

# KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH

## Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

144 North Binkley Street  
Soldotna, AK 99669  
Phone 907-714-2160  
Fax 907-714-2388

Dale Bagley, Assembly President  
Sue McClure, Vice President

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### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Dale Bagley, Assembly President  
Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly Members

**FROM:** Brent Johnson, Assembly Member

**DATE:** November 25, 2014

**RE:** Resolution 2014-~~066~~; A Resolution Asking the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to Complete the 2014 Kasilof River Sockeye Smolt Enumeration Project and to Continue that Project in the Future

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A State salmon hatchery was built at Crooked Creek, a tributary of Kasilof River, in 1973.<sup>1</sup> Sockeye egg gametes were subsequently collected at Tustumena Lake, incubated in the hatchery and released back into Tustumena lake as "fry." Sockeye fry typically rear in Tustumena Lake for one or two years and then migrate down Kasilof River as "smolt" on their way to rearing in the Pacific Ocean.

The State of Alaska established a Kasilof River sockeye salmon smolt trap study in 1980 to establish estimates on fresh water survival rates.<sup>2</sup> Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) took over management of Crooked Creek Hatchery in 1993, and also took over the smolt trap estimates. In 2004 the 9th Circuit Court closed the hatchery operation based on potential conflicts with goals of the 1980 Andy Simon Wilderness Area, which encompasses most of Tustumena Lake.

The State of Alaska and Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association recognize a scientific value in the sockeye smolt estimates and have worked together to continue them through 2014. However, only the field work portion (\$25,000) was funded for the 2014 season. The laboratory and analysis portion (\$10,000) has not yet been funded.

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1 McNair, Marianne. *Alaska Salmon Enhancement Program, 2001 Annual Report*, by Alaska Dept of Fish & Game, March 2002, Table 3, page 6.

2 Flagg, Loren; Owecke, Michael; and Waite, David. *Sockeye Salmon Smolt Studies, Kasilof River, Alaska, 1982*. For Fred Division, ADF&G, page 24.

In recent years the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has provided the money for the smolt counts while CIAA has hired the experts who have done the actual work. The same person, a Kenai Peninsula Borough resident, has led the work for many years.

Financial considerations have led the ADF&G to announce their plans to discontinue the project. Meanwhile, Tustumena Lake has apparently become more productive, which is probably due to raised water temperature and possibly lower turbidity. Many fishermen believe the State should be expanding smolt counts to include chinook salmon, not discontinuing sockeye smolt counts. Fishermen and processors use the annual sockeye predictions to help plan for upcoming seasons. In addition, freshwater survival rates are important for science purposes.

This resolution asks the State of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to fund the \$10,000 necessary to complete the 2014 project and to continue funding the sockeye smolt count in the future.

Your consideration is appreciated.