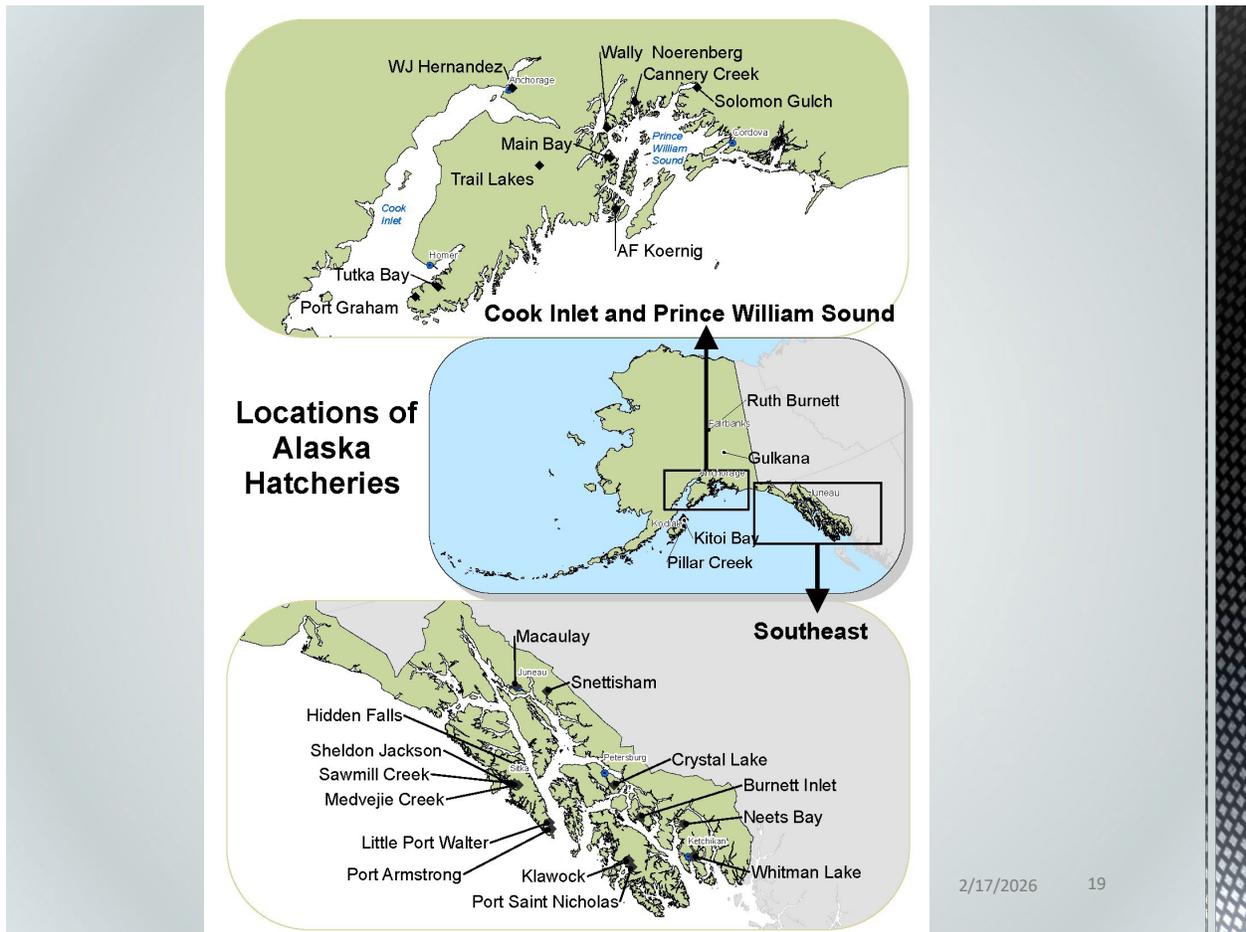


Salmon Fishery Enhancement in Alaska: A White Paper

Purpose: This paper summarizes and updates a 2019 presentation given to Alaska House Fisheries and is intended as a quick guide to understanding the history and complexities of the salmon enhancement program in Alaska.

