



Change Service Requested

Highlighting releases, returns, policy and legislation affecting the Southeast Alaska salmon fisheries

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F/V Natalie Gail conducting Cost Recovery at Deep Inlet

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NSRAA'S 2024 Cost Recovery Goal Largest on Record

At a daunting \$8 million, this year's cost recovery goal is one of the largest in NSRAA's history. Still, it's less than it could have been.

"Between inflation and the cost of NSRAA's programs and production, the budgetary need has gone up every year," explains Ben Adams, NSRAA Research and Evaluation Manager.

Add to that, the salmon market crash, the soaring prices of goods, and the fact that NSRAA fell short of its cost recovery goal last year when the Southeast Cove run returned below forecasts.

NSRAA's board and staff has worked hard over the years to be financially conservative, aiming to have a full year's budget in reserves. But this year, the board decided to back off on that goal. It will utilize \$2 million from its forward-funding reserves this year in order to ensure the most possible opportunities for the fleets.

"The board decided that if we've been saving for a rainy day, this was the rainy day," Ben says. "We compromised, taking less than we would have."

More than 6 million chum are forecasted to return to NSRAA this season. But after last year's market crash, few are optimistic about the coming salmon season.

"There's still a lot of uncertainty in the market," says NSRAA General Manager, Scott Wagner. "It's looking like it's stabilized a bit and there's potential for an upside, but the processors still don't have a lot of confidence. They're still a little gun-shy."

While salmon prices hit rock bottom on the docks last year, seafood prices in supermarkets remain high, further delaying a turnaround.

"The entire seafood sector, not just salmon markets, continues to have issues," Scott explains. "During the pandemic, there was this crazy ramp up in prices and consumer demand, but in the last year or so, with inflation, consumers have cut back on their consumption of seafood, including salmon. The grocery stores haven't dropped their prices, which is slowing down recovery."

This year's salmon forecast is predicted to be NSRAA's third highest chum return ever. Scott is hopeful the salmon will come in at or above forecast and – if market prices cooperate – provide ample opportunities for the fleets despite the organization's high cost recovery goal.

"We're really fortunate that it looks like we'll have a lot of fish coming back this year," he says. "We'd be in a world of hurt if it was anything less."

In the past few years, NSRAA has limited cost recovery operations to one or two sites only. For a while, all cost recovery was at Crawfish Inlet, where chum first returned to with astonishing numbers. But as those returns have decreased, the board felt it was wiser to split cost recovery between the west and east sides of Baranof Island. Last year, cost recovery was split between Crawfish Inlet and Southeast Cove.

After NSRAA was unable to meet its 2023 cost recovery goal at Southeast Cove due to market uncertainties, however, the board felt it prudent to further spread out cost recovery this season and lessen the risk of once again falling short.

This year, cost recovery is scheduled for all NSRAA sites, excluding Thomas Bay. This will be the first year in almost a decade that Deep Inlet may be closed for cost recovery.

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General Manager's Notes



As the fishing season is now upon us, I look forward to what may be a very robust chum return. If chum returns materialize as forecast, this will be the third largest chum return in NSRAA's history. While normally this would be great news, there still hangs gray clouds over the salmon market and the prices that may be paid to you, the commercial salmon fishermen, this season. Salmon markets seem to have stabilized, but they have stabilized far below pre-2023 prices. If the salmon prices

can hold this summer, even at the lower prices, this may still be a relatively good year for NSRAA's contribution to the salmon gear groups considering the large forecast return.

Not only do the lower salmon prices affect all gear groups, but it also dramatically increases the portion of our return that will need to be harvested for cost recovery. The long-term historical average of the NSRAA chum return taken for cost recovery is 17 percent, leaving on average 83 percent for common property harvest in our return areas. This season, NSRAA will need to harvest 42 percent of the forecasted return to balance our budget. Keep in mind, this portion takes into account board action to reduce this season cost recovery by \$2 million dollars and a return forecast of more than 6 million chum salmon, leaving roughly 58 percent available for common property harvest.

NSRAA is fortunate that we have a near record chum return forecast to ease the pain felt by lower salmon prices. In short, it could be worse; we could have a poor forecast and poor prices.

In order to meet the cost recovery goals this season, we will be conducting cost recovery harvests at all our return areas (6 Special Harvest Areas), with the exception of Thomas Bay. This will make our cost recovery management quite complex, and balancing any in season adjustments due to chum returns coming in below forecast at any of the six sites, challenging. The overall goal with our cost recovery efforts is to allow maximum uninterrupted common property harvest to the greatest extent possible, while still meeting our cost recovery needs. Time will tell how successful these efforts will be.

