Alaska Marine Salmon Research Programs **FY2025 Request: $1,300,000**
Reference No: AMD 64777

AP/AL: Appropriation
Category: Development
Location: Statewide
Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1 - 40)
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2024 - 06/30/2029

Project Type: Research / Studies / Planning
Recipient: NA
House District: Statewide (HD 1 - 40)
Contact: Sam Rabung
Contact Phone: (907)465-6100

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:
Many systems in Alaska are experiencing poor returns of salmon, including Chinook salmon stocks statewide, Western Alaska chum salmon stocks, and others. Available information frequently points to poor marine survival attributed to changing ocean conditions driving poor returns and reducing the sustainable harvest available to Alaskans. It is critical to have resources to participate in marine research efforts in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

Funding:	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	Total
1004 Gen Fund	$1,300,000						$1,300,000
Total:	$1,300,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$1,300,000

☐ 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:
Sec14 Ch1 SLA2023 P89 L11 HB 39 $1,150,000
Sec11 Ch11 SLA2022 P89 L27 HB281 $1,150,000

This project was started as a capital project request until it could be established. The funding will need to move into the operating budget request in the future.

Project Description/Justification:
Core program: Cost - $200,000 Annually

A core marine salmon research program would include the staffing necessary to support basic statewide research and analysis, inclusive of two months of Fisheries Scientist 1 (FS1) salary with remaining months covered under general funds; two months of Fishery Biologist 3 (FB3) salary, with remaining months covered by general funds and external funding; and six months Fishery Biologist 1 (FB1) salary. Additional sea duty pay for the FS1, FB3, and FB1 to support field research at sea.
Additional funds support travel for these positions, supplies, replacement, or repair of field collection equipment (e.g., trawl nets), and equipment purchase necessary for laboratory analyses (e.g., genetics, otoliths, and stomach content).

Support existing long standing research programs: Northern Bering Sea Juvenile

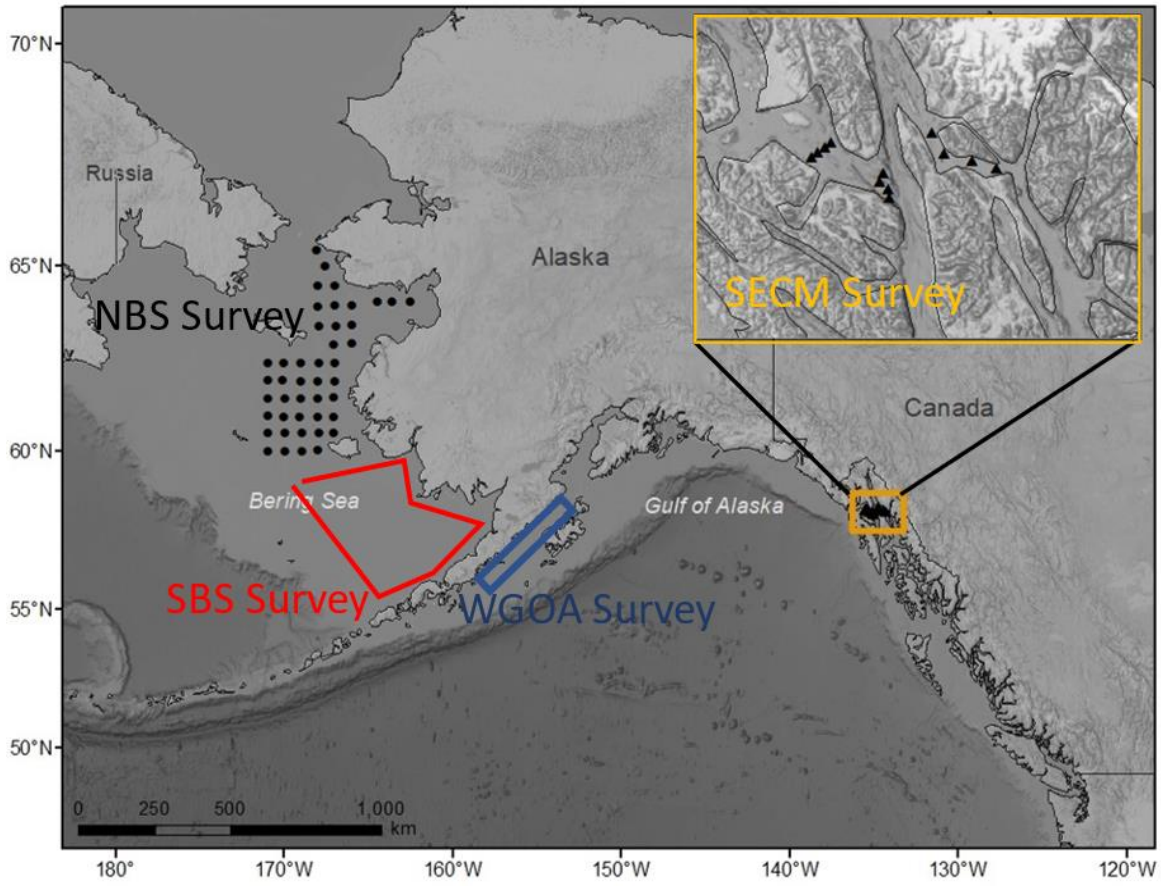
Salmon Survey and Southeast Alaska Coastal Monitoring Program: Cost - $100,000 Annually

