

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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Status of FY11 Increments for the Department of Fish and Game

Division of Commercial Fisheries

Southeast Region

The SE Region received an increment for \$600.0 GF for enhanced fisheries management. A one-time item (OTI) of \$50.0 GF was also provided for crab research.

- **Red King Crab Research - \$50.0 (OTI):** The majority of the funds from this increment went to industry participants in expanded biomass surveys. Short term vessel contracts were let in Pybus Bay, Gambier Bay, and Excursion Inlet. Initial results of this project have been presented to the public during recent King and Tanner Task Force meetings. Funding has been fully expended and the 2010 field season has ended. Data analysis is ongoing.
- **Herring - \$145.0:** This increment will significantly reduce test fishing operations for revenue. There will be no herring test fisheries conducted in Southeast Alaska in the spring of 2011. The division has also allocated some of the funding to the Age Laboratory to allow for documenting ageing procedures. In the long run, lab methods will be improved (double reading, documenting methods, etc). More diver calibration samples will also be taken and analyzed beginning in the spring of 2011 which is important in terms of understanding variability in egg counts across different spawning substrates.
- **Sablefish - \$260.0:** These funds will be expended on Chatham sablefish stock assessment activities (longstanding mark-recapture stock assessment experiments that have historically been funded through revenue derived from test fish harvests). The department will be able to significantly reduce its reliance on revenue derived from the Chatham Strait longline. By not having to take sablefish for revenue, those fish can be rolled back into personal quota shares, which directly benefits permit holders.
- **Chilkoot Sockeye Enumeration - \$100.0:** The department used this funding to provide for mark-recapture analysis on the weir count during the 2010 field season. A mark-recapture estimate was derived which demonstrated that the weir count accurately reflected the true escapement. Remaining funds will be expended during the early spring of 2011 on necessary repairs to the weir structure (remove blow-down logs that have been hung up on the weir, replace damaged weir material, etc).

- McDonald Lake Sockeye - \$95.0: Funds were used to cover costs of increased sampling of McDonald Lake sockeye in mixed stock fisheries in Southeast Alaska. Funds were also used to improve the department's stock assessment activities within this system. In the future, these funds will enable the department to closely monitor returns of enhanced sockeye salmon resulting from a stocking project conducted by the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association. The first enhanced returns are expected in 2011.

Central Region

The Central Region received an increment for \$105.4 GF for enhanced fisheries management.

- Crescent River Sonar - \$40.0: The department used this funding to enumerate sockeye salmon in the Crescent River. Using sidescan technology the department estimated the daily escapement rate of sockeye salmon. The escapement was sampled to estimate age, sex, and size composition by species. Data from this project was used for inseason management of the commercial fishery and for postseason evaluation of escapement goals. Inseason daily escapement information allowed the department to maximize the yield for the fishery and at the same time, ensure that the escapement needs were met.
- Fish Creek Sockeye Salmon - \$65.4: The department used this funding to estimate freshwater production of sockeye salmon in the Fish Creek watershed. A weir was used to collect spawner abundance, as well as age, sex, and length composition of the escapement. Limnological samples were collected from Big Lake from July through September. Measured parameters included water temperature, dissolved oxygen, light penetration, nutrients, phytoplankton, and zooplankton density and species composition. This data will be used to appropriately set biological escapement goals to provide for sustained yield to the users from this resource.

AYK Region

The AYK Region received increments totaling \$380.0 GF for enhanced fisheries and data management.

- Baseline Genetics Sample Collection and Analysis - \$75.0: This program seeks to establish genetic baselines to provide stock composition estimates and stock-specific harvest numbers for marine subsistence and commercial fisheries in the Norton Sound area. Additionally, baseline development of Norton Sound salmon stocks will be used to further analyze Western Alaska stock mixed stock composition and stock separations at the area, regional, and statewide levels. Exploratory surveys and sample collection was conducted on two Norton Sound Chinook salmon spawning tributaries in the 2010 season, resulting in the collection of over 600 samples from Chinook, chum, sockeye, pink, and coho spawning populations. Samples were cataloged and submitted for baseline genetics analysis, which is ongoing. Additional exploratory surveys and sample collection will be conducted on the existing two tributaries and new tributaries during the 2011 season.
- Yukon-Northern Area Program Management - \$50.0: Recent increases in field office and area program operational costs have resulted in budget shortfalls over several years. These funds have been successfully utilized to address shortfalls in Emmonak field office contractual and materials costs, lower Yukon River test fishery program operational costs and materials needs, and increasing seasonal staff time in support of various management and research programs.