While the coming salmon return and cost recovery harvest weigh heavy on me, NSRAA's staff is preparing fervently for one of the largest returns to our facilities. Of high importance is replacing the weir at Medveje that was washed out in a flood last fall. The necessary permits have been received and re-construction is currently under way and should be completed before large numbers of chum begin to gather.

Also of particular note this season is the large return to our Gun-nuk Creek facility – far in surplus than what is needed for broodstock. In fact, the forecasted return is ten times that number. Aggressive cost recovery harvest is planned in order to not overwhelm the hatchery raceways and existing infrastructure. Hidden Falls is predicted to have the largest chum return in a decade and will have common property openers that harken back to the “old days” when we would have more than 100 seine boats participate in an opening.

Even with extensive pessimism on pricing, it should be an exciting and noteworthy season. Good fishing to everyone and together we will see what the season brings.

Sawmill Creek: Density Experiment

The staff at NSRAA's Sawmill Creek Hatchery continues its quest to increase marine survivals of the coho it rears for Deep Inlet. This year, the staff will experiment with rearing the fish at different density levels in an effort to determine if there is an ideal density that translates into improved marine survivals.

“We hope to optimize rearing space and the size of the fish at release to improve marine survivals,” says Hatchery Manager, Rebecca Olson.

The density experiment is one of a number of efforts to improve marine survivals.

The hatchery recently reinstated family tracking for bacterial kidney disease (BKD), a disease that occurs naturally in the wild but can cause chronic mortality in a hatchery. Family tracking is a method of control where the fertilized eggs from each female are kept separate in the early stages of incubation, while the female's kidney is tested for BKD. If the test results exceed a target threshold for the bacteria, the eggs of that female are discarded.

Though BKD testing was performed regularly in the past, it was discontinued when it no longer seemed necessary. The end of the testing seems to coincide with a recent decline in the Deep Inlet coho marine survivals, though there are other factors that likely have contributed to diminishing returns as well, including cooler summer water temperatures, slower growth and smaller release sizes. Fish health has also been compromised by the stress of moving the fish to NSRAA's Medveje Hatchery when the water at Sawmill was shut off for expansion work.

Sawmill Creek Report, cont. on page 3

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NSRAA
1308 Sawmill Creek Road
Sitka, Alaska 99835
Phone: (907) 747-6850
Fax: (907) 747-1470
E-mail: firstname_lastname@nsraa.org
Web: www.nsraa.org



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President
Vice President
Secretary/Treasurer

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Juneau, Alaska 99801

Any interested party may also receive **Fish Rap** free of charge. Send your address to NSRAA.

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FISH RAP STAFF:

Chelsea Huckbody - Editor chelsea_huckbody@nsraa.org
Lu Snyder - Writer www.lusnyder.com

Sawmill Creek Experiments cont'd from page 2

Last year, the hatchery staff added light manipulation to its rearing process in an effort to stimulate coho growth and increase the size of the fish at the time of release. The fish responded remarkably well, which led to some of the highest-ever rearing densities and, eventually, to this summer's density trial.

Normally, the coho are reared at a maximum density of 35 kilograms of fish per cubic meter. Last year's fish growth led to densities just short of 50 kg per cubic meter. Though Sawmill is permitted to release 1.8 million coho annually, it is currently rearing only 1.3 million – the result of both insufficient broodstock returns and the culling required with the BKD testing. The lower numbers allowed the space for this trial. The coho will be divided into three groups and reared at different densities: 22 kg, 35 kg and 50 kg per cubic meter.

“I think we are on the right track to get marine survival up,” says Rebecca. “I was really happy with the growth we got this past fall. (The coho were at least five grams bigger going into saltwater than in past years.) Fifty percent of brood year 2022 were BKD tracked and we saw better health in those fish than the bulk fish, so we know going 100 percent BKD family tracked will put us on a much better track for healthier fish and lower mortality.”

In addition to evaluating the marine survival of the various density groups, NSRAA will attempt to evaluate the size of the adults at return to see if there is any correlation to their rearing densities. Larger coho command a higher price per pound at harvest, which can be economically important to the commercial hook and line fisheries.



