

February 21, 2021

To: Alaska House Special Committee on Fisheries Membership

**RE: Support for Salmon Enhancement Funding House Bill 80 and Senate Bill 60**

Dear Speaker Stutes and Committee Members,

The Alaska Salmon Hatchery Operators, a group of all Executive Directors/General Managers of the Private Non-Profit (PNP) hatcheries in Alaska, support the passage of HB80 and SB60 this legislative session for the continuation of sportfish fisheries enhancement around the State of Alaska.

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 State-owned Crystal Lake Hatchery (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.

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 with SB 247/HB189 in 2020 prior to their sudden adjournment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. No alternative funding is currently available to replace the \$500,000 needed to continue both Southeast salmon enhancement programs. Since HB80/SB60 have been introduced this legislative session, we now have another vehicle for reinstitution of the sportfish license surcharge, which would provide a remedy for these important and highly effective 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 Southeast.
- 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 at Macaulay Salmon Hatchery (MSH) 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 this time, \$300,000 of the funds received by DIPAC through the State is derived from the Sportfish license fee surcharge revenues, and the remaining \$46,400 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.

There is a critical need for legislative action so that these Southeast salmon enhancement programs continue. With wild Chinook salmon in Southeast Alaska returning in low numbers in recent years, these hatchery programs are essential 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.

Please support the passage of HB80/SB60 this legislative session in order to guarantee the continuation of these important programs.

Sincerely,

Tina Fairbanks  
Executive Director  
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association (KRAA), Kodiak

Dean Day  
Executive Director  
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA), Cook Inlet

Mike Wells  
Executive Director  
Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA), Valdez

Geoff Clark  
General Manager  
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC), Cordova

Scott Wagner  
General Manager  
Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (NSRAA), Sitka

Katie Harms  
Executive Director  
Douglas Island Pink and Chum, Inc. (DIPAC), Juneau

David Landis  
General Manager  
Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA), Ketchikan