

The Cordova Times

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The Cordova Times

WALT PARKER

A giant in Alaska's history has passed away

Walt Parker, a portrait photo taken in 2004 by Stan Jones, director of administration and legislative affairs for the PWSRCAC.

PHOTO COUTESY OF PWSRCA.



Parker on the power of international discussions: 'as long as they're talking, they're not shooting'

BY MARGARET BAUMAN
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Walt Parker, a passionate conservationist who played a major role in the footprint of transportation and environmental protection in Alaska's history, died on June 25 at his home in Anchorage, surrounded by his family.

A dog musher too, from his years in Alaska's Interior, Parker passed away peacefully, as his daughter Sandy Parker

Wassilie read to him a poem she had written about his old lead dog Stormy, and his relationship with the hearty husky. "It is worth noting that his beloved dogs in the outside kennel began to howl as I started the poem," she said.

His kennel included several dogs sired by one of his males descended from his old team at Lake Minchumina, mated with a female given to him by old friend Violet Redington, the widow of Joe Redington Sr., father of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Parker was indeed a renaissance man, a man of wide ranging intellect, with a wide range of accomplishments and intellectual

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FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



BEN YEAGER/THE CORDOVA TIMES

Elliot Johnson fishes the Copper River facing Child's glacier, a favorite pastime.

A remote job with purpose

A look into life at the Alaska Fish & Game Miles Lake site, where a team of three technicians run a sonar system to count salmon escapement

BY BEN YEAGER
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As the Copper River flows into Miles Lake, it becomes sandwiched by two glaciers and forced through a thin bottleneck where three men monitor a series of sound-waves 24 hours a day.

Aside from living a Spartan lifestyle in a remote place, the three Fish & Game employees at Miles

Lake, Shane Shepherd, 30, Elliot Johnson, 30, and Mike Sharp, 23, are using one of the department's most important assets, a DIDSON sonar system, to do one of it's most important jobs: counting salmon escapement as they travel back to their spawning grounds.

Shepherd spends his eight hour shift watching

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FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Researchers tackle big fish questions

Four-year study on the effects of hatchery-wild interactions looks a ocean and stream sampling

BY HEATHER WIEDENHOFT
For The Cordova Times

In Prince William Sound, both wild and hatchery runs of pink and chum salmon are vital to the economy, with pink salmon being the largest of any commercial fishery.

But what happens when wild and hatchery-bred salmon end up in the same stream environments? Questions have been raised about the fitness of possible wild and hatchery salmon crosses. As of yet, little is known about the interactions between wild and hatchery salmon, or the effect of straying of hatchery fish into streams used by wild populations.

And that is what an Alaskan Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) project, called the "Hatchery- Wild Interactions Study", aims to address. ADF&G awarded the research contract to the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC), in conjunction with Sitka Sound Science Center (SSSC), and the Centers are in their second year of a four year study to discover the effects and impacts of hatchery-wild interactions.

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MAKEOVER

AMCC launches new website

BY THE CORDOVA TIMES STAFF

Alaska Marine Conservation Council has launched a new website, to include more information about the council, and its endeavors.

Included on www.akmarine.org is information on fisheries conservation, working

waterfronts and efforts such as protecting habitat, protecting Alaska salmon, sustaining Alaska halibut, federal fisheries policy and ocean acidification.

The website also includes information on getting involved and volunteering at events supported by AMCC, and a place to sign up for email delivery of fisheries news updates.

FISHERIES

From Page 1

Researchers are conducting a massive operation involving stream and ocean sampling of salmon in Prince William Sound and SE Alaska this summer to build on data collected in 2013. They will help to determine the genetic stocks, scope of hatchery straying, and overall effect on wild population fitness. Ultimately the goal is to estimate survival rates and reproductive success in adult stage salmon in each stream for hatchery-origin fish, natural-origin fish, and fish that may be a cross of both.

The study is organized into three projects: PWS ocean sampling, PWS stream sampling, and Southeast Alaska stream sampling which is subcontracted to the Sitka Sound Science Center.

