

HJR

38

Alaska State Legislature

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Senate Committee on Resources

MEMORANDUM

May 11, 1985

TO: All Members
Senate Resources Committee

FROM: Staff *[Signature]*
Senate Resources Committee

RE: HJR 38

HJR 38 requests the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to allow the stocking of fish and the enhancement of the fishing resources within Tustumena Lake in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

The final draft of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge conservation plan prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service classified this area as a wilderness unit, and this designation would not allow fisheries enhancement in Tustumena Lake. The Department of Fish and Game has objected to this prohibition. June 7, 1985 is the last date for comment on the final draft plan.

Enclosures:
1 memo from Rep. Navarre with
back-up information

Alaska State Legislature

REPRESENTATIVE
MIKE NAVARRE

DISTRICT 5A

CHAIR, LABOR & COMMERCE
VICE-CHAIR, STATE AFFAIRS



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House of Representatives

MEMORANDUM

May 10, 1985

TO: Senator Arliss Sturgulewski, Chairman
Senate Resources Committee

FROM: Rep. Mike Navarre

Pat Malone for Mike Navarre

Attached is back-up information for HJR38. This measure passed the House with a unanimous vote, and was assigned to Senate Resources today. I respectfully request that this measure be scheduled as soon as possible. The deadline for comment on the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge is June 7, 1985. If this measure doesn't pass this session, it will be too late. Thanks for your help.

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska

TO: Pat Malone
Administrative Assistant
to Representative Navarre
Alaska State House - Juneau

DATE: April 24, 1985

FILE NO:

TELEPHONE NO: 267-2166

FROM: Dave Daisy *Dave Daisy*
Regional Program Manager
FRED Division - Anchorage
Department of Fish and Game

SUBJECT: Tustumena Sockeye
Enhancement Program

Enclosed are two documents that should help explain the Tustumena Lake Sockeye Enhancement Program. One is Sockeye Salmon Investigation, Tustumena Lake System, Alaska - Progress Report Number 3 which is the latest progress report on the studies to determine the effects of sockeye salmon enhancement on Tustumena Lake, and the other is the abstract of two presentations given by Loren Flagg, the area biologist in charge of the Tustumena program, explaining the enhancement program and the Tustumena sockeye investigation project. You will note the the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is involved in the investigation project. A quote from Flagg's presentation sums it up best - "Our studies to date indicate that the Tustumena Lake stocking program has resulted in an increase in total production from the lake without any negative effects."

It should be noted that the Tustumena stocking program involves no habitat manipulation, no permanent structures, and utilizes stocks native to the Tustumena system. It takes advantage of plankton (sockeye food) production that is surplus to the needs of sockeye produced naturally in the system.

Tustumena Lake is totally within the Andy Simons Wilderness portion of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR). The final draft of the KNWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) defines fisheries enhancement as "actions taken to increase fishery stocks above historic levels. Includes lake fertilization, stocking, building hatcheries and fish passages, and artificially incubating fish in streams." The CCP states that fisheries enhancement will not be permitted in wilderness areas as well as areas where minimal management techniques or traditional management techniques will be applied. This in effect eliminates fishery enhancement from 87% of the KNWR. We object to this outright prohibition on the bulk of the KNWR. Fishery enhancement encompasses a broad range of activities. We believe that some forms of enhancement are compatible within all management categories and should be allowed pending an activity-specific review.

April 24, 1985

To accomplish this the permitting level indicated for fisheries enhancement in Table 21 of the final draft of the KNWR CCP needs to be changed. The suggested wording is: Table 21, Fisheries Enhancement - Change all categories to: "Permitted in special situations with cooperative agreements."

I hope the above and the enclosed documents are of use to you. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. My home phone is 243-8544 and my work phone is 267-2166.

Good luck.

Enclosures

cc: Moberly
Flagg



STATE OF ALASKA

S. A. (STAN) MOBERLY
DIRECTOR

DIVISION OF FISHERIES REHABILITATION,
ENHANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (FRED)
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Abstract of Presentation to Kenai Peninsula Borough
Resource Development Commission (3/18/85) and
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (3/23/85)
on Tustumena Lake Sockeye Salmon Enhancement Program

by

Loren B. Flagg
Area Biologist
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Fisheries Rehabilitation,
Enhancement, and Development

The Crooked Creek Hatchery, located at Kasilof, was constructed in 1974. Additions to the facility in the late 1970's and early 1980's brought the capacity of the hatchery to 20 million salmon eggs.

