



## Trail Lakes Hatchery Sockeye Salmon Management Plan

### *Approval of New Plan Critical*

The programs of Trail Lakes Hatchery provide salmon returns that are harvested in the commercial, recreational and personal use fisheries in Resurrection Bay, Kachemak Bay and Kamishak Bay. Over the last four years 98 percent of the fish returning to these sites have originated from the supplemental production provided by this facility. It is, therefore, obvious that without these hatchery-based projects there would be no harvestable salmon returns at these five sites.

To keep these projects operating it is necessary to stabilize the hatchery's revenue base which is a cost-recovery program conducted within defined special harvest areas. To accomplish that stabilization the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) must revise the applicable management plan and receive the approval of the Board of Fisheries for that revision.

In 2005 the Board of Fisheries approved the Bear Lake Management Plan which contained a cost-recovery component intended to provide the financial resources CIAA needed to continue Trail Lakes Hatchery salmon enhancement programs. That is the plan which is now in effect and has turned out to be inadequate to generate the revenue needs of 2009 and beyond.

That inadequacy became apparent in 2008 when CIAA did not meet its cost-recovery harvest expectations at any of the five locations. A thorough post-season review of the cost recovery harvests showed sufficient returns were available for meeting CIAA's financial goals and for providing a common property harvest. The location and timing of the cost-recovery harvests caused the shortfall.

The Bear Lake Management Plan focuses on cost recovery efforts in Resurrection Bay and allocates 50% of the harvest of fish returning to the CIAA project site to the cost-recovery effort. Since 2005, the average actual harvest by CIAA at this site has varied from 32% to 63% and averaged 47%. A 2008 review of the most recent four years of data revealed that, while CIAA harvested an average of 47% of the fish in the combined commercial and cost recovery harvests; the value of the cost recovery harvested fish averaged only 36% of the value of the combined commercial and cost recovery harvests. From a different perspective over the last four years the average per fish price received for cost recovery fish in Resurrection Bay has been only 64% of that paid for commercially caught fish. This is so because CIAA's cost-recovery allocation is taken from the temporal and spatial end of the return when quality and prices are low. In summary because the cost recovery effort secured 47% of the fish instead of 50%, and received only 64% of the price paid for commercially caught fish, CIAA's annual cost-recovery income has been inconsistent and lower than projected.

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## **Kenai Office**

Gary Fandrei - Executive Director  
Paul Blanche - Senior Biologist  
Dan Frisbie - Field Biologist  
Nathan Weber - Field Biologist  
Ron Carlson - Project Technician  
Dawne Schmidt - Admin. Assistant  
Cathy Cline - Seasonal Assistant

## **Trail Lakes Hatchery**

Tom Prochazka - Manager  
Mark Thomas - Assistant Mgr.  
Grant Sill - Fish Culturist  
Jen Mevissen - Seasonal Assistant

## **CIAA Board of Directors**

Brent Johnson - President  
Mike Wiley, -1st Vice President  
Steve Tsvenstrup - 2nd Vice Pres.  
Dave Martin, - Secretary  
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Teague Vanek - CIFF  
Charles Walkden - CI Seiners  
Nathan Wise - CI Seiners  
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Kenny Rodgers - NDSN  
Frankie Derossitt - UCIDA  
James Butler III - At Large  
Dyer Van Devere - At Large  
Mark Roth - City of Homer  
Beaver Nelson - City of Kachemak  
John French - City of Seward  
Paul Fischer - Kenai Peninsula  
Brian Bohman - Mat-Su  
Sam Cotten - Anchorage  
Stephen Vanek - Village of Ninilchik  
Tim Schmidt - Processor Rep.  
Ken Tarbox - KAFC

# Board of Directors Election

As defined in CIAA's By-Laws, five (5) Board of Directors seats are Inlet Wide Commercial Fishermen Representatives who are elected "at-large" by all permit holders. Nomination petitions were mailed to all Cook Inlet (Area H) Limited Entry Permit Holders in November of 2008.

