

Strategic Plan

2021–2025

Mission

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association is a nonprofit regional association which exists to:

1. protect self-sustaining salmon stocks and habitats upon which they depend;
2. rehabilitate self-sustaining salmon stocks;
3. rehabilitate salmon habitat; and
4. maximize the value of the Cook Inlet (Area H) common property salmon resource by applying science and enhancement technology where appropriate.

Core Values

Credibility, accountability, education, and responsible service to the community

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Statement of Intent

This strategic plan articulates in broad strokes the direction the Board of Directors has deemed appropriate and productive for the Association and the set of priorities the Board has identified as pivotal to moving the Association in that desired direction.

The direction and priorities are further detailed in a statement of specific goals and the most likely objectives that, when implemented, will result in the achievement of those goals.

This plan incorporates policy, fiscal and personnel objectives and tactics intended to function as checks and balances that will keep the day-to-day affairs of the Association consistent with the approved long-range direction and priorities.

Statement of Strategic Plan Structure

This strategic plan is supported by numerous related documents including but not limited to annual program and financial reports issued by the Association and assorted project reports including but not limited to annual hatchery management reports. This plan does not include the detailed contents of all of its supporting documents for two basic reasons.

First, the orientation of the plan is forward. The particulars of the Association's history are relevant in this document only to the degree they directly influence the establishment of new policies and the identification of new objectives, and in that case reference may be made in a summary fashion.

Second, for the plan to be most productive for the volunteer Board members it has been made sufficiently lean and direct to be easily understood and referenced.

Statement of Strategic Plan Content

The strategy is to establish objectives in ten broad categories of Association activity and identify the tactics which may be employed to achieve those objectives.

Four of the ten activity categories in this plan deal with what may be broadly described as administrative operations.

The first of these administrative categories is entitled "Administration - Purposes of the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association" and serves as the introduction to the organization.

The second administrative category is entitled "Administration – Finance," and it describes the nature and sources of the organization's revenue stream.

The third administrative category is entitled "Administration – Human Relations," and it addresses the policies governing performance and responsibilities of both volunteer Board members and paid staff.

The final administrative category is entitled "Administration – Public Relations," and it covers the

method and content of the Association's interface with the broader community. The remaining six activity categories address project work carried out by the Association.

The first project category is entitled "Projects – Habitat and Self-sustaining Salmon Production." It describes the maintenance of salmon habitat and the overall strength of the existing resource.

The next four project categories are entitled "Projects – Trail Lakes Hatchery", "Projects – Eklutna Hatchery," "Projects – Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery," and "Projects – Port Graham Hatchery." Each of these describes the stewardship and operation of the named facility.

The final project category is entitled "Regional Planning Team," and it coordinates salmon population enhancement activities of the Association and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Within each of these ten activities there is an examination of the history and current status of the work, a presentation of the objectives and identification of the suggested tactics.

ADMINISTRATION – PURPOSES OF THE COOK INLET AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

Background

The Association first expressed its organizational purpose in its articles of incorporation in 1976 where it said quite simply it was forming to engage in aquaculture and activities in furtherance of aquaculture. In this context aquaculture was understood to pertain only to anadromous Pacific salmon.

The purpose was refined into a mission statement in 1990, and that mission was supported by a set of goals.

In the strategic planning process relatively minor adjustments have been made to both the mission statement and the set of goals. They now read as follows.

Mission: Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association is a nonprofit regional association which exists to: (1) protect self-sustaining salmon stocks and habitats upon which they depend; (2) rehabilitate self-sustaining salmon stocks; (3) rehabilitate salmon habitat; and (4) maximize the value of the Cook Inlet (Area H) common property salmon resource by applying science and enhancement technology where appropriate.

Goals: To accomplish this mission the Board of Directors of Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association will:

- Seek protection of salmon habitat through active participation (testimony, committee work, data input, etc.) in planning, permitting and enforcement processes.
- Conduct salmon rehabilitation and enhancement projects which can be expected to

significantly contribute to common property fishery harvests. An average harvest rate of 50% in the common property fishery is the acceptable standard for “significant contribution”. This standard does not apply during project development or to projects designed solely for cost recovery harvest.