Table of Contents

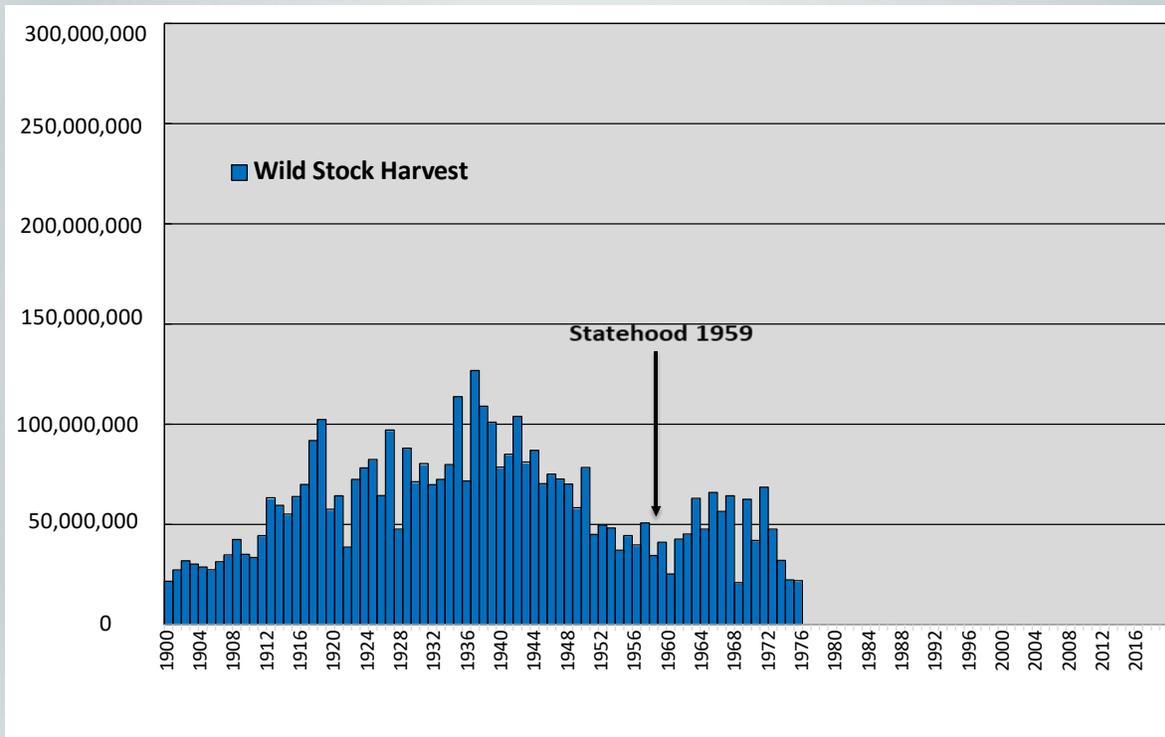
1. History.....page 2.
2. Statutory Guidance.....page 3.
3. Regulatory Guidance.....page 6.
4. Regional Planning.....page 7.
5. Hatchery Production.....page 9-11.



History:

In 1959, when statehood began, Alaska’s salmon fisheries had fallen to historical low levels. Wild salmon production was not living up to the potential of the abundant habitat. Economic losses to individual fishermen, coastal communities, and the state were considered a disaster. In 1960, with state control of fish and game management, in-season escapement-based management of salmon fisheries was adopted. After 15 years, harvest management alone had not increased salmon abundance quickly enough.

Alaska Commercial Harvest of all Salmon Species from 1900-1976



In the 1970's, the state adopted an integrated approach to recovering Alaska's salmon fisheries. In 1971, the legislature created Fisheries Rehabilitation, Enhancement and Development (FRED) Division (AS 16.05.092). In 1972, a constitutional amendment allowed limited entry commercial salmon fisheries for resource conservation and to prevent economic distress, as well as "to promote the efficient development of aquaculture in the state" in Alaska (Article 8, section 15). The 1976 Magnuson-Stevens Act restricted foreign fishing to staying outside a 200-mile limit.

Statutory Guidance:

In 1974, private nonprofit (PNP) hatcheries are approved by the legislature. The purpose of Alaska's PNP fisheries enhancement program is to provide an economic engine to support and grow coastal communities; and recover and support Alaska's salmon fisheries and fishing economy.

Private Nonprofit Salmon Hatcheries

Laws of Alaska 1974

Source: CSHB 830 am S
Chapter No. 111

AN ACT

Authorizing the Operation of Private Nonprofit Salmon Hatcheries

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Alaska:

*Section 1. INTENT. *It is the intent of this Act to authorize the private ownership of salmon hatcheries by qualified nonprofit corporations for the purpose of contributing by artificial means to the rehabilitation of the state's depleted and depressed salmon fishery...*

Approved May 16, 1974
Effective August 14, 1974

2/17/2026 5

The PNP fisheries enhancement program is guided by a series of statutes. Some, like the FRED statute (AS 16.05.092) begin with directives, “*The department shall*” before laying out specifics, “*through rehabilitation, enhancement, and development programs, do all things necessary to ensure perpetual and increasing production and use of the food resources of state waters and continental shelf areas;*”. Other statutes lay out broad responsibilities, which may include interaction with the hatchery program (AS 16.05.050 and AS 16.05.221).