CIAA received nomination petitions of two (2) eligible candidates, Christine Brandt and John McCombs. Because the number of nomination petitions was less than the number of vacant seats (4) in this election cycle, no election was required and the two previously mentioned candidates will be seated uncontested at the 2009 Annual Meeting of CIAA's Board of Directors. Two (2) vacant seats will remain until the next election cycle scheduled in fall 2009.

# Staffing Changes

Ed Mears began his employment with Trail Lakes Hatchery in the summer of 2007 as a seasonal worker just after he had completed the building maintenance program at AVTEC in Seward, Alaska. Ed had many years experience working on Alaska fishing boats, tenders and work boats. Ed became the Maintenance Technician at Trail Lakes Hatchery for Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association in January, 2008. Ed left CIAA in early September for other endeavors.

In March of 2008, Grant Sill was hired as the Fish Culturist at Trail Lakes Hatchery. Grant, his wife Tina and their daughter Brooke, are from the greater Portland, Oregon area. Grant studied fisheries technology at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon. Grant brings several years of hatchery experience from Skamania Steelhead Hatchery and Washougal Salmon Hatchery in Washougal, Washington to his present position with Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association.

In July 2008, Paul Blanche was promoted to Senior Biologist from the Field Biologist position. Paul will continue to lead CIAA field projects and staff as they continue the Susitna River project and other CIAA hatchery support projects.

In January 2009, Nathan Weber was hired to fill the vacant Biologist position. Nathan graduated from the University of Kentucky with a B.S. in Natural Resource Conservation and Management. Nathan has worked with CIAA as a Seasonal Assistant for the previous two summers.

CIAA is excited to have Grant and Nathan as a part of our team.

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## Trail Lakes Hatchery - Tom Prochazka, Manager

In the beginning of 2008, Trail Lakes Hatchery, along with the Alaska SeaLife Center (ASLC), hosted the Alaska Hatchery Managers' Meeting in Seward. Mark Thomas, Assistant Hatchery Manager, put together a very good program for the meeting that was well received by those who attended. The meeting included two days of presentations by those in attendance, tours of the Trail Lakes Hatchery, the ASLC, and Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery, and a dinner banquet.

This last year, the staff at the hatchery took a long, hard look at the prior well redevelopments, consulted with some experienced professionals, and came up with a plan that was most likely to succeed. After the initial phase of the redevelopment was begun, the results indicated that some methods included in the original plan could be pared back, while other methods could be pursued more aggressively to attain the most cost effective results. The hatchery has been using one of the wells continually since the redevelopment was completed in late fall and the results have been very good. This year, Eklutna Hatchery will not have to be opened to rear Trail Lakes Hatchery fish.

## Salmon Management Plan - continued

The Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association petitioned the Board of Fisheries in January 2009 to repeal the Bear Lake Management Plan and adopt the Trail Lakes Hatchery Sockeye Salmon Management Plan. The petition was accepted and is scheduled for a public comment period and will be heard by the Board of Fisheries at the March 2009 meeting in Anchorage.

The Trail Lakes Hatchery Sockeye Salmon Management Plan will incorporate much of the Bear Lake Management Plan and establish a priority for hatchery cost recovery harvests and broodstock needs, in addition to the expansion of Special Harvest Areas in Kachemak and Kamishak Bays traditionally used by CIAA. The existing constraints designed to protect coho salmon production from Bear Lake, maintain the early-run timing of Bear Lake sockeye stocks and minimize conflict between recreational and commercial fisheries will remain in place. The priority for cost recovery harvests should allow those harvests to take fewer fish because they will be of greater value and continue the projects that make recreational, personal use and commercial salmon harvests possible at these sites.

CIAA wishes to implement the Trail Lakes Hatchery Sockeye Salmon Management Plan for the 2009 season if the Board of Fisheries accepts the regulations. Support from the recreational, personal use and commercial users would be welcomed and would help to assure the continuation of these productive projects. In the absence of a successful cost-recovery program, they will all be lost and with them over 100,000 fish out of the annual common property fisheries, including the coho salmon produced for designated recreational fisheries in Resurrection and Kachemak Bays.

