

The Honorable Governor Michael J. Dunleavy
Alaska State Capitol, 3rd Floor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

January 20th, 2021

RE: Kachemak Bay State Park and State Wilderness Park Management Plan

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

Alaska's Private Non-Profit (PNP) Salmon Hatchery Operators have collective concerns related to language and proposed actions contained within the Intent to Adopt for the Kachemak Bay State Park and State Wilderness Management Plan, which is open for public comment. We oppose language that would close the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery.

The associations authorizing this letter represent hatchery programs large and small from Ketchikan to Kodiak. Collectively, our fisheries enhancement programs generate over \$600 million dollars in annual economic impact and create an estimated 4,700 jobs statewide. Salmon produced by these hatcheries provide renewable fisheries resources for sport, commercial, subsistence, and personal use harvesters throughout Alaska; improving the lives of many Alaskans and the coastal communities in which they live.

The model for Alaska's hatcheries began with the Fisheries Rehabilitation Enhancement and Development (FRED) Division within ADF&G. The State of Alaska developed and managed many hatcheries, including the Tutka Bay Hatchery. Over time, Alaska's PNP hatcheries forged strong partnerships with ADF&G, and transitioned to operating state-owned hatcheries under contract in Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Prince William Sound and SE Alaska. The operation of these facilities have been the cornerstone of Alaska salmon sustainability. Our constitution encourages the development of natural resources for "maximum use" with a "sustained yield" to benefit all Alaskans. Hatcheries play a significant role in maintaining our constitutional mandate by efficiently operating state facilities through these private-public partnerships.

Imagine our surprise when, after decades of mutually beneficial operation of the Tutka Bay Hatchery by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA), the State Park determined that the Tutka Bay Hatchery is no longer compatible with the park plan and has proposed adopting language to close the Tutka Bay Hatchery at the end of the contract term with the State in 2031. A large number of Alaskans currently benefit from the Tutka Bay Hatchery and the hatchery helps fund enhancement projects throughout the region. It appears that the advocacy of a small and vocal minority may have influenced the Park Service's decision making while the majority of Alaskan stakeholders support the Tutka Bay Hatchery and view fisheries enhancement as compatible with State Park operations.

The impacts of closing the Tutka Bay Hatchery will have an immediate effect on CIAA's ability to generate cost recovery revenue for its other operations. This loss of vital funding places many enhancement projects, including personal use sockeye dip net fisheries in the park (China Poot Personal Use) and sport fisheries in Cook Inlet, the Mat Su Valley and Resurrection Bay, at risk of closure. Thousands of Alaskans participating in these fisheries will no longer have a source for salmon.

Moreover, the commercial fishing and seafood processing industry in Cook Inlet recently suffered significant revenue loss due to the closure of commercial fishing in waters within Cook Inlet under federal control. The elimination of Tutka Bay Hatchery production will further damage regional fisheries and the economies of Homer, Kenai, Soldotna and others. Many Cook Inlet commercial fishermen have

said that they are close to or beyond the tipping point to participate in a viable commercial fishery. Tutka Bay Hatchery closure reductions in Aquaculture Association revenues and fish production are likely to put Cook Inlet processors, as well as many of their fishermen out of business.

It does not make economic sense for the State of Alaska to consider closing the Tutka Bay Hatchery. CIAA has invested millions in improving its hatchery operations, including the Tutka Bay Hatchery, and secured many of these efforts with loans through the State of Alaska Fisheries Enhancement Revolving Loan Fund administrated by the Dept., of Commerce. A loss of Tutka Bay Hatchery will put the payment of these loans at risk. Moreover, closing the hatchery will result in the loss of jobs, commercial fishing revenue, and income to a variety of recreational, commercial and personal use fishery support businesses as well as a loss of municipal tax revenues. As Governor you have stated that the State is "open for business" and that Alaska's resources should be responsibly developed to sustain our great land. Alaska's Department of Natural Resources has consistently proclaimed to need to develop Alaska's natural resources to create jobs and revenue. Why then would the Department, through the Park Service, now reverse itself by cutting jobs and reducing revenue by closing the Tutka Bay Hatchery?

If adopted, these actions will have far reaching and consequential impacts to Alaska's fisheries and other hatchery programs. ADNR will be setting a precedent by the Park Service's determination that hatchery operations are not compatible with Kachemak Bay State Park operations. Hatchery programs within state parks in Prince William Sound, Kodiak and Southeast Alaska become "at risk". Will the State of Alaska continue to finance hatchery improvement and development of hatcheries within State parks? Will fishermen and/or hatchery associations be willing to continuing investing in hatcheries which may be closed by the State through an incompatibility determination? Finally, we have concern that if this precedent is set within state parks it will be viewed as a standard for consideration in federal parks within Alaska as well and may result in adverse impacts to additional Alaska hatcheries. In Alaska, the Federal Government has recognized the importance of Aquaculture in sensitive environmental areas and specifically allows fishery enhancement, fish weirs, fish ladders and fish hatcheries [ANILCA Title XIII Wilderness Management 1315 (b)]. These facilities shall be operated to minimize adverse impacts on the wilderness character of the area, not eliminated from it. The current DNR proposed management plan is more restrictive than that permitted on comparable federal land.

In closing, we ask that you intercede to correct this attempt to close down the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery by encouraging a re-evaluation of the preliminary Alaska Department of Natural Resources incompatibility determination and allow a longstanding, compatible and accepted practice of salmon fisheries enhancement within the Kachemak Bay State Park to continue.

Respectfully,



Dean Day – Executive Director
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association



Mike H. Wells – Executive Director
Valdez Fisheries Development Association Inc.



Tina Fairbanks – General Manager
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association



Geoff Clark – Interim General Manager
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association



Katie Harms – Executive Director
Douglas Island Pink & Chum



Scott Wagner – General Manager
Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Assoc.



David Landis – General Manager
Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Assoc.

CC ADNR Commissioner Corri A. Feige
ADF&G Commissioner Douglas Vincent Lang
Senator Peter Micciche
Representative Louise Stutes

Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Ben Carpenter
Ben Stevens, Chief of Staff
Mr. John Moller, Senior Policy Advisor



North Pacific Fisheries Association
P.O. Box 796 · Homer, AK · 99603
npfahomer@gmail.com

State of Alaska House of Representatives
House Fisheries Committee
House.Fisheries@akleg.gov

May 4, 2021

Dear Chair Tarr and members of the House Fisheries Committee,

The North Pacific Fisheries Association (NPFA) is a commercial fishing organization based in Homer, Alaska, representing more than sixty family fishing operations utilizing a variety of gear and vessel types. Many of our members hold Lower Cook Inlet Seine permits and some actively participate in the fishery. As a regional fishery association, NPFA holds two seats on the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association board of directors. NPFA is very familiar with the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery as well as Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan. Recent proposed changes to that plan have exposed the need for the Hatchery to be protected by legislation.

