

Susitna River Sockeye Salmon Migration

FY2013 Request: \$625,000

Reference No: 54420

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Research / Studies / Planning

Category: Natural Resources

Location: Mat-Su Areawide

House District: Matsu Areawide (HD 13-16)

Impact House District: Matsu Areawide (HD 13-16)

Contact: Jeff Regnart

Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2012 - 06/30/2017 **Contact Phone:** (907)267-2350

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

The goal of this project is to better understand the spatial and temporal sockeye salmon distribution of Susitna River drainage stocks and those from other Cook Inlet drainages migrating through Upper Cook Inlet's (UCI) Central District. This knowledge should allow managers the ability to more efficiently harvest non-Susitna stocks, while allowing Susitna-bound fish passage through the Central District.

Funding:	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	Total
CFEC Rcpts	\$625,000						\$625,000
Total:	\$625,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$625,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

This is the first year for the project.

Project Description/Justification:

Catch data from the existing six-station offshore test fishery (OTF) demonstrate high variability in Susitna catch, both temporally and spatially. Susitna sockeye tend to pass the OTF transect throughout the duration of the UCI run (i.e., no distinct time period). In addition to having similar run timing at the OTF transect as other UCI stocks, Susitna sockeye salmon catches have been spread throughout all six stations with no discernable pattern. It is unclear if the migratory pathway of Susitna River sockeye salmon diverges from fish destined for other drainages as the fish move northward through the Central District. One line transect fished daily, each with five sampling stations bisecting the Central District, would provide samples to determine stock composition estimates throughout the salmon migration.

This project proposes to add an additional test fish transect that will closely mirror the current OTF transect located between Anchor Point and Red River Delta. Although a location has yet to be determined, it is expected that this drift test fishery would transect across a location where east side Cook Inlet stocks have, are believed to for the most part, split off, leaving predominately northern bound stocks. Sockeye salmon yields have declined in recent years and this project should help determine if conservation efforts through time and area restrictions could lessen exploitation on

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sockeye salmon bound for the Susitna River in the drift gillnet fishing area, and provide increased opportunity for sport and subsistence fishermen in Northern Cook Inlet. The project could benefit about 100 Northern District commercial fishermen and the many sport fishermen in the area. Five stations will be sampled daily to obtain a pooled sample of 100 fish per station per week over four weeks, totaling 2,000 samples for the 20-strata-per transect.

This project contributes to the department's mission and is consistent with the Division of Commercial Fisheries core service of Harvest Management. It may assist in achieving sockeye salmon escapement goals in the Susitna River drainage and increase harvests of sockeye salmon. Specifically, information gained from the project should allow managers the ability to more efficiently provide for harvest of non-Susitna stocks while allowing Susitna-bound fish passage through the Central District.