Prior to the March meeting of the Board of Fisheries CIAA will request a Regional Planning Team meeting for additional public review.

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## Susitna Project Expansion

CIAA is currently conducting a complete enumeration of both the juvenile and adult migrations on seven (7) lakes thought to be key sockeye salmon producers in the Susitna River system and collecting water quality data to better understand the entire salmon life cycle by isolating variables in the lakes that may be limiting productivity. CIAA and ADF&G realize the current cooperative studies need to be expanded to encompass the scale and duration fisheries research demands to build accurate models and management strategies. These projects extend the time frame of the current study and identify additional lakes and creeks where analysis is critical to understanding the factors limiting production in the Susitna River basin. It is this adult to juvenile relationship that allows us to analyze and evaluate the production and rearing conditions of each lake in the study. The goal is to collect sound biological data to provide the foundation on which decisions for management and rehabilitation strategies will be drawn.

CIAA is in the final stage of the current ongoing study, CIAA received monies to date to operate the study on seven lakes from July 2006 through June 2009. In the fall of 2008, CIAA staff submitted several grants in cooperation with ADF&G to expand the project to fourteen lakes for an additional three years. Two grants totaling \$2.4 million dollars funding the project through 2012 were accepted through the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund (AKSSF), contingent upon negotiation of the statement of work. Although details regarding budgeting and the scope of the project is still premature, the Susitna River project looks to continue. The map on page 5 shows the location of existing and new lakes in the Susitna River project, CIAA projects are also highlighted.

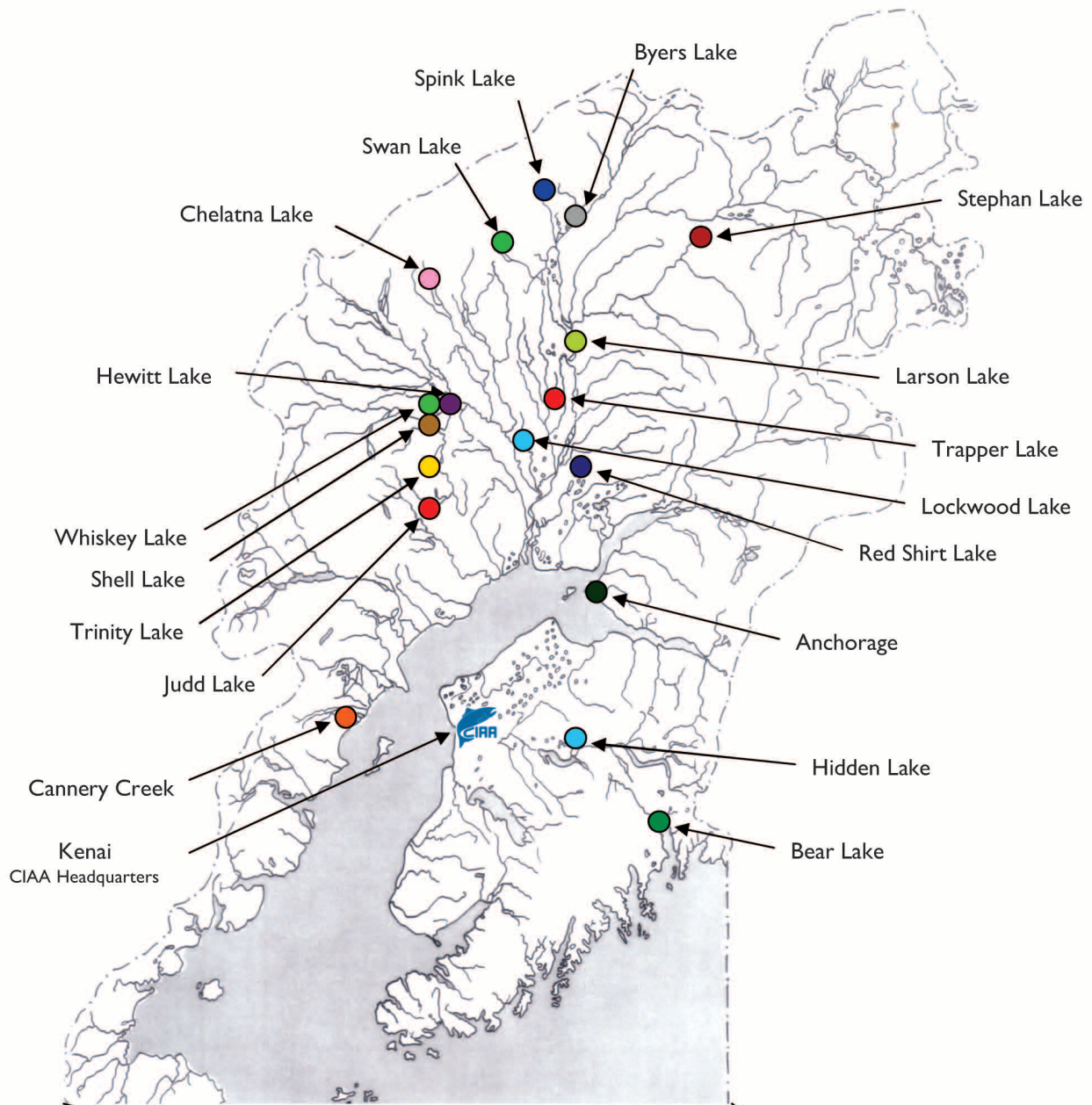
## Student Conservation Association (SCA) Partnership

