made in new production. It was bound to fail, and it did. PWSAC could never keep up with new production, with falling prices and other damage caused by the oil spill the seine fleet kept falling short. The drift fleet was opposed to it mainly because of the Exxon Valdez oil spill that had occurred the year before because the seine fishery was damaged a lot more than the drift fishery, but the main reason was why would anyone include wild stocks in an enhanced salmon allocation plan? All that did was make the plan that much harder to fulfill its goals. I served on the BOF subcommittee that worked on the current plan. The product that came out of the subcommittee was to **include all enhanced salmon** and remove wild stocks from the plan. VFDA enhanced salmon was removed from the plan at 10:00pm the night before vote the next morning. Yet again a fair enhanced salmon allocation plan slipped away from the drift fleet.

The drift fishery has been in deep decline the last four years. All you must do is look at the CEFC data. It looks like seine fishery did before 2006 when the current plan was adopted.

The drift fleet does not want more than what they were promised from the beginning of the enhanced salmon program in Area E. They want a fair allocation plan that protects the fishery and delivers on what it claims to do. After 19 years it's time to acknowledge the developments in the fisheries that have occurred since this plan went into effect in 2006.

PROPOSED BY: Michael Bowen (EF-F24-090)

PROPOSAL 76

5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan.

Amend the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan to increase access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict by drift gillnet permit holders, as follows:

(h) If the drift gillnet or purse seine gear group harvest value of enhanced salmon is **50** [45] percent or less of the previous five-year average exvessel value comparison of the common property enhanced salmon stocks harvested, as calculated by the department under (c) of this section, then in the year following this calculation the fishery shall be managed as follows:

- (1) if the drift gillnet gear group harvest value is **50** [45] percent or less, then in the year following the current calculations, the drift gillnet gear group shall have exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to harvest enhanced salmon returns from June 1 through July 30, during fishing periods established by emergency order; and
- (2) if the purse seine gear group harvest value is **50** [45] percent or less, then in the year following the current calculations, the purse seine gear group shall have exclusive access to the **Port Chalmers Subdistrict** [ESTHER SUBDISTRICT] to harvest enhanced salmon returns [FROM JUNE 1 THROUGH JULY 20, DURING FISHING PERIODS ESTABLISHED BY EMERGENCY ORDER]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Prince William Sound Enhancement Allocation plan is flawed. Currently it has a 5-year rolling average that is supposed to balance the percentages between the commercial fleets. This plan is ineffective in ensuring a 50/50 split between the Seine and Drift fleet. Since the inception of the plan in 2005 just on Prince William Sound Aquaculture (PWSAC) fish the drift fleet is behind the seine fleet by \$68,000,000. This data was derived from ADFG via the COAR report values of PWSAC enhanced salmon. The plan has been in effect nearly 20 years without any updating or review to see it is working as intended. The drift fleet being behind \$68,000,000 shows that is currently flawed. My proposal would substitute the language in part (h) of the regulation known as the "allocation trigger" to allow the drift fleet additional access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict. Currently the drift fleet only has access to this district if we fall below 45 percent on the 5-year rolling average. Allowing the drift fleet access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict when they fall below 50 percent would alleviate some of this disparity.

Additionally, this substitute language would eliminate the possibility of the seine fleet having access to the Esther Subdistrict for Prince William Sound Aquaculture chums. The possibility that the seine fleet has access to harvest Esther chums via this enhancement plan is not conforming to the intent of parity, especially when the drift fleet is behind by such an exorbitant amount.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have worked with a few other drift gillnetters in drafting this regulation change.

PROPOSED BY: Darin Gilman

(HQ-F24-017)

PROPOSAL 77

5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan.

Include salmon produced by Valdez Fishery Development Association in the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan, as follows:

Remove the language in 5 AAC 24.370. PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND MANAGEMENT AND SALMON ENHANCEMENT ALLOCATION PLAN. Under

[(J) IN THIS SECTION, "ENHANCED SALMON STOCKS" MEANS SALMON PRODUCED BY THE PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AQUACULTURE CORPORATION"]

Or add the language to 5 AAC 24.370. PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND MANAGEMENT AND SALMON ENHANCEMENT ALLOCATION PLAN. Under

5 AAC 24.370. PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND **AQUACULTURE CORPORATION** MANAGEMENT AND SALMON ENHANCEMENT ALLOCATION PLAN.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This regional plan does not include the value of all enhanced salmon produced in the Copper River/Prince William Sound region (Area E). The value of enhanced salmon production from the private non-profit corporation Valdez Fisheries Development Association's (VDFA) Solomon Gulch Hatchery is not included in the regional allocation management plan. The construction of the Solomon Gulch Hatchery was financed by funds from the State of Alaska, and it continues to use state financing. The original Solomon Gulch hatchery operational permit included chum production intended to benefit the drift gillnet fleet which was never accomplished.