Guidance in Statutes

Title 16 – Fish and Game

- AS 16.05.050. Powers and Duties of Commissioner
- **AS 16.05.092. Fisheries rehabilitation, enhancement and development**
- AS 16.05.221. Boards of fisheries and game
- AS 16.05.730. Management of wild and enhanced stocks of fish
- AS 16.05.851. Hatchery required (for dams and obstructions)
- **AS 16.10.375-480. Salmon Hatcheries**
- AS 16.10.500-560. Fisheries Enhancement Loan Program
- AS 16.40.210. Finfish farming prohibited
- AS 16.43.400-440. Special Harvest Area Entry Permits

Statutes directly related to salmon enhancement planning, permitting, and hatchery operations can be found in Chapter 10, Article 9 - Salmon Hatcheries. This includes, AS 16.10.375, which directs the commissioner to designate regions of the state for the purpose of salmon production, develop regional planning teams, and develop a comprehensive salmon plan for each region, including provisions for both public and private nonprofit hatchery systems.

Title 16 – Fish and Game

Chapter 10, Article 9 - Salmon Hatcheries.

Section

- 375. Regional salmon plans
- 380. Regional associations
- 400. Permits for salmon hatcheries
- 410. Hearings before permit issuance
- 420. Conditions of a permit
- 430. Alteration, suspension, or revocation of permit
- 440. Regulations relating to released fish
- 443. Department assistance and cooperation
- 445. Egg sources
- 450. Sale of salmon and salmon eggs: use of proceeds; quality and price
- 455. Cost recovery fisheries
- 460. Inspection of hatchery
- 470. Annual report
- 480. Contracts for the operation of state hatcheries

Regulatory Guidance:

Additional guidance for operating the PNP fisheries enhancement program can be found in Alaska Administrative Code, Title 5 – Fish and Game, and in Fish and Game policy.