These programs have proven valuable for providing forecasting tools used in management and contributing to understanding factors driving survival and productivity at different life stages for Yukon River Chinook salmon and Southeast Alaska Pink salmon. Currently, both programs have untapped capacity to provide usable products for other regional salmon species as well (e.g. Western Alaska chum, Southeast Alaska Chinook). Both programs are largely funded from external sources and with in-kind contributions from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Additional funds would primarily support increased fuel and vessel costs for operating surveys. Marine fuel costs in rural Alaska increased approximately 66 percent between 2021 and 2022, leading to an increased cost of operating the 2022 Northern Bering Sea (NBS) survey of approximately $47,000.

Comprehensive marine salmon monitoring: Southern Bering Sea and Northwestern Gulf of Alaska: Cost - $1,000,000 Annually

Collectively these surveys would provide a comprehensive assessment of Alaskan salmon at sea for major salmon stocks. The Southern Bering Sea (SBS) survey includes monitoring of Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay, and North Alaskan Peninsula salmon stocks. The Northwestern Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) survey includes monitoring of Cook Inlet, Copper River, and Chignik stocks, with the possibility of some Kodiak stocks also being included. Salmon surveys have previously been conducted by NOAA in these locations and have been successful. Much of the requested amount would be used for charter vessel costs and vessel fuel.

Annual monitoring and stock assessment through genetics and otolith/coded wire tags (CWT) mark recoveries; combining juvenile abundance with adult abundance data would enable development of forecasting tools like those already developed from NBS and Southeast Alaska Coastal Monitoring Program (SECM) surveys. Combined, these four surveys would monitor future salmon runs of importance to Alaskans and allow for better analysis of factors driving Alaskan salmon run abundance patterns.



What was accomplished?

Ongoing survey efforts have pinpointed survival bottlenecks in salmon populations, assessed health metrics that may be early indicators of poor marine survival, and collected data for forecasting tools that can predict run sizes up to three years in the future. In FY2024, capital funds provided for the Alaska Marine Salmon program support core program needs, including personnel costs and travel for a Fisheries Scientist 1, a Fishery Biologist 2, and a short-term nonpermanent Fishery Biologist 1. Accomplishments of the core program include participation and support in multiple marine surveys in calendar year 2023; salmon and salmon shark tagging; submission of reports in technical publications and peer reviewed scientific journals; initiation and coordination of new research projects examining root causes of Chinook and chum salmon declines in Western Alaska; expert advice on marine-related salmon issues in regulatory and advisory bodies; and multiple outreach efforts including interviews with news media, presentations at various venues, and development of printed and online content for stakeholders. Funding support for the NBS survey was critical for offsetting increased marine fuel costs in rural Alaska. Given the timing of fiscal year fund release relative to survey timing, FY24 funds will be expended across the latter part of FY2024 and into FY2025 to support SECM, and to establish the WGOA and SBS surveys in the 2024 calendar year.

Line Item	Amount
1000 - Personal Services	$160,000
2000 – Travel	$30,000
3000 - Services	$1,020,000
4000 - Commodities	$90,000
5000 - Capital Outlay	
7000 - Grants	
Total Request	$1,300,000

This project will partially fund three positions, Fisheries Scientist 1, PCN 11-1176 a Fisheries Biologist 3, PCN 11-1317, and a Fishery Biologist 1 (PCN to be determined).

A new PCN is needed for a Fishery Biologist 1, range 14, full-time, Anchorage.