


From: [Tom Gemmell](#)
To: [Tom Gemmell](#)
Subject: Alaska Fish Notes May 18, 2012
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Top Stories. Copper river off and running..Senate holds marine debris hearing and Senator Begich ask for \$45M for cleanup..Herring bust in Seymour Canal, Togiak having weather problems...EPA weighs in on Pebble... ASMI board approves \$21.3 million budget for 2013Listen to both Fish Radio & Alaska Fisheries Report (KMXT).

[The Alaska Fisheries Report with Jay Barrett \(5/17\)](#)  *Coming up this week, the Togiak sac roe herring fishery happened all of a sudden this week; NOAA Fisheries issues its report on the status of U.S. Fisheries, close encounters of the cetacean kind, and jig fishermen get some marketing help. We had help this week from [KDLG's Mike Mason](#) in Dillingham.*

[17th District Notice to Mariners \(5/16\)](#) 

[AMSEA Safety Training Calendar](#)

[Follow Marine Debris in Alaska](#)

Fish Radio (Laine Welch) Broadcast Daily.

http://www.marineconservationalliance.org/?page_id=846%22

5/18/12 Lots of ups and downs in AK permit values

5/17/12 Togiak herring underway w/eager market; no reds at Fraser River

5/16/12 Togiak herring underway w/eager market; no reds at Fraser River

5/15/12 Ultimate Fishing Town contest

5/14/12 Salmon Vs Harsh weather condtions

[Fish Factor by Laine Welch \(5/11\)](#) 

Alaska Fish Related Blogs

[Deckboss by Wesley Loy](#)

[Hauling Gear](#)

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FEDERAL

1. **Do Not Disturb: Quiet, unmanned planes may help NOAA survey marine mammals (5/10).** Since the 1970s, the population of Steller sea lions has declined dramatically in the western Aleutians Islands of Alaska, and the western stock is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Keeping tabs on Steller sea lion populations is the responsibility of NOAA's National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML). NOAA Marine mammal biologists and their colleagues are experimenting with a potentially powerful new survey tool: unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). NOAA CDR Nancy Ash explains. [Video](#) More: <http://researchmatters.noaa.gov/news/Pages/sealions.aspx>
2. **Transparency tops proposed IPHC changes (5/13).** A consulting firm recommended sweeping changes centered on improving transparency and increasing stakeholder participation after completing a performance review of the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

Concur Inc. submitted its review April 30, and conducted a webinar May 7 presenting its findings with 12 recommendations to bring one of the world's oldest and most well-respected fisheries management bodies in line with the best practices of today.

The IPHC was established by a treaty between the U.S. and Canada in 1923 and manages the Pacific halibut stock through survey assessments, modeling and harvest strategy — and it has largely been successful at achieving sustainability, Concur found.

However, the IPHC process has been exposed as outdated and incompatible with a burgeoning stakeholder base under the current circumstances.

The status of halibut management today is characterized by dramatically smaller average size-at-age, questions about the biological model after retrospective analysis has revealed significant overharvest since 2004, and increasingly severe cuts in quota to compensate.

Trust among stakeholders and with the IPHC is at an ebb, with Canadians questioning the IPHC's methods for apportioning and near-annually extracting additional quota for British Columbia based on the decades-long failure by U.S. managers to address trawl halibut bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska. [More CONCUR Report](#)

3. **Annual NOAA report shows a record number of rebuilt fisheries (5/14).** A record six fish populations were declared rebuilt to healthy levels in 2011, bringing the number of rebuilt U.S. marine fish populations in the last 11 years to 27, according to a report to Congress out today from NOAA's Fisheries Service. This report documents historic progress toward ending overfishing and rebuilding our nation's fisheries, due to the commitment of fishermen, fishing communities, non-governmental organizations, scientists, and managers.

"With annual catch limits in place this year for all domestic fish populations and the continued commitment of fishermen to rebuild the stocks they rely on, we're making even greater progress in ending overfishing and rebuilding stocks around the nation," said Samuel Rauch, acting assistant NOAA administrator for fisheries. "Healthy and abundant fish populations and marine ecosystems support seafood for Americans, create lasting jobs, and enhance saltwater recreational fishing opportunities."

NOAA's *Status of U.S. Fisheries* report declares Bering Sea snow crab, Atlantic coast summer flounder, Gulf of Maine haddock, northern California coast Chinook salmon, Washington coast coho salmon, and Pacific coast widow rockfish fully rebuilt to healthy levels.

Two indicators of stock health increased slightly over 2010:

- 86 percent of the populations examined for fishing activity (222 of 258) were not subject to overfishing, or not fished at too high a level, compared to 84 percent in 2010
- 79 percent of assessed populations (174 of 219) are not overfished, or were above levels that require a rebuilding plan, compared to 77 percent in 2010.

These data continue a long-term trend in rebuilding U.S. fisheries to sustainable and more productive levels that NOAA began tracking in 2000. [More](#)

[NYTimes \(5/14\)](#)

4. **NY Times Editorial. The Grand Old Party and the Sea (5/16).** Add fish and oceans to the long list of environmental issues that House Republicans do not much care about. Last week, the House voted to deny further financing to a federal program that helps regulate commercial fisheries and has been increasingly important to the recovery of several at-risk species. For

good measure, it also killed financing for a worthy effort by the Obama administration to improve the health of America's coastal waters. [More](#)