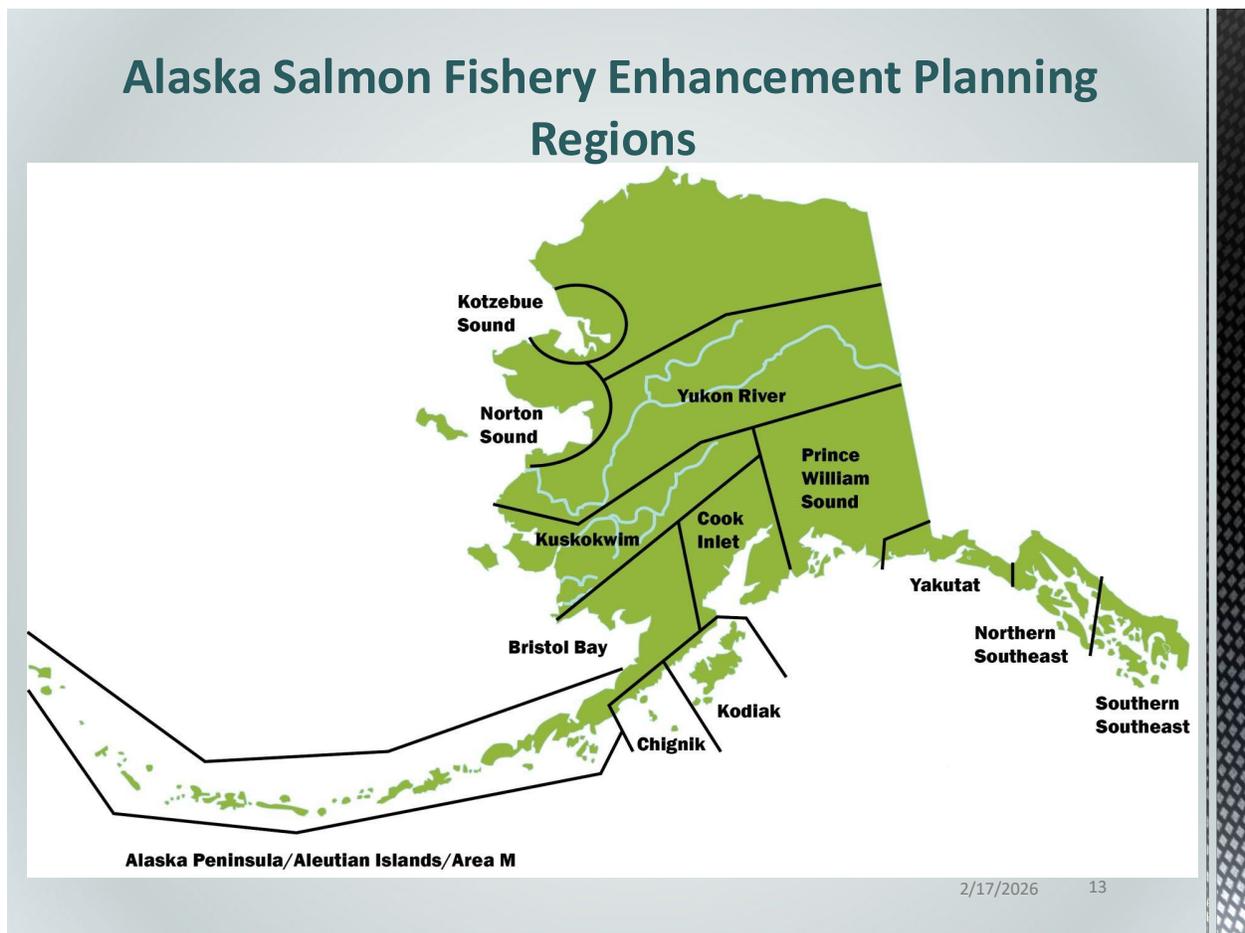
Guidance in Regulations and Policy

Title 5 – Fish and Game

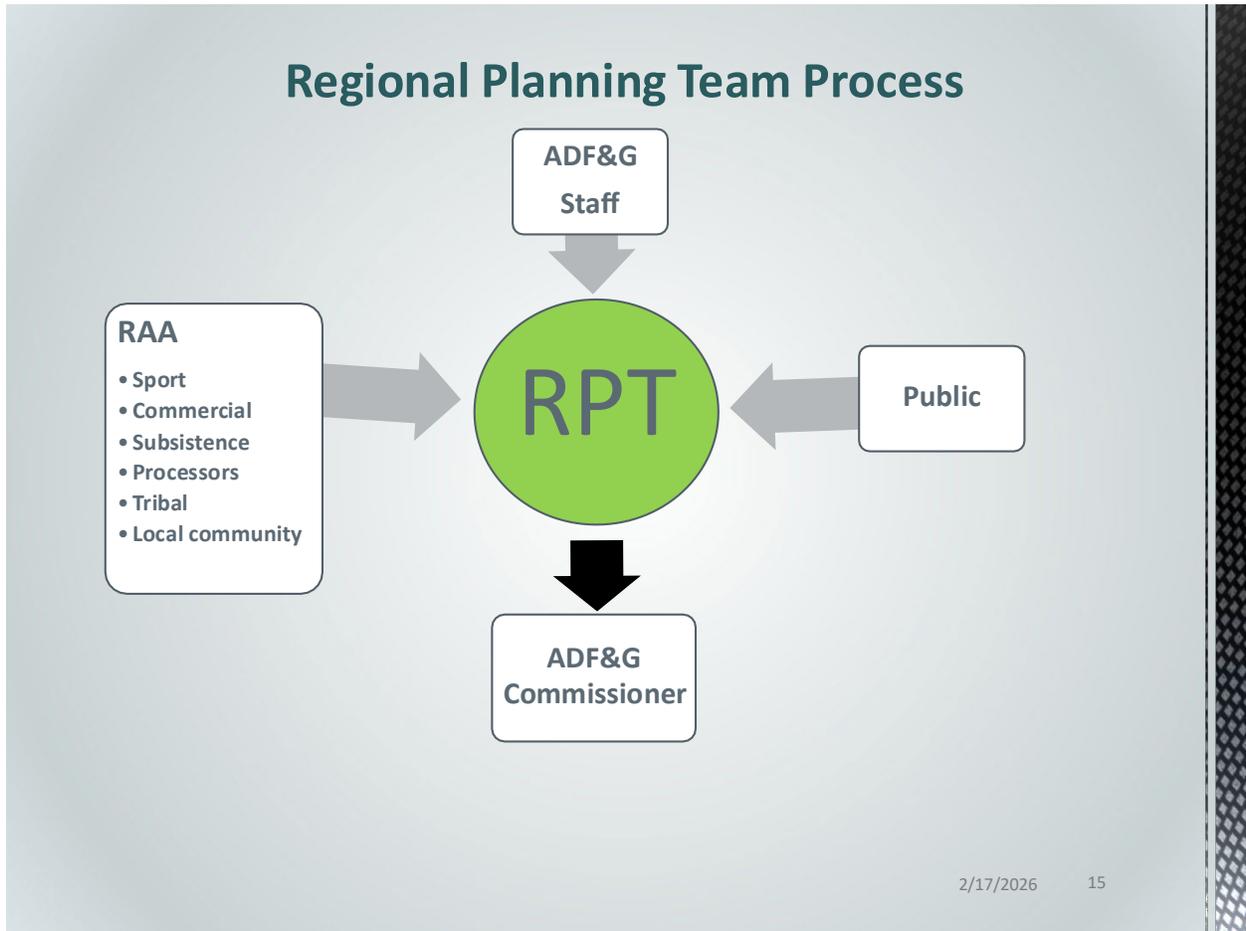
- 5 AAC 39.220. Policy for the management of mixed stock salmon fisheries
- 5 AAC 39.222. Policy for the management of sustainable salmon fisheries
- **5 AAC 40.005-990 - Private Nonprofit Salmon and Shellfish Hatcheries**
- 5 AAC 41.001-100 Transportation, Possession and Release of Live Fish
- **Genetic Policy** (1985) and Background to the Genetic Policy (1989) is a policy used for permit review but has not been adopted into regulation.

