



SALMON HATCHERIES FOR ALASKA

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Federal Government Rejects Bid to List Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Under Endangered Species Act

*NOAA's Comprehensive 12-Month Scientific Review Affirms Alaska's Hatchery
Management is Effective and Poses Low Risk to Wild Chinook Populations*

Alaska's salmon hatchery industry welcomed the critical review and additional clarity provided through a landmark federal decision after the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced on May 12, 2026, that Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Chinook salmon do not warrant listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ruling rejects a petition filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC), which had sought ESA protections for three distinct Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) of GOA Chinook: the Southeastern Gulf of Alaska (SEGOA), the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA), and the Northwestern Gulf of Alaska (NWGOA), covering the majority of Alaska's Chinook stocks from Ketchikan to the Alaska Peninsula.

In its findings, NOAA concluded: "Based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we conclude that the SEGOA, CGOA, and NWGOA ESUs of GOA Chinook salmon are not in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges, nor likely to become so within the foreseeable future."

"The Status Review Team (SRT) found it unlikely that hatcheries contribute significantly to each ESU's extinction risk, now or in the foreseeable future. We agree that hatcheries present a low-level threat."— **NOAA Status Review Team, May 2026**

Of particular significance to Alaska's hatchery community, NOAA's Status Review Team (SRT) conducted an extensive evaluation of widely available multi-national North Pacific salmon research on hatchery interactions with wild Chinook populations. After twelve months of rigorous scientific and peer-reviewed examinations, the SRT concluded that "current state management practices are effective for mitigating risks caused by hatcheries" and that hatcheries are "unlikely to contribute significantly to each ESU's extinction risk, now or in the foreseeable

future." The team designated hatcheries as presenting only a "low-level threat" — the most favorable determination possible under the ESA review framework.

NOAA's review further noted that interspecific competition between wild Chinook and hatchery pink and chum salmon is minimized by naturally occurring ecological factors. As the agency observed, "species-specific redd site requirements, habitat partitioning, and temporal differences in spawn timing reduce the likelihood of this type of interspecific competition" — a finding consistent with decades of peer-reviewed fisheries science.

Under ESA Section 4(a)(1), NOAA was required to evaluate GOA Chinook across five threat categories: habitat destruction or modification, overutilization, disease or predation, the adequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms, and other natural or manmade factors. The agency found that existing state management frameworks were sufficient to address each of these factors.

"This decision reflects the strength of Alaska's science-based approach to hatchery management — programs developed and refined through decades of research, peer review, and collaboration with state and federal partners. We welcome NOAA's thorough and rigorous findings, and we remain committed to the responsible stewardship of Alaska's salmon resources through continued research and review in the years to come." — **Scott Wagner, General Manager, Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (NSRAA)**

This decision provides significant clarity that the science presented within NOAA's findings — and in related policy discussions — is entirely consistent with information long advanced by Alaska's hatchery operators. The ruling is a favorable decision for those operators, but additionally for the coastal fishing communities, tribes, commercial and sport fishing industries, and the broader public that depend on Alaska's salmon economy. Alaska's salmon hatcheries produce fish at a scale that sustains commercial and sport fisheries, supports food security, and generates thousands of jobs statewide.

The full NOAA findings and supporting documentation are [publicly available here](#).

About the Signatory Organizations

Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) is a non-profit aquaculture association operating hatchery programs in Prince William Sound, supporting commercial and sport fisheries in the Valdez area.

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) is one of the largest non-profit aquaculture corporations in Alaska, operating multiple hatcheries and enhancement programs throughout Prince William Sound.

Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association (KRAA) operates salmon enhancement programs serving the Kodiak Island Borough, supporting commercial fisheries and rural Alaskan communities.

Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) provides salmon enhancement services to commercial fishermen in Southeast Alaska, operating hatcheries across the southern panhandle region.

Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (NSRAA) operates salmon hatchery programs in northern Southeast Alaska, enhancing fisheries from Yakutat to Frederick Sound for the benefit of commercial, sport, and personal use fishermen.

Additional information can be found at salmonhatcheriesforak.org