New Chum Troll Opportunities in the Works at Crawfish Inlet & SE Cove

NSRAA initiated two new chum salmon programs recently, one at S.E. Cove near Kake, Alaska in 2013 and another at Crawfish Inlet in 2015. These programs are expected to provide major opportunities to chum trollers. The NSRAA board agreed to give troll priority six days per week at Crawfish Inlet terminal area for the first two years of adult returns – 2017 and 2018. ADF&G requires a mop up fishery (cost recovery or net group) once per week. Troll opportunities at Crawfish Inlet will likely begin far outside the head of the Inlet as the chum begin to school and enter the islets surrounding Crawfish and Biorka.

The S.E. Cove project is located seven miles west of Kake on the Kuiu Island shoreline nestled in a rocky patch of islets, islands and sea mounds. This program began with eggtakes at Hidden Falls Hatchery in 2012; these fry were transported to S.E. Cove in the spring of 2013. Adults will begin returning in 2015 as 3 year olds, the first 4 year olds return in 2016. The troll opportunity will likely begin as fish enter Chatham Strait along Malmesbury, Tebenkof, and Kingsmill shorelines. The S.E. Cove terminal harvest area is poorly suited for a troll drag and off limits to common property fishing until 2019 when Alaska Department of Commerce will cease having rights to the portion of these fish released by Kake Nonprofit Fisheries Corporation (differential otolith marks for NSRAA vs KNPF).

S.E. Cove maximum permitted eggs are 55 million, whereas Crawfish Inlet is 30 million. Neither location has reached its maximum potential yet, although the goals for 2015 are to obtain the maximum permitted number at each site. Currently, there are 17.5 million fry rearing at S.E. Cove and 13.4 million fry at Crawfish Inlet; all fry will be raised to 4.0 grams to maximize marine survival. If these fry see average marine survival of 2.5%, these releases will produce 335,000 adults at Crawfish and 437,500 adults at S.E. Cove. Maximum permitted levels will produce 1.12 million adults and 750,000 adults at S.E. Cove and Crawfish Inlet, respectively.

Common property value at full capacity would be $3.6 million for Crawfish Inlet and $5.4 million for S.E. Cove based on sixty cents a pound chum salmon. With some luck and avoidance of predators that have not adjusted to large biomasses of fry being released at these new sites, the marine survival and consequent value could be much higher. After several years of returns at Crawfish which demonstrate no management or biological concern, the program is slated to go to 50 million eggs.

These programs are not without significant challenges as they both put additional demands on Medvejie and Hidden Falls hatcheries to obtain the requisite adult broodstock in order to expand these satellite programs. Seasonal broodstock demands often mean fishery closures at the hatcheries where broodstock management is already challenging. NSRAA is seeking a permit to allow use 30 million Macaulay Hatchery chum eggs for five years at S.E. Cove to reduce pressure on Hidden Falls during the initial development.

Many thanks to Steve Reifenstuhl of NSRAA for this report.
Lt. Governor Visits Mt. Polley

Lt. Governor Byron Mallott recently paid a visit to the residents of Likely, B.C. and viewed Imperial Metals Mt. Polley Mine, site of last summer’s tailings dam breach. He traveled with a delegation of Alaskan’s who have been working with ATA on British Columbia mining issues. Mallott got a warm welcome from the locals and was able to not only discuss, but see firsthand, some of the impacts of the Mt. Polley disaster.

The Alaskans had productive meetings in addition to a few tours. The Lt. Governor met with provincial ministers, mine and environmental officials, and representatives of the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council, Xat’sull First Nation, among others. The crew from Salmon Beyond Borders and United Tribal Transboundary Mining Working Group spent time discussing ways to better collaborate with B.C. groups and First Nations on projects like KSM and Red Chris mines.

Many thanks to Governor Walker and Lt. Governor Mallott for taking steps to actively engage Canada on the issue of cross-border mining.

How Many Salmon in the Tongass?

