

Resources Committee Members

Here are my comments regarding Mr. Gease's opposition to HB107. First and foremost, the Gulkana Hatchery is an all-natural stock in both adult returns and fry releases. Ricky's comment on Gulkana not being licensed today is not correct. We go through Annual Reviews as well as Annual Management Plans with Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADFG) to assure we meet all the criteria before taking any eggs or releasing any fry.

The mixing of wild and hatchery is a touchy subject. We have shown that it can be done with the one hundred and thirty-six stocks of wild sockeye in the Copper River and a very large hatchery component. Conservative management by ADFG is always going to be the first order of business with the Department when dealing with any salmon of concern. In my opinion, if we don't step up to the plate some of these stocks will be lost forever. The proposed enhanced juvenile salmon can be marked by simple fin clips, coded wire tagging or otolith marking to establish return timing through the various fisheries and to their final spawning sites.

Mixing of stocks is more dependent on species. We participated in a straying study with "Ecotrust" on the possibility of Gulkana Sockeye straying; the outcome of that study was that 100% of the Gulkana stocks returned to the location that were stocked in as fry.

The genetic policy that ADFG follows is very stringent unlike what Washington State started out with years ago where 25% of all chinook stocks came from the same place. I highly recommend the committee speak with ADFG Genetics staff regarding this issue.

Yes, there are very strict breeding protocols at the hatcheries for very good reasons. This would continue with the passage of HB107 and I'm sure ADFG is willing to work with the various groups to make sure that protocols are followed.

Benchmarks and effectiveness will most definitely have to be scrutinized to see if a particular program is successful. It will not come overnight per my experience. There will be successful and failed projects, but given Alaska's poor economic climate, being able to get assistance from the private sector would create beneficial partnerships.

Gary Martinek