

ALASKA TROLLER

Newsletter of the Alaska Trollers Association

Spring 2015

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.

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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 Reifstahl of [NSRAA](#) for this report.



From the Director's Desk . . .

As I reflect on the season so far I'm struck by how different each year can be - dynamic, just like the ocean we work on. Each is different and brings its share of agonizing decisions and blissful moments.

Sometimes things line up so sweet - lots of big fish, good price, manageable weather, terrific packer service. Then there are the years when an abundance of kings are held beyond our grasp and seasons constrict; or prices drop off a cliff; or punishing weather forces the toughest of skippers to run for a safe harbor on too many days. Fortunately most years are a mix, but 2015 seems to be giving us the full meal deal when it comes to the frustration and worry part of fishing. Good news is that coho seem early and well-fed, now if we can just move some fish at a decent price, eh?

As if fishing and marketing isn't tough enough, we now face new and growing threats to the health of the fish we harvest. British Columbia's aggressive mining agenda is high on our work list these days and we haven't even begun to sort out what LNG will mean. We work with some great folks on the mining issues - tribal interests, enviro and other gear groups - it's unified citizens across Alaska and B.C. Lt. Governor Mallott and the congressional delegation are helpful and engaged, which gives hope that we can make headway with our neighbors, but how much and will it be in time? Massive projects are coming to life in the Unuk and Stikine watersheds as we fish. Not even the Mt. Polley disaster last year seems to have slowed B.C.'s steady march towards creating an acid mine mecca in critical habitat. Time is short to help head-off future problems and ATA will continue to do what we can.

And of course, there's treaty. Now we aren't asking for much, just a fair Chinook quota that mirrors the abundance that we helped create. ATA's long term goal has been to rebuild and maintain healthy Chinook stocks. Along with that is the quest to see healthy fisheries from Alaska to the Northwest. That means the quota fisheries in Alaska and Canada must trim harvests when needed, but should be able to be full partners in the abundance when it's there. That was the promise of the treaty, so why is the sharing part of the deal so elusive? Alaska trollers have a history of fighting to protect West Coast habitat. We have taken our treaty cuts and fought along with groups in the Northwest to see improved logging practices, additional spill at the dams, and more. The current bounty of king salmon surely speaks to the results of more spill; funny what happens when you treat a river a little more like a river. King salmon have proven themselves to be among the most amazing, resilient animals on earth. We are committed to care from them and also to provide for our coastal and inriver fishing communities. NMFS and Lower 48 agency treatment of Alaska on this matter has been outrageous. I believe that better coalition building amongst fishermen everywhere is key to fair harvest shares. If you think you can help, I'd like to hear from you!

Rock on...

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.

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 fisherman like you; fisherman 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.

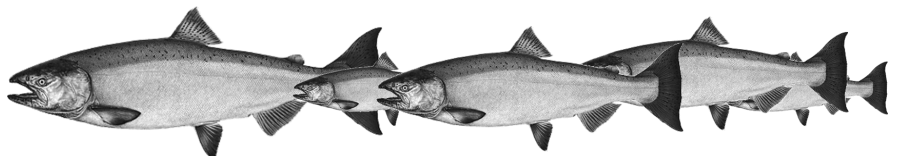
It is ironic to have to write this letter. In just the last 3 years ATA has negotiated thousands of dollars in mitigation payments for all trollers, helped bring ice back to Pelican, extended the coho season, and stopped a mandatory 10 day coho closure proposal from passing. Still, many trollers seem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

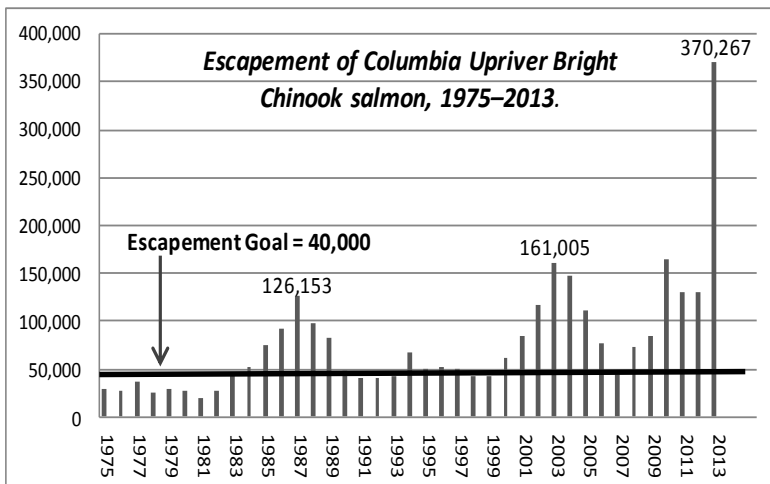
The model used to evaluate abundance and set [treaty](#) quotas has known problems and has grossly underestimated abundance since 2013. That year, troller's catch rate was more than twice what it was in 2012. This surprised managers and fisherman alike, especially given the low abundance estimate. ADFG 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.