- Conduct evaluation activities which increase the effectiveness of project implementation.
- Engage in research which advances the state of enhancement/rehabilitation technology.
- Be sensitive to the interests of those harvesting the Area H common property salmon resource.
- Educate the public about the salmon resource and the mission, goals and projects of the Association, including the economic, community, and environmental contributions and importance of the commercial fishing industry.
- Maintain the highest standards of financial responsibility and accountability for the funds entrusted to it.
- Maintain facilities, administrative practices and personnel policies which require and encourage its staff to perform in a safe, professional and cost-effective manner.
- Comply with all statutes and regulations governing private nonprofit aquaculture association activities in the State of Alaska.
- Participate, within the limits for tax-exempt corporations, in the development of legislation and regulation relevant to attainment of the mission.

Objectives - The Association wants:

- to declare the high value it places on performance.
- to acknowledge its full accountability for its programs.
- to affirm the importance of education in resource stewardship.
- to commit to serve the resource and the community responsibly.
- to continue its commitment to service to the greater Cook Inlet community.

Tactics - The Association should:

- develop cooperative relationships with other enterprises, agencies and organizations with compatible missions to maximize the benefits of efforts expended in behalf of the resource.
- be certain the public statements and reports about its programs and projects are complete and accurate.
- continue to recognize it is in the Association’s best interest and supportive of its overall mission to foster educational efforts whenever possible because successful stewardship of the salmon resource depends in large part on a well-informed public.
- retain the commitment of service to the fisheries resources and human population of the greater Cook Inlet community where the fishery resources originated and where efforts have historically been directed.
- operate in a manner that recognizes that essentially all of the activities associated with the enhancement or rehabilitation of the salmon resource are long-term, and this dictates that the Association must place a high priority on its ability to remain sustainable.

ADMINISTRATION – FINANCE

Background

The four major revenue sources upon which the Association depends for its annual operation are the salmon enhancement tax, licensing cost-recovery harvest of a portion of the supplemental production generated by the Association, grant funds and contract fish production. The Directors understand that significant elements of each of these revenue streams are out of the control of the Association.

The magnitude of the enhancement tax is dependent upon the size of the return, the degree to which fishermen are allowed to harvest those fish and the price they are paid for those fish. The revenue generated by licensing cost recovery harvests also depends on the size of the return and the price which is paid. The availability of grant funds is dictated by the granting source and the volume of competing applicants. The opportunities for the Association and an acceptable project sponsor to agree to a fish production contract are quite limited and subject to the funds available to the potential sponsor and the sponsor's ability to secure the necessary permits.

With recognition of the fact that proportions will vary from year-to-year, it is the Association's intent to strive for a predictable, long-term revenue-generating programs from all the sources available to the Association.

→ Objectives – The Association wants:

- to develop new income streams through outside funding of projects, contracts for stocking projects, grants, and other revenue sources.
- to assure that no new project will be developed without first identifying long-term funding.
- its projects to meet performance goals before substantial common property harvest is allowed.
- to manage the Association's debt load.
- to manage the Association's financial resources in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

→ Tactics – The Association should:

- establish a cost recovery harvest that meets the Association's budgeted expense needs annually.
- develop revenue from contract fish production.
- secure grant funded projects that substantially leverage funds the Association has committed to a project.
- develop and implement a plan to accelerate payment of the Association's total debt.

ADMINISTRATION – HUMAN RESOURCES

Background

The Association is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors dedicated to the salmon resources of Cook Inlet. To translate that dedication into an effective organization with meaningful programs, the Board employs a staff that strives to meet its responsibilities in a professional and efficient manner.

➔ Objectives - The Association wants:

- the Board of Directors to remain well informed about issues relevant to the salmon resource and the actions of their staff.
- the staff to maintain high professional standards.

➔ Tactics - The Association should:

- encourage professional development for each regular full-time employee.
- maintain affiliation with a consulting group such as the Foraker Group that specializes in the management and leadership of non-profit organizations.
- provide salmon enhancement information to the members of the Board of Directors through the web site and social media.
- secure at least one professional presentation to the Board of Directors each year.
- maintain a competitive salary and rewards program for the Association's staff.

ADMINISTRATION – PUBLIC RELATIONS

The core of the Association's public relations activities have been the publication of the SMOLTS newsletter and the Annual Report and making the meeting room available to resource-related groups at no cost.