The primary purpose of the facility is to increase the sockeye (red) salmon production at Tustumena Lake. Lake rearing studies in the early 1970's indicated that the system was spawning limited, as opposed to rearing limited, and that the lake was capable of producing more salmon fry than the spawning grounds could supply. Recent studies verify that this assumption was correct - we have demonstrated through the stocking and evaluation program that the lake can produce more fish.

Production stocking was initiated in 1979 at a level of 7.8 million sockeye fry. From 1982 to 1984 we reached the full production level of about 16-17 million fry annually.

Most sockeye salmon fry rear for one year in Tustumena Lake before migrating to sea as smolt. Since 1980 the number of smolt migrating from Tustumena Lake has increased (1-14 million) as has the hatchery contribution (3%-25%).

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APR 1 1985

F.R.E.D.
ANCHORAGE REGIONAL OFFICE

Our evaluation studies have addressed the questions: (1) "are the smolt being produced from the lake in good condition, and (2) are we in any way harming the natural stock or the environment". Our studies to date indicate that the Tustuegan Lake stocking program has resulted in an increase in total production from the lake without any negative effects. The smolt coming out of the lake are in excellent condition and we have observed no adverse impacts on wild stocks or the rearing environment. In 1984, the year of the largest smolt migration (14.2 million), age 1.0 smolts were the largest we have observed. The plankton population has held up strongly, in fact the plankton index was higher in 1984 than it was in 1980.

The additional salmon smolt being produced from the system will mean more adults available for commercial, sport, and subsistence fishermen. At a minimum, 300,000 additional adult salmon will be available on an annual basis for harvest as a direct result of the enhancement program. The ex-vessel value estimated to commercial fishermen in Central Cook Inlet is 1.6 million dollars. When added to the annual value of \$400,000 for fish produced from Leisure Lake, which are harvested by Lower Cook Inlet seiners, we estimate that 2.0 million dollars annually will go directly to commercial fishermen from our stocking program starting next year.

The first wholesale value, or value produced from the fish pack, is generally considered to be about 2 times the ex-vessel value (\$4.0 million). There are other multipliers, as the dollar rolls over in the community, however, I'll leave that analysis for the economists.

Since the Tustumena Lake sockeye salmon stocking program accounts for over 90% of the Crooked Creek Hatchery production, the loss of this stocking program would in all likelihood mean closure of the hatchery. The hatchery also provides king salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead for sport fishermen. Last year over 5,000 adult king salmon were caught at Crooked Creek. This fishery ranked second behind the Kenai River in king salmon catch on the Kenai Peninsula in 1984. This program and the others, coho and steelhead, would be in jeopardy if the hatchery is closed.

We ask only that the future stocking program at Tustumena Lake be directed based on the merits of the program; that is the agreement we had with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service when we initiated our 5 year cooperative study in 1981. The State has recommended to the USFWS to change the Fisheries Enhancement section of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Plan to read: "Fisheries enhancement permitted in special situations with cooperative agreements". The State also recommended that the "Tustumena Lake sockeye salmon stocking be continued until the Service and ADF&G jointly determine that these projects have been completed or no longer achieve their stated objectives".

The KNR plan will be available soon for a 60 day public comment period. We would encourage you, as individuals or as a group, to review this plan and provide comments to the USFWS. The State would appreciate your support on the Tustumena Lake issue. Thank you.