- **AYK Database Management - \$80.0:** This increment provides funding for a research position that was filled in January to provide support and technical expertise to the regional computer services group and will be work on continued development and maintenance of the publicly-available AYK Database Management System. Additionally, this position will work in a support capacity with regional biometrics and analytical staff on a variety of AYK research and management programs.
- **AYK Research and Management Project Positions - \$175.0:** This increment funds two permanent full-time positions and associated support costs; one fishery biologist IV working at the regional level and one fishery biologist II working in the Yukon-Northern Area. The fishery biologist II is currently being recruited and is expected to be filled in the near future. Recruitment on the second position will follow. Funding for these positions in FY11 has been utilized to extend existing area seasonal staff in an effort to temporarily fill in for these vacancies.

Division of Sport Fish

- **Susitna Fish Passage - \$212.6 (GF):** A prioritized list of Mat-Su culverts has been determined with preliminary cost estimates for replacement/modification generated for the highest priority culverts. The division will be working with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan approved Mat-Su Habitat Partnership to collaboratively leverage other funding sources to address priority culverts.
- **Alexander Creek Pike Control - \$130.0 (GF):** Targeted gillnetting has taken place over the last several years and was expanded during 2010. Expansion of gillnetting efforts will be conducted during 2011 and into the future to further suppress the population of pike.

Division of Wildlife Conservation

- **Intensive Management Field Operations - \$250.0 (GF):** Division staff based in Fairbanks and Palmer are preparing for predator control field operations during the late-winter. Field work for wolf control is planned for the Upper Yukon/Tanana control area; bear predation within Game Management Unit 16; and removal of brown bears to reduce predation on muskoxen in Unit 26B. Field work may also be executed to reduce wolves on Unimak Island to increase caribou populations. Reporting on specific results of field operations will be available in April.
- **ESA Listings Coordination - \$236.6 (GF):** This funding supplemented an existing RSA relationship from ADF&G to the Department of Law for a coordinated response to ESA listings. The RSA purchases legal consultation on ESA listing issues. The increment also funded a wildlife biologist position and recruitment is currently underway. An RSA agreement with the Department of Natural Resources has been enacted to enable consultation with the department on ESA response issues. This increment strengthens the department's ability to respond to ESA listings.

- **Game Management - \$3,100.0 (Federal):** This increment is for federal receipt authority from the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration program. Funding has enabled staff to continue species survey and inventory work that was supported by CIP funding for several years. This has produced continuity for population management for moose in Game Management Units (GMU) 16, 18, 19, 19D, 20, 20A, 20E, 21E, 22, 23, 26, Galena and Tok; bears in GMU 13, 20E, 23; caribou in GMU 26A (Central Arctic Herd), Unit 9 (Southern Alaska Peninsula Herd), Unit 17 (Mulchatna Herd), Units 12 & 20E (Forty Mile Herd); and sheep research in GMU 13D. An organizational restructuring to create Region IV based in Palmer has been partially funded by this increment.

Division of Subsistence

- **Index Community Approaches to Harvest Assessment - \$200.0 GF:** Comprehensive surveys of subsistence harvests in a set of communities throughout the state will be conducted and the results added to the Community Subsistence Information System (CSIS). The design of a scientifically sound program for annual monitoring of subsistence harvests, including harvest quantities, locations of harvests, and levels of participation, in a set of index communities will be produced. Data collection regarding fish and wildlife harvests conducted during the 2010 calendar year will commence by the end of January 2011 and continue through April. Data analysis and reporting will carry-over into FY12.
- **Yukon Chinook Salmon Disaster - \$260.0 GF:** Declining Yukon salmon returns are having a significant effect on the mixed cash-subsistence economies of Yukon River communities. This increment will fund research methods that include conducting systematic household surveys of subsistence salmon fishing households and interviewing medium and heavy salmon harvesting fishers to document local and traditional knowledge regarding subsistence and commercial salmon fishing. It is important that this effort be conducted in representative communities throughout the Alaskan portion of the Yukon drainage as fishing patterns (e.g., gear types) vary from one part of the river to the next. The resulting data will fill significant information gaps pertaining to conservation concerns associated with Yukon Chinook salmon management. This information will assist the Alaska Board of Fisheries in addressing reasonable opportunities for customary and traditional subsistence uses.

Boards Support Section

- **Regional Regulatory Program Assistant in Bethel - \$84.6 GF:** The Boards section is conducting a second recruitment for the Western Region Regulatory Program Assistant position located in Bethel. We originally began the recruitment in August and it was extended several times in order to increase the applicant pool with qualified candidates. We are beginning the interview process for the second recruitment and hope to fill the position in the near future. The Advisory Committees in the Western Region are active and are temporarily being serviced by existing staff from other locations.