A standing Public Relations Committee was established in 2019 and is working on raising public awareness of the Association's contributions and activities in Area H.

➔ Objectives - The Association wants:

- to promote the Association's mission and goals through outreach and education and to increase its public relations activities.
- to continue to update and improve the services offered by and the user effectiveness of the meeting room

➔ Tactics - The Association should:

- continue to regularly produce and distribute the SMOLTS newsletter and Annual Report.
- continue to maintain an informative web site and social media.
- continue to develop information materials such as brochures, signage, videos, etc.
- continue to participate in educational activities such as "Salmon in the Classroom, and "Adopt-A-Stream," and other educational projects.
- continue to present the Association and its programs and projects at venues such as professional conferences, city council meetings, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, and Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly, outdoor shows, etc.
- continue to provide tours at its hatcheries.
- develop an educational pamphlet that describes the Association's activities and accomplishments for distribution to school and other tour groups that visit Trail Lakes, Tutka Bay Lagoon, and Port Graham hatcheries.
- update the visitor display at Trail Lakes, Tutka Bay Lagoon, and Port Graham hatcheries.
- develop a program to annually award a scholarship to a student from Area H.

- continue to coordinate with aquaculture associations throughout the state, such as through Alaska Salmon Hatchery Alliance.
- continue to educate Board of Fisheries members and elected officials about the contributions, mission, and goals of the Association.

HABITAT AND SELF-SUSTAINING FISH PRODUCTION

Background

The Association has historically recognized the importance of understanding, maintaining and improving salmon habitat and self-sustaining fish populations through its efforts to monitor smolt and adult salmon populations, provide adequate flows through migration corridors, removal of seasonal barriers to fish migration, eradicate and/or manage harmful invasive species, construction of spawning channels and fish ladders and implementation of fish habitat projects in cooperation with other resource agencies.

→ Objectives - The Association wants:

- to implement at least one project per year that improves salmon habitat in the Cook Inlet basin.
- to continue to annually monitor at least four streams in Upper Cook Inlet for seasonal migration barriers and modify the barriers as needed.
- to continue to operate four flow control structures to assist salmon migration.
- to establish self-sustaining salmon returns to the Paint River system.
- to develop and implement salmon monitoring projects in the Susitna River drainage.
- to continue to cooperate, when possible, with other organizations to identify, eradicate, manage or control invasive species that are negatively impacting salmon and salmon habitats and initiate, where appropriate, efforts to rehabilitate impacted salmon populations and their habitat.

→ Tactics - The Association should:

- continue the cooperative effort with the Kenai Watershed Forum, Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, and Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, and where possible initiate such efforts with similar organizations to identify priority habitat projects.
- annually fund and operate flow control structures at Daniel's, Packer's, Bear and Marten lakes.
- annually fund and conduct aerial surveys of Northern District streams for beaver dams.
- annually open the Paint River fish ladder, initiate salmon stocking programs and monitor escapement into the Paint River system.
- annually seek the necessary funds and complete smolt and adult population monitoring at several representative sockeye salmon rearing lakes in the Susitna River drainage.

PROJECTS – TRAIL LAKES HATCHERY

Background

This facility is owned by the State of Alaska and operated by the Association through contract with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The hatchery is located at Trail Lakes and was designed to produce sockeye, coho and chinook salmon. It is currently permitted to produce sockeye and

coho salmon for release at selected sites throughout the Cook Inlet (Area H) watershed. Individual project objectives and strategies are presented in annual Trail Lakes Hatchery Management Plans.

➔ **Objectives - The Association wants:**

- to maintain the Trail Lakes Hatchery physical plant in a manner which (1) does not accelerate its deterioration, (2) does not cause failure of any of its principal elements to result in the loss of fish or the injury of staff or visitors, and (3) does support the maximum fish production that can be sustained by the facility.
- to minimize and promote the wise use of chemicals as much as possible.
- to maximize, within the hatchery's productive capacity, the return of adult fish produced by hatchery operations.

➔ **Tactics - The Association should:**

- minimize the use of chemicals by maintaining production within the hatchery's capacity.
- maintain the UV filter on the influent.
- monitor, evaluate and change, where appropriate, existing projects to maximize the benefits of these projects to the Association and the Cook Inlet community.
- maintain its lease of the Trail Lakes Hatchery.