NPFA supports HB52 Tutka Bay Hatchery

The Public Review Draft of the Management Plan that was released in September, 2018 identified Fisheries Enhancement – Hatchery as a conditionally compatible use. On December 2, 2018 the Commissioner of the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources adopted the Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan which identified Fisheries Enhancement – Hatchery as a conditionally compatible use. That plan was rescinded. The 1995 Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan also identified the Hatchery as a compatible use. After 40 plus years of operating within the Park, NPFA sees no justification as to why the compatibility of the TBL Hatchery should suddenly change. The proposed legislation offers a solution, please move it forward.

Finally, in terms of the science of salmon hatcheries in Alaska, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has thorough oversight of all hatchery activities. In October 2018, ADF&G released Special Publication 18-12 *"Salmon Hatcheries in Alaska – A Review of the Implementation of Plans, Permits, and Policies Designed to Provide Protection for Wild Stocks"*. This document explains how robust the Alaska hatchery program is. <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static-f/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2018-2019/ws/SP18-12.pdf>

Again, the North Pacific Fisheries Association supports HB52 and appreciate the sponsors for bringing it forward.

Respectfully,

G Malcolm Milne
President, North Pacific Fisheries Association
npfahomer@gmail.com

CITY OF CORDOVA



January 22, 2021

Kachemak Bay State Park Planning
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1050
Anchorage, AK 99501
Fax: (907) 269-8915 E-mail: kbsp.comments@alaska.gov

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in opposition to the Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Management Plan (Lines 21-32, Page 152) that would eliminate operations at the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery in the coming years. Eliminating the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery reduces economic benefit and food security when most needed.

Communities like Homer and Seward will see negative economic impacts related to permit holder losses, processor profitability, fish transportation services, and other related business and services. All user groups (subsistence, sport, commercial, etc.) will be severely impacted by this plan to starve regional salmon stocks by decimating Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery's stock contributions.

Note that the City of Homer, the City of Seward, the City of Whittier, and the Seward Chamber of Commerce have already objected to this draft plan in writing and support the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery. Many individuals also oppose this plan. The hatchery's operations are an economic powerhouse for the region, especially during years of low wild stocks.

Closing the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery, when our country imports 94% of its seafood, will further exacerbate our nation's top five multi-billion dollar trade imbalance in seafood. Reducing harvestable salmon means reducing food production, so not only will Cook Inlet communities and their economies be deprived of the benefit of Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery salmon production and harvest opportunities, but our domestic reliance on imported seafood will continue to increase.

This plan is in no way strategic to Alaska's economic future or domestic food security objectives. It is imperative that the Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park Management Plan is not adopted in its current form and should be modified to exclude Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery changes.

I welcome you to contact me with further questions.

Respectfully, Mayor Clay Koplin, City of Cordova

**CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA**

Evensen/Hansen-Cavasos/Mayor

Resolution 20-134

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA
SUPPORTING REGIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATIONS AND
STRONGLY OPPOSING PROPOSED CHANGES TO MANAGEMENT
PLAN OF KACHEMAK BAY STATE PARK AND STATE WILDERNESS
PARK THAT WOULD DISPROPORTIONATELY AND NEGATIVELY
IMPACT THE HOMER COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, The State of Alaska Division of Natural Resources (DNR) recently proposed management plan with intent-to-adopt, which includes effective elimination of the “Fishery Enhancement – Hatcheries” category with respect to Kachemak Bay State Park (Park) and its Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery; and

WHEREAS, Built by the State of Alaska, the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH) is a regular component within the Park and nearly as old as the Kachemak Bay State Park (1970) itself; and it is currently operated by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) and has been serving the greater Homer community continuously since 1978; and

WHEREAS, CIAA is a private, non-profit, regional aquaculture corporation that works with regional stakeholders to engage in salmon fisheries enhancement and habitat work throughout the Cook Inlet region for the benefit of commercial, subsistence, sport, and personal use fishing; and

WHEREAS, CIAA activities bolster salmon throughout their entire lifecycle and the nutrients that they provide uniquely support land-based ecosystems; and this marine-to-land transference of biomass is rare biologically and critical to inland wildlife populations near Homer; and

WHEREAS, One distinguishing feature of Alaskan aquaculture is that fisheries enhancement is designed to provide salmon harvest opportunities while maintaining the sustainability of wild salmon through science-based programs; and this concept and terminology should not be confused with environmentally offensive “fish farming” – a controversial, offshore practice that remains illegal in the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of Homer and visitors to Kachemak Bay directly benefit from CIAA activities from at least the following run fisheries:

- Sockeye salmon providing sport, personal use, and commercial fishing harvest at China Poot River and waterfall, Kachemak Bay

- Sockeye salmon released at Hazel Lake, returning to Kachemak Bay for sport and commercial fishing harvest
- Pink salmon providing sport, personal use, and commercial fishing harvest at Port Graham Bay, Kachemak Bay
- Pink salmon providing sport and commercial fishing harvest at Tutka Bay, Kachemak Bay
- Coho salmon providing sport, and personal use fishing harvest throughout Kachemak Bay (CIAA-initiated Caribou Lake stock)
- Monitoring natural salmon colonization at Paint River (via CIAA-built fish ladder), Kamishak Bay, Cook Inlet, with the goal of opening up common property fishing there
- Sockeye salmon providing sport and commercial fishing harvest at Kirschner River, near Bruin Bay, Kamishak Bay
- Monitoring stations (modern fish weirs) for natural sockeye salmon runs at Delight River and Desire River, Nuka Bay (near Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park)

WHEREAS, A corollary to local benefited fisheries, the largest sector of tourism in and around Homer involves sport fishing; and these visitors also represent the largest user group (volumetrically) of the Homer Harbor and its facilities; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of Homer reap economic benefits from CIAA activities associated with TBLH, including support of Homer-based marine trades and businesses, fish processing jobs, State and City fish processing tax (landing tax), and related industry jobs that support both sport fishing and commercial fishing fleets in Homer; and