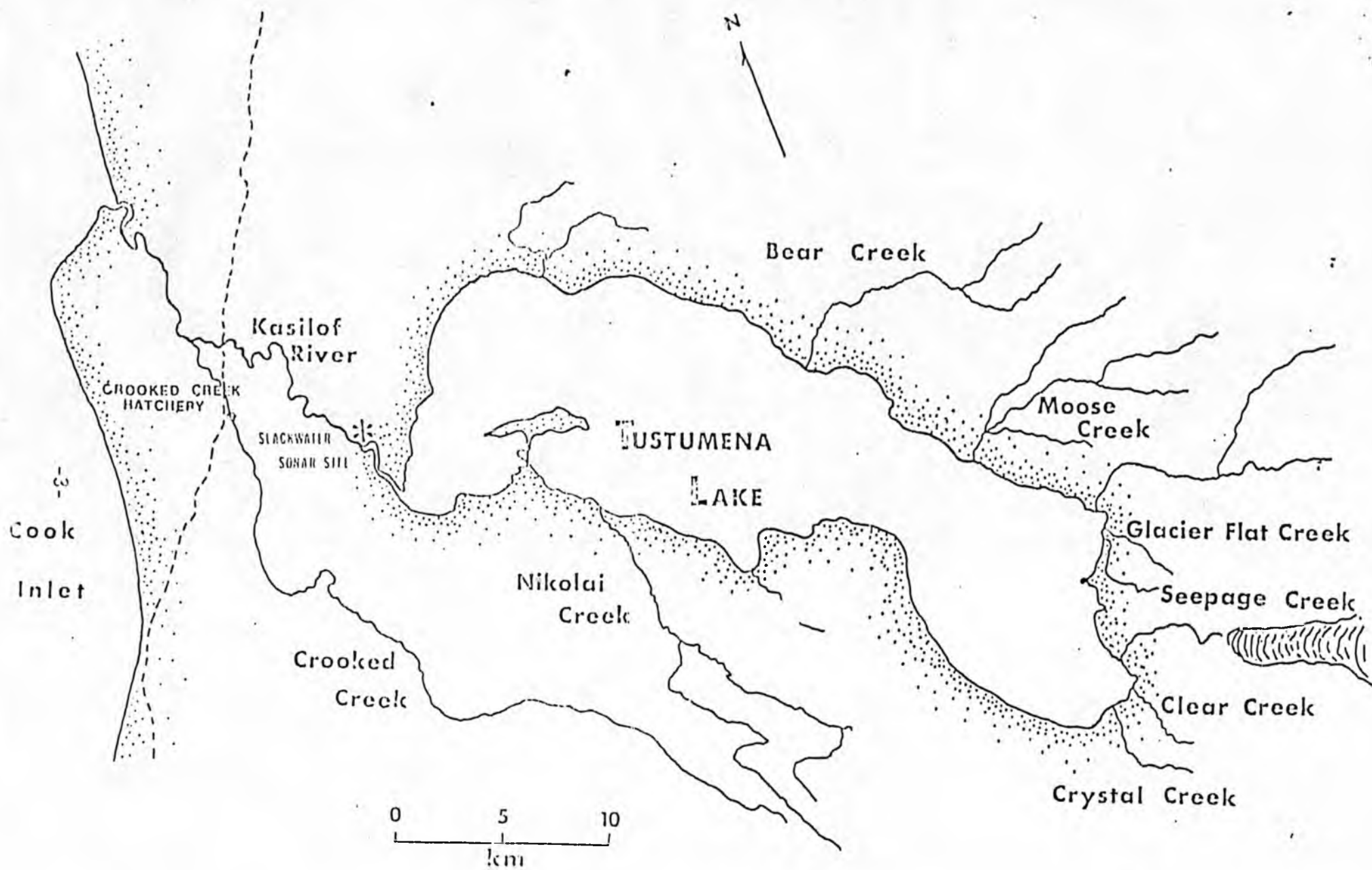


Figure 1. Kasilof River drainage and major sockeye salmon rearing lake.