F/V Lucy O conducting coho transfers from Sawmill Creek Hatchery

Deer Lake Coho Investigation

A recent discovery of an unusually high percentage of coho from NSRAA's Deer Lake project missing both adipose fins and coded-wire-tags caused concerns and prompted investigation.

“If, throughout the return, we are seeing a bunch of missing tags on these clipped fish, that can raise an eyebrow to the quality of our tags,” explains Annie Causey, NSRAA Special Projects Manager.

The adipose fin on a portion of Alaska's hatchery-raised salmon are clipped to differentiate them from wild stock and then coded-wire-tagged to indicate the specific location where the salmon were released and strategies used to rear them. This tracking is crucial as NSRAA determines the marine survivals of different brood years and the success of different rearing strategies, as well as its contribution to the fleets.

While it's not unusual for fish to lose their coded-wire-tags, they typically do so within the first three weeks after tagging. NSRAA already had a protocol in place to check the fish for tags at four weeks, at which time approximately 95-97 percent of the fish at Deer Lake still held their wires. It was assumed the number would not drop substantially after that.

After the discovery of the large number of coho returning without adipose fins or coded-wire-tags, NSRAA staff began to investigate further. Last spring, the crew added an additional check at six months. By that time, the number had dropped to 70-80 percent.

Adding to the perplexity is that some fish could naturally have missing adipose fins, which can lead them to be confused with fish whose fins were clipped. Whether the fish are losing tags or losing fins, both groups appear to be hatchery fish with no identifying information.

So this year, the tagging crew added a control group. The coho are reared over winter in Deer Lake, with 25 percent of the fish in net pens and the remainder swimming free in the lake. Fish that were neither clipped nor tagged were placed into an additional net pen as a control group.

“We found that a lot of the fish in the control group had missing or only partial adipose fins, which made them look like they were clipped,” Annie says.

This could be the result of the fish rubbing against or nipping each other, or perhaps they cluster into a dense ball over the winter and their dorsal fins were rubbing against the net. Regardless, it indicates that what were initially perceived as clipped fish without tags were actually fish that were never tagged but lost their fins.

“If we don't have a tag on a clipped fish, then it's not counted as part of NSRAA's contribution to the fisheries,” Annie explains. “If that missing adipose is happening naturally, then it wouldn't be counted toward our contribution anyway.”

NSRAA will continue to investigate this anomaly and search for ways to reduce or eliminate the loss of adipose fins during rearing. At a minimum, if there proves to be no feasible solution, NSRAA can report the percentage of those fish with neither adipose fins nor tags to allow for more accurate contribution estimates for that rearing strategy.

“The biggest takeaway is that our fish are not shedding tags,” Annie continues. “It was a relief for us to come to that conclusion.”



Partial regenerated adipose fin of a Deer Lake coho

Hidden Falls: Takatz Bay Reopens

Hidden Falls Hatchery’s remote rearing site at nearby Takatz Bay came back online this year with unanticipated success, raising hopes that salmon survivals in Chatham Strait will continue to rebound.

“It was a big success,” says Hatchery Manager, Kevin Connell. “The fish grew exceedingly well and exceedingly quickly – so much so that they were released two to three weeks earlier than normal.”

NSRAA began splitting chum releases from Hidden Falls between Kasnyku and Takatz bays in 1987. The Takatz site was used as a release to which the commercial fleets would have full access to upon their return, making it easier for the hatchery to manage broodstock returning to Kasnyku.

As salmon survival rates on the east side of Baranof Island declined sharply, Hidden Falls began to move its production to other sites, including Medvejie and the newly approved Thomas Bay project. The Takatz Bay site was discontinued after the 2016 release.

Salmon returns in Chatham Strait have finally begun to improve in the past several years. Those increased numbers, along with a recent cooperative agreement between NSRAA and Armstrong Keta Inc. (AKI) led NSRAA to reopen Takatz Bay this year. As part of the cooperative agreement, NSRAA is rearing 40 million chum under AKI’s permit – 30 million which are reared and released from Takatz Bay for the fleets and 10 million which are reared and released as part of the Kasnyku production.

The chum at Takatz Bay grew so much better and faster than expected that the staff was able to release the fish two to three weeks earlier than usual, saving about \$45,000 worth of food in the process.

Over the years of declining salmon returns in Chatham Strait, NSRAA has experimented with a variety of techniques to improve marine survivals. One of the leading theories for the dismal returns at Hidden Falls and Takatz Bay was that predators had become habituated to the spring releases and were feeding on the fry. NSRAA began using tenders to transport the fish away from the traditional release sites and those waiting predators.