5. **NOAA Seeks Comments on Potential Adjustments to the National Standard 1 Guidelines of the Magnuson-Stevens Act; Comments due Aug. 1 (5/3).** NOAA Fisheries has issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking to provide background information and request public comment on potential adjustments to the National Standard 1 Guidelines, one of 10 national standards for fishery conservation and management contained in Section 301 of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Since the guidelines were last updated in 2009, a number of issues regarding the application of the guidelines were identified by stakeholders and managers that may warrant their revision. This action provides the public with a formal opportunity to comment on the specific ideas mentioned in this advance notice, as well as any additional ideas and solutions that could improve provisions of the National Standard 1 Guidelines. Written comments regarding these issues must be received by August 1, 2012. [Read more or submit a comment.](#)
6. **U.S. Fisheries Management: Lessons from a 35-Year Journey (5/11).** By Eric Schwaab. I am pleased to be here at the 6th World Fisheries Congress and honored to have been invited to provide your closing remarks. The events, papers and other discussions of this week truly demonstrate that we have come a long way in fisheries science and management around the globe, but that we also still have a long way to go and, perhaps most importantly, that we have much to gain by learning from each other and working together even more closely in the challenging years ahead.

I want to thank the organizers and the hosts for a wonderful venue, an excellent forum and, notably, a particularly appropriate theme - - "Sustainable Fisheries in a Changing World." I can think of no better ambassador to underscore both our changing world and our responsibility for global stewardship than fish.

Like many of our most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, fish recognize no national or state boundaries. They move about, largely unseen - - be that on their own or in crates. Their populations change dramatically not only as a result of our direct intervention, but also as a result of changes in environment both large and small. They are subject to environmental variables - - but also to changing social and economic conditions. This point has been made clear throughout the week as we have seen multiple trend lines suggesting a changing balance between aquaculture and wild-caught fish and ever-evolving market conditions.

And, as another point of focus here this week, fish require constant and ever more sophisticated scientific understanding if we are to achieve our management objectives. But science only serves as a foundation for good decisions and, like many other important issues we face, the difficult task of translating good science into effective policy and action requires considerable effort.

But fish also present us with a tremendous opportunity for robust international collaboration and global stewardship. [More](#)

7. **Young steps in to rescue salmon recovery funds (5/15).** Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, and Rep. Mike Thompson, D-CA., co-founders and co-chairs of the Congressional Wild Salmon Caucus, joined in a bipartisan effort May 8 to reject legislation to eliminate \$15 million from the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund.

They voted with the majority, 239-168, against an amendment introduced by Rep. Paul Broun, R-Georgia to H.R. 5326, the fiscal year 2013 Commerce, Justice and Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act,

The bill would fund PCSRF at \$65 million for fiscal 2013.

“Alaskans know firsthand the economic benefits of a strong fishing industry,” said Young. “By helping to rehabilitate salmon populations across America, these recovery funds go a long way in building and maintaining healthy fishing industries. I was happy to see that my colleagues recognized this last night and rejected this misguided amendment in a bipartisan manner.”

[Link](#)

8. **Rash of Sea Lion Miscarriages Caused by Virus (5/15).** A relatively rare virus in Alaska is being looked at as the cause to an unusually high number of premature births among Steller Sea Lions around Kodiak Island. Marine mammal specialist Kate Wynne, with the University of Alaska's Marine Advisory Program, says she found four dead pups while on a routine trip to sea lion haulouts this spring. [More/KMXT Audio](#)
9. **Snow Crab Officially Recovered, Says NOAA (5/15).** The Bering Sea snow crab stock is officially rebuilt.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association announced the stock's recovery as part of its annual report to Congress on the status of America's fisheries.

Scientists first determined that snow crab was overfished in 1999, and slashed the harvest levels in response. A little over a decade later, the stock is now above its target population level. Commercial fishing quotas have also gone up as a result. This quota was brought up to almost 90 million pounds this season, nearly double what it was last year. However, fishermen have struggled to take this amount because of persistent ice cover in the Bering Sea this winter.

The report also noted that golden king crab and Gulf of Alaska shallow water flatfish were not overfished, information NOAA had not established previously. [Link NOAA PR and Full Report](#)

10. **NPFMC-Items FOR the June meeting**

[Agenda](#): June 4-12, 2012 Kodiak, Alaska (updated 5/14/12)

GOA Halibut PSC [EA/RIR/IRFA](#); [Appendicies](#)

11. **My Turn: Reduce the waste of our Alaska halibut (5/17).** Waste of our Alaskan fishery resources is in the news again as the North Pacific Fishery Management Council approaches its June 6 meeting. A proposal has finally reached the table to reduce bycatch by 15 percent. Bycatch is the allowed death and wastage of halibut from fisheries. I call this a mild reduction but there are two other options that would reduce the kill rate by only 10 percent or even a meager 5 percent. I hope Alaskans from all walks of life will call or send in a short note by letter or email to push our resource managers to finally take this baby step to control the killing of unwanted halibut during the course of another fishery. I say small step because the 15 percent bycatch reduction is in comparison to commercial halibut catch reductions of over 50 percent and in comparison to the current issue of potentially limiting the sport guided catch from a two fish daily limit to only one fish per day. How crazy is it to limit Alaskans access to their halibut resource while leaving the Gulf of Alaska allowable waste at over 5 million pounds per year? That is more poundage than the entire sport fishery. Since most bycatch is killed while below legal size, the waste is actually a higher number of fish than the entire commercial fishery. [More](#)
12. **Tiglax gets tied up in first sign of federal budget cuts (5/16).** In a difficult cost-cutting move, the research vessel the M/V Tiglax will sit tied to the Homer dock for two weeks this summer.

The Alaska National Maritime Wildlife Refuge owns the famed research ship, built in 1987 especially for difficult work in the stormy Aleutians. Refuge Manager Steve Delehanty said the move will save the refuge \$80,000.

“This will be the most noticeable cut in terms of the public, because the ship will be tied up at the dock for two weeks in the prime of the season,” Delehanty said.