Lots! And according to USFS Tongass Fisheries Program Manager Ron Medel, 25.6% of all salmon harvested in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean got their start in one of the thousands of streams in our region. The Tongass produces a whopping 28 percent of the entire Alaska salmon harvest and is by far the most valuable local export. 79% of the Southeast commercial catch is wild, which makes it essential that we do our part to protect our watersheds from poorly planned and over-ambitious development.
The Wheelhouse View  President Steve Merritt, F/V C’est La Vie

This is OUR organization, not mine

One of the biggest problems ATA has is a membership shortage. I have been on this board for a while now and the thing I truly dread is the expectation for board members to recruit new members. Within my own fleet I am starting to get the sense that some fishermen try to avoid talking with me, because they fear the ‘join ATA’ spiel. It is uncomfortable and one of the more irritating things that seems to come with this volunteer service. Which begs the question, Why?

Why has this become one of the main focuses for your ATA board members? ATA is not just the board member’s organization; it is ALL of the member’s organization. Remember that your ATA board members are really just fishermen like you; fishermen willing to donate their time to try and keep abreast of the wide variety of issues that affect our fishery.

We ALL need to improve the financial health our organization by getting new members. In fact, the job of recruiting new members is easier and more successful when spread out amongst all of us rather than just left up to the board of directors. EVERYBODY knows SOMEONE!

A potential new member is much more receptive to someone they know and trust when it comes down to joining a group like ATA. And it is much easier to approach someone you know about joining than it is convincing someone you don’t know. Use your influence and your ATA knowledge to improve your organization’s ability to protect the troll fishery. Talk to the fishermen you know are not ATA members about joining. Your organization needs YOU and new members.

The fact that board members have to concentrate so much on increasing membership robs the time we could dedicate to the actual issues facing the troll fishery. Issues that, truthfully, most fishermen loath thinking about, let alone try to understand. Most fishermen are inclined to avoid learning about the Board of Fisheries process, Coast Guard regulations, EPA regulations, enhancement allocation, Pacific Salmon Treaty, GE salmon and fish farming. It’s in our nature to avoid such things!!! We FISH, period. Yet, the modern world no longer allows that easy fishing lifestyle. If we are to continue fishing, there must be an organization looking after our interests.

It is ironic to have to write this letter. In just the last 3 years ATA has negotiated thousands of dollars in mitigation payments for all trollers, helped bring ice back to Pelican, extended the coho season, and stopped a mandatory 10 day coho closure proposal from passing. Still, many trollers seem to think that $350 in dues is TOO much to invest in ATA.

The basic powertroll rate of $350 is equal to ONE of the following: 35 coho, 4 winter king salmon, 6 summer king salmon, 65 chum salmon, 350 pinks, or 700 black bass. If you saved just one fishing day because of the new Pelican ice machine you made well over $350. The list goes on and on. ATA dues are a bargain when you think about the benefits vs. the expense - AND you can deduct most of it off your taxes!

In closing, if you truly value the organization YOU help fund, then reach out to the trollers and business owners you know to help increase OUR membership base.

Good Fishing!

Steve
Alaska and Canada Chinook Fishermen Short-Changed, Again.

Since 2013, the Columbia River has seen the biggest Chinook returns since the first dam was built in 1938. Alaska and Canadian fishermen contributed to the rebuilding of these runs, so why are we now prevented from fully sharing in such great bounty? The issue is part technical and mostly political.

The model used to evaluate abundance and set treaty quotas has known problems and has grossly underestimated abundance since 2013. That year, troller’s catch rate was more than twice what it was in 2012. This surprised managers and fisherman alike, especially given the low abundance estimate. ADFG overshot the July goal and we lost the August Chinook opening for the first time since 1989. On top of the model troubles are bogus quota cuts imposed in 2009: -15% in Alaska and -30% in Canada.

Once the mammoth 2014 forecast for the upriver Columbia River stocks was announced it became obvious the 2013 quota had been low and 2014 probably was, too. ATA asked the State of Alaska to attempt a one-year roll back of the quota cuts. Our reasoning was two-fold: prevent over-escapement and eliminate unnecessary quota reductions. The state agreed.

