Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute - Western Alaska Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Inshore Bering Sea Pollock Fishery

FY2024 Request: **$990,000**
Reference No: **65062**

AP/AL: Appropriation
Category: Development

Project Type: Energy
Recipient: Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute

Location: Statewide
Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1 - 40)
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2023 - 06/30/2028

House District: Statewide (HD 1 - 40)
Contact: Micaela Fowler
Contact Phone: (907)465-2506

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:
SCS1 Add.

Use genetic stock identification to quantify and avoid bycatch of Western Alaska chum salmon in the inshore pollock fishery in real time.

Funding:	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	Total
1004 Gen Fund	$990,000						$990,000
Total:	$990,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$990,000

☐ State Match Required ☐ One-Time Project ☐ Phased - new ☐ Phased - underway ☐ Ongoing
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:
BBSRI designed and built a remote genetics lab for characterizing the makeup of the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run in real time in 2021 and 2022 ($240,000 invested) and has acquired additional equipment to analyze chum salmon in Dutch Harbor in 2023 ($115,000). The last two years the lab has been aboard a research vessel and results are provided to fishery managers and industry daily sockeye salmon information from mid-June to mid-July.

This project will operate a portable, state-of-the-art genetics laboratory in Dutch Harbor, Alaska to characterize in real time the stock of origin of chum salmon captured in the inshore B-season pollock fishery for three seasons, 2023-2025. Chum salmon bycatch will be sampled from shoreside fish plants in Dutch Harbor and Akutan, and weekly estimates of the stock-specific chum bycatch will be provided to industry and fishery managers. The information produced from the project will allow the fishery to better avoid "Western Alaska chum salmon" bound for the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Nushagak rivers.

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A large fraction of the chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea is from Asian hatcheries. Industry goes to great lengths to avoid high catch rates of chum, only to move and encounter weak Western Alaska chum and Chinook salmon in greater numbers. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is considering a regulatory measure to "cap" the allowable chum bycatch from Asia, Alaska and elsewhere, which would have a huge economic impact on Alaskan communities with potentially little help for Alaskan chum. This project will facilitate consideration by the Council of a more effective cap on the harvest of "Western Alaska chum salmon", thereby focusing conservation measures salmon that Western Alaska communities up and down the region's rivers depend so heavily upon.

Project Timeline:
2023 Season $150,000 - develop catch sampling and lab capacity to make 3 or 4 weekly estimates of stock-specific chum
bycatch estimates.
2024 and 2025 Seasons $420,000/each - provide weekly salmon estimates from the entire pollock B-season (June-Sept)