The cuts also mean foregoing or postponing research at Barren Islands, a long-term sea bird monitoring project studying ocean health through bird diets.

The refuge’s annual budget of roughly \$4 million goes to all operations throughout the Alaska National Maritime Wildlife Refuge. With increasing costs and budget cuts of 2 percent, the refuge has a budget shortfall of about \$400,000. [More](#)

13. **Debris gets local, federal attention (5/17).** Ocean debris thought to be from Japan’s devastating tsunami is washing up on Alaska’s shores, raising concerns among state officials and others that a response plan is needed.

Legislators, including Rep. Beth Kerttula, are asking the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to develop such a plan.

“We do not know how much tsunami-generated debris is on its way towards the coastlines of Alaska and other Pacific states, but the first waves of it are already here,” Kerttula, D-Juneau, and other legislators wrote in a letter to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco.

In Washington, D.C. today, NOAA’s Assistant Administrator David Kennedy and Coast Guard Rear Adm. Cari B. Thomas, director of response policy, will testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard about tsunami-generated marine debris.

U.S. Sen. Mark Begich, D-Alaska, chairs that subcommittee.

Kerttula’s letter, also signed by several other House Democrats, warned the potentially dangerous debris could contain hazardous materials, containers of fuel and other toxins. [More](#)

14. **US Senate Hearing. Stemming the Tide: The U.S. Response to Tsunami Generated Marine Debris (5/17).** [Webcast, 71 minutes](#)
15. **Federal Government Unprepared To Deal With Tsunami Debris (5/17).** The federal government is woefully unprepared for the tsunami debris washing ashore. Government officials testified on Capitol Hill on Thursday, and complained their agencies are underfunded, under-staffed and haven’t done nearly enough research. [APRN Audio](#)
16. **Begich wants \$45 million for tsunami debris clean-up (5/18).** Sen. Mark Begich, D-Alaska, is asking the federal government for \$45 million over two years to clean up debris from the devastating Japanese tsunami washing up on the vast coastline of Alaska and the West Coast.

Begich made the request May 17 following a hearing on the impact of tsunami debris that Begich led as chairman of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard.

“There’s three billion pounds of mostly plastic trash which will flood into our inter-tidal ecosystems and the leading edge of this tide is already here,” Begich said in his opening statement at the subcommittee hearing. “Unlike many disasters which catch us by surprise, we have known this debris was coming since shortly after the tsunami.” [More](#)

17. **Snagged Whale Nearly Swamps Boat (5/16).** An encounter last month between a fishing vessel and a whale in Uyak Bay ended badly for the whale. Apparently a 60-foot Fin whale feeding in the bay on the morning of April 17 wound up hooking its baleen on the anchor line of the 48-foot boat and couldn't get loose.

Marine Mammal specialist Kate Wynne with the University of Alaska Marine Advisory Program said the whale drowned, but the incident could have ended badly for the fishing boat and crew as well. [More/KMXT Audio](#)

18. **Editorial. Law of the Sea: U.S. should approve treaty (5/17).** The U.S. Senate is again poised to take up the proposed Law of the Sea treaty, which has languished for 30 years. It remains a missing piece in the puzzle of future Arctic development.

The treaty has been approved by 161 nations and all of the world's industrialized countries and those that have Arctic territory — with the exception of the United States.

The treaty, which is supported by Alaska's U.S. senators, enjoys broad bipartisan support in the U.S., as well as from industry, environmental and military leaders, but its approval has been blocked by those who claim it would relinquish U.S. sovereignty.

On the contrary, this treaty would give the United States more power to exercise maritime rights and responsibilities. Without this legal framework, our ability to lead in the development of future international rules regarding the oceans will be next to nil. [More](#)

19. **Salmon Grow on Trees: Fishermen and Loggers Disagree Over Tongass Watershed (5/16).** JUNEAU, Alaska— In Southeast Alaska, there's a controversy brewing.

A controversy between loggers and fisherman.

Last year, the salmon catch in Southeastern Alaska was the highest in the state, exceeding even salmon-rich Bristol Bay. Something in excess of 15-billion pounds of salmon was caught there in 2011.

That wasn't always the case. In 1967, the salmon catch in southeast commercial fisheries hit a record low, just 215 million pounds.

There are many possible reasons for the low catch, but scientists agree, among those reasons were the logging practices of the time.

In the 1960's, areas like Prince of Wales Island were heavily logged in clear-cuts. Forest restoration was not widely practiced, and it is a known fact that sedimentation and lack of shade can harm salmon spawning streams.

But there were probably other factors as well. Asian vessels that were doing illegal drift net fishing, and possibly pollution factors in the Pacific. [More/KTUU video](#)

20. **Washington state man dies on vessel near Togiak (5/18).** TOGIAK, Alaska - Alaska State Troopers say a 43-year-old Washington state man died Thursday on board a commercial fishing vessel anchored 10 miles off Togiak.

Troopers say Stanley E. Allison Jr. of Shelton was working as a deckhand on board the fish processor Gordon Jensen when he collapsed at about 3:30 a.m.

He could not be revived on the vessel and he was flown to a Dillingham hospital.

A trooper flew to the vessel to investigate. Troopers say foul play is not suspected and an autopsy has been ordered to determine the cause of death.

Togiak is 67 miles west of Dillingham at the head of Togiak Bay, part of the larger Bristol Bay. [Link](#)

21. **Begich Chimes In On Halibut Management (5/11).** [Listen to this story](#) KBBI-Homer
22. **Opinion. Canada's oil-sands bonanza could mean disaster for Alaska's coastline (5/17).** *Canada's disregard for the impacts of selling oil sands to China will lead to the near-inevitability of another Exxon Valdez-type spill in U.S. waters, writes guest columnist Michael Byers.* Twenty-three years after the Exxon Valdez spilled more than half a million barrels of oil into Prince William Sound, another threat looms over Alaska's remote and beautiful coastline — in the form of heavy oil exports from Canada to China.

