



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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February 22, 2021

Sent Electronically:

Alaska Senate Finance Committee
Alaska Senate Resource Committee
Alaska House Fisheries Committee
Alaska House Resource Committee
Alaska House Finance Committee

Re: HB 80/SB 60- Support for Salmon Enhancement Funding

Dear Committee Members,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 37 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state, and the federal fisheries off Alaska's coast.

United Fishermen of Alaska recognizes the economic value of the Alaska's salmon hatchery program and supports immediate and continued State funding for the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) operated Crystal Lake Hatchery (CLH) and the Chinook salmon enhancement projects conducted by Douglas Island Pink and Chum (DIPAC).

In September 2020, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) announced it was discontinuing its Southeast salmon enhancement programs. This included operational funding for the CLH in Petersburg operated by the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) and Chinook salmon enhancement projects conducted by Douglas Island Pink and Chum (DIPAC) in Juneau. This notice was unexpected.

ADF&G's reasoning for the decision was that a portion of the funding supporting the CLH and DIPAC Chinook salmon enhancement projects was derived from a sport fishing license surcharge. This surcharge, which expired December 31, 2020, was not renewed by the Alaska Legislature in 2020 when the Legislature adjourned suddenly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and SB 247 and HB189 were not passed. No alternative funding is currently available to replace the \$500,000 needed to continue the Southeast salmon enhancement programs.

Important issues to consider:

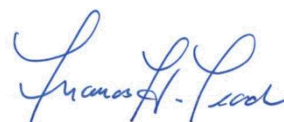
- CLH, located in Petersburg, is owned by the State of Alaska, with SSRAA as the operator of the facility under a service contract with ADF&G Sport Fish Division. SSRAA has operated CLH with 4 full-time employees since 2000.
- CLH produces Chinook and coho that are released in the Petersburg, Wrangell, Ketchikan, and Craig areas.
- Averaged over the past 10 years, returning adult CLH Chinook have represented about 40% of the catch of Alaska hatchery-produced salmon in SE.
- SSRAA's service contract with ADF&G Sport Fish Division for operating CLH is for \$517,300 of which \$200,000 is derived from the Sport Fish license surcharge fund. The remaining \$317,300 of the contract is derived from federal funds (Dingell-Johnson) and a required state 25% match and is expected to continue into FY 22.
- DIPAC in Juneau operates a Chinook program primarily funded by the State to boost the local Juneau sport opportunity for Chinook Salmon. For almost 30 years, DIPAC has received \$346,400 for the Chinook program through a co-operative agreement with ADF&G. At the time, \$311,600 of the funds received by DIPAC through the State is derived from the Sportfish License fee surcharge revenues, and the remaining \$34,800 are federal (Dingell-Johnson) funds.
- DIPAC produced adult Chinook salmon returning to the Juneau area have provided significant benefits to the recreational fishery. On average, recreational marine boat fishery harvested about 41% of the Chinook salmon produced by DIPAC, and the DIPAC production has contributed approximately 37% of all the marine boat harvest of Chinook salmon in the Juneau area. The shore side sport fishery also benefits from DIPAC's Chinook program, but those harvest percentages have yet to be evaluated.
- If the surcharge is restored during this legislative session, funds would not be available until the following calendar year, i.e., 2022, and a short-term "gap" in funding of at least one year is expected.

There is a critical need for legislative action for the Southeast salmon enhancement programs to continue. If State funds are not appropriated to cover the current short-term "gap" and a long-term State source such as the sportfish license surcharge, the Southeast Sport Fish salmon enhancement programs will be reduced. Short-term "gap" funding is needed to assure the uninterrupted rearing and release of the salmon currently being reared, and there is an even greater need for a long-term solution to be crafted within a renewed license surcharge.