In the spring of 2008, CIAA developed a partnership with the Student Conservation Association (SCA). This partnership is a great marriage of human resource capacity and program development. The SCA pre-screened and recruited qualified applicants to participate in our internship program. The SCA also participates in the AmeriCorps scholarship program and many of our interns qualified for a \$1000 scholarship. The AmeriCorps program allows students to use the monies for tuition and other qualified expenses in pursuit of their respectable degree programs.

The summer of 2008 was a great year for our internship program, CIAA hosted 35 interns in two sessions for staffing our smolt and adult field camps at Hidden Lake and the Susitna River project. The 2008 class was a very well rounded and engaged class of students from over 22 University and Colleges from every corner of the nation.

The upcoming 2009 field season looks to be a very busy and exciting year! With the expansion of the Susitna Project looming, CIAA looks to host up to 50 interns in meeting our program requirements. The SCA and CIAA will continue our endeavor to place the next generation of conservation professionals to work in understanding production problems in the Susitna River Basin. These students will take the knowledge and skills learned by working with our organizations to continue the pursuit of well managed natural resource systems well into the future. CIAA is excited to be engaged in the greater mission, the education and mentoring of our youth.

# Cook Inlet Drainage



This map indicates all of the areas that the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association will be enumerating juvenile or adult salmon in 2009.

\*CIAA Headquarters and Anchorage are shown for reference.

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# From the Executive Director's Desk

It looks as if 2009 is setting up to be a milestone year for the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association. Several issues, including the future of Trail Lakes Hatchery and CIAA fish production are set to be addressed. I am hopeful that implementing the new cost recovery plan will alleviate the problems that have plagued the program in the past. I am anxious to see the Association finally move forward with a plan that will leave the organization financially viable now, and well into the future.

As we look to reconcile the cost recovery program for Trail Lakes Hatchery, the Association continues to develop strong programs to address the production problems of the Susitna River system in the northern district of Cook Inlet. CIAA has already taken a lead in working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in running fish weirs to document adult escapement and smolt production on several key lakes. Our staff has secured funding to move forward for an additional 3 years, this will double our efforts in the Susitna River system and expand the project to additional lakes where information is vital in developing remediation strategies.



**Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association**

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