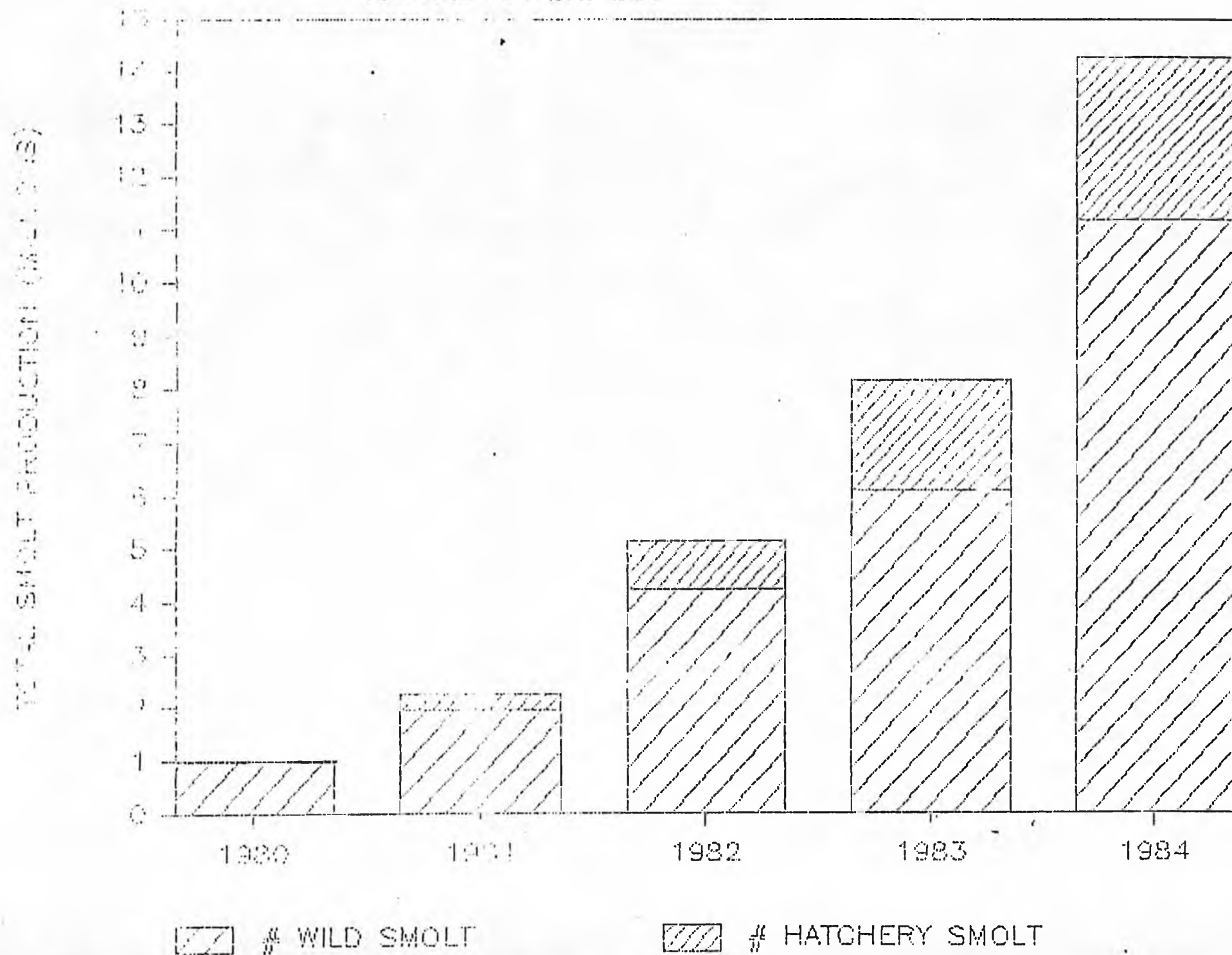
Table 1. Tustumena Lake sockeye salmon fry stocking and marking history, 1976-84.

Release year	Glacier Flats Creek			Bear Creek			Total		
	Number fry stocked	Number marked RV	Percent	Number fry stocked	Number marked LV	Percent	Number fry stocked	Number marked	Percent
1976	1,137,784	--	--	--	--	--	1,137,784	--	--
1977	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1978	400,000	--	--	--	--	--	400,000	--	--
1979	4,864,193	30,502	.62	2,899,785	36,095	1.24	7,763,978	66,597	.86
1980	2,706,610	32,669	1.20	2,499,232	32,758	1.31	5,205,842	65,427	1.26
1981	4,967,526	198,409	3.99	3,809,045	253,947	6.67	8,776,571	452,356	5.15
1982	8,299,560	210,114	2.53	7,648,602	248,639	3.25	15,948,162	458,753	2.88
1983	9,760,100	201,800	2.07	7,174,800	218,400	3.04	16,934,900	420,200	2.48
1984	9,750,000	202,400AD 202,100RV	2.08 2.07	7,300,000	29,400	0.40	17,050,000	433,900	2.54
		404,500	4.15						

Appendix A. Kasilof River smolt migration summary, 1980-1984.