Regional Planning:

The PNP fisheries enhancement program is user driven. The ADF&G Commissioner designates regions of the state for the purpose of salmon production and development. The users of the resource determine what fishery enhancement is desirable and ADF&G determines what is appropriate within their mandate to sustain natural production. The mechanism for this cooperative effort is the Regional Planning Team (RPT), made up of representatives from the appropriate Regional Aquaculture Association (RAA) and ADF&G staff.

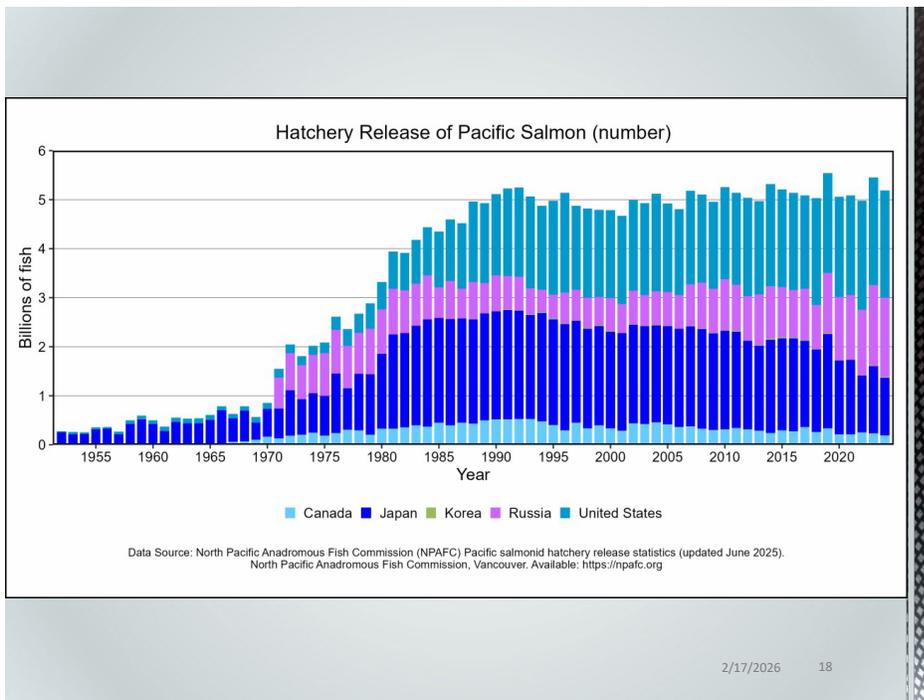
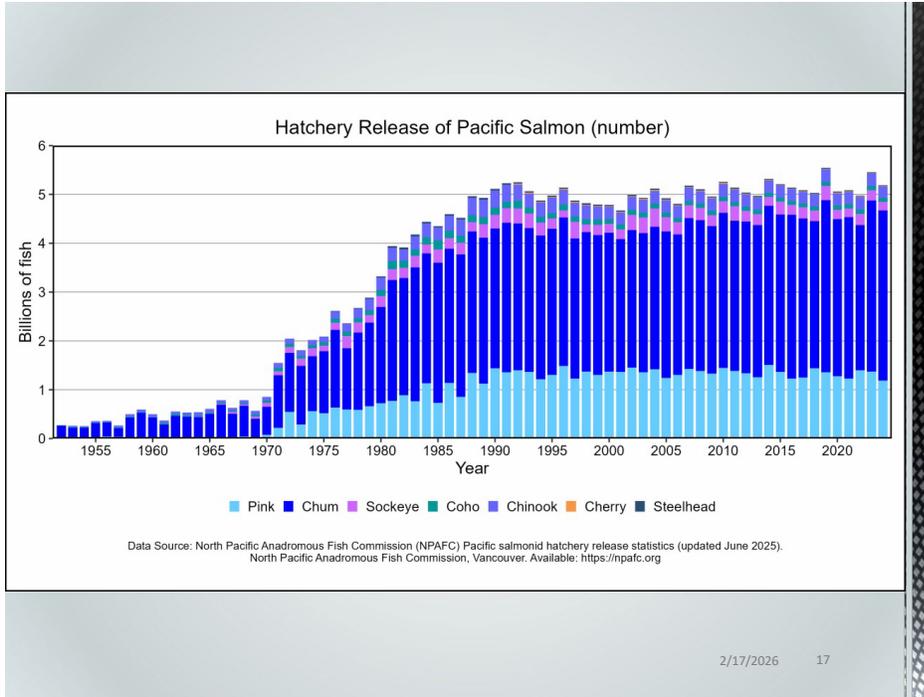