Former treaty commissioner, David Bedford, urged the Pacific Salmon Commission to avoid putting too many fish on the spawning beds and provide fair 2014 harvest levels for quota fisheries. His request was flatly denied.

Over-escapement has been shown to reduce future returns of Chinook, including the Columbia Upriver Brights (URB). The URB is a fall run stock that contributes heavily to many treaty fisheries. Most years it makes up ~30% of the Alaska quota. With recent high abundance, the percentage of URBs in Alaska and Northern B.C. has been much higher. The run includes many hatchery fish paid for by US tax payers, specifically to mitigate fishermen for the impact of dams.

In 2013, a record 1.3 million fall Chinook returned to the Columbia River - nearly two and a half times the 10-year average (557,600) and twice the forecast. 62% of the run was URB. The escapement goal for natural spawning URBs is 40,000 and a total of 60,000 fish is required to pass McNary Dam to allow upriver fisheries. Almost 800,000 URBs returned in 2013; 180% of the forecast and 290% of the 10 year average - 370,300 of those fish spawned. A whopping 455,000 fish passed McNary. The Hanford Reach and Deschutes River saw 294% and 155% increases over the 10-year average, respectively. The Snake River doubled its 2012 return and enjoyed the best survival since 1986.

URBs were seriously over-escaped in 2013 and another huge return was on the way. ATA and the State argued that quotas should be increased, because all West Coast fishermen could be harmed if this large driver stock tanked due to over-escapement. This concern is based on both science and past behavior of the URBs, which have seen steep drops in production in years when escapement goals were exceeded by a wide margin.

Biologist A.J. Nicholson suggested in 1933 that abundance of a species profoundly influences whether or not its survival rate will go up or down, based, in part, on the carrying capacity of its habitat. Simply put, salmon that spend a large part of their lifecycle in lakes or streams, particularly sockeye and Chinook, require a certain amount of area. If too many fish hit the spawning gravel their eggs can be dug up, smothered, etc. Even if they escape that fate, there is only so much space and food to support each juvenile salmon.  (Continued on p.6)
Unuk River Conservation

A number of calls have come in regarding the need for the recent closures we’ve seen in the spring fishery to protect Unuk River king salmon. As you can see by the graph below, the Unuk recently experienced a steep drop in productivity, similar to Chinook stocks across the state. This necessitated caution for fishery managers, who responded by reducing time and area for all fisheries along the path of the Unuk migration, not just troll. Chilkat River kings are also getting some added protection this year.

The Unuk River is a glacial system in Behm Canal, with a spring run of king salmon producing yearling smolts that rear in inside waters. The Unuk is one of 7 indicator stocks in the region. ADFG conducts mark-recapture studies on Unuk kings each year and escapement surveys were expanded in 2012. Troll and sport fisheries take over half of each year’s Unuk harvest, mostly in southern inside waters. From 1975 to 2011, Unuk River met or exceeded its escapement range of 1,800-3,800 large (~26”) spawners, but in 2012 unexpectedly dropped to 15% below goal for two years. Restrictions in 2014 helped boost escapement, which wasn’t enough to make the point goal of 2,764 fish, but did keep these fish off the Board of Fish ‘stock of concern’ list.

So what’s going on with the Unuk and other Alaska Chinook stocks? Hard to say yet, but the state is investing millions of dollars in research and conservatively managing fisheries until its sorted out. Ocean conditions seem the most likely contributor to lower Alaska returns.

The Pacific Ocean has warmed recently, causing many to wonder if drops in salmon production are related to phenomenon’s we’ve seen before, like Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) or El Niño. PDO is similar to El Niño, but lasts decades as opposed to a year or two. During these events, large differences in water temperatures can be seen between Alaska and the Pacific NW. When Alaska waters are warm and southern waters cool, northern salmon stocks tend to be highly abundant. When temps shift, often so does production. The Columbia River and other rivers to the south are currently experiencing large to record returns, while Alaska’s have been smaller. PDO? El Niño? Or something else? NOAA points to a warm water ‘blob’ that hung offshore for a couple years before hitting the continental shelf last fall; raising water temps by about 2°C, increasing salinity, and posing a threat to zooplankton. Some scientists believe this warming is worse than the late 90’s and could spell ecological disaster in the years ahead. Sounds grim.