5 AAC 33.364. Southeastern Alaska Area Enhanced Salmon Allocation Management Plan includes the value of all enhanced salmon produced in the Southeastern Alaska region (Area A) that includes two regional hatchery associations and all independent private non-profit hatchery operators involving 17 hatchery facilities.

5 AAC 24.370. and 5 AAC 33.364. stated goals are to provide a fair and reasonable allocation of the harvest of enhanced salmon among the commercial fisheries.

State of Alaska regional enhanced salmon allocation plans should be based on the same criteria for all regions of the state. Which would include all enhanced salmon produced and all the user groups in the region as the starting point.

If 5 AAC 24.370. is the regional (Area E) enhanced salmon allocation plan then the plan should address and include all enhanced salmon produced in the region. If the BOF determines that a commercial user group deserves or is entitled to more enhanced salmon than the recognized historic average, then the percentage triggers can be adjusted to reflect that.

There cannot be a fair and reasonable enhanced salmon allocation plan when a large percentage of the enhanced salmon resource produced in Area E is not included in the regional plan. There is no difference between a hatchery built by the State of Alaska, PWSAC, VFDA and the 17 hatchery facilities located in SE Alaska. They all used public funds for their construction and startup operations and their purpose is to enhance regional fisheries for the benefit of all users. Both PWSAC and VFDA continue to use public funds for improvements and increase production. But VFDA use of public funds and increases in production only benefits one commercial user group.

If all the enhanced salmon value produced in the Prince William Sound region is not recognized and included in the Prince William Sound Enhanced Salmon Allocation Plan, then the enhanced salmon value will not be complete, accurate and accounted for. Since 2006 when the current allocation plan was adopted to 2021, VFDA has produced 233 million pink and 550 thousand coho salmon with a value of over 245 million dollars.

The current management plan has been in effect for 19 years. A review of the plan with stakeholder involvement to see if the plan can be updated and improved to meet its purpose and goals which states **“is to provide a fair and reasonable allocation of the harvest of enhanced salmon among the drift gillnet, seine, and set gillnet commercial fisheries, and to reduce conflicts between these user groups. It is the intent of the Board of Fisheries (board) to allocate enhanced salmon stocks in the Prince William Sound Area to maintain the long-term historic balance between competing commercial users that has existed since statehood, while acknowledging developments in the fisheries that have occurred since this plan went into effect in 1991”**.

After 19 years it’s time to acknowledge the developments in the fisheries that have occurred since this plan went into effect in 2006.

This proposal does not propose to reallocate VFDA produced enhanced salmon to other commercial salmon user groups, but to only include the value of all enhanced salmon in the regional plan so that the plan is complete, inclusive and everyone will know the total value of all PWS enhanced salmon. And possibly all PWS commercial common property salmon fisheries can receive a benefit from the value of VFDA enhanced salmon production.

PROPOSED BY: Michael Bowen (EF-F24-078)

PROPOSAL 78
5 AAC 24.370. Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan.

Reduce Prince William Sound hatchery permitted pink salmon egg take level by 25%, as follows:

The solution is very simple. Reduce the permitted egg intake of each Prince William Sound Hatchery that produces pink and chum salmon by 25%. Then do an evaluation within five years.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce pink and chum hatchery egg takes in the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) and Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) by 25% of current permitting levels.

There is significant evidence that there is an ocean carrying capacity that is exacerbated by the proliferation of Alaskan and Asian hatchery releases into the North Pacific. This is particularly important to Chinook salmon as stocks have declined dramatically all over Alaska. Chinook decline is so critical that the Yukon River may lose discrete stocks. An emergency Agreement between Canada and Alaska was signed April 1, 2024, to impose a drastic Chinook harvest moratorium of at least seven years. Sadly, the situation with Chinook on the Yukon River is now becoming a statewide problem; the Nushagak, the Kenai and many other Alaskan rivers have conservation plans in action because of the declines. Emergency Orders to close Chinook sports fishing entirely in many of Alaska's most iconic river systems have already been implemented. While hatcheries are not the only factor in salmon decline, they are among the top five, including climate change, bycatch, intercept, disease, hatcheries.