Beach seining last year indicated that a portion of the fish released on the east side of Chatham Strait had returned to the Baranof Island shoreline before swimming north. This year, the staff changed its strategy and had the tender release the fish north of Hidden Falls, in hopes the fish would continue on their journey north without backtracking.

“It was a great season at Takatz,” Kevin says. “Our staff put in a lot of hard work. It was great to see that our efforts paid off and the fish grew so well.”



Takatz Bay net pen and barge site

Sawmill Expansion Delayed

A delay in funding has caused a setback in the final stage of work in the expansion of NSRAA’s Sawmill Creek Hatchery.

NSRAA was slated to receive more than \$5 million from the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) Mitigation funds in July 2023, which it had earmarked to purchase all the new building’s aquaculture equipment, such as incubation tanks, filters and pumps. Those funds were delayed by almost a year, due to a problematic transition when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) switched to a new grant administration software. The issue resulted in the delay of grants nationwide.

NSRAA finally received word that those funds were received by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the administrator of the mitigation program, in mid-May this year.

Unfortunately, the delay may cause further problems, as the grant specifically dictates the time window within which NSRAA must spend those monies.

“Grants are usually for two years and we lost an entire year,” explains NSRAA Operations Manager, Adam Olson.

There is some discussion that the grant term will be extended by a year, but that has yet to be confirmed. Without that change, it’s unrealistic NSRAA could use those monies in the allotted time, especially considering the frequency of delays sourcing the materials and equipment for which the funds are earmarked.

After last year’s salmon market crash, the board was not willing to risk purchasing the necessary equipment before receiving the funds. NSRAA is waiting to receive an agreement from ADF&G before moving forward with the equipment purchases.

While the funding delay of this last portion of PST monies was disappointing, NSRAA recently received good news: it will receive \$325,000 of an additional \$750,000 in PST Mitigation funds that recently became available. Those monies will be used toward NSRAA’s Chinook production at Medvejie and Hidden Falls.

If all goes well, Adam hopes the new Sawmill Creek facility will be completed by the end of the summer of 2026 – in time to increase its Chinook production with that brood year.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Hunter Conn
Levi Danielson
Charlotte Martin
Kelcey Simic

Medvejie Trials New Release Strategy

The staff at Medvejie Hatchery has begun a new strategy in its constant quest to reduce the cost of NSRAA’s Chinook program while also ensuring healthy returns – a group of Chinook will be released in the fall instead of spring.

The fall release trial is a play on what is known as the zero-check strategy, with which the Chinook are released to sea in their first year. Traditionally, Chinook are reared for almost two years before release, leading them to be the most expensive species for hatcheries to raise. That second year of rearing time also requires double the space than species that are reared and released after only one winter.

Medvejie has experimented with the zero-check program before, but the marine survivals were so poor NSRAA discontinued the program. The fall release strategy is a blend between the zero-check and traditional rearing strategies. Instead of releasing the Chinook the first spring, as has been done historically with zero-check strategy, the fish would be held at the hatchery through the summer and released in the fall.

“The zero-check strategy just wasn’t working, so we shifted to this fall release strategy instead,” explains Jared Nelson, Medvejie Hatchery Manager. “It gives us the ability to make more fish than the traditional rearing method and release a larger-size fish than the standard zero-check strategy. There have been some coho fall releases at another facility that have had some success, so I’m hoping our Chinook do the same.”

As this is the first known such trial for Chinook, there a lot of unknowns.

While springtime releases allow the fish to grow and adapt to the ocean when the water is warmer, there is more light, and food, such as bait fish and zooplankton, is more plentiful, there are also more predators ready to prey on the releases. In the fall, many of the predators have left the area, but daylight is waning and the water has begun to cool, which can inhibit fish growth as well as the availability of food.

“We’re hoping to be on the front end of those winter conditions by releasing them in September or early October, when there’s still a good amount of life in the ocean and the water hasn’t cooled off yet,” Jared says.

Last year was the first year Medvejie released a group of Chinook in the fall. This year’s release will be the same size: roughly 200,000. Half the group will be reared in Green Lake, while the other half will be reared in saltwater for the summer months. Both groups will be released in the fall.