WHEREAS, Common property harvest at TBLH fills a strategic gap in the mid-season timing of the Commercial Lower Cook Inlet Salmon Fishery and some years the "Tutka Run" has represented the most substantial harvests; and TBLH also represents crucial operations for CIAA that allow salmon enhancement and monitoring regionally throughout Kachemak Bay and Lower Cook Inlet; and

WHEREAS, Within the Park the majority of seasonal traffic directed at Tutka Bay and Tutka Bay Lagoon is due to sport fishing supplied by TBLH; and heavy Park usage directed at the China Poot Dip Net Fishery also relates to TBLH and CIAA; and

WHEREAS, Proposed changes to the management plan for Kachemak Bay State Park and cessation of the TBLH would harm the largest usage of the Park, diversity of users within the Park, and current and historic economies of the Homer community; and furthermore it would severely or permanently limit salmon deliveries to the Homer Dock, encumber fish-processing and fish-transporting businesses, potentially eliminate related business niches, commercial and sport fishing operations based from Homer, families that rely on personal use fishing for subsistence, regional tourism in a widespread manner, and – generally – the citizens of Homer; and

WHEREAS, In summary, implementation of plans proposed by DNR would unfairly and disproportionately affect the livelihoods of citizens and the economy of one community, Homer; and

WHEREAS, Continued support and operation at TBLH as a Park-compatible asset is in the interest of the citizens of Homer and the numerous stakeholders surrounding Homer's regional world-class marine-, river- and lake-based resources.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Homer City Council affirms its general support for regional aquaculture associations and their programs, and for CIAA in particular.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council supports scientific and unbiased methods to assess the interaction of aquaculture programs with marine ecosystems.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council is strongly opposed to proposed changes in the Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan that would encumber, restrict, or terminate continued operations of this long-standing Hatchery (TBLH) due to widespread economic and historic/cultural benefits for the greater Homer community and owing to its clear compatibility within Kachemak Bay State Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council is strongly opposed to proposed changes that could specifically cause economic hardship for Lower Cook Inlet commercial fishermen, Homer-based marine trades and businesses, wharfage, crane and ice sales at the city Fish Dock, fish processing jobs, State and City fish processing tax (landing tax), and related industry jobs that support our commercial fishing fleet in Homer.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council calls on the Division of Natural Resources to work dutifully with the regional aquaculture associations, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Board of Fisheries, commercial fishermen, and marine scientific organizations to further its understanding of the importance of Alaskan aquaculture programs for all Alaskans and our visitors to Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness Park.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Homer City Council this 14th day of December, 2020.

CITY OF HOMER

KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

128 ATTEST:

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MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

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134 Fiscal Note: N/A

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**CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA**

Evensen/Hansen-Cavasos/Mayor

RESOLUTION 20-134(A)

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA
SUPPORTING REGIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATIONS AND
STRONGLY OPPOSING PROPOSED CHANGES TO MANAGEMENT
PLAN OF KACHEMAK BAY STATE PARK AND STATE WILDERNESS
PARK THAT WOULD DISPROPORTIONATELY AND NEGATIVELY
IMPACT THE HOMER COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, The State of Alaska Division of Natural Resources (DNR) recently proposed management plan with intent-to-adopt, which includes effective elimination of the "Fishery Enhancement – Hatcheries" category with respect to Kachemak Bay State Park (Park) and its Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery; and

WHEREAS, Built by the State of Alaska, the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH) is a regular component within the Park and nearly as old as the Kachemak Bay State Park (1970) itself; and it is currently operated by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) and has been serving the greater Homer community continuously since 1978; and

WHEREAS, CIAA is a private, non-profit, regional aquaculture corporation that works with regional stakeholders to engage in salmon fisheries enhancement and habitat work throughout the Cook Inlet region for the benefit of commercial, subsistence, sport, and personal use fishing; and

WHEREAS, CIAA activities bolster salmon throughout their entire lifecycle and the nutrients that they provide uniquely support land-based ecosystems; and this marine-to-land transference of biomass is rare biologically and critical to inland wildlife populations near Homer; and

WHEREAS, One distinguishing feature of Alaskan aquaculture is that fisheries enhancement is designed to provide salmon harvest opportunities while maintaining the sustainability of wild salmon through science-based programs; and this concept and terminology should not be confused with environmentally offensive "fish farming" – a controversial, offshore practice that remains illegal in the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of Homer and visitors to Kachemak Bay directly benefit from CIAA activities from at least the following run fisheries:

- Sockeye salmon providing sport, personal use, and commercial fishing harvest at China Poot River and waterfall, Kachemak Bay

- Sockeye salmon released at Hazel Lake, returning to Kachemak Bay for sport and commercial fishing harvest
- Pink salmon providing sport, personal use, and commercial fishing harvest at Port Graham Bay, Kachemak Bay
- Pink and sockeye salmon providing sport and commercial fishing harvest at Tutka Bay, Kachemak Bay
- Coho salmon providing sport, and personal use fishing harvest throughout Kachemak Bay (CIAA-initiated Caribou Lake stock)
- Monitoring natural salmon colonization at Paint River (via CIAA-built fish ladder), Kamishak Bay, Cook Inlet, with the goal of opening up common property fishing there
- Sockeye salmon providing sport and commercial fishing harvest at Kirschner River, near Bruin Bay, Kamishak Bay
- Monitoring stations (modern fish weirs) for natural sockeye salmon runs at Delight River and Desire River, Nuka Bay (near Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park)

WHEREAS, A corollary to local benefited fisheries, the largest sector of tourism in and around Homer involves sport fishing; and these visitors also represent the largest user group (volumetrically) of the Homer Harbor and its facilities; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of Homer reap economic benefits from CIAA activities associated with TBLH, including support of Homer-based marine trades and businesses, fish processing jobs, State and City fish processing tax (landing tax), and related industry jobs that support both sport fishing and commercial fishing fleets in Homer; and

WHEREAS, Common property harvest at TBLH fills a strategic gap in the mid-season timing of the Commercial Lower Cook Inlet Salmon Fishery and some years the "Tutka Run" has represented the most substantial harvests; and TBLH also represents crucial operations for CIAA that allow salmon enhancement and monitoring regionally throughout Kachemak Bay and Lower Cook Inlet; and

WHEREAS, Within the Park the majority of seasonal traffic directed at Tutka Bay and Tutka Bay Lagoon is due to sport fishing supplied by TBLH; and heavy Park usage directed at the China Poot Dip Net Fishery also relates to TBLH and CIAA; and