The Alaska Board of Fisheries has limited authority to provide injunctive relief on this issue but to the extent that they can reduce hatchery egg take permitting levels, this is the only venue open to public proposals.

For several years, different groups have been submitting proposals for hatchery egg take reduction. All those proposals have been refused on the basis of lack of conclusive evidence that there is a correlative relationship to detrimental impacts of hatchery production in wild stocks through competition for forage food and straying.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, which directs information to the Board of Fish, has been consistently reluctant to consider peer-reviewed research outside of the Department and to even evaluate their own internal research that indicates hatchery production can have an effect on the health of wild salmon stocks. The "iterative" process that the Department assures the public is watchdogging hatcheries is an inter-dependent process with hatcheries and therefore is not seen as sufficiently separated from hatchery production to apply significant oversight.

This is an extraordinarily frustrating situation to many who depend on wild salmon stocks and are outside of the hatchery management systems.

CONCLUSIONS: The goal of Alaska's PNP hatchery system is economic, not conservation. In a 2011 international report *Shifting the Balance: Towards Sustainable Salmon Populations and Fisheries of the Future*, renown Canadian scientists Dr. Richard Beamish and Dr. Donald Noakes noted: "While Alaska's large ocean-ranching program may have contributed to the observed increase in catch, there remain many unanswered questions about potential negative impacts on wild fish and deleterious effects on other Alaskan salmon fisheries (Hilborn and Eggers 2000; Clark et al. 2006; Knapp et al. 2007). As with most if not all large-scale hatchery programs, there is a lack of information to critically evaluate the program either with respect to its stated production objectives or other criteria (i.e., ecosystem interactions, etc.), and more research is clearly needed in that respect."

In addition to on-going research on hatchery impacts, we also need an independent venue to review all the latest peer-reviewed science and to have an on-going dialogue on application of what we can have consensus on. The Board of Fish Hatchery Committee would be a good start as long as it is not an orchestrated situation.

Prior to the next Prince William Sound Board of Fish meeting, I will be working with many others to gather many supporting documents.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Reduction of hatchery egg take (and thus releases) has long been the goal of the Fairbanks Advisory Committee as it has researched the negative impacts of hatcheries for years. This includes conversations with some of the top salmon scientists in Alaska, Canada and the Pacific Northwest, as well as conversations with stakeholders in AYK river systems.

PROPOSED BY: Virgil Umphenour (HQ-F24-130)

PROPOSAL 79

5 AAC 24.367 Main Bay Salmon Hatchery Harvest Management Plan.; 5 AAC 55.023 Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.; and 5 AAC 01.610. Fishing Seasons.

Close Main Bay to all fishing during hatchery cost recovery operations, as follows:

5 AAC 24.367 Main Bay Salmon Hatchery Harvest Management Plan (NEW SUBSECTION (H))
No Common Property salmon fishing shall occur in the Main Bay Alternating Gear Zone (AGZ), Special Harvest Area (SHA), or Terminal Harvest Area (THA) from the time Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation commences cost recovery operations until they cease efforts in the Main Bay Hatchery for the year.

If this language were to be adopted, it would alleviate the issue PWSAC has with completing its cost recovery goal in a timely and efficient manner.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There is a rampant increase of boating traffic into Main Bay in the months of June and July interfering with cost recovery efforts. This is just the start of an immense issue at hand where Prince William Sound Aquaculture (PWSAC) is not able to meet their cost recovery goals effectively or efficiently, due to multiple vessels being in the way of the seiner trying to harvest these sockeye salmon. This is leading to a long delay in meeting cost recovery goals for PWSAC and directly affects quality with time degradation for much of the sockeye salmon due to the delay in harvesting these sockeye salmon. It is prudent for PWSAC to operate in an efficient and expedient manner while achieving their cost recovery goals. This will allow more opportunity to all user groups for the foreseeable future. We further request that the State make the necessary corresponding subsistence, personal use, and sport fishery regulatory changes to be consistent with the requested change to commercial fishery regulations.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This proposal was developed by a committee of members of the CDFU Board of Directors, Prince William Sound Setnet Association, and the Native Village of Eyak Department of the Environment and Natural Resources staff where it was recommended by the Native Village of Eyak Resource Advisory Council and unanimously approved by Tribal Council

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Eyak (HQ-F24-098)

PROPOSAL 80

5 AAC 55.023 Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Prince William Sound Area.

Manage the Main Bay sport fishery based on the hatchery corporate escapement goal, as follows:

Alaska Administrative Code Number: 5 AAC 55.023

(10) in Main Bay, sport fishing is prohibited [FROM A VESSEL THAT IS]

(A) within **250** [60] feet of the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine; and

(B) inside the Main Bay Hatchery barrier seine and shoreward to the head of the bay.