Since the Earth is a sphere, the shortest shipping route from Western Canada to China passes through the Aleutian Islands at a narrow strait called Unimak Pass.

Two pipeline companies want to dilute tar-like bitumen from the Alberta oil sands with natural gas condensate so that it can be pumped west to the coast of British Columbia.

The first plan — a new pipeline called "Northern Gateway" — would carry 525,000 barrels per day to a terminal just south of the Alaska Panhandle, where it would be loaded onto supertankers that would sail westward toward Unimak Pass. [More](#)

23. **Chemical leak threatens Alaska Juris fishermen (5/18).** An ammonia leak aboard the fishing vessel Alaska Juris, which led to the evacuation of three crewmembers last Thursday, is still under investigation by the Coast Guard.

Coast Guard personnel received report that the three men were suffering from ammonia exposure on board the vessel, approximately 80 miles north of Cold Bay. "We are sending multiple air assets to ensure the most efficient response possible," said Lt. Lane Munroe in a release following report of the incident. "Getting on scene quickly and assisting the crew of the vessel is our number one priority."

The Coast Guard deployed an HC-130 airplane, an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter and an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter in response to the report.

"We medevaced them using C130s back to Anchorage where we transferred them to emergency medical personal," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Grant Devuyst.

While the crewmembers of the Seattle-based factory trawler are in good condition, Devuyst said he can't release any more information regarding vessel, leak or the individuals involved, until the investigation is complete.

This is the third rescue mission executed near Cold Bay in the month of May. [More](#)

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24. **Opinion: Streets of Cordova - Jim and Ruth Poor (5/14).** Here's a repeat of a story I wrote in 1997 about an old friend many of us clearly remember: Jim Poor, leader and builder of our town for many years. Even though I wrote this story myself, I'm still amazed when I see all of Jim's accomplishments laid out on paper. Today, Jim and his wife, Ruth, live in Graham, Washington. Check this out:

Jim started working in the seafood business 50 years ago as a high school kid in 1948, icing and grading salmon at Westport, Washington. As soon as he graduated from high school, he bought an Alaska Steamship ticket and traveled to Ketchikan where he got a job butchering dungeness crab 18 hours a day, 7 days a week. [More](#)

25. Lodestar II-AFDF Newsletter (Spring 2012). Dear Members and Friends of the Foundation,

A lot has been happening at AFDF lately! In this newsletter, we will update you on this year's 19th Annual Alaska Symphony of Seafood and ask for early support for our next year's 20th Anniversary Symphony.

On a state level, we are excited about potential funding for AFDF's Fishing Vessel Energy Audit Pilot Program, which is currently pending Governor's approval of 2013 Budget.

On a federal level, AFDF has been working with our sister organization, Gulf of South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. (GSAFF), to re-initiate distribution of S-K funds toward commercial fisheries development and research activities and now we need industry support of our efforts. We are also continuing our regular MSC Updates and "Member Spotlight" article series. Lastly, we offer a heads-up on an upcoming conference on Nutrition and Fats of Omega 3s, which is scheduled to take place in Vancouver BC later this month (May 26-30, 2012).

So, please, read on!

On a fishing note, the Stikine and Taku Rivers opened on May 7th and Copper River opens on May 17th. The entire Pacific Northwest is anxiously awaiting the first fresh taste of Alaskan Chinook and sockeye salmon. Hallelujah, and here's hoping that 2012 beats the statewide forecast both in numbers and ex-vessel value!

— James Browning [More](#) Scroll down

26. Alaska Glacier Seafoods charged with failure to timely submit fish tickets (5/13). It was the fish ticket that got away.

Charged with failure to submit fish tickets to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in a timely fashion, the president of Alaska Glacier Seafoods Inc. says he doesn't know how one of the "tens of thousands" of tickets he submits annually fell through the cracks.

"I'm not quite sure how this one got away from us, really," Michael Erickson, the president of the family-owned seafood processor and distributor based in Juneau, said in a phone interview.

"When you're dealing with that many tickets, it's pretty hard not to have a late ticket now and then," Erickson added, though emphasizing his company has never been ticketed for this before, so far as he knows.

Erickson, 58, as the president and registered agent of the company, was ticketed by the Alaska Wildlife Troopers in Juneau on Sept. 30, 2011, for failure to submit fish tickets to the department within seven days after delivery. [More](#)

27. Alaska Joint Board Of Fisheries And Game Committee Meeting May 15. ALASKA

JOINT BOARD OF FISHERIES AND GAME COMMITTEE will meet via teleconference at 2pm. The purpose of the committee meeting is to discuss potential recommendations to the Joint Board for regulatory amendments to 5 AAC, Chapter 96, particularly changes addressing the removal of advisory committee members for cause, conducting of advisory committee meetings and the use and sufficiency of advisory committee minutes. The agenda and other meeting documents will be available prior to the meeting at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=process.jbmeetinginfo>. The Department intends to offer live audio streaming and a link will be provided during the meeting at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=process.jointboard>. The meeting is open to the public. Listen in teleconference sites are available for the public at the AK Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G) offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. For more information about the meeting, contact Kristy Tibbles or Monica Wellard at 465-4110.