The RPT is advisory to the ADF&G Commissioner, similar to Advisory Committees associated with the Boards of Fish and Game. The primary responsibility of the RPT is salmon enhancement planning through a document known as the regional comprehensive salmon plan (CSP). The CSP usually contains historical harvest levels, historical hatchery production, and project opportunities to fill plan goals and objectives. By regulation (5 AAC 40.340) a CSP must define production goals by species, area and time.

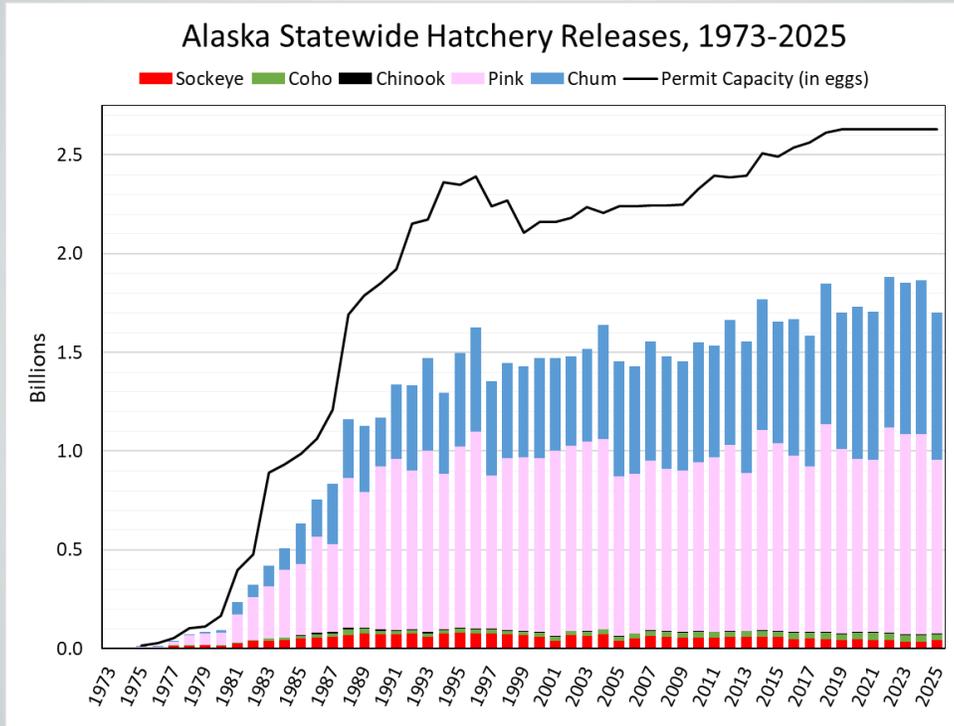


Hatchery Production:

Hatchery releases in the North Pacific have been relatively stable since the late 1980's, averaging about 5 billion fish released annually.