(C) (i) The department, in consultation with the hatchery operator, shall manage the Main Bay sport fishery salmon fishing through restricting time and area by emergency order to achieve corporate escapement goals.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Changing the sport fishing distance inside the Main Bay would mimic regulation 5 AAC 55.023 in part (3) for waters of Lake Bay's distance from Ester Hatchery to halt all interference with hatchery operations.

Removing the "From the Vessel" portion would also alleviate sport fishing from shore inside the AGZ and brood pen, which Hatchery Managers have voiced to PWSAC as a problem.

Overall this would eliminate a great deal of costly damage to the barrier seine from lost tackle and boats/motors, as well as alleviate the conflicts between user groups, hatchery staff, and cost recovery vessels during broodstock collection and cost recovery operations.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. We developed this proposal in collaboration with CDFU members and Prince William Sound Setnetters Association, and used PWSAC as a resource.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) (EF-F24-111)

PROPOSAL 81

5 AAC 55.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

Modify the area open to sport fishing near the Main Bay Hatchery, as follows:

PWSAC recommends making Main Bay language consistent with Wally Noerenberg Hatchery but keep the distance closer for MBH and at the distance it has been as well as providing a visible cork line at the distance required. 5 AAC 55.023(3) the waters of Lake Bay of Esther Island inside ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 100 feet seaward of the Esther Hatchery broodstock holding pen are closed to sport fishing;

5AAC 55.023(10) the waters of Main Bay inside a line of buoys located approximately 60 feet seaward of the Main Bay Hatchery broodstock holding pen are closed to sport fishing;

[(10) IN MAIN BAY, SPORT FISHING IS PROHIBITED FROM A VESSEL THAT IS (A) WITHIN 60 FEET OF THE MAIN BAY HATCHERY BARRIER SEINE;AND (B) INSIDE THE MAIN BAY HATCHERY BARRIER SEINE AND SHOREWARD TO THE HEAD OF THE BAY.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? 1) Snagging hooks are consistently becoming entangled in the Main Bay barrier seine compromising barrier seine integrity and usefulness. Through multiple tide series this causes additional mesh to become entangled with a snagging hook, resulting in lifting leadlines or sinking corklines eliminating barrier seine integrity and allowing unwanted fish passage behind the barrier seine.

2) Snagging hooks in the barrier seine pose a safety concern for personnel removing and cleaning the barrier seine.

3) Snagging of Main Bay sockeye intended for use as broodstock inside the barrier seine broodstock enclosure when not fishing from a vessel. The State of Alaska has strict sockeye salmon culture protocols that have allowed for the successful culture of this species. Culling broodstock with open wounds is part of the protocol to help minimize IHN transmission in brood holding areas. Snagging inside the barrier seine on fish intended as brood increases the number of wounded fish staff encounter and are required to cull and may increase the incidence of IHN in Main Bay Hatchery brood.

The barrier seine is designed and operated to protect salmon intended as brood and allow orderly fisheries on fish swimming outside the barrier seine to continue for all user groups. If nothing were changed, barrier seine integrity will continue to be compromised, whether by snagging tackle, boat or propellor damage, whereby tens of thousands of fish can be lost to all user groups. Until all Main Bay brood collection is secured in the freshwater brood pond, the barrier seine must remain in place. Barrier seine removal occurs as soon as all brood are secured in the freshwater brood pond and occurs on or before July 15th. When the barrier seine is not in the water, fishing is open to up to 300 feet from the fish ladder.

As a solution, barrier seine dive inspection frequency and snag hook removal was increased to weekly in 2023. This was at additional cost to PWSAC and the Main Bay operation but ultimately proved unsuccessful. Planning and coordinating dives after heavier weekend traffic was still not sufficient to remove problematic snagging gear and maintain barrier seine integrity.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. The proposal was developed in consultation with Cordova Fishermen United and ADF&G Area Management.

PROPOSED BY: Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (HQ-F24-057)