Sincerely,



Matt Alward
President



Frances H. Leach
Executive Director

CC: Governor Mike Dunleavy
Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang



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Telephone: (907) 789-2399 • Fax: (907) 586-6020

Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Josiah Patkotak
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Neal Foster
Representative Kelly Merrick
Representative Sara Hannon
Representative Andi Story

March 6, 2021

RE: HB 80, An act establishing the sport fishing hatchery facilities account; establishing the sport fishing facility surcharge; and providing for an effective date.

Dear Representatives Tarr, Patkotak, Hopkins, Foster, Merrick, Hannon, and Story:

I am writing on behalf of the Territorial Sportsmen, Inc. (TSI) regarding HB 80, an Act establishing the sport fishing hatchery facilities account; establishing the sport fishing facility surcharge; and providing for an effective date. TSI is a sportsman/conservation organization based in Juneau and has approximately 1,500 members. TSI strongly supports HB 80. We request that this letter be entered into the official record for HB 80.

Southeast Alaska is suffering through severe population declines of its king salmon stocks. International rivers like the Taku and Stikine are at all time lows and have been for 7 or 8 years. The only relief that the region has seen has been provided by the statewide support for targeted hatchery programs. We respectfully request that the funding continue and that sportsmen continue to finance this effort through this surcharge.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron".

Ron Somerville
TSI Board of Directors



Douglas Island Pink and Chum, Inc.

2697 Channel Drive • Juneau, Alaska 99801

(907) 463-5114 • www.dipac.net

March 12, 2021

RE: HB 80, An act establishing the sport fishing hatchery facilities account; establishing the sport fishing facility surcharge; and providing for an effective date.

Dear Representative Foster, Representative Merrick and Members of House Finance,

Douglas Island Pink and Chum (DIPAC) is a private nonprofit corporation with a mission to sustain and enhance valuable salmon resources of the State of Alaska for the economic, social, and cultural benefit of all citizens, and to promote public understanding of Alaska's salmon resources and salmon fisheries through research, education, and tourism.

DIPAC operates a Chinook program at Macaulay Salmon Hatchery (MSH) in Juneau primarily funded by the State to boost the local Juneau sport opportunity for Chinook salmon. Prior to 1994, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game produced Chinook salmon to enhance the Juneau area recreational fisheries. These fish were raised at the State's Snettisham hatchery and released at selected sites in the Juneau area. In 1994, Snettisham was converted to a sockeye salmon production facility, and the Juneau Chinook program was transferred to MSH. For almost 30 years, DIPAC has received funding through a co-operative agreement with ADF&G to produce and release king salmon along the Juneau road system. Without these outside funds, the Chinook program would never have gotten off the ground at DIPAC. At this time, over 80% of the funds for this program are derived from the sportfish license fee surcharge. If funds are not secured into the future for the Chinook program, the DIPAC board will likely be forced to direct staff to greatly reduce the program due to budgetary constraints.

There is a critical need for legislative action so that state funded salmon enhancement programs can continue across the State of Alaska. With wild Chinook salmon in Southeast Alaska returning in low numbers in recent years, hatchery programs are essential in this region to continue attracting fishermen from out of state for fishing related tourism, for locals who value the sport, subsistence and personal use-caught Chinook salmon, and for commercial fishermen alike.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue.

Katie Harms
Executive Director
katie_harms@dipac.net

Mark Vinsel

Representative Neil Foster, Co-chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-chair
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature

RE: Support for CSHB 80 – Sportfish Surcharge

Dear Co-Chairs Foster and Merrick, and Committee Members,

As a sport fisherman for over 50 years including 19 years in Alaska, I strongly support HB 80 to create a hatchery facility funding account to be funded through a sport fishing surcharge on licenses.

I have moved from Alaska to be near my wife's family, and will be fishing Alaska in the future as a non-resident. I will pay \$200 for a non-resident annual license and king salmon stamp, and an additional \$42.50 for the hatchery facility surcharge. I am happy to be able to do so for fishing that is impossible to match elsewhere. I also support that the fee structure for residents is a nominal price and not overly burdensome.