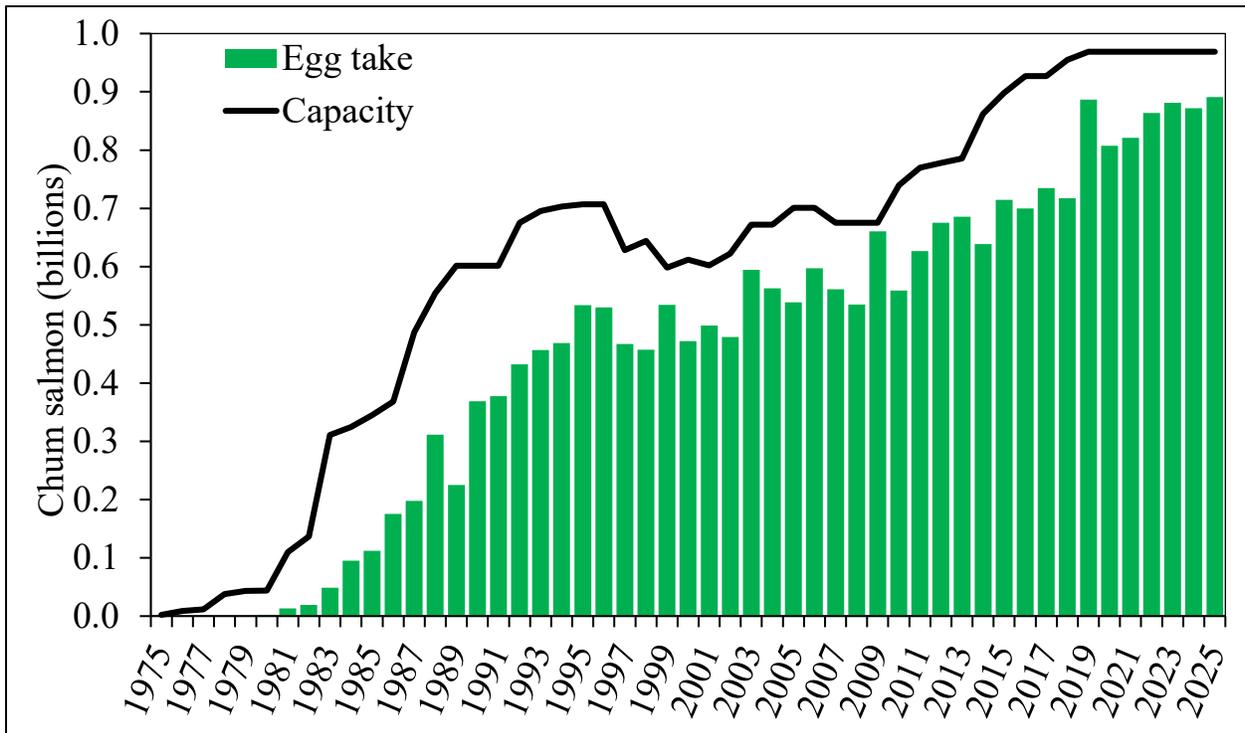
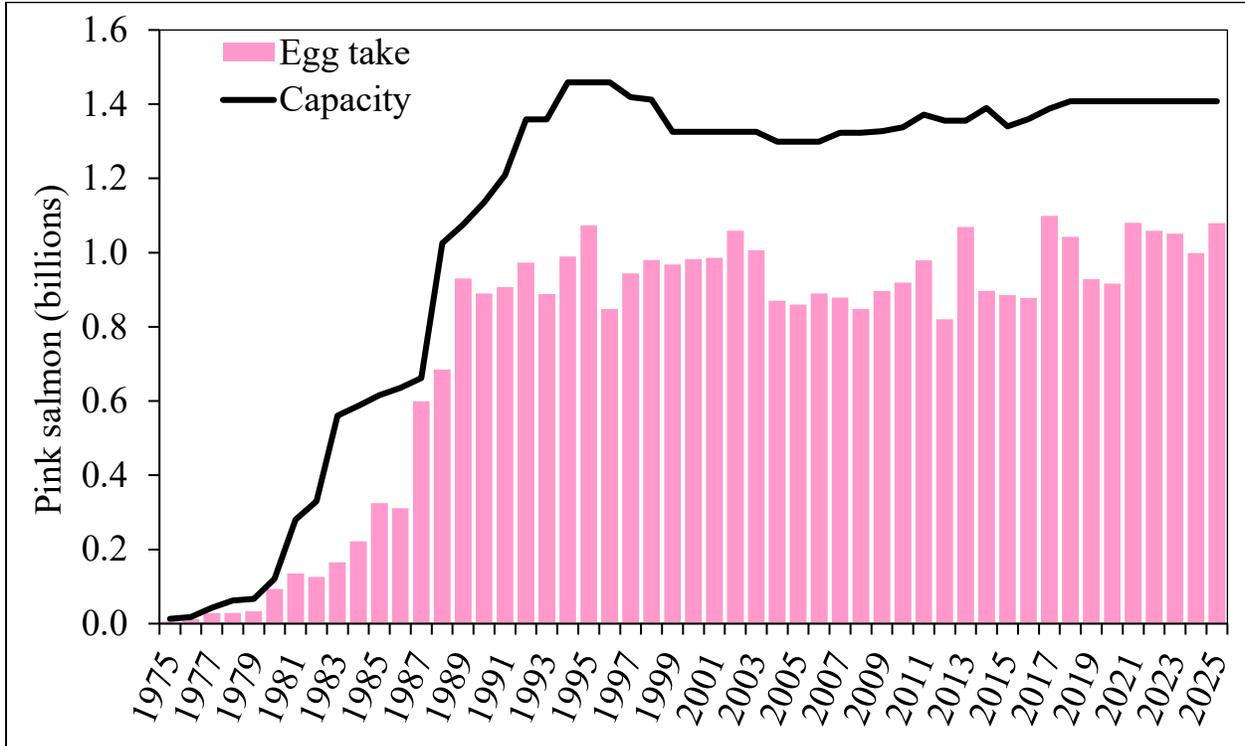


