2016 Gulf of Alaska Pink Salmon Disaster **FY2020 Request: $4,500,000**
Reference No: 62551

AP/AL: Appropriation
Category: Natural Resources
Location: Statewide
Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2019 - 06/30/2024

Project Type: Economic Assistance
House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)
Contact: Charles Swanton
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Brief Summary and Statement of Need:
January 18,2017 the Secretary of Commerce declared the Gulf of Alaska Pink Salmon fishery disasters. This project is the first step in a four step distribution process for the Disaster. Disbursement of funds will be prioritized based on the following criteria: 1) funds will be allocated to improve fishery information to better assess and forecast future fishery performance; 2) fishery participants directly involved and harmed by the 2016 pink salmon disaster; 3) funds will be disbursed to positively affect the broadest number of people possible; and 4) address losses to primary business and infrastructure that directly support pink salmon fisheries and that incurred the greatest losses as a result of the disaster.

Funding:	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	Total
1108 Stat Desig	$4,500,000						$4,500,000
Total:	$4,500,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$4,500,000

☐ State Match Required ☑ One-Time Project ☐ Phased - new ☐ Phased - underway ☐ On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required ☐ Amendment ☐ Mental Health Bill

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	Amount	Staff
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
Totals:	0	0

Prior Funding History / Additional Information:

Project Description/Justification:

Step One – Research - $4,500,000: Research funds will be deducted from the total amount of disaster funds prior to any distribution to the other entities. Disaster funds will be allocated to the following research projects.

Prince William Sound juvenile salmon survey
This project would re-deploy a juvenile pink salmon trawl survey in Prince William Sound (PWS) to forecast pink salmon returns. Such a survey would closely follow the methods and gear used for the Southeast Coastal Monitoring Survey (SECM), conducted annually in Southeast Alaska since 1997. An identical survey was successfully initiated in PWS for two full seasons (2014 and 2015), but it was discontinued due to state budget cuts before sufficient data could be collected to produce a reliable forecast.

Given large interannual fluctuations in pink salmon harvests in PWS, which have ranged from 54,000 to 90 million since 1960, pre-season indications of run strength are important to the resource stakeholders who rely upon this species. Pink salmon forecasts produced from the PWS juvenile salmon trawl survey would help seafood processors and commercial fishermen prepare for harvest expectations the following year. Such a survey would also be useful for ADF&G and hatchery managers until inseason abundance indices are available.

Total cost for the PWS trawl survey is approximately $1,000,000 and would include participation by the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC), ADF&G, and NOAA. Salary for PWSSC staff ($340,000), vessel costs ($468,000), and ADF&G salary ($100,000) would make up the bulk of the annual costs, with the remainder for net repairs, travel, expendables, and some equipment. NOAA personnel will have a substantial advisory role but are not requesting salary. This project is not currently funded. Total requested funds for this project is estimated to be $1,000,000.

Alaska Hatchery Research Program

The Alaska Hatchery Research Program was established in 2011 to study the interaction of hatchery fish straying into wild systems for pink and chum salmon in Prince William Sound and for chum salmon in Southeast Alaska. This program has been funded by the State of Alaska, private-non-profit hatchery operators, processors, and competitive grants, and is overseen by a science panel composed of current and retired scientists from ADF&G, University of Alaska, aquaculture associations, and National Marine Fisheries Service.

The results of this ambitious project will examine genetic population structure among hatchery and natural fish, determine hatchery proportions in wild systems, and measure differences in fitness between hatchery- and natural-origin fish. This information is a critical element of assessing the impact of hatchery fish on wild production. Previous studies have been conducted on other Pacific salmon species with different life histories in locations where wild habitat has been compromised. This makes inferences from those studies to Alaskan circumstances tenuous.

To date the available funding ($9.1M) has covered the first two components of this project: all the field work associated with the Prince William Sound and Southeast Alaska components. However, available existing funding is only sufficient for laboratory analysis in two of three generations at two of the five study streams in Prince William Sound. The program has not secured funding to complete the last generation at two streams and all generations for the three additional streams. Proposed work would support any fieldwork, laboratory analyses, statistical evaluations, and reporting necessary to complete this portion of the project. The anticipated cost of the remaining work, and the requested amount of disaster funds is estimated to be $2.5 million.

Southeast Alaska Coastal Monitoring Survey

The Southeast Alaska Coastal Monitoring (SECM) project has operated since 1997, whereby it surveys juvenile pink salmon abundance in three annual surveys from June through August. Surveys focus on the primary seaward migration corridors of the Inside Northern Southeast region including Icy Strait and upper Chatham Strait.

The results are essential to reliably forecasting Southeast pink salmon harvest. For most years the SECM project has shown a strong relationship between juvenile pink salmon abundance and harvest the following year. Because the pink salmon harvest in Southeast has a high interannual variability (harvest has ranged from 3 to 95 million since 1960), information gained from the SECM project is essential in aiding seafood processors to form and prepare for harvest expectations the following year. It is also useful for ADF&G managers until inseason abundance indices are available.

Total cost for the SECM project is approximately $1,200,000. Of this amount, NMFS has agreed to continue funding their staff's salary cost and expertise moving forward, which is approximately $520,000. That leaves approximately $680,000 of needed funds to cover the remaining project costs for the vessel and ADF&G personnel. Current project funding expires in 2018.