28. **Board of Fish Votes to Keep the Bristol Bay Meeting in Naknek (5/16).** [🔊 Listen to audio](#) | [📎 Download audio](#) (7:01). The Alaska Board of Fisheries held a meeting Wednesday morning to consider moving the December meeting from Naknek to Anchorage. The December meeting is specifically focused on Bristol Bay.
29. **Togiak Sac Roe Herring Fishery is Open (5/15).** [🔊 Listen to audio](#) | [📎 Download audio](#) (5:56). The largest herring fishery in Alaska opened last night.
30. **Weather Hampers the Togiak Herring Fishery (5/17).** [🔊 Listen to audio](#) | [📎 Download audio](#) (2:55). The largest herring fishery in Alaska has been hampered the last few days by weather and unripe fish. KDLG's Mike Mason has the story.
31. **Kodiak Herring Sac Roe Fishery Wraps Up (5/17).** A late start to the Kodiak sac roe herring fishery will leave about a thousand tons unharvested. [KMXT Audio](#)
32. **Ice Forces Snow Crab Season Extension (5/14).** It's already been a long snow crab season, but it's about to be longer. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced Monday that the season will be extended by two weeks in some areas, moving the overall end date to mid-June.

Heavy ice cover in the Bering Sea periodically forced fishermen off the grounds this winter and almost a quarter of the allowable harvest remains uncaught. The unprecedented move by Fish and Game should give crabbers time to bring in the remaining 20 million pounds.

The fishery was scheduled to close on May 31, but with the extension, areas west of 171 degrees will be open through June 15. [More](#)

33. **Hatchery Salmon Versus Wild Salmon (5/16).** A group of studies says that salmon raised in man-made hatcheries can harm wild salmon through competition for food and habitat. Salmon, which survived millions of years of evolution, are in danger from...salmon.

The studies provide new evidence that fast-growing hatchery fish compete with wild fish for food and habitat in the ocean as well as in the rivers where they return to spawn and even raises questions about whether the ocean can supply enough food to support future increases in hatchery fish while still sustaining wild salmon.

"This isn't just an isolated issue," says Pete Rand, a biologist at the Wild Salmon Center and a guest editor of the publication. "What we're seeing here in example after example is growing scientific evidence that hatchery fish can actually edge out wild populations." [More](#)

34. **Compass. Mining Pebble would fail Hammond's criteria (5/17).** As Alaskans we take great responsibility in balancing the management of our natural resources with the protection of our land and waters. Since statehood, Alaska's leaders have walked a fine line to determine

how essential minerals can be extracted without sacrificing equally valuable fish and wildlife resources. In determining whether potential resource development would ensure healthy, sustainable economic growth for our state, former Governor Jay Hammond had four simple criteria a project should be evaluated by:

- Is it environmentally sound?
- Do most Alaskans want it?
- Can it pay its own way?
- Does it meet our constitution's mandate to manage resources for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans?

While many of Alaska's mining projects have met Hammond's basic standards, the proposed Pebble Mine has not. With a thriving commercial fishing industry and a vital subsistence way of life at stake, mineral development in Bristol Bay must be carefully scrutinized and permitted with only the highest of precautionary environmental standards. [More](#)

35. **Mine could hurt Alaska salmon, EPA warns (5/18).** Failure of a large-scale mine planned near the headwaters of one of the world's premier salmon fisheries in Alaska could wipe out or degrade rivers and streams in the region for decades, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said in a draft watershed assessment released Friday.

The report responded to concerns that have been raised about a large copper-and-gold prospect near the headwaters of Bristol Bay. It is a draft, with a final report that could affect permitting decisions due after public comment and peer review.

The Pebble Partnership, the group behind the Pebble Mine project, has called the deposit one of the largest of its kind in the world, with the potential of producing 80.6 billion pounds of copper, 107.4 million ounces of gold and 5.6 billion pounds of molybdenum over decades. [More](#)

36. **Another Weak Yukon River Chinook Run In The Forecast (5/16).** Another weak king salmon return is forecast for the Yukon River. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Yukon area management biologist Steve Hayes says this summer's Chinook run is predicted to be up to 146,000 fish, in line with weak runs since 1997. [KUAC Audio](#)
37. **Low Yukon King run expected again (5/17).** Another weak king salmon return is forecast for the Yukon River. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Yukon area management biologist Steve Hayes says this summer's Chinook run is predicted to be up to 146,000 fish, in line with weak runs since 1997. [More/KYUK](#)
38. **Safety, seafood driving airport improvements (5/16).** Small towns from the tip of the Alaska Peninsula to the far-flung Aleutian Islands are some of the trickiest areas to get to and aircraft is often the only means to do so. Improving access, safety and economic benefits are driving renovations moving forward in several such places this year.

Akutan represents the biggest example. The tiny city has no paved airport. Passengers currently get in or out by way of the amphibious aircraft, the Grumman Goose. Construction is under way for a 4,500-foot paved runway, which Project Manager Sean Holland said will open up the tiny town to more advantages.

Holland said the \$56 million project is easily the biggest transportation infrastructure project Akutan has had. It's expected to be completed by Sept. 1. The contractor is Kiewit Infrastructure West Co. of Anchorage. [More](#)

39. **Alaska Salmon Commercial Fishing Preparations Underway (5/16).** The Alaska Copper

River commercial salmon season opener awaits fishermen in Cordova, poised to make a profit on the prized fish they're able to catch, beginning Thursday.

It's the season many of the fishermen have been waiting months for, because Copper River salmon is prized by [restaurant](#) chefs and fish mongers as some of the best salmon in the world.

"The Copper River is a very strong, powerful river, so these fish naturally have to be a stronger animal to fight these currents and get up to the spawning grounds," said Billy Green with Copper River Seafoods. "Naturally, that helps produce a higher oil content, higher fat content and higher omega-3s that a lot of people associate with a [healthy](#) product."