The fish will be coded-wire-tagged to differentiate between the two groups, so NSRAA staff can measure whether there is a difference in marine survival between the fry reared in freshwater and those reared in saltwater. The fall release program will likely run for at least 6 to 8 years, until enough brood years have returned for NSRAA to collect and analyze data to determine the success of the program.

Though NSRAA currently produces about three million Chinook at Medvejie annually, it is permitted for 5.2 million. A combination of space limitations, the cost of the program and insufficient returning broodstock numbers have prevented the organization from taking full advantage of its permit. NSRAA was recently approved for additional monies for Medvejie’s Chinook program through the Pacific Salmon Treaty Mitigation Funding. The funds will be used to purchase additional rearing containers to increase its Chinook production.

“A lot of this depends on the adults that come back and how many eggs we can collect, but I’m hoping it will help us double our production in 2025,” Jared says. “It will be dependent on our broodstock returns.”

NSRAA FY25 Budget

Projected Income - FY25		
Year	Income Source	Amount
2023	Enhancement tax	\$1,295,615
Revenue - Fish sales / Assessment tax:		
2024	- Amount required from Chum	\$7,570,783
Cost Recovery		
2023	- Chum	\$2,544,597
2023	- Chinook	\$9,106
2023	- Coho	\$249,984
2023	- Incidental species	\$2,508
2023	- Roe	\$0
2023	- Carcass	\$101,594
Other Revenue / Funds from Reserves		
2023	Rental Income	\$39,000
2023	Investment Earnings (net of fees)	\$647,456
2023	From unrestricted Reserves	\$0
Total		\$12,460,643
Projected Expenses - FY25		
Expense Source	Amount	
Operational Budget	\$11,360,643	
Capital Budget	\$1,100,000	
Total		\$12,460,643



BY22 Medvejie fall-release zero checks

NSRAA Experiments with Keta Chinook

A surplus of eggs collected last fall has allowed NSRAA to begin experimenting with different rearing strategies for the Keta Chinook, bringing the organization one step closer to its goal of one day releasing the fish for the fleets.

Ten years ago, staff at Little Port Walter Research Station began collecting eggs from a wild stock on the Keta River when they noticed the fish had a natural tendency to out-migrate their first summer, as sub-yearlings. When NOAA threatened to cut the Keta research program several years ago, NSRAA began a cooperative agreement with Little Port Walter to ensure the program would continue.

“We were very interested in this stock,” says Taylor Scott, NSRAA Research Coordinator.

The Keta’s natural propensity to out-migrate after one winter makes it very promising for NSRAA’s zero-check programs, in which the salmon are reared for and released after only one winter. Chinook are traditionally reared for at least 18 months before being released to the ocean, making them the costliest species to rear in a hatchery. By eliminating the second winter, the zero-check strategy can halve the cost of and provide more space for production.

“It’s an enormous trade-off in feed, labor and space,” Taylor says.

NSRAA has experimented with the zero-check strategy on its current Chinook stock (from Andrews Creek), but with little success. The fish have experienced extremely poor marine survivals.

The Keta also tend to grow fast and large, and typically rear within Alaska’s inner islands as adults, rather the open ocean – increasing the appeal of using the stock for production.

“There’s a good chance for them to be caught by the commercial fisheries,” Taylor explains. “That’s a boost to the troll fleet.”

Under the cooperative agreement, the Keta eggs are collected from returning broodstock at Little Port Walter and then transferred to NSRAA’s Hidden Falls Hatchery for incubation and rearing. The juveniles are then transferred back to Little Port Walter in the spring for release.

Last fall was the first season there was a large enough surplus of eggs – 150,000 – to allow NSRAA to experiment with different rearing strategies. One theory behind the failure of NSRAA’s past zero-check Chinook programs is the fish were too small at the time of release to survive the ocean. In this year’s experiment, 45,000 of the fish were reared using the conventional zero-check strategy, to be released at a weight of 20 grams in July. The second group of approximately 100,000 are slated for release at 50 grams this fall.

“The overarching experiment is: can we produce a sub-yearling, and, if so, does the spring or the fall release strategy work better? Both groups are differentially tagged so we will know when they return as adults the difference between the survival of the two groups.”

Previous research indicates Chinook must be a minimum of 20 grams at release to have a chance of survival in the ocean. Most of NSRAA’s traditional Chinook programs, in which the fish are reared for two winters before release, aim for a release weight of 50 grams. The fall group would be released at the same weight as a traditional group, but nearly nine months earlier.

“It’s pretty significant that we could achieve the same size as a yearling in less time,” Taylor says. “That’s what’s appealing about the fall release.”