Sample year	Total smolt migration (millions)	Percent age composition		Mean size of age 1.0 smolt		Percent hatchery contribution
		1.0	2.0	Length (mm)	Weight (g)	
1980	1.0	91	9	68	2.7	3
1981	2.3	82	18	70	2.8	13
1982	5.1	80	20	69	2.9	17
1983	8.3	84	16	70	2.9	25
1984	14.2	80	20	73	3.3	22

TUNSTUMPTNA LK. GOCKEY SMOLT PRODUCTION

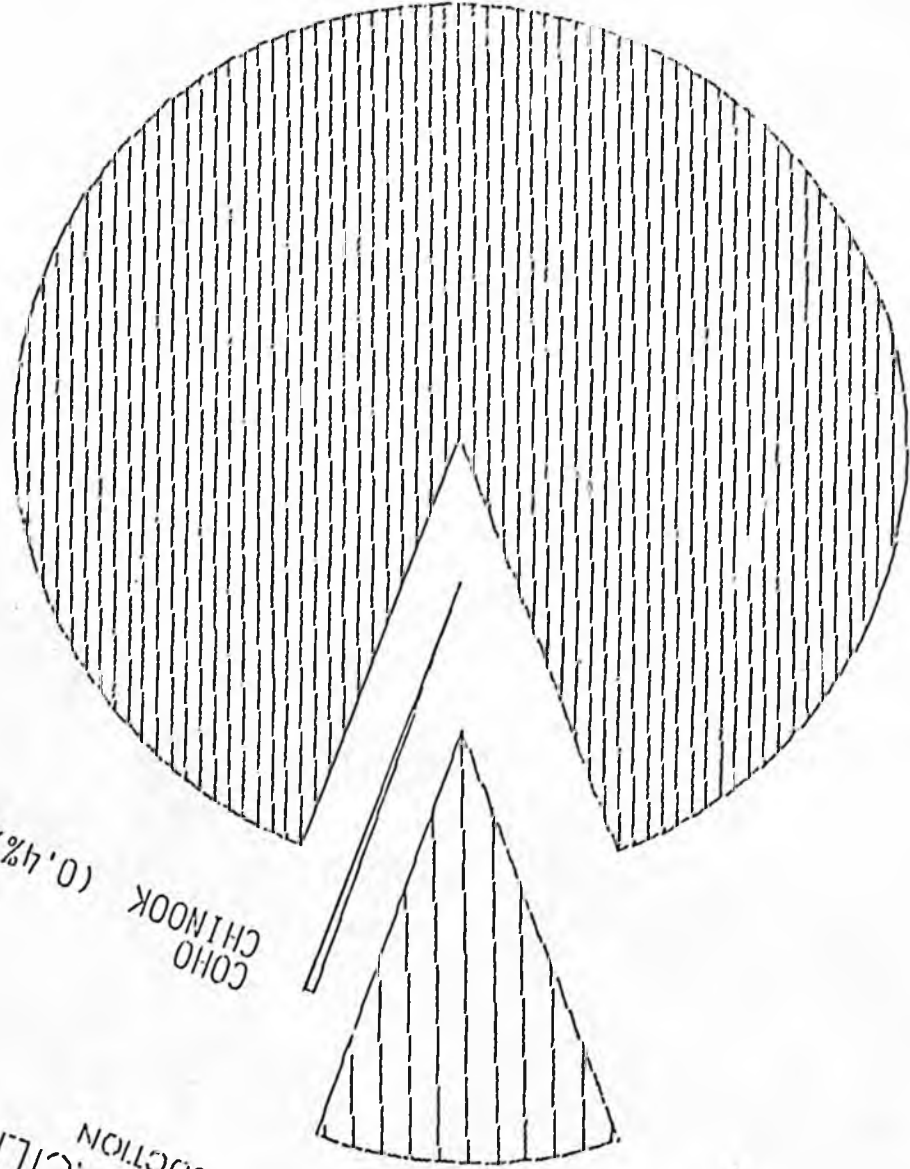


CROOKED CR. FACILITY
1984 PRODUCTION

COHO
CHINOOK (0.4%)

LEISURE SOCKEYE (11.0%)

TUSTY SOCKEYE (88.6%)



Kenai refuge plan dissent widens

By JOHN QUINLEY
Managing Editor

A Soldotna-based commercial fishing organization has asked the federal government to delay implementation of the comprehensive plan for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and to make substantial changes in the document.