WHEREAS, Proposed changes to the management plan for Kachemak Bay State Park and cessation of the TBLH would harm the largest usage of the Park, diversity of users within the Park, and current and historic economies of the Homer community; and furthermore it would severely or permanently limit salmon deliveries to the Homer Dock, encumber fish-processing and fish-transporting businesses, potentially eliminate related business niches, commercial and sport fishing operations based from Homer, families that rely on personal use fishing for subsistence, regional tourism in a widespread manner, and – generally – the citizens of Homer; and

WHEREAS, In summary, implementation of plans proposed by DNR would unfairly and disproportionately affect the livelihoods of citizens and the economy of one community, Homer; and

WHEREAS, Continued support and operation at TBLH as a Park-compatible asset is in the interest of the citizens of Homer and the numerous stakeholders surrounding Homer's regional world-class marine-, river- and lake-based resources.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Homer City Council affirms its general support for regional aquaculture associations and their programs, and for CIAA in particular.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council supports scientific and unbiased methods to assess the interaction of aquaculture programs with marine ecosystems.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council is strongly opposed to proposed changes in the Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan that would encumber, restrict, or terminate continued operations of this long-standing Hatchery (TBLH) due to widespread economic and historic/cultural benefits for the greater Homer community and owing to its clear compatibility within Kachemak Bay State Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council is strongly opposed to proposed changes that could specifically cause economic hardship for Lower Cook Inlet commercial fishermen, Homer-based marine trades and businesses, wharfage, crane and ice sales at the city Fish Dock, fish processing jobs, State and City fish processing tax (landing tax), and related industry jobs that support our commercial fishing fleet in Homer.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Homer City Council calls on the Division of Natural Resources to work dutifully with the regional aquaculture associations, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Board of Fisheries, commercial fishermen, and marine scientific organizations to further its understanding of the importance of Alaskan aquaculture programs for all Alaskans and our visitors to Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness Park.

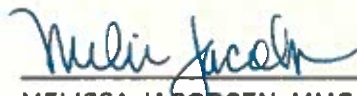
PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Homer City Council this 14th day of December, 2020.

CITY OF HOMER



KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Jacobsen", is written over a horizontal line.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

Fiscal Note: N/A



**CITY OF SEWARD, ALASKA
RESOLUTION 2021-007**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEWARD,
ALASKA, SUPPORTING REGIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATIONS
AND STRONGLY OPPOSING PROPOSED CHANGES TO
MANAGEMENT PLAN OF KACHEMAK BAY STATE PARK AND
STATE WILDERNESS PARK THAT WOULD DISPROPORTIONATELY
AND NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE SEWARD COMMUNITY**

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska Division of Natural Resources (DNR) recently proposed management plan with intent-to-adopt, which includes effective elimination of the "Fishery Enhancement - Hatcheries" category with respect to Kachemak Bay State Park (Park) and its Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH); and

WHEREAS, built by the State of Alaska, the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery is a regular component within the Park and nearly as old as the Kachemak Bay State Park (1970) itself; and it is currently operated by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) and has been serving the greater Seward community continuously since 1978; and

WHEREAS, CIAA is a private, non-profit, regional aquaculture corporation that works with regional stakeholders to engage in salmon fisheries enhancement and habitat work throughout the Cook Inlet region for the benefit of commercial, subsistence, sport, and personal use fishing; and

WHEREAS, CIAA activities bolster salmon throughout their entire lifecycle and the nutrients that they provide uniquely support land-based ecosystems; and this marine-to-land transference of biomass is rare biologically and critical to inland wildlife populations near Seward; and

WHEREAS, one distinguishing feature of Alaskan aquaculture is that fisheries enhancement is designed to provide salmon harvest opportunities while maintaining the sustainability of wild salmon through science-based programs; and this concept and terminology should not be confused with environmentally offensive "fish farming" - a controversial, offshore practice that remains illegal in the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, citizens of Seward and visitors to Kachemak Bay directly benefit from CIAA activities from at least the following run fisheries:

- Sockeye salmon providing sport, personal use, and commercial fishing harvest at China Poot River and waterfall, Kachemak Bay
- Sockeye salmon released at Hazel Lake, returning to Kachemak Bay for sport and commercial fishing harvest
- Pink salmon providing sport, personal use, and commercial fishing harvest at Port

**CITY OF SEWARD, ALASKA
RESOLUTION 2021-007**

Graham Bay, Kachemak Bay

- Pink and sockeye salmon providing sport and commercial fishing harvest at Tutka Bay, Kachemak Bay
- Coho salmon providing sport, and personal use fishing harvest throughout Kachemak Bay (CIAA-initiated Caribou Lake stock)
- Monitoring natural salmon colonization at Paint River (via CIAA-built fish ladder), Kamishak Bay, Cook Inlet, with the goal of opening up common property fishing there
- Sockeye salmon providing sport and commercial fishing harvest at Kirschner River, near Bruin Bay, Kamishak Bay
- Monitoring stations (modern fish weirs) for natural sockeye salmon runs at Delight River and Desire River, Nuka Bay (near Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park)
- From 2015 – 2020 CIAA has released 2,819,299 Coho in the Seward area, primarily Bear Lake.
- From 2015 – 2020 CIAA released 22,937,518 sockeye in Resurrection Bay and Bear Lake.
- Processing in Seward ties directly in with our hatcheries and the fisheries in the lower Cook Inlet. Tutka Bay Lagoon hatchery has provided cost recovery pink salmon harvest of 12,678,000 pounds over the past five years.

WHEREAS, a corollary to local benefited fisheries, the largest sector of tourism in and around Homer and Seward involves sport fishing; and these visitors also represent the largest user group (volumetrically) of the Seward Harbor and its facilities; and

WHEREAS, citizens of Seward reap economic benefits from CIAA activities associated with TBLH, including support of Seward-based marine trades and businesses, fish processing jobs, State and City fish processing tax (landing tax), and related industry jobs that support both sport fishing and commercial fishing fleets in Seward; and

WHEREAS, common property harvest at TBLH fills a strategic gap in the mid-season timing of the Commercial Lower Cook Inlet Salmon Fishery and some years the "Tutka Run" has represented the most substantial harvests; and TBLH also represents crucial operations for CIAA that allow salmon enhancement and monitoring regionally throughout Kachemak Bay and Lower Cook Inlet; and

WHEREAS, within the Park the majority of seasonal traffic directed at Tutka Bay and Tutka Bay Lagoon is due to sport fishing supplied by TBLH; and heavy Park usage directed at the China Poot Dip Net Fishery also relates to TBLH and CIAA; and