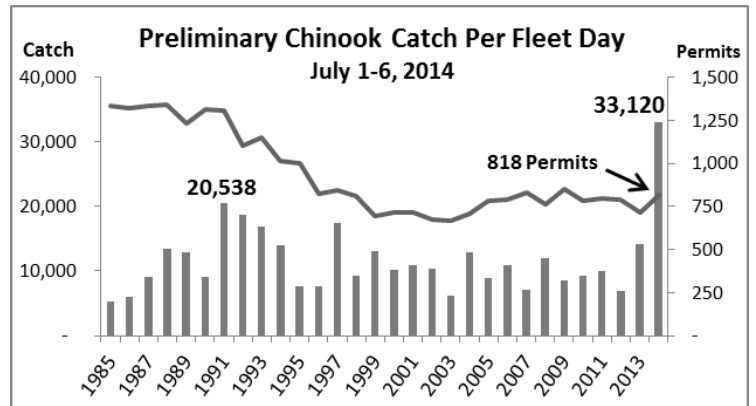
Former treaty commissioner, David Bedford, urged the Pacific Salmon Commission to avoid putting too many fish on the spawning beds and provide fair 2014 harvest levels for quota fisheries. His request was flatly denied.

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.



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.

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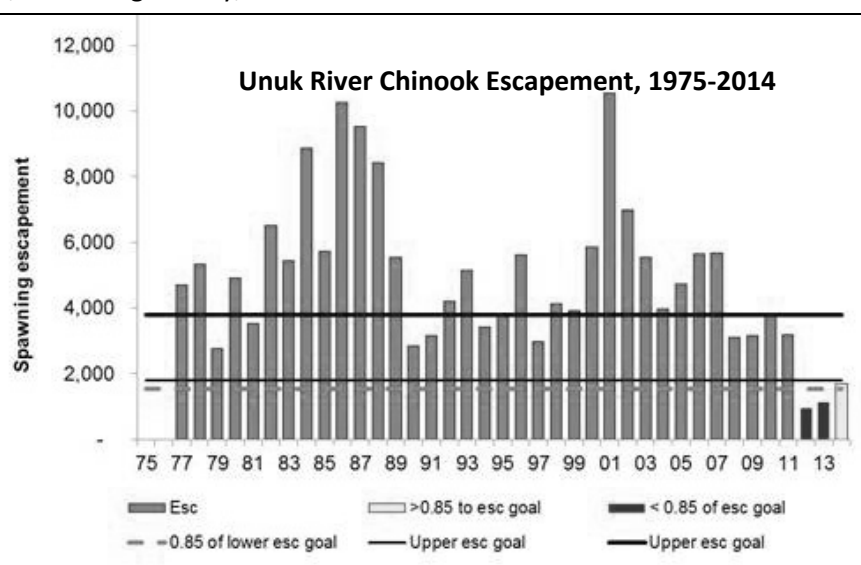
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Who Harvests Unuk Kings?

Below are estimated average harvest rates on 4-5 year old fish from each brood year shown. Troll catch of Unuk kings has gone up the last couple of years, but with no change to the fishery, the reason is unclear.

	Brood Years 1992-2006	Brood Years 2010-2014
Troll	57%	70%
Sport	28%	13%
Gillnet	10%	5%
Seine	2%	
Trawl		3%
Hatchery		6%
Other	3%	



Calendar

October		
5-13	NPFMC	Anchorage Hilton
15	USCG Safety Inspection Become Mandatory	FishSafe
21-22	Board of Fisheries Work Session	Anchorage Hilton
November		
18-20	FISH EXPO	Century Link Field, Seattle
19	ATA Port Meeting	Thursday 1:30pm @ FishEXPO - Media Room 1D01

(Cont. from p.4) Chinook Quota

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.



ATA T-Shirt Outlets

Be sure to stop by these suppliers to purchase your ATA t-shirt.

Ottesen's True Value Hardware, Wrangell
Sentry Hardware, Wrangell
The Clothes Company, Craig
F/V Mai Tai (Casey Mapes), Yakutat

ATA tees come in two varieties. *Salmon Trolling is Healthy for Alaska's Economy* is a beautiful block print logo of a wooden troller by Sitka artist, Rebecca Poulson. The other shirt sports the ATA logo shown above. In the spirit of buying local, both shirts are printed in Sitka on heavy duty t-shirts by the fabulous Fairweather Prints. Not planning to be in those ports anytime soon? You can still place orders through the office or at port meetings and events.

Welcome New Members

(Through 4/18/15)

New

Jeffrey Robinson
Mike Bobo
Chad Mickel
Michael Schmit
Tim Price

Boat

Elinore Jane
Moon Spirit
Silver Sea
Maverick

Home Port

Petersburg
Craig
Ketchikan
Ketchikan
Anchorage

Type

PT
PT
PT
HT
CW

Upgrades

Dugan Daniels
Lance Preston
Casey Mapes
Deborah Lyons
Hoonah Cold Storage

Pacific Bounty
Seaboy
Mai Tai

Sitka
Sitka
Yakutat
Sitka
Hoonah

PT/G
PT/G
HT/S
HT/P
P/S

Did we miss you? Give a call!

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Dennis Longstreth, *Shearwater*

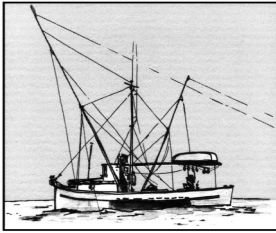
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Silver	400	200	110	1000	500	
Gold	450	250	160	2500	1000	
Platinum	550	350	300	5000	2500	
LIFE	5000	2000	750			
1st YR Initiation Rate	175	75				
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Crew Size: ____ Ice Boat: ____ Freezer Boat: ____ Direct Seafood Marketer: ____ Processor: ____ SPC: ____ UFA: ____

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

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Account # _____ Exp. Date: _____

Amount: \$ _____ Signature: _____

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Yes ____ No ____