The opener begins near Cordova at 7 a.m. [More/KTUU Video](#)

40. Fleet leaves Seymour without fishing (5/17). It looks like the sac roe herring fishery in Seymour Canal was just not to be this year. Fishery managers say all the gillnetters left the grounds off Admiralty Island by last weekend. They never fished.

The fleet had waited for nearly three weeks, but the herring never congregated in large enough schools to have an opening. Dave Harris is Fish and Game's assistant area management biologist in Juneau:

"No aggregate of fish were ever, you know, in one place at any good enough time to provide a fishing opportunity. So the spawn appears to be over. The spawn event appears to be over. All fishermen have left the grounds," Harris said on Tuesday.

As of early this week, the state hadn't officially cancelled the season. Harris expected the department would make an announcement after flying the grounds at least once more. He said the department didn't observe any fish along the beach or spawn during a flyover on Monday. [More](#)

41. Unmanned Aircraft Could Help Solve Sea Lion Decline Mystery (5/18). Since the 1970s, populations of Steller sea lions have dramatically declined in the western Aleutian Islands of Alaska, where they are protected under the Endangered Species Act. What exactly is responsible for the downturn is unknown, and is especially confounding given that sea lion populations to the southeast and in Russia are on the rise.

"Is it due to changes in climate? Is something eating them? What is causing all the animals to go away?" asked Greg Walker, a researcher at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. "Nobody knows for sure."



Pinpointing the cause of the [Steller sea lion](#) decline isn't solely an academic concern, as declines have helped lead to closing off fishing areas that cost local people millions of dollars, Walker said. [More](#)

42. ASMI Estimate of 2011 Ex-vessel Value

ASMI Seafood Revenues Projected FY2012		
FY 2012 TOTAL VALUE (Ex Vessel) (2011 Run) <i>projected</i>	Species	% of assessment
\$ 10,482,084	Herring	0%
\$ 141,739,240	Black cod (IFQs)	6%
\$ 266,074,682	All other Groundfish	12%
\$ 469,563,403	Pollock	21%
\$ 195,698,281	P Cod	9%
\$ 283,296,548	Shellfish	12%
\$ 198,965,815	Halibut(IFQs)	9%
\$ 715,269,411	Salmon	31%
Total Alaska Seafood Value (Ex-Vessel) projected		
\$ 2,281,089,464	"...PROJECTED..."	

MARKETING

43. **Foodservice traffic, sales stumble in April (5/14).** Traffic and sales at foodservice stumbled in April - still positive, but falling off the pace of the first three months in an unexpected setback. Could be a temporary blip. We also look at seafood menuing, including the growing popularity of raw fish, and the expansion of seafood items - such as more lobster at quick service chains. [John Sackton Video](#)
44. **Alaska's Summer Salmon Season Officially Open (5/12).** The summer season for wild Alaska salmon has officially opened with a projected harvest of 132 million fish. Should the actual harvest match or exceed this figure, 2012 will mark the 25th consecutive year of a harvest in excess of 100 million salmon. While initial openings are amongst the lower volume troll-caught salmon fisheries the season will go into full swing with more salmon returning throughout the summer and into September. Alaska salmon, like all fish harvested in the state, are wild, natural and sustainable thanks to a pristine habitat, careful fisheries management and laws prohibiting finfish aquaculture. Last year's Alaska salmon harvest was the ninth largest on record, with a final total of 176 million fish. [More](#)
45. **Seafood labelling under fire (5/11).** About one-quarter of seafood sold as 'sustainable' is not meeting that goal, according to an analysis taking aim at the two leading bodies that grant this valuable label to fisheries.

In an online paper in *Marine Policy*¹ and at a conference this week in Edinburgh, UK, fisheries biologist Rainer Froese of the Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research in Kiel, Germany, launched a stinging attack on the schemes by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the marine-conservation organization Friend of the Sea (FOS) to certify fisheries as sustainable. Such schemes aim to help consumers and retailers to support fisheries that are sustainable and not exploited by overfishing.

Both organizations approve certain stocks of fish and seafood to carry their logo, designating these species as environmentally friendly, and both say that their certification processes are scientifically credible. The presence of the logos can result in higher prices and increased consumer demand for food products that carry them. [More](#)

46. **MSC Seafood Finder App hits 500 downloads in first month (5/11).** The Marine Stewardship Council's sustainable seafood finder mobile app has passed 500 downloads, less than a month after its official launch. The app, which helps shoppers search for certified sustainable seafood on the go, links shoppers to businesses that use the MSC ecolabel on packaging. [More](#)
47. **Alaska Airlines 737-800 will sport the world's largest king salmon (5/14).** Travelers and plane-watchers are in for a salmon treat beginning this fall. In Anchorage on May 14, 2012, [Alaska Airlines](#) and the [Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute](#) unveiled the fish-themed design an Alaska Airlines Boeing 737-800 soon will sport. The intriguing design stretches 129 feet long, and certainly, it is the world's largest king salmon. So, watch the skies for a truly immense, flying fish.



Celebrates connection to fisheries

[Alaska's](#) fisheries are big business. According to the [Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#), the seafood industry contributes \$5.8 billion and 78,500 jobs to the Alaskan economy. Alaska Airlines' celebration of its home state's fishing and fisheries highlight the airline's commitment to the people, industries, and resources of Alaska. [More](#)

48. **Astoria becomes surimi capital (5/15).** Ever wondered about the crab-flavored fish protein in your seafood sandwich, crab salad or California sushi roll?

It's surimi, a fish protein paste made into various shellfish-flavored products.

Oregon State University's Seafood Lab on Marine Drive hosted the 20th annual Surimi School, a gathering of global industry representatives and researchers that made Astoria for one week the epicenter of expertise on the globally popular, gelatinous fish protein you've likely had in one form or another.