Time will tell what lies ahead for climate and salmon populations. In the meantime, ADFG will continue to adjust management as needed to achieve conservation goals. We know the situation can complicate a season, and sympathize, but also realize that the fleet takes sustainability seriously. ATA is committed to ensure conservation measures make sense and that management burdens are shared fairly amongst the fleets.
In 1954, Canadian scientist W.E. Ricker built on Nicholson's work. He crafted a model to mathematically determine the escapement levels needed for a stock to hold steady, decline, or increase in number. The Ricker model allows fishery scientists to set goals that produce enough fish to both maximize harvest and protect salmon stocks. Recent returns to the Columbia River have been huge, but in no way optimum.

The 2014 URB forecast was massive and splashy headlines appeared for months before, during, and after the fishing season. Like 2013, the figures were eye-popping. The total fall run was about 1.2 million and URBs posted the second largest return in decades with 684,200 returning to the river. Hanford Reach set an escapement record, coming in 5% higher than 2013. The URB surplus was so large that more than 68,000 unspawned hatchery kings went unharvested. And, of course, the third largest Columbia River return is predicted for 2015.

Not only is ATA concerned about productivity in the Columbia River, we also want the fleet’s fair cut of this shared resource we helped to rebuild. The model is seriously out of whack and quotas are too low.

The 2009 treaty included a review of the quotas at the 5-year mark. However the Southern treaty delegates felt it wasn’t a priority, so it was never done. These same folks heralded the magnum 2014 Columbia River return and extended their fisheries. Alaska and Canadian fishermen are entitled to share this abundance. Instead, fish have been reallocated to other users and allowed to choke off spawning areas.

Alaska fought hard again this year to get a fair 2015 quota, but the other US commissioners were dismissive and denied the request out of hand. One claimed over-escapement is just an ‘interesting theory’, despite strong evidence to the contrary. All refused to seriously discuss quota adjustments, pointing to complications for southern management and the threat of the ESA. The treaty is a consensus forum, meaning that all voting commissioners must agree to get anything done. There is only one US vote, so if the US commissioners aren’t in agreement on an issue, Canada isn’t even brought into the discussion—it just gets dropped. So, the bottom line is that the quota fisheries were managed on the faulty forecast numbers and the fleet didn’t get a fair deal, thanks to the south.

Next edition we’ll tally the 2015 numbers and give you a report on ongoing efforts to get a fair deal for Alaska. ATA appreciates the state’s strong commitment to making things better for the fleets – Alaska is not to blame for the current situation. If you are unhappy and want to vent, a call or letter to your legislator and the congressional delegation would be in order. Remember to send copies to ATA, and consider a contribution to the treaty and/or legal funds. The treaty terms will be renegotiated in 2018 and it’s already shaping up to be a tough fight.
Welcome New Members

(Through 4/18/15)

New
Jeffrey Robinson
Elinore Jane
Petersburg
PT

Mike Bobo
Moon Spirit
Craig
PT

Chad Mickel
Silver Sea
Ketchikan
PT

Michael Schmit
Maverick
Ketchikan
HT

Tim Price

Upgrades
Dugan Daniels
Pacific Bounty
Sitka
PT/G

Lance Preston
Seaboy
Sitka
PT/G

Casey Mapes
Mai Tai
Yakutat
HT/S

Deborah Lyons
Mai Tai
Sitka
HT/P

Hoonah Cold Storage
Hoonah
P/S

Did we miss you?  Give a call!