WHEREAS, proposed changes to the management plan for Kachemak Bay State Park and cessation of the TBLH would harm the largest usage of the Park, diversity of users within

**CITY OF SEWARD, ALASKA
RESOLUTION 2021-007**

the Park, and current and historic economies of the Seward community; and furthermore it would severely or permanently limit salmon deliveries to the local Seward docks, encumber fish-processing and fish-transporting businesses, potentially eliminate related business niches, commercial and sport fishing operations based from Seward, families that rely on personal use fishing for subsistence, regional tourism in a widespread manner, and - generally - the citizens of Seward; and

WHEREAS, in summary, implementation of plans proposed by DNR would unfairly and disproportionately affect the livelihoods of citizens and the economy of two communities, Homer and Seward; and

WHEREAS, continued support and operation at TBLH as a Park-compatible asset is in the interest of the citizens of Seward and the numerous stakeholders surrounding Seward.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEWARD, ALASKA that:

Section 1. The Seward City Council affirms its general support for regional aquaculture associations and their programs, and for Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) in particular.

Section 2. The Seward City Council supports scientific and unbiased methods to assess the interaction of aquaculture programs with marine ecosystems.

Section 3. The Seward City Council is strongly opposed to proposed changes in the Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan that would encumber, restrict, or terminate continued operations of the long-standing the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH) due to widespread economic and historic/cultural benefits for the greater Seward and Homer communities and owing to its clear compatibility within Kachemak Bay State Park.

Section 4. The Seward City Council is strongly opposed to proposed changes that could specifically cause economic hardship for Lower Cook Inlet commercial fishermen, Homer and Seward-based marine trades and businesses, wharfage, fish processing jobs, state and city fish processing tax (landing tax), and related industry jobs that support our commercial fishing fleet in Seward.

Section 5. The Seward City Council calls on the Division of Natural Resources to work dutifully with the regional aquaculture associations, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Board of Fisheries, commercial fishermen, and marine scientific organizations to further its understanding of the importance of Alaskan aquaculture programs for all Alaskans and our visitors to Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness Park.

**CITY OF SEWARD, ALASKA
RESOLUTION 2021-007**

Section 6. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the City Council of the City of Seward, Alaska, this
11th day of January, 2021.

THE CITY OF SEWARD, ALASKA


Christy Terry, Mayor

AYES: Osenga, McClure, Casagrande, DeMoss, Seese, Baclaan, Terry
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

ATTEST:


Brenda J. Ballou MMC
City Clerk





UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 20229, Juneau AK 99802-0229

Phone: (907) 586-2820

E-mail: ufa@ufa-fish.org **Website:** www.ufa-fish.org

February 22, 2021

House Fisheries Committee
State Capitol Room 208
Juneau AK, 99801

Re: Support for HB52

Dear Speaker Stutes and Members of the House Fisheries Committee,

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 36 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state, and the federal fisheries off Alaska's coast.

United Fishermen of Alaska recognizes that recreational, personal use, and commercial fishing interests as well as the State of Alaska have benefited greatly from the fisheries enhancement and rehabilitation programs conducted throughout Alaska. The most noted program is the State's non-profit salmon hatchery program administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G).

Recently, the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources has put forth language in the updated Kachemak Bay State Park (KBSP) Management Plan to investigate closing the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery (TBLH). This State-owned facility, built in 1975, has been contractually operated through the State's non-profit salmon hatchery program by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) since 1992.

At issue is the compatibility of TBLH within the KBSP. For many years, and multiple management plans, the hatchery has been deemed compatible with the Park management plan. However, the latest plan update states that TBLH is "likely incompatible", and "the state will explore a phase-out of the hatchery, to include not renewing the CIAA operating agreement in 2031".

Representative Vance has pre-filed House Bill No. 52 to amend AS 41.21.132 by adding a new subsection to read:

(b) Operation of the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery permitted under AS 16.10.400 is a compatible use within the boundaries of Kachemak Bay State Park.

This legislation would mirror existing legislation for other hatcheries operating within parks in Alaska.

Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery plays an important direct role in the Lower Cook Inlet fisheries by providing for salmon enumeration, salmon enhancement, and habitat monitoring. Indirectly TBLH operations help fund broader projects throughout the Cook Inlet drainage for habitat protection and salmon rehabilitation.

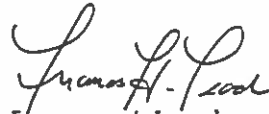
Alaskan fisheries enhancement projects have contributed to sustainable economic development that directly benefits recreational, personal use, and commercial fishermen, as well as seafood processors, local communities, and the State.

We strongly support House Bill No. 52 and appreciate your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Alward', written in a cursive style.

Matt Alward
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances H. Leach', written in a cursive style.

Frances H. Leach
Executive Director

From:



Cc:

Subject:

HB 52 comments

Date:

Wednesday, May 05, 2021 2:09:27 PM

Hello and thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony on HB 52. My name is Dan Miotke and I am a resident of Homer and a commercial fisherman that harvests the resource that Tutka Hatchery provides. Also, I represent the City of Homer on the CIAA board that manages the hatchery. First, I would like to touch on the opportunity that Tutka directly and indirectly provides. One of our communities favorite summer activities is the China Poot personal use fisheries, Sockeye salmon eggs that are collected at Tutka are taken to Trail Lakes Hatchery outside Seward, raised and then brought back down and released in both China Poot Lake and the lagoon at the hatchery. These fish are harvested by both sportfish and commercial fisherman. I've heard testimony that these fish come from Trail Lakes, what they are not including is that ADFG only allows fish harvested at Tutka to be released in the adjacent waters.

Also, I have heard testimony about the small number of vessels that get the opportunity to harvest the returns to the Hatchery. I would like to point out that the Board of Directors is made up commercial permit holders from all of Cook Inlet including; seiners, gillnetters, set netters, and other stakeholders. As a board we have decided to use the cost recovery efforts from Tutka to help fund most of programs that we are involved in throughout the Cook Inlet drainage. These include smolt enumerations on the Kasilof River, Pike mitigation in the watershed of the Upper Inlet, elodea/ invasive species monitoring, and the numerous public outreach education programs. Without the revenue generated from Pink Salmon harvest at Tutka we would not be able to fund these activities.