Before I moved to Alaska in 2000, I had fished for 20 years in the Pacific coast states and had never caught a king salmon by fly fishing from shore –my favorite way to fish. Thanks to Juneau's DIPAC hatchery Chinook program I was able to catch two that first month and many more through the following years.

Thanks to ADF&G's careful regulation of hatcheries including local brood stocks, location and timing of plantings, the Juneau area sport fishing hatchery contributions provide great opportunity for fishing while also diverting angler pressure to benefit the waters accessible on the limited road system and other nearby wild salmon runs.

I look forward to returning every June to fish for Kings and every September for Coho, when travel restrictions are lifted. Compared to the fishing in any other US state, I consider Alaska's sport fishing to be infinitely more valuable and am eager to support the hatchery programs through the surcharge.

Thank you for your consideration,



Mark Vinsel
Monroe, WA

Kayla Roys
306 7th Street
Juneau AK 99801

Representative Neil Foster, Co-chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice Chair
House Finance Committee Members
Alaska State Legislature

RE: Support for CSHB 80 – Sportfish Surcharge

Dear Co-Chairs Foster, Merrick, Vice Chair Ortiz, and Committee Members,

I was born and raised in Juneau Alaska and am an avid sport angler. I have grown up fishing the waters surrounding Juneau, both by boat and on shore, and I am in strong support of HB 80 to create a hatchery facility funding account to be funded through sport fishing surcharges on fishing licenses.

The Juneau area sport fishing and hatchery enhancement programs allow for fantastic year-round fishing and access for Juneau residents to enjoy. The chinook program and rainbow trout program have allowed people in Juneau the opportunity to spread out on watersheds and minimize the pressure on wild stream systems.

Over the last ten years, I have worked with groups like Becoming an Outdoors Woman and the Trout Unlimited Juneau Chapter to teach men, women, and children how to fly fish. Teaching folks to fish at Twin Lakes, or Sheep Creek, where anglers have the chance to catch fish that DIPAC has released, often hooks the angler immediately. Having road accessible fisheries such as these are great for novice or experienced anglers alike. They empower women, new anglers, and are a huge benefit to the Juneau angling community.

I look forward to the King salmon opener in early June each year, as many of my fondest memories have been cultivated around the Fish Creek fishery, spending quality time with my family on the water. The Fish Creek and Sheep Creek King fisheries are especially important to me, because it allows me to fill my freezer for the year while also creating irreplaceable memories.

I am absolutely in support of the Sportfish funded enhancement programs at DIPAC. If it's a matter of adding \$4 annually to a fishing license, that is a no-brainer. That is practically less than a cup of coffee at Heritage, and it creates endless resources for Juneau locals.

Again, I am in full support of bill HB 80 to create a hatchery funding account to be funded through sport fishing surcharges on fishing licenses, specifically related to the DIPAC hatchery in Juneau.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kayla Roys', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kayla Roys
Juneau, AK

UNITED SOUTHEAST ALASKA GILLNETTERS

Box 2196, Petersburg AK 99833 * (253) 279-0707 * usag.alaska@gmail.com * akgillnet.org

USAG'S MAIN PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT, SERVE AND ENHANCE SOUTHEAST ALASKA'S COMMERCIAL GILLNET FISHERY

March 19, 2021

Representatives Foster and Merrick
Co-chairs, House Finance Committee
State Capitol, Rm 519
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Foster and Merrick and committee members,

United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters would like to extend our support of HB 80. The surcharge this bill will enable will allow for funding of programs and maintenance of state facilities by users that benefit from those programs and facilities. Funding maintenance of facilities and programs is often an afterthought when capital projects and programs are implemented. This bill offers sound fiscal principles that provide the means for the department to offer sportfishing and personal use opportunity that is an important economic and food source to the state, far into the future. Please support the passage of this bill.

Sincerely,



Max Worhatch, Executive Director, USAG



HAINES SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION, INC.