Ocean sampling involves collecting salmon from the Sound via a fishing vessel and bringing them directly to the science center, where the heads are cut open and tiny ear bones, called otoliths, are collected and stored for analysis. These small, fragile ear bones can convey important information to researchers because the ear bones of hatchery fish display temperature-induced markings. These markings can identify whether the fish is hatchery or wild stock.

Stream surveyors will travel by boat to 32 remote streams in Prince William Sound and 32 SE Alaska streams where pink and chum salmon spawn. Hiking miles upstream outfitted with thick waders, sampling gear, and bear safety equipment, stream teams will collect the spawned out carcasses of salmon. From the carcasses they will retrieve length data, otoliths, and in some streams heart tissue and fin tissue for genetic analysis. Genetic analyses have improved to a point where an individual fish can now be traced to its respective parents if the parents were also previously sampled. In a process similar to human paternity tests, ADF&G will use DNA markers to determine the salmon's "family tree", and use this information to determine relative survival rates of hatchery or wild fish.

The protocols for the study have been set by the Alaska Hatchery Research Group, a panel made up of industry, state and federal scientists. Alaska Fish and Game is analyzing the otoliths and genetic samples collected by the stream and ocean teams.

The study has the financial backing of the Alaskan legislature, the fish processing industry, and the hatchery community,

who are all interested in furthering the science of fisheries enhancement and increasing consumer confidence in Alaskan salmon. Much of that confidence stems from understanding why and how often hatchery fish stray into wild streams.

George Covell, Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation Board Chairman, makes the point that

"... straying of salmon is a normal, natural behavior, higher in some years than others and influenced by environmental conditions and harvest management—the hatchery salmon that don't get harvested may have a higher probability of straying."

Already in 2013, PWSSC and SSSC collected samples from about 33,000 fish as a basis for the first year of study. Changes for the 2014 season will include sampling the 6 pink salmon streams in PWS and 4 chum streams in SE much more intensively than originally planned to better evaluate the likelihood of being able to track the pedigrees of enough individuals through the generations to make a robust comparison of survival between hatchery-origin fish, wild-origin fish, and any cross-bred offspring.

"This is an exciting project for Alaska and will be bringing new faces and background experiences to Cordova from all over the US to work on all aspects of the study, allowing for about 15 new seasonal positions during the sampling season" says Eric Knudsen, Project Manager for the study.

The project will also bring revenue to Cordova businesses for logistical support and purchasing field gear and supplies from local merchants.

The project is not only important for Alaska, but for global markets as well.

George Covell explains: "Consumers world-wide want to be confident that Alaska is producing a sustainable, responsible salmon fishery and that is what we are working to achieve."

Data collected will be made available in annual written reports and a workshop, with a final report due at the end of the study in 2016.

For more information:

<http://pwssc.org/research/fish/hatchery-wild-salmon-interactions/>
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingHatcheriesResearch.main>

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PROBLEM SOLVERS

From Page 2

did pretty well. Two kids from Fairbanks and Kenai received first and second place awards for their team efforts, and our own Sam Johnson was a second place winner in the Senior Team Scenario writing with the three young ladies he'd met the day of the competition. The story they wrote was interesting and thought provoking. Well done, Sam!

Heading home, on the plane from Seattle, a woman in our aisle saw the group of us getting on and overheard our chatting about Iowa and the competition. She asked what we'd been doing. I explained the trip, giving her a short version of what

FPSP was about, and what it meant not only for the kids who participated, but for their communities and possibly the world. These kids, I told her, were part of something that would serve them and us well.

She nodded thoughtfully, then said, "You know, when I watch the news and see some of the crazy things kids and young adults do, I get a little cynical and worried about the future. But knowing there are kids like yours out there, I'm hopeful."

So am I.

Congratulations to our Cordova FPSP participants and coaches Anita Smyke and Rob Eckley. What a great year!

Cathy Pegau, mom, author and FPS chaperone, can be reached at cpegau@yahoo.com.

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