As a commercial fisherman I can ensure you the entire Lower Cook Inlet Fleet targets salmon that have returned from Tutka. Lower Cook Inlet is an entry point for young and new fishermen to get into the seining. Limited Entry permits are affordable and the fishery doesn't require large expensive vessels, if you were to ask many of the very success Homer and Seward Fishermen most started in the Lower Cook Inlet Areas. The last rebutte to the testimony I would like to touch on is the negative impacts that large numbers of salmon carcasses left over in the area when these fish return. I cant think of a better thing to be happening. Salmon have been returning to areas in large numbers for hundreds of thousands of years and the nutrients these carcasses are fundamental to marine ecosystems. Many studies have been done and these nutrients end up being the cornerstone of healthy natural environment. Areas along the entire west coast would be thrilled to have this problem.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments. I hope you can support this bill to ensure we can continue operating and providing the many opportunities and programs Tutka creates. I have attached one of our recent CIAA news letters that highlight some of the history of Tutka Bay Hatchery in Kachemak State Park along with the numerous programs we provide to all of Cook Inlet. I hope you have a moment to take a look at our organization.

<https://www.ciaa.net.org/index.php?gf-download=2020%2F07%2FIssue-85-Final-for-Web.pdf&form-id=6&field-id=4&hash=618a0fd0ee2bc1e2308ff151d50f46272040a61d56c22407c79987f6fc06a704>

-Dan Miotke

CIAA Board Member

Lower Cook Inlet Commercial Fisherman

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: HB52. Tutka Hatchery
Date: Wednesday, May 05, 2021 7:27:04 PM

Members of the committee:

I fully support the land trade that removes the land that houses the Tutka Lagoon hatchery from the boundaries of the Park.

At the time the State constructed the hatchery, fishery enhancement was fully compatible with the Park purposes. The designers of the Park did not want to limit its use to a select few.

It is not fair to now punish the thousands of beneficiaries of the hatchery.

I also fully support hatcheries as being compatible in Parks. Tourists love looking at fish up close and most have never seen so many. This is an experience they will never forget!

Jessie Nelson
Commercial fishermen
Homer, AK

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: House Fisheries
Subject: HB 52. Tutka Hatchery
Date: Wednesday, May 05, 2021 9:00:11 PM

Members of the committee:

I support HB 52 which features a land trade and a ruling that Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery has the right to conduct its operations within Kachemak Bay State Park.

The land trade as proposed would be in the best interests of both TBLH and KBSP. KBSP would gain valuable recreational acreage for access to the Cottonwood Creek area and TBLH would be freed the constant land use conflicts with Parks.

The Hatchery needs legislative reassurance that Hatchery operations involving the use of Park waters and land for fish releases, cost recovery operations, lake fertilization and associated activities are compatible with Park management plans.

The Hatchery is a significant asset to the Park by providing fish for sport, subsistence, personal use and commercial fisheries. The fish returning to Tutka are a major tourist attraction and contributes to the yearly ever-increasing flow of visitors to the Tutka Bay Area.

Beaver Nelson

Park Advisory Board member
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Board member
Commercial fisherman
Homer AK

Sent from my iPad

House Bill 52

I've been a Cook Inlet setnetter in the Ninilchik-Cohoe beaches since 1962. Due to the fixed location of setnets my family doesn't catch either sockeye or pink salmon that Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery is involved in enhancing. I've been involved in Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) for many years and served as president of the CIAA board of directors for 15 years. Between about 1975-2003 Tustumena Lake sockeye salmon were enhanced and we benefited from that. A lawsuit was brought against that project by the Wilderness Society, and that forced the closure of what was, in my opinion, a very successful project. Even after losing that project, my commitment to the work of CIAA remains steadfast.

HB 15 has my full support. I appreciate Representative Vance's effort to address a legal issue and a management plan confusion between Kachemak Bay State Park and this hatchery. Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery was built in 1975, according to *Alaska Salmon Enhancement Program 2004 Annual Report* by Bruce White, page ten, table 7. At the time of its construction I don't remembering hearing any concerns about its location, nor have I found any record of concern. As president of Kasilof Regional Historical Association and past president of the Kenai Peninsula Historical Association I have some experience at looking for historical accounts.

A July 23, 1979 Associated Press article out of Homer in the *Sitka Sentinel* offers Department of Fish and Game opinion. It says "The pink salmon run to the state Department of Fish and Game's Tutka Bay Lagoon hatchery near Homer is reaching record proportions. Spokesmen for the department say the run may become the largest return of adult salmon ever to an Alaskan hatchery."

The focus of HB 52 is on legal issues regarding land. I appreciate that, but at the same time realize if the question regarded Bradley Lake hydro project, which touches Park land, there would be little opposition. People with personal viewpoints and visions of how the Park should be managed want to eliminate the hatchery, as similar people eliminated the Tustumena Lake sockeye stocking project. In Tutka the ultimate decision should be made by State officials who are well-educated on the risks and benefits of the hatchery.

I find it interesting that some of the loudest voices for closing the hatchery use Tutka Bay for business or personal use. There are 20 private property holdings in Tutka Bay, many of which have cabins. Water taxi services, kayak renters, and sight-seers all want to use the Park. At Tustumena Lake there were no indications that the sockeye enhancement project caused any environmental issue. Almost 20 years has passed since that project closed and sockeye salmon continue to rear in Tustumena Lake, which seems to indicate that wild stocks weren't harmed by over 25 years of enhancement.

The same is likely true about Tutka hatchery. It seems wise to approve HB 52 to settle land issues. Then carefully study environmental issues. There is no question that closing the hatchery will result in negative economic problems for fishers, processors, support industry and for the State of Alaska. That is what happened at Tustumena Lake. I live five miles from Crooked Creek Hatchery, which was built in 1973. I saw how the Tustumena Lake project helped my setnet fishery. Loss of that project harmed my family. And who did it help? No one. I'm convinced Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery is a victim of the same, erroneous, selfish opinions.

Brent Johnson
Clam Gulch

Mayor decries Tutka Bay Hatchery closure as another attack on Homer's economy

KBBI | By Jay Barrett

Published December 16, 2020 at 11:56 AM AKST



Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association /

It appears Homer's mayor is becoming more comfortable casting his tie-breaking vote. After barely using it at all during his first term in office, Mayor Ken Castner on Monday night cast a tie-breaking vote and threatened a veto.

The first instance was when the council took up a resolution supporting the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association and opposing proposed changes in the Kachemak Bay State Park management plan that would force the association's Tutka Bay Hatchery to close.