Alaska hatchery output grew quickly until the early 1990s, then remained relatively flat at just under 1.5 billion fish released until permit increases bumped up output to around 1.7 billion fish starting in 2014.



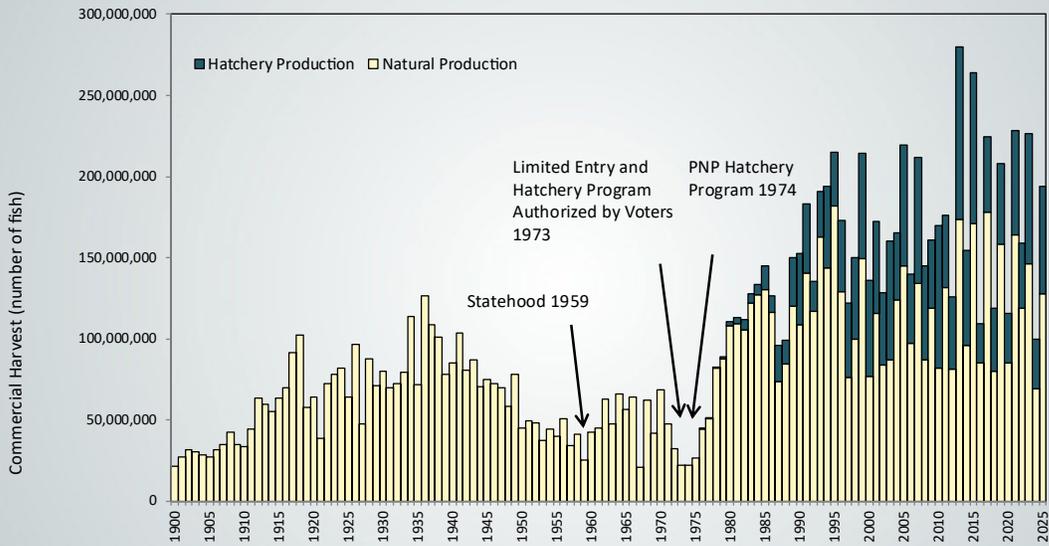
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Alaska's permitting standard is in eggs, which limits the number of eggs that may be collected as opposed to limiting the number of fish released. Releases fluctuate up and down based on broodstock availability and egg to fry/smolt hatchery survival. Since 2019, permitted capacity has not changed for pink and chum salmon.



Circling back to the first graph, since the legislature created the salmon fishery enhancement program in the 1970's, the program has provided 1.7 billion salmon to the fisheries of the state, resulting in substantial economic value to coastal communities of the state without apparent negative effect on statewide harvest of wild salmon (in yellow).

Alaska Commercial Harvest of all Salmon Species from 1900-2025



2/17/2026

21