PROJECTS – EKLUTNA SALMON HATCHERY

Background

This facility was built by and is owned and operated by CIAA. The Eklutna Hatchery was originally constructed in 1982 as a pink, chum, coho and Chinook salmon hatchery. In 1992, a majority of the facility was converted to sockeye production, and the facility produced sockeye and coho salmon smolts for release to the Eklutna Tailrace and sockeye fry for release to several Cook Inlet lakes. In 1998, fish production was suspended and the facility has been maintained as an emergency backup system for Trail Lakes Hatchery.

➔ **Objectives - The Association wants:**

- to select one of two alternative objectives for this facility; and it should be to (1) contract with the State for salmon production at the facility or (2) operate the facility for production.

➔ **Tactics - The Association should:**

- initiate an internal process leading to the identification of the best objective for the Eklutna Hatchery.
- identify the most effective tactics to achieve the objective once it has been selected.
- evaluate and change, where appropriate, the broodstock used for future projects to maximize the benefits of these projects.

PROJECTS – TUTKA BAY LAGOON HATCHERY

Background

This facility is owned by the State of Alaska and operated by the Association through contract with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This remote hatchery was built in 1975 and designed to produce pink and chum salmon for release to Tutka Bay Lagoon and at selected sites in Lower Cook Inlet. In 1994, the facility was renovated, production of chum salmon was removed, production of pink salmon was increased, and production of sockeye salmon was added. In 2004, the Association elected to suspend operations at Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery; and, in 2010, the Association made the decision to re-open the hatchery. Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery currently produces pink salmon fry for release to Tutka Bay and Paint River. The facility is also used to support Trail Lakes Hatchery and Port Graham Hatchery pink and sockeye salmon projects. Individual project objectives and strategies are presented in annual Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery Management Plans.

→ Objectives - The Association wants:

- to maintain the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery physical plant in a manner which (1) does not accelerate its deterioration, (2) does not cause failure of any of its principal elements to result in the loss of fish or the injury of staff or visitors, and (3) does support the maximum fish production that can be sustained by the facility.
- to minimize and promote the wise use of chemicals as much as possible.
- to maximize, within the hatchery's productive capacity, the return of adult fish produced by hatchery operations.
- to operate the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery to support short-term rearing of sockeye salmon from other facilities.

→ Tactics - The Association should:

- monitor, evaluate and change, where appropriate, existing projects to maximize the benefits of these projects to the Association and the Cook Inlet community.
- maintain its lease of the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery.
- Identify capital acquisitions required to achieve full permitted production capacity.
- Continue to develop and maintain good working relationships with Alaska State Parks.

PROJECTS – PORT GRAHAM HATCHERY

Background

This facility is located in the village of Port Graham, Alaska, near the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula. The facility, constructed on land owned by Port Graham Corporation in 1992, was operated by the Port Graham Hatchery Corporation until 2007. Originally focusing on pink salmon production, the facility was also designed to produce coho and sockeye salmon. The coho salmon program was discontinued in 2000 and pink salmon production was suspended in 2007. In 2014, The Association took over ownership of the hatchery, the facility was renovated, production of sockeye and coho salmon was removed, and production of pink salmon was increased. Individual project objectives and strategies are presented in annual Port Graham Hatchery Management Plans.

→ Objectives - The Association wants:

- to develop the Port Graham Hatchery to support its maximum designed egg incubation capacity.
- to maintain the Port Graham Hatchery physical plant in a manner which (1) does not accelerate its deterioration, (2) does not cause failure of any of its principal elements to result in the loss of fish or the injury of staff or visitors, and (3) does support the maximum fish production that can be sustained by the facility.
- to minimize and promote the wise use of chemicals as much as possible.
- to maximize, within the hatchery's productive capacity, the return of adult fish produced by hatchery operations.

→ Tactics - The Association should:

- complete renovations to the facility.
- seek and develop an additional water source for the facility.
- monitor, evaluate and change, where appropriate, existing projects to maximize the benefits of these projects to the Association and the Cook Inlet community including the investigation and implementation, if appropriate, of a chum salmon program.
- maintain its property leases with the Port Graham Corporation and the Village of Port Graham. Identify capital acquisitions required to achieve full permitted production capacity.
- maintain good relations with the Port Graham and Nanwalek communities., including programs such as Salmon in Classroom and other classroom activities.