Though there has been some experimentation among hatcheries with a fall release of coho, this is the first known trial with a hatchery-raised Chinook fall release. NSRAA’s Medvejie Hatchery is doing a similar trial this year, but with the Andrews Creek stock.

Though there is little evidence of Alaska wild salmon outmigration in the fall, such behavior has been poorly researched. All Pacific salmon utilize stream estuaries for a period of time before moving into the open ocean and it’s likely sub-yearling Chinook may spend several months there in the summer before moving offshore.

By holding these fish in net pens for the summer, the sub-yearling Chinook will have the opportunity to grow to a larger size while protected from predators.

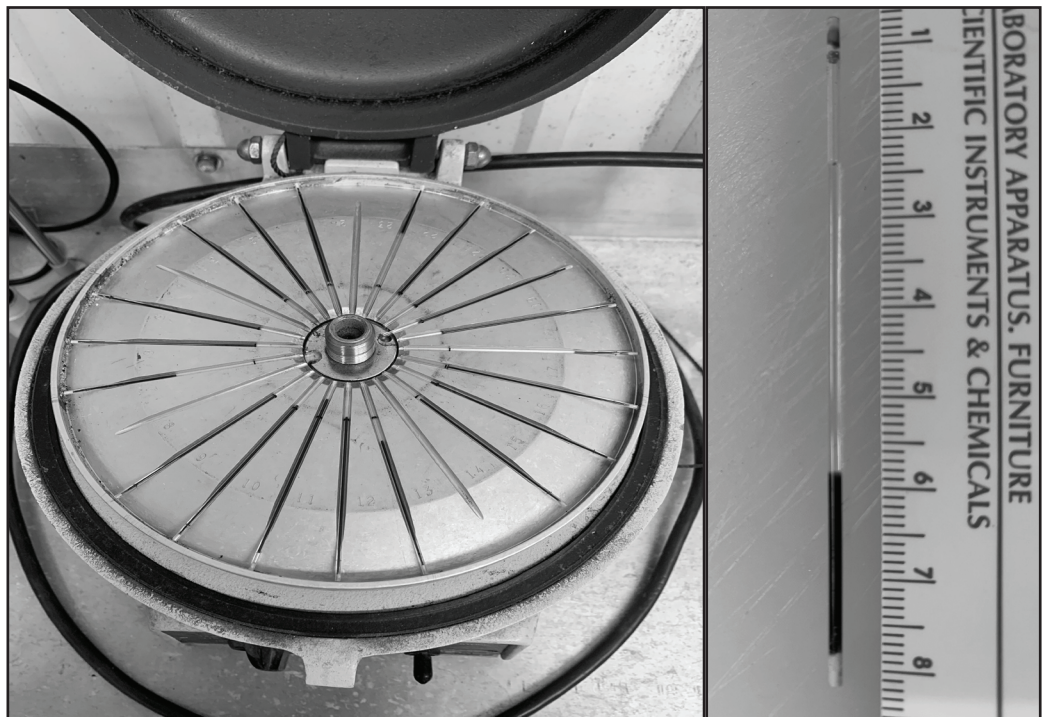
As part of this year’s experiment, NSRAA is also working with the research staff at Little Port Water to measure the sodium chloride levels in the blood of the fry. Sodium chloride levels can indicate the optimum time to transfer the fish from fresh to saltwater. This, in turn, can help maximize fish growth.

“Everybody wants chinook and if we could figure out a way to produce a stock that survives well and isn’t expensive to rear, that’s a win for everybody,” Taylor says.

Taylor is hopeful the Keta Chinook program will prove successful and that the fleets will be able to benefit from this work by 2030 or so.



BY23 Keta zero checks



Centrifuging blood capillary tubes. Before (left), After (right)

Cost Recovery cont'd from front page

“Our goal, since we have such a large forecasted return, is that we will harvest cost recovery outside of Deep Inlet to allow rotational fisheries,” Scott explains. “The caveat being that if we’re not able to meet our goal there, we’ll have to close Deep Inlet. But our hope is to meet our goal with continual rotational fisheries.”

Scott expects there will be common property opportunities at each of the cost recovery sites, though some more than others.

“I’m hopeful this is a one year event where we have to take cost recovery at so many sites, but it depends both on salmon returns and market prices,” he says.