About 40 students from surimi plants, surimi seafood (finished product) plants and others from accessory industries attended lectures and took part in surimi labs.

Jae Park, an OSU professor seen as the pre-eminent expert on surimi, founded the OSU Surimi Technology School in 1993 in Astoria. He started similar institutes in Bangkok in 1996 and in Paris in 1999. [More](#)

49. **Alaska's prized Copper River salmon are on their way (5/15).** Upscale seafood markets and restaurants in Alaska and around the country are getting ready to go wild to buy up and cook wild Copper River red and king salmon in a tasty rite of spring.

The first 12-hour commercial fishing opener begins at 7 a.m. Thursday, just 41 hours after the Alaska Department of Fish and Game opens the Copper River district for a seven-hour subsistence fishing opening.

As usual, pomp and circumstance are planned for the arrival of the first reds and kings, including a media event in Seattle marking the first delivery of the popular fresh salmon to gourmet restaurants around town.

Alaska fisheries biologists estimate the total harvest will reach 1.2 million Copper River reds and 27,000 kings.

Anticipation aside, nobody knows what the first two or three commercial openings will yield. Much depends on weather, which has proven absolutely miserable during some cold and stormy years while other seasons have started strong. [More](#)

50. **Season kicks off (5/18).** Fishermen who weren't busy with putting on nets and last minute engine work, got out for the first subsistence opener of the season earlier this week, bringing

home an abundance of beautiful Copper River red salmon and some prized kings.

Calm weather, blue skies and fish in the net made for an enjoyable and certainly well deserved beginning to a hard working season.



Also earlier this week, processors held their kick-off picnics, bringing together communities of old friends and new faces after a long winter. The picnics provide insight into some of the history and cultural diversity that blossoms here with each fishing season.

Over at Copper River Seafoods, the atmosphere was both very American and very eastern European. The picnic was held in the historic and beautifully maintained cannery mess hall. Fresh glossy red and white paint accents the handsome woodwork of the classic building that harkens back to the early days of commercial fishing before box shaped tin warehouses and aluminum boats. [More](#)

51. **Momentum Building for the Salmon Fisheries (5/16).** Down on the Copper River, harvesters and processors are bracing for the first commercial opener of 2012 on the river's famed Copper River red and king salmon.

Weather permitting, the first catch will arrive in Seattle and Anchorage the next day.

As Bristol Bay drift net and set net harvesters and processors ready for the start of their season in late June, fishing is already in progress in the commercial king salmon fishery in the Pacific Salmon Treaty waters of the Stikine and Taku rivers. [More](#)

52. [Bristol Bay Waypoints \(5/15\).](#)

53. **ASMI board approves \$21.3 million budget for 2013 (5/16).** The board of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute approved a \$21.3 million budget on May 15 for the fiscal year starting July 1.

It also indicated plans to release, by May 18, a definitive statement reconfirming the decision

of producers accounting for most of the state's annual salmon harvest that they have no intentions to continue as clients of the Marine Stewardship Council eco-label after the current certification expires this October.

The statement is intended to squelch rumors — circulating mainly in Germany and other European markets — that the April announcement that the Seattle-based Purse Seine Vessel Owners Association would take over as the MSC's client for its sustainability certification of the Alaska salmon fishery would renew processors' use of the label.

"I don't think that's going to be the case," said Ray Riutta, ASMI executive director, after the board meeting.

Eight processors, handling upwards of 75 percent of the annual Alaska salmon harvest, have declared their support for ASMI's responsible fisheries management, or RFM, certification program, grounded in the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization's code of conduct for responsible fisheries.

Five of those companies, Trident, Icicle, Ocean Beauty and Peter Pan Seafoods and Kwik'Pak Fisheries, occupy the five processor seats on the ASMI board.

The remaining three outfits, Alaska General Seafoods, E & E Foods and North Pacific Seafoods, plus many of the 34 other licensed Alaskan processors, are being marshaled to endorse the ASMI certification. [More](#)

54. **Murkowski Wants Additional Review Of Fish (5/18).** U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski is proposing to have the environmental and economic impacts of genetically modified fish studied before the fish are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Murkowski's office says the analysis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would be in line with the review and standards in place currently for federal fisheries. It would be required before an FDA decision.

Her office says the FDA is looking at any scientific and biological risks associated with genetically modified salmon but isn't required to look at how any fish escaping into the ocean could impact the seafood industry.

Sen. Mark Begich has also signed onto the proposal. [Link](#)

MISC

55. **Prey Distribution, Not Biomass, Key To Marine Food Chain (5/3).** A new study has found that each step of the marine food chain is clearly controlled by the trophic level below it – and the driving factor influencing that relationship is not the abundance of prey, but how that prey is distributed.

The importance of the spatial pattern of resources – sometimes called “patchiness” – is gaining new appreciation from ecologists, who are finding the overall abundance of food less important than its density and ease of access to it.

Results of the study are being published this week in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters*.

Kelly Benoit-Bird, an Oregon State University oceanographer and lead author on the study, said patchiness is not a new concept, but one that has gained acceptance as sophisticated technologies have evolved to track relationships among marine species.

“The spatial patterns of the resource ultimately determine how the ecosystem functions,” said Benoit-Bird, who received a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 2010. “In the past, ecologists primarily used biomass as the determining factor for understanding the food chain, and the story was always rather muddled. We used to think that the size and abundance of prey was what mattered most.

“But patchiness is not only ubiquitous in marine systems, it ultimately dictates the behavior of many animals and their relationships to the environment,” she added.