REGIONAL PLANNING TEAM

Background

The Cook Inlet Regional Planning Team is made up of six voting members. Three are appointed by the Association and three appointed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The non-voting chair is usually held by an Alaska Department of Fish and Game representative. The team meets annually to discuss and approve regional hatchery Basic Management Plans, Annual Management Plans, Permit Alteration Requests, etc. One of the other tasks charged to the Cook Inlet Regional Planning Team is to annually review and update the Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Plan. The Plan has recently been rewritten and is in its second phase, 2006 – 2025.

→ Objectives - The Association wants:

- to ensure at least two Cook Inlet Regional Planning Team meeting are held annually.
- to maintain the Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Plan.

→ Tactics - The Association should:

- coordinate with Alaska Department of Fish and Game to hold two annual Cook Inlet Regional Planning Team meetings.
- review and update the Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Plan and mailing list annually.

Strategic Plan 2021–2025 Checklist

		Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association Annual Meetings					Comments for the 2021 Annual Meeting Review
		February 2021	February 2022	February 2023	February 2024	February 2025	
ADMINISTRATION - Purpose							
1	continue existing/develop new cooperative relationships with other organizations						
2	maintain credibility through complete and accurate reporting						
3	conduct and/or foster public fisheries resource education efforts						
4	continue the commitment to resource-oriented community service in Area H						
5	operate in a manner that assures long-term sustainability						
ADMINISTRATION - Finance							
6	establish cost recovery harvest that meets expenses						
7	develop revenue from contract fish production						
8	secure grant funded projects that leverage Association funds						
9	accelerate payment of Association's debt						
ADMINISTRATION - Human Relations							
10	encourage professional development of full-time employees						
11	maintain affiliation with management and leadership consulting group						
12	provide information to the Board of Directors through the website and social media						
13	secure at least one annual professional presentation to the Board of Directors						
14	maintain competitive salary and rewards program for staff						
ADMINISTRATION - Public Relations							
15	regularly produce SMOLTS and Annual Report						
16	maintain website and social media						
17	develop and distribute information material						
18	participate in educational activities						
19	participate in professional conferences and meetings						
20	provide tours at hatcheries						
21	develop educational pamphlet for distribution to tour groups and schools						
22	update or develop visitor displays at hatcheries						
23	develop a program to annually award a scholarship to an Area H student						
24	continue to coordinate statewide with aquaculture associations						
25	continue to education Board of Fisheries and elected officials						
PROJECTS - Habitat							
26	continue to work with Kenai Watershed Forum and other organizations on habitat projects						
27	annually fund/operate flow control structures at Daniels, Packers, Bear and Marten lakes						
28	annually fund/conduct aerial surveys of Northern District streams for beaver dams						
29	annually open, stock and monitor the Paint River fish ladder project						
30	implement a smolt and adult population monitoring program in the Susitna River Drainage						
PROJECTS - Trail Lakes Hatchery							
31	minimize use of chemicals at the hatchery						
32	maintain UV filter on the influent at the hatchery						
33	assess projects supported by the hatchery to maximize benefits to community						
34	maintain lease for the facility						
PROJECTS - Eklutna Salmon Hatchery							
35	initiate an internal process to identify the best objective for the hatchery						
36	identify the most effective tactics to achieve the best objective for the hatchery						
37	assess future projects supported by hatchery to maximize benefits to community						
PROJECTS - Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery							
38	assess projects supported by the hatchery to maximize benefits to community						
39	maintain lease for the facility						
40	Identify capital acquisitions to achieve permitted production						
41	continue to develop good relationship with Alaska State Parks						
PROJECTS - Port Graham Hatchery							
42	complete renovations to the facility						
43	develop additional water supply						
44	assess chum production and current projects to maximize benefits to community						
45	maintain the property leases						
46	maintain relations with Port Graham and Nanwalek						
PROJECTS - Regional Planning Team							
47	coordinate with ADF&G to ensure at least two RPT meetings are held annually						
48	review and update the Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Plan and mailing list annually						