Closing the hatchery would starve both the sockeye and pink salmon commercial fisheries and the China Poot dipnet fishery of salmon stock.

Castner was clearly displeased with what he saw as yet another attack on Homer by the governor.

"I'm feeling a little bit peppered by this administration. On one hand, they want us to take local control over masking and stay-at-home orders and everything like that. 'Oh it's all about local control mayor. You take these things on you know, we want you to take these things on,'" Castner said. "But when it comes down to closing a thousand square miles of traditional fishing zones or eliminating ferries or creating a new activity that's never existed here and taking away an activity that's been here for 45 years, that's a control that's going to happen, you know, in the state Capitol or by an agency and not local. And so that's why I signed onto this thing; to me if we want to keep discussions local, then let's keep them local."

It was clear during debate that support for the resolution was split among the six city council members, but Mayor Castner was firm.

"I don't like being pushed around, like we have been, and I'm really feeling like our economy is under attack. I mean, how many blows can we take in one year and still go into a season when there's any hope," Castner said. "So my yes vote is on the table. Everybody knows that deal. I co-signed on it. And so, I'll be breaking the tie if there is one."

Earlier in the meeting, Homer commercial salmon fisherman Len Fabich was fully behind the city's resolution.

"Kachemak Bay State Park management plan has decided that the Tutka Bay Hatchery is not compatible with the use of our state park. I beg to differ with that," Fabich said. "It's my opinion that there are a very few people with an agenda that are creating this travesty that we will all be affected by."

The Kenai River Sportsfishing Association has long sought to close hatcheries in the Cook Inlet drainage. Its former executive director is Ricky Gease, who is now the director of the Alaska Division of Parks. Division spokesperson Monica Alvarez claimed on Monday that Gease was not involved in the Kachemak Bay plan, however, his comments and testimony as the director for Kenai River Sportsfishing were incorporated into the draft plan, as were the comments of many others.

Fabich struck back at the claim that the Tutka Bay Hatchery is only a benefit to the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, saying that hatchery pink salmon level-out the even-odd year return cycle of wild humpies.

"Our even-years, when our wild stock do not generally return in big numbers on the outer coast, the hatchery is a huge, bright spot in our local seine

fisheries," Fabich said. "The returning reds, especially, and pink's returning to the hatchery or hatchery release sites are by far our target fish. It really is a big part of my livelihood. So the argument that it is largely only benefiting the hatchery is false."

The vote on the resolution to support CIAA and to "strongly oppose" State Parks' efforts to close the Tutka Bay Hatchery split, three-to-three, as Castner predicted. Against the resolution were council members Caroline Venuti, Donna Aderhold and Rachel Lord. In favor were Heath Smith, Joey Evensen and Storm Hansen-Cavasos. The mayor cast his lot with those in favor of the resolution, and it prevailed 4-to-3.

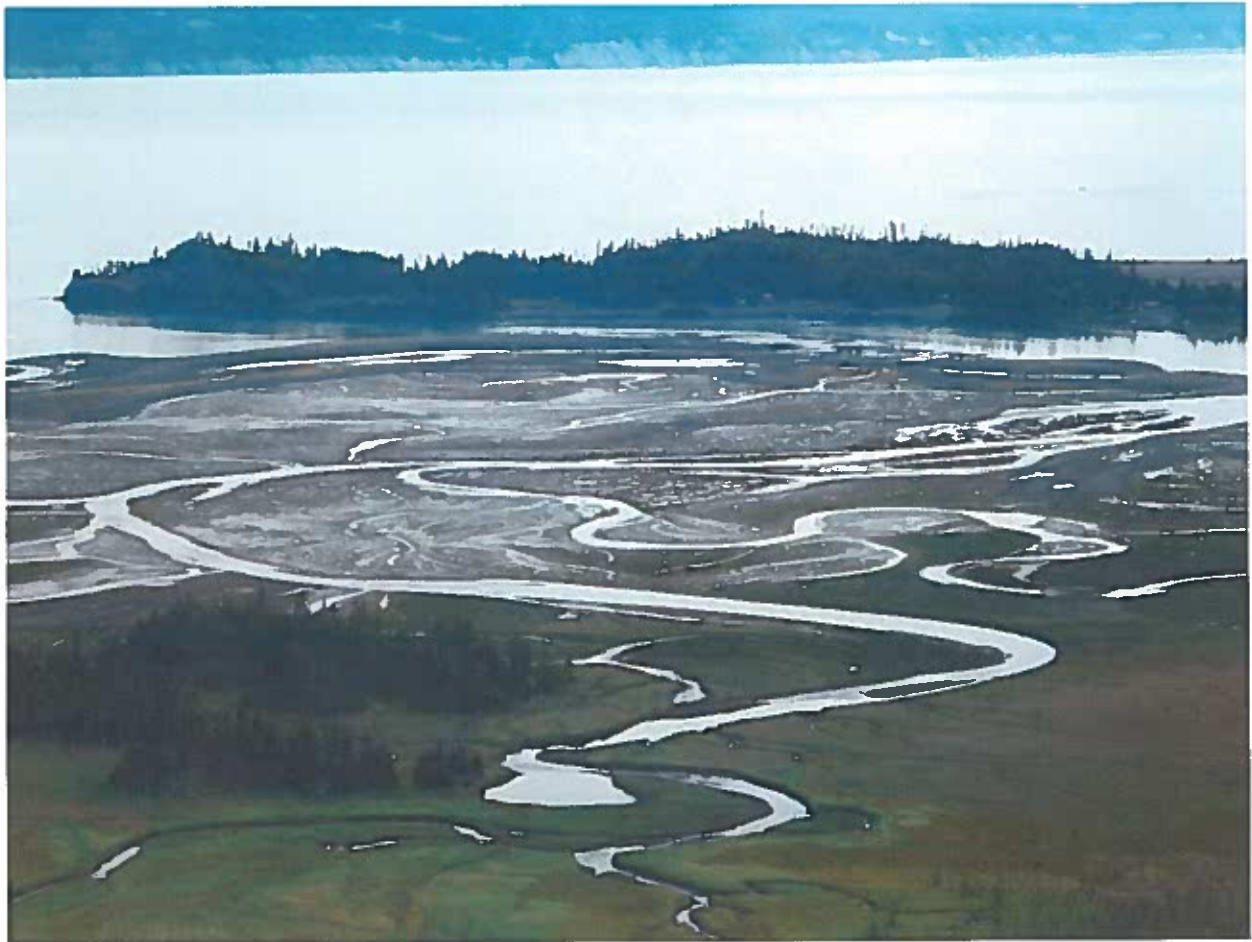
Mayor Castner also threatened a veto on a motion to substitute new language in a resolution regarding a property purchase near the airport. Castner opposed using special water and sewer funds as part of the deal, and the amendment failed on a 3-3 vote. No tie-breaker was needed, as without four votes, the amendment failed. In the end, the council voted to postpone the underlying resolution until January.