Unfortunately, last year’s market crash and poor market prices means more fish must be harvested this year in order to meet the cost recovery goal. It also led to no interest in NSRAA’s carcasses.

“Nobody bid on our carcasses this year,” Ben says. The carcasses typically bring in a few hundred thousand dollars or so. “It’s not a lot, but it’s something. It provides value to the fish.”

It also helps the hatcheries with the removal of carcasses. Without bids, the hatchery staff will be forced to grind and/or dispose of all the carcasses.

“You can imagine the amount of labor required to process hundreds of thousands of chum and how quickly the carcasses pile up,” Ben explains. Not only has NSRAA lost the funds it would normally get from those carcass sales, but now it will bear additional costs in order to process those carcasses. In addition to increased labor costs, NSRAA may also be forced to purchase a fish grinder for Medvejie, which is slated to have the biggest chum return this summer.

With the current budget constraints, it’s not a good time for an equipment purchase of that size – if it’s even possible to make the purchase and receive and install the grinder in time.

For now, NSRAA remains in a strong financial position despite the increased costs of expanding operations, last year’s cost recovery shortfall and market crash.

“Overall, if we meet our goals this year, we’ll continue to be in a strong financial position moving forward and we won’t need to consider cutting production in order to meet our budgetary needs,” Scott says.

A number of other aquaculture associations have been forced to cut production recently due to budgetary constraints.

“We’re hopeful we’ll meet our goals and avoid (any production cuts) in the future,” he says.

NSRAA Welcomes new Board Members

NSRAA welcomes two new people to its board this year: Eric Daugherty and Jacqueline (Jacquie) Foss.

At 33, Eric is one of the younger members of the board. When a fellow gillnetter asked him to consider running for the open board position, Eric hesitated, unsure if he really had the time to make that commitment. But after reflection, he decided it didn’t matter how busy he was, he would make the time. Though this will be Eric’s thirteenth season gillnetting, he realized he still has a lot more to learn about what happens behind the scenes with Southeast Alaska’s salmon politics.

“There aren’t a lot of people my age or younger involved (in fishing politics),” Eric explains. “This is an opportunity for a local person like myself to get more involved, to get a better understanding of what’s going on and have more of a voice in it.”

That lack of younger people serving on NSRAA’s and other boards in the industry was Jacquie’s main interest in joining the board. In the past few years, Jacquie has worked with the Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association (ALFA) to create more avenues for young people to buy into the fishery. She realized that it’s often the same folks, like Jim Moore and Eric Jordan, who have been working behind the scenes for decades advocating for fishermen, while folks in their 40s and younger rarely get involved.

“It’s time for people my age to step up,” Jacquie says, herself included. “I see this as the next cohort of fishermen coming on board to learn alongside the folks that have been doing this for decades and have deep connections and knowledge before they step down.

This is Jacquie’s first time on a board this size and she’s eager to learn how it navigates difficult decisions and makes compromises to serve different gear groups, each with their own interest.

“Also, NSRAA supports my livelihood, so it’s also a way of giving back to an organization that gives to fishermen.”

NSRAA THA SCHEDULES - 2024							
Deep Inlet	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Seine	Gillnet	Gillnet	Gillnet	Seine	Seine	Troll
<i>Begin: Sat, June 1 with Deep Inlet proper area restrictions for cost recovery (Deep Inlet closed from neck of Deep Inlet to head of bay). Full THA should open on or around July 1.</i>							
2024 chum forecast = 1,427,000 early run, 1,027,000 late run (both Deep Inlet and Bear Cove)							
Crawfish Inlet	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Seine				Seine		
<i>Begin: Late July with cost recovery; one day/week seine openings may occur to assist in terminal buildup as needed; will open to seine upon completion of cost recovery</i>							
2024 chum forecast - 1,336,000							
Hidden Falls	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Seine				Seine		
<i>Begin: Sunday, June 16</i>							
2024 chum forecast - 1,553,000							
Southeast Cove	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Seine	Troll	Gillnet	Gillnet	Seine	Troll	Troll
<i>Begin: Sunday, June 16</i>							
2024 chum forecast - 215,000 (Southeast Cove), 211,000 (Gunnuk Creek)							
Thomas Bay	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Seine				Seine		
<i>Begin: Sunday, June 16</i>							
2024 chum forecast - 381,000							

Staff Profile: Jared Nelson



Jared and Annie, with Louie and Lloyd

Like many others, Jared Nelson was amazed by Sitka’s natural beauty when he first arrived.

