



American Fisheries Society

ALASKA CHAPTER

Commissioner Denby Lloyd
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
1255 West 8th Street
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

Dr. Jamal Moss
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June 26, 2007

Dear Commissioner Lloyd,

I am writing, on behalf of our AFS chapter to inquire about a proposed hatchery stocking project. Apparently ADF&G plans to use hatchery stocking to make up for recent escapement shortfalls at McDonald Lake, near Ketchikan. On the surface, this project seems to be in conflict with several parts of the Sustainable Salmon Fisheries for the State of Alaska. We in Alaska have been rightly proud of our responsible approach to salmon hatcheries. ADF&G, over the watch of many commissioners, has had a strict “wild stock first” policy. Even with this policy, Alaska has allowed a successful hatchery program throughout the state. Not that there have not been problems, but generally these problems have been dealt with successfully using a consistent policy. Alaska has been so successful that researchers and managers outside of our state talk approvingly about the “Alaskan model” for enhancement.

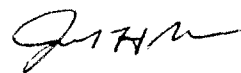
Members of our chapter are concerned by the appearance that sockeye stocking is now being used in place of wild-stock management—first at Hugh Smith Lake and now at McDonald Lake—and that this represents an abrupt change in of Alaska’s very successful policies and traditions. As you must know, hatchery supplementation was used in place of management of wild stocks in the Pacific Northwest for many years, and that reckless use of hatcheries has often been cited as one major cause of the “salmon crisis” in that part of the world.

Our chapter would like to know if there was a recent change in hatchery policies in Alaska. In the future, our chapter may be called upon to take some kind of position on this kind of stocking, either pro or con, and what we need right now is more information. Our specific questions at this time are as follows:

1. What is the intent of the stocking project at McDonald Lake (is it restoration, simple fish production, stock identification)?
2. What is ADF&G's policy about using hatchery-produced fish to meet escapement goals, and did that policy recently change?
3. Does ADF&G have a plan to study the potential deleterious effects of this stocking on the genetic integrity of the naturally spawning populations in and around McDonald Lake?
4. Does ADF&G have plans to measure what has been called "the effective escapement" from this project, or will both breeding and non-breeding fish all be counted toward escapement goals, as was the case at Hugh Smith Lake?
5. Did ADF&G's career managers and research biologists support this as a responsible use of hatchery supplementation?

Thank you in advance for any answers to these questions you can provide. Also, if our chapter does decide to organize some kind of ad-hoc meeting on this topic at our upcoming chapter meeting in Ketchikan in November, would you be willing to assign a staff member to come and participate?

Sincerely,



Jamal Moss, Ph.D.
Alaska Chapter President