Board of Directors

Steve Merritt, President
cestlavie@aptalaska.net
C'est La Vie, Southern Rural

Jim Moore, Vice President
ajac47@yahoo.com
Aljac, Northern Rural

Joel Kawahara, Secretary
joelkaw@earthlink.net
Karolee, Lower 48

Tad Fujioka, Treasurer
tadsitka@gmail.com
Merlin, Sitka

Matt Lawrie
matt.thusela@gmail.com
Born Again, Sitka

Ken McGee
kenmcgee@gci.net
Northstar, Juneau

Mark Roberts
capecross@gci.net
Cape Cross, Petersburg

Mike Rugo
rugofish@aptalaska.net
Formerly Barbi J, Wrangell

Ben Peters
toyotatacoma28@hotmail.com
Jaeger, Lower 48

Thatcher Brouwer
thatcher.brouwer@gmail.com
Deep Sea, At Large

Matt Donohoe
Matthew_Donohoe@yahoo.com
Helen A, At Large

Ben Atwood
blondebenjo1983@hotmail.com
Aquilla, Ketchikan

Casey Mapes
yak2you2@yahoo.com
Mai Tai, Handtroll

Staff
Dale Kelley, Executive Director
ata@gci.net

Treaty Representatives
Howard Pendell, Chaos
Dennis Longstreth, Shearwater
Dale Kelley, ATA

We’re grateful for the support of ATA’s Business Members and encourages your patronage of these fine establishments...

Anderes Oil, Ketchikan
Bruce Weyhrauch, Juneau
City of Craig
City of Port Alexander
City of Pelican
City of Wrangell
Hill Bar & Liquor, Craig
E.C. Phillips & Son, Ketchikan
First Bank, Ketchikan
Hammer & Wilton, Petersburg
Hoonah Cold Storage
House of Liquors, Sitka
LFS, Inc., Bellingham
Madison Lumber, Ketchikan
Murray Pacific, Ketchikan
Murray Pacific, Sitka
Ocean Beauty XIP
Ottesen’s True Value Hardware
Petersburg Fisheries, Petersburg
Petro Marine, Seward
Precision Boatworks, Sitka
Qi Hooks, Sitka
Savage, Inc., Seattle
Seafood Producers Co-op
Sea Mart, Sitka
Seattle Marine, Seattle
Service Auto Parts, Ketchikan
Shoreline, Pelican
Sitka Boat Watch, Sitka
Sitka Salmon Shares, Illinois
Sitka Sound Seafoods
Southeast Pilots, Ketchikan
Taku Oil, Juneau
Taku Smokeries, Juneau
The Boat Company, WA, DC
The Office Bar, Hoonah
Timber & Marine Supply, KTN
Tongass Trading, Ketchikan
Trading Union, Petersburg
Triad Fisheries
Union Machine Shop, KTN
US Seven Oceans, Mukilteo
Vakutat Seafoods, Vakutat
Join Today!

___Renewal    ___ New Member

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Hand</th>
<th>Crew</th>
<th>Processor</th>
<th>Other Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st YR Initiation Rate</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired Troller</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Your Convenience…
You may include dues & contributions to these groups along with your ATA dues:

___United Fishermen of Alaska ($175)

___Halibut Coalition (any amount)

Name: ___________________________________________________________

Address: _________________________________________________________

City/ZIP: ____________________________

F/V: _____________________________________________

Phone/Cell: ___________________________________________ E-Mail: __________________________


Other Fisheries: ____________________________________________________

Call-In Program? Yes___ No___

Are you willing to volunteer some time and/or expertise to ATA? Yes ___ No ___

DONATION: $ ______ Please use my extra donation for:  Legal ___  Treaty ___  General Purposes ___  Publicity ___

T-SHIRTS:  Men’s:  Forest Green, Charcoal, Brown, Black w/logo (M, L, XL, XXL)  Women’s: Black w/logo (L)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qty.</th>
<th>Size(s)</th>
<th>Color(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-sleeve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-sleeve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hat: $25 - TEMPORARILY OUT OF STOCK

Raffle Ticket: $20 each #___

Method of Payment:  Check _____  Mastercard _____  Visa _____  Need a Receipt?

Account #__________________________ Exp. Date:________

Amount: $_________ Signature:_____________________________________

A receipt for tax purposes is sent to all members in late January. Check only if you want an extra receipt & add email: Yes ___ No ___