“I couldn’t believe the scenery – it reminded me of Jurassic Park,” says Jared, who grew up in Minnesota. “I couldn’t believe how big everything was. I’d never seen mountains and I’d never seen the ocean. It was a ton of new experiences... ocean waves and swells and creatures... it was all completely new and almost overwhelming.”

It wasn’t necessarily love at first sight, though. Jared found the ocean intimidating and Sitka’s rainy weather dampened his enthusiasm for living there year-round. Fortunately, he loved it enough to return each summer until he was finally ready to call Sitka home.

Jared grew up in Red Wing, a small city on the Mississippi River south of Minneapolis. Some of his favorite memories are of fishing for bass with his father and brother. After graduating high school, Jared went to school for a two year fisheries and natural resources program in Ely, Minnesota, on the edge of the Boundary Waters.

“I wasn’t exactly sure what I wanted to do, I just knew I wanted to work outdoors,” he says.

By the time he graduated, Jared knew he wanted to study fisheries, so he transferred to University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point to finish his bachelor’s degree in fisheries, with an aquaculture minor – a decision that altered his course.

“I pictured myself working for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, with an end goal of becoming a fisheries biologist or something,” Jared says.

But he found the direct contact with the hatchery fish more rewarding than he had anticipated.

“You actively see them, feed them and rear them,” he explains. “It was also nice to know that the fish are getting stocked into lakes and streams for people to catch and both people and the environment benefit from the fish you raised. It was easier to see the reward.”

That interest eventually led to Jared finding and applying for a job opening at NSRAA. He worked as a seasonal employee for the first few years and returned to Minnesota in the winters. Minnesota might be known for bitterly cold winters, but Jared found it more difficult to adjust to Sitka’s rainy, dark winters.

“I like ice fishing and snowmobiling, so Minnesota’s winters never bothered me much,” he said.

Fishing and his work at NSRAA kept Jared coming back. Each year, he would work a new position with a new challenge. In the past eight years, Jared has worked his way up from a seasonal fish culturist to the manager of Medvejie Hatchery.

“I’ve learned a ton and it’s been very rewarding,” Jared says. “There’s always a new challenge: weather, run forecasts, etc. We’re constantly trying to improve what we do, always changing techniques. Even as a manager, you’re still right in there with the fish. You’re definitely getting your hands dirty every day.”

It also helped that Jared was finally able to purchase his own boat. “That was a gamechanger,” he says. “I finally fell in love with everything around the water.”

Life in Sitka holds an added bonus for Jared now – he’s engaged to be married to NSRAA colleague Annie Causey in September.

NSRAA 2024 Return Projections					
Site	Projected Return	Range		2023 Return	2023 Forecast
		Low	High		
Chum					
Hidden Falls	1,553,000	588,000	2,312,000	1,194,761	806,000
Medvejie/Deep Inlet*	2,454,000	1,549,000	3,598,000	1,390,342	951,000
Crawfish Inlet	1,336,000	756,000	2,113,000	1,687,317	867,000
Southeast Cove	215,000	118,000	480,000	381,655	570,000
Gunnuk Creek	211,000	101,000	304,000	38,662	26,000
Thomas Bay	381,000	123,000	572,000	139,754	97,000
	6,150,000	3,235,000	9,379,000	4,832,491	3,317,000
Chinook					
Hidden Falls	900	350	2,200	1,661	400
Gunnuk Creek	900	350	2,200	1,185	400
Medvejie	10,000	3,000	20,000	5,193	13,000
Crawfish Inlet	400	200	600	872	250
Crescent Bay	1,800	900	2,600	1,150	1,800
	14,000	4,800	27,600	10,061	15,850
0-ck Chinook					
Medvejie	300	-	750	293	100
Crawfish Inlet	100	-	400	55	300
	400	-	1,150	348	400
Coho					
Hidden Falls	36,000	18,000	72,000	26,912	38,000
Deer Lake	82,000	41,000	165,000	44,600	44,000
Lake Stocking	-	-	-	-	-
Medvejie	11,000	6,000	22,000	10,396	12,000
Deep Inlet	17,000	8,000	33,000	11,648	26,000
	146,000	73,000	292,000	93,556	120,000
ALL SPECIES TOTALS:	6,310,400	3,312,800	9,699,750	4,936,456	3,453,250

* Cooperative Project with SJH: Projections for Medvejie/Deep Inlet are for total returns (NSRAA + SJH fish)