* A previous version of this story incorrectly stated Mayor Castner used his tie-breaking vote twice.

Standing together for Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery

By Malcolm Milne

Updated: April 5, 2021Published: April 5, 2021



China Poot Bay is about 4 miles southeast of Homer across Kachemak Bay. (Michael McBride)

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently took up a regulatory change in Kachemak Bay (Intent to Adopt version of Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan) that would eliminate operations at the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game founded this hatchery and then operated it from 1975–1991. Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA), a nonprofit regional aquaculture association, assumed operations in 1991. After 45 years in operation and 30 years under CIAA, we know a lot about Tutka's impacts on the people who call Southcentral Alaska home.

The hatchery provides about 25 Alaskan jobs and measurable impacts to the region by providing increased harvesting opportunity for all user groups, reducing pressure on returning wild runs in years of low abundance, and supplying all salmon harvested by China Poot personal-use sockeye fishermen. Tutka's annual production significantly impacts the economies of several small communities by hiring services to support the hatchery and increasing commercial salmon landings at local ports.

The China Poot personal use dip-net fishery will cease to exist should Tutka Bay operations come to an end. Any reduction in opportunity to salmon harvests made possible by Tutka would significantly impact stakeholders, communities and user groups but would be exceptionally hard-hitting during years of low returns. Protecting wild-run strength during years of poor returns is, in fact, the mission statement of the Alaska hatchery program statewide.

During the past several months, since DNR has taken this regulatory change up for consideration, hundreds of individual Alaskans, state legislators, several municipalities and city officials, and various organizations, entities and trade groups have stepped up to make their voices heard on the matter. The message is clear:

- The Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery is a vital component of the Southcentral economy;
- It's important to ensuring sustainable fisheries for decades to come; and
- DNR should support the hatchery and allow for continued operations for future generations.

Notably, Seward, Whittier, Cordova, Homer, Chugach Alaska Corporation, the Seward Chamber of Commerce and several legislators joined fellow Alaskans in their support of Tutka Bay Hatchery operations. The support for Alaska's salmon fisheries, one of our most precious and valuable renewable resources, is unified, cohesive, and encouraging. This fishery is critical as we navigate food security for Alaska and increasing demand for healthy food worldwide.

As first Vice President of the CIAA Board of Directors, our core values of credibility, accountability, education, and contributions to the resource and our region are my top priorities. It is these values that drive our mission and reinforce my belief that our salmon hatcheries help all Alaskans.

Accounting for more than 25 million pounds of commercial fish harvest and nearly \$32 million in ex-vessel value, the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery supports several fisheries across Kachemak Bay, Cook Inlet, and the Kenai Peninsula. Additionally, annually, more than 26,000 sockeye salmon produced by the hatchery are harvested in sport fisheries, and more than 4,000,000 sockeye salmon are stocked into Resurrection Bay.

Although we're all facing uncertainty right now, Alaskans strongly support sustainable salmon populations and the opportunity to harvest wild, sustainable protein. Whether it's an Alaska Native Corporation, individual Alaskans, cities, or nonprofit organizations and trade associations, I'm grateful for the outpouring of support. I remain hopeful for a positive outcome and look forward to another 46 years of Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery operations and giving back to our neighbors, communities, and fellow fishermen.

Malcolm Milne is a commercial fisherman and first Vice President of the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association Board of Directors. Malcolm first seined in Kachemak Bay in 1995 and now owns and operates his own boat, seining and longlining out of the Port of Homer.

Tutka Bay hatchery can be a resource for generations to come

By Jim Hunt

Updated: May 20, 2021Published: May 20, 2021



A push to close the Tutka Bay Hatchery in Kachemak Bay has drawn the ire of fishermen and residents far beyond that region. (Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association)

As the City Manager of Whittier, I have the privilege of working hard to serve the people of my city and the critical port we operate for the region. Every day, I'm driven by the goal of ensuring that Whittier is the best place possible for the people who choose to live here, and the flow of commerce that relies on our strategic location and infrastructure. Although the residents of Whittier come from a wide variety of walks of life, everyone here knows that salmon and access to fisheries are central to the economic health of our community.

Here in Whittier, fisheries are second only to tourism in economic impact. Without the positive contributions from hatcheries across our region, most notably the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association's Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery for communities and users just south of Whittier, and Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation for users in and to the east of Whittier, our fisheries sector and the local economy would face a critical setback. Since its inception in 1975, the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery has provided a sustainable wild salmon population that supports sport, subsistence, personal use, and commercial fisheries across Southcentral Alaska. Each year in Whittier alone, which ranks fifth in Alaska for hatchery sport harvests, we catch an average of more than 7,000 hatchery-produced coho.

We know the measurable contributions that Tutka Bay hatchery makes to the success of our charter boats, guides and commercial fishing vessels. However, there is no way to put a price tag on filling our freezers and providing lifetimes of memories out fishing in Prince William Sound and in nearby waters south of here like Kachemak or Resurrection Bay. Whether it is a tourist from out-of-state on a sportfishing charter, or an elementary school student catching their first salmon off the pier, I am grateful for the incredible harvest and economic opportunities that our local hatcheries provide.

Recently — along with the collective voices of several hundred Alaskans and stakeholders — the City of Whittier wrote to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources encouraging them to allow operations at the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery to continue. The Department recently considered a regulatory change that threatens to shut down the hatchery altogether. Although we are on the edge of Prince William Sound, hours away by car or boat from Kachemak Bay, the Tutka hatchery's impact is felt far and wide, from Kachemak Bay to Resurrection Bay and into the northern Gulf. Closure of the hatchery would be devastating for all user groups.

The City of Whittier stands united with Alaskans and stakeholders across the Kenai Peninsula in urging the Department of Natural Resources to allow continued operations at the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery. It is the right thing to do for Alaskans today and the right thing to do for future generations.

Jim Hunt has nearly 10 years of fisheries and processing experience working from an economic development and stability standpoint, acting as the current City Manager of Whittier and as the former City Manager of Seward.