Southeast Salmon Fisheries
The Economic Backbone of Southeast Communities
Commercial fishing is the world’s last remaining hunter-gatherer industry for a wild food source.
Statewide Catch of Salmon

Alaska Purchased from Russia 1867

Regional Aquaculture Assoc.
Southeast Alaska Commercial Salmon Harvests, 1988-2008

2009 - 49 million
The Regional Ocean Ranching Program

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is required by the Alaska state constitution to manage the state’s salmon resource sustainably and in the early 1970s that meant commercial salmon fishermen were spending a lot of their season tied to the dock. Natural salmon abundance was at the bottom of a down cycle and commercial salmon fishermen were not catching enough salmon to sustain a viable salmon industry. With their livelihoods hanging in the balance, commercial fishermen, with cooperation from the state of Alaska, voted to take an active part in their own economic recovery by “enhancing” the salmon resource through ocean ranching aquaculture.
Why “enhancement” works

- In nature, 90% of the female's eggs do not survive to develop into “smolt” ready to go to sea.
- Eggs and sperm taken from hatchery brood stock and incubated at the hatchery have a 90% survival in the smolt stage.
- SSEAA releases smolt to the ocean as soon as they are ready.
- SSEAA's goal is to have 75% of returning adults intercepted by the common property fishery.
John Sund

– Legislator, District 1 Representative, and drafter of SSRAA Articles of Incorporation 1975.

A Quote From the Video, *Neets Bay an Alaska Salmon Ranch*

“The entire non-profit regional aquaculture enterprise in Alaska is totally unique in the history of the United States in terms of fishery management. . . . . . it is a tremendous success. All of the original goals and objectives of the program have been exceeded many times over. The economic benefit to the region is in the millions and millions of dollars. And, it will continue to generate tremendous benefits for decades to come.”
In 1975 newly passed state legislation allowed fishermen to form regional aquaculture associations and assess themselves a percentage of their gross catch to use as payment for the state loans necessary to build hatcheries. If the associations failed, the fishermen’s future earnings were the collateral for paying back the state loans. There were no precedents for this cooperative partnership with the state, and the success of this venture was far from certain.
Without negatively impacting natural spawning fish populations, Regional Aquaculture Associations continue to succeed in enhancing the salmon resource for all the salmon user groups.

The annual social and economic benefit of these programs has succeeded far beyond the expectations of the “founding fathers” - Alaska’s commercial salmon fishermen.
The Constitution of the State of Alaska
Ratified by the People of Alaska April 24, 1956

Article 8 ~ Natural Resources

Article 8, Sections:

1. Statement of Policy
2. General Authority
3. Common Use
4. Sustained Yield
5. Facilities and Improvements
6. State Public Domain
7. Special Purpose Sites
8. Leases

occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.

§ 4. Sustained Yield ~ Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.
“Sound science forms the foundation of sustainable management of seafood resources in Alaska.” – Ray Riutta, Executive Director ASMI
The Dog that Didn’t Bark

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS by John Sackton (news analysis) - Dec 5, 2007- The largest fishery in the U.S. will likely be cut 28% in tonnage next year, as the N. Pacific council appears likely to accept the 1 million ton allowable biological catch limit for Bering Sea pollock. They are also likely to accept a 15% reduction in pacific cod - selling almost by the ounce these days it is so valuable.

This reduction will reduce revenues by tens of millions of dollars. Yet there is no cry for relief from Congress; no demands for the declaration of a fishing emergency in Alaska. Instead the industry is taking the cuts in stride.

They say that such stock fluctuations are to be expected after several years of above average landings.

It's worth asking why this seems so much like business as usual in Alaska, but in other parts of the country, stock reductions for things like summer flounder or herring create massive campaigns against the cuts, with politicians, lobbyists, and environmental groups all engaged in a massive media fight to influence the outcome.

The answer is quite simple: stewardship. In Alaska, more than any other area, the industry and government are partners in stewardship over the resource.
The Fishing Industry

The oldest industry in United States worth $30 billion to nation’s economy

More from Alaska than the rest of U.S. states combined
  • More jobs than oil, gas, and mining - combined
  • 78,000 direct and indirect jobs creating $5.8 billion dollars of economic activity
  • 96% of all US salmon is from AK
  • There are no over fished stocks
  • Seafood is harvested and managed on a sustainable basis
Alaska's Salmon Fishery
Certified *Sustainable*

MSC re-certifies
November 08, 2007
Alaska's Salmon Fishery

Alaska salmon was the first U.S. fishery and third worldwide to receive certification in 2000.
Economic Diversity of Southeast Alaska

2009

Fisheries

Mining
Timber
Tourism

Mariculture

Future