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association has filed a letter of protest with the Fish and Wildlife Service detailing 19 flaws it found in the management plan for the 2 million-acre

refuge. The plan is open for a final round of public comment through June 7.

The association is funded by commercial fishermen to work toward larger salmon returns in Cook Inlet through stocking, lake fertilization, construction of fish ladders and hatchery production.

The group said Fish and Wildlife Service failed to meet many of the requirements for a comprehensive plan as established by federal legislation.

The association also joined other com-

mmercial fishing groups and the Kenai Chamber of Commerce in protesting the prohibition of salmon enhancement on land classified as wilderness, traditional management or minimal management.

The decision not to allow enhancement activities "is a major change between the draft and the final versions of the plan. The change is so major in effect as to constitute a revision of the plan. Under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, plan

See PENINSULA, back page

Continued from Page 1

revisions require public hearings prior to implementation."

The association and others fear the prohibition will end the stocking and enhancement program being conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game on Tustumena Lake. The number of sockeye salmon smolt leaving the lake through the Kasilof River has increased in the past few years from 1 million to 14 million. Greater numbers of adult salmon are also expected to return, contributing at least \$4 million to the peninsula economy, association officials said.

The letter of protest, from Executive Director Tom Mears, was explained and reiterated Monday during a press briefing. "The issue is broader than whether Tustumena Lake stocking will be allowed," he said. "We're losing our ability to enact enhancement programs."

Mears said 86 percent of the refuge is closed to enhancement work.

However, all areas on the refuge are open to stocking or other projects which will bring fish or wildlife species back to "histor-

ic" levels. When rehabilitation stops and enhancement begins is something no one in federal, state or private agencies can pinpoint.

Research from the current stocking program, which has a year left on a five-year permit, could help establish the historical level, Mears said.

He also claimed the federal plan is inconsistent, saying in one section that enhancement is prohibited, while in another saying it will continue.

Mears was also critical of the federal agency's handling of other requirements of a comprehensive plan. He said there was little justification given for the establishment of "special values" and the recognition of "significant problems" by the plan.

"It seems these values just spring forth; there is no analysis to say why they are so special that they will be the basis of the plan," Mears said. The values include the Harding Icefields, the Tustumena-Skilak benchlands, the diversity of uses and resources found on the refuge, the Kenai River and its tributaries, the Swanson River area canoe systems, and the Chickaloon

lowlands and estuary.

Mears said Monday that he hopes the Fish and Wildlife Service will delay implementation of the plan as a means of precluding the protests moving in the court system. "Experience in Cook Inlet has shown that if one rushes an incomplete or poorly based plan into existence, one person or group will litigate the thing and that will hamstring what's trying to be done."

Refuge Manager Bob Delaney, in response to earlier protests made by another commercial fishermen's group, said federal law mandates that fish stocking in wilderness areas may be used only to rehabilitate stocks and keep them at historical levels.

He said the enhancement program could have detrimental long-term effects on the overall health of the Tustumena system.

The stocking program in place on Tustumena takes eggs from fish spawning in two of the lake's seven tributaries. The eggs are incubated at the Crooked Creek Hatchery in Kasilof and the juvenile salmon are then transplanted to the lake. The eggs incubated at the hatchery have a higher survival rate than those incubated naturally in the other tributary streams.

In earlier discussions of the controversy, Delaney said he and other biologists fear that as salmon runs increase and commercial fishing takes larger numbers of fish, the stocks in the other five tributary streams will suffer, leading to a decrease in genetic diversity and growing reliance on a state-funded hatchery for maintenance of large salmon returns. The wilderness designation was created to retain areas and wildlife populations in as nearly an untrammelled condition as possible, Delaney said.

Mears said the association and others have contacted Alaska's Congressional delegation, the Alaska Land Use Council and state legislators in hopes of having portions of the plan changed.