P. O. Box 677 – Haines, AK 99827

Sponsor of

"HAINES COHO SALMON DERBY"

March 15, 2021

House Finance Committee
Representative Neil Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice Chair
32nd Alaska State Legislature

To Honorable Neil Foster, Honorable Kelly Merrick, Honorable Dan Ortiz, and House Finance Committee Members:

The Haines Sportsman's Association is in favor of **HB 80**: "An Act establishing the sport fishing enhancement account; establishing the sport fishing enhancement surcharge; and providing for an effective date." Continuing the surcharge could provide funding for replacement of net pens and fish to enhance the king salmon fishery and take pressure off wild stock in the Northern Lynn Canal. Placing net pens in Taiyasanka Harbor will provide shelter from weather-related interference of rearing salmon fry and will result in strong king salmon returns.

The Chilkat River system was listed as a "stock of concern" in 2018. Furthermore, escapement goals were not met in 2016, 2017, and 2018. This means king salmon returns five years after these escapement failures will be dangerously low. Reestablishing king salmon enhancement efforts now will address the declining fishery and take pressure off wild stock resulting in rebuilding wild stock to sustainable numbers.

A previous commitment in 2005-2006 to place 500,000 king salmon in the Haines area was unexpectedly retracted and discontinued. We are urging you to renew the commitment that will enhance the king salmon fishery while simultaneously taking pressure off the wild stock.

We urge you to **pass HB 80** to generate revenue for fisheries enhancement efforts in the Upper Lynn Canal.

Respectfully,
Cheryl Stickler
Haines Sportsman's Association, Secretary/Treasurer

cc: HSA Communications File

**PETERSBURG BOROUGH
RESOLUTION #2021-02**

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING SENATE BILL NO. 60: AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SPORT FISHING HATCHERY FACILITIES ACCOUNT; ESTABLISHING THE SPORT FISHING FACILITY SURCHARGE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, the Petersburg Borough is home to Crystal Lake Salmon Hatchery, a State-owned hatchery that raises and releases Chinook and Coho salmon primarily for sport fish use; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has contracted with Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association to manage Crystal Lake Salmon Hatchery since July 1, 2000 using funds from the Department of Fish & Game Sport Fish Division; and

WHEREAS, the legislation approving the funding to manage Crystal Lake Salmon Hatchery expires on June 30, 2021; and

WHEREAS, from the Chinook and Coho salmon raised at Crystal Lake Salmon Hatchery, recent annual release goals are as follows:

600,000 Chinook salmon released in Blind Slough (Crystal Creek stock)
500,000 Chinook salmon released in Anita Bay (Andrew Creek stock)
100,000 Chinook salmon released at City Creek (Andrew Creek stock)
300,000 Chinook salmon released at Neets Bay (Chickamin River stock)
200,000 Chinook salmon released at Port St. Nick – POW (Chickamin River stock)
135,000 Coho salmon released in Blind Slough (Crystal Creek stock); and

WHEREAS, these salmon releases are relied upon for sport fishing by the residents and visitors of Petersburg, Wrangell, Ketchikan and Prince of Wales Island, supplying healthy food for locals and visitors and supporting a livelihood for tourist lodges and sport fishing charter businesses; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill No. 60 has been introduced in the first session of the Thirty-Second Legislature which will establish a sport fishing hatchery facilities account within the State of Alaska Fish and Game fund, and a sport fishing facility surcharge; and

WHEREAS, money accrued from the sport fishing facility surcharge shall be allocated to ongoing maintenance and operation of the Department's sport fish hatchery facilities, including Crystal Lake Hatchery and DIPAC Chinook enhancement in the Juneau area.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Petersburg Borough Assembly hereby supports Senate Bill No. 60: An Act Establishing the Sport Fishing Hatchery Facilities Account; Establishing the Sport Fishing Facility Surcharge; and Providing for an Effective Date; and encourages passage of the legislation during the Thirty-Second Legislature.

Passed and approved by the Petersburg Borough Assembly, Petersburg, Alaska this 8th day of February 2021.

Attest:



Mark Jensen, Mayor



Debra K. Thompson, Borough Clerk