Benoit-Bird specializes in the relationship of different species in marine ecosystems. In one study in the Bering Sea, she and her colleagues were estimating the abundance of krill, an important food resource for many species. Closer examination through the use of acoustics, however, found that the distribution of krill was not at all uniform – which the researchers say explained why two colonies of fur seals and seabirds were faring poorly, but a third was healthy.

“The amount of food near the third colony was not abundant,” she said, “but what was there was sufficiently dense – and at the right depth – that made it more accessible for predation than the krill near the other two colonies.” [More](#)

56. **Growing risks from hatchery fish (5/14).** "The genetic effects of mixing hatchery fish with wild populations have been well-documented," says journal editor David Noakes from Oregon State University. "But until now the ecological effects were largely hypothetical. Now we know the problems are real and warrant more attention from fisheries managers."

The research volume, published in the May issue of *Environmental Biology of Fishes*, brings together 23 peer-reviewed, independent studies carried out across the entire range of [Pacific salmon](#), including some of the first studies describing the impact of hatcheries on [wild salmon](#) populations in Japan and Russia.

The studies provide new evidence that fast-growing hatchery fish compete with wild fish for food and habitat in the ocean as well as in the rivers where they return to spawn. The research also raises questions about whether the ocean can supply enough food to support future increases in hatchery fish while still sustaining the productivity of wild salmon.

"This isn't just an isolated issue," says Pete Rand, a biologist at the Wild Salmon Center and a guest editor of the publication. "What we're seeing here in example after example is growing scientific evidence that hatchery fish can actually edge out wild populations." [More](#)

57. **Fish Guts Could Say Which Species Survive Climate Change (5/14).** As sea temperatures rise, stocks of some fish species may decline while others may grow, reveals new research. The gastrointestinal system of fish is much more sensitive to temperature changes than previously believed, the researchers report.

"Our work is largely about trying to identify the physiological bottlenecks, in other words which parts of the body will fail first — whether the heart or the gut is the most sensitive part of the system," study researcher Albin Gräns, of the University of Gothenburg, in Sweden, said in a statement. They found that the gut was actually the most temperature-sensitive organ in many fishes.

The researchers looked at how gut function in various fish species is affected by both rapid and slow changes in water temperature, to better understand what will happen to different species when the climate changes.

"When the temperature of the water rises, the fish's body temperature climbs, activity in the gut increases, and more energy is needed to stay healthy," Gräns said. "Since changes in body temperature affect virtually all of a fish's organs, it's surprising that we know so little about how temperature changes impact on their physiology," [More](#)

58. **'Beauty and conflict' (5/13).** Words are the thread Steve Schoonmaker weaves to stitch together the two fabrics of his world. Those fabrics are his reality and are as different as burlap and silk.

They are what compel him to write his unique poetry about nature, wildlife and fishing. They force him onto the stage in bars, conventions and gatherings to speak what's on his heart and in his head about the land he loves.

Beauty and conflict.

Schoonmaker said he does his best to walk the middle line, letting his words pay tribute to the struggle between.

The beauty of the king salmon, the conflict of the creature in his net.

The beauty of Alaska, the conflict of developments he thinks threatens the land. [More](#)

59. **Dozens of flyswatters wash up on Alaska beaches (5/15).** Sports memorabilia is popular around the world, but most people don't go to the beach to find it.

During the past week, dozens of flyswatters bearing logos of collegiate and professional sports teams have washed up on Kodiak beaches, and beachcombers have set out to collect them.

Kodiak resident [Todd Anderson](#) even created a page on Google Maps to track when and where the fly swatters are found, and the team logos. More than 70 people have reported fly swatter sightings.

Other sports-related items like Nerf basketballs and aluminum water bottles are also being found on Kodiak's beaches.

"We found three flyswatters on Kalsin and four more yesterday at Middle Bay," Kodiak resident [Jessica Horn](#) said. "We found three Nerf balls, too." [More](#)

60. **The Kanakanak Hospital in Dillingham is Now a Trauma Center (5/17).** [Listen to audio](#) | [Download audio](#) (5:02) . The only hospital in the Bristol Bay region is now officially designated as a trauma center.

Fish Calendar 2012

May 17. [Comments due NOAA – Blue whale and North Pacific right whale recovery plans. 77 Fed. Reg. 22760](#)

May 22-24. [NOAA Hydrographic Services Review Board](#), Anchorage Hilton

May 24. [Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program, Public Information Meetings and Workshops for Fishermen](#), Wrangell

May 25. [Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program, Public Information Meetings and Workshops for Fishermen](#), Petersburg

May 29. [Comments due on amendment 12 to Alaska Salmon FMP](#)

May 31. SSL Mitigation Committee organizational teleconference (NFMC) 

Jun 5-8. [Capitol Hill Oceans Week](#), Washington, DC

Jun 6. [NPFMC](#), Kodiak

June 8. [World Ocean Day at the Alaska SeaLife Center](#), Seward

June 15-16. SSL Mitigation Committee meeting, Juneau 

Jun 18. [Comments due on proposed delisting of eastern stock SSL.](#)

Jun 18. [Comments due on revised observer program for BSAI/GOA](#)

Jun 27. [ASMI International Marketing Committee](#), Anchorage 

Jun 29-30. [Fish Ireland](#), Killybegs, Donegal

Jul 13-14. [National Business Forum on Marine Spatial Planning](#), DC

Aug 1. [Comments due on Potential Adjustments to the National Standard 1 Guidelines of the Magnuson-Stevens Act](#) 

Aug 1-3. SSL Biological Opinion (2010) CIE Review, Seattle

Aug 14-16. [NPRB Science Panel](#), Anchorage

Aug 19-22. [PSMFC 65th Annual Meeting](#), San Francisco

Aug 27. [Agenda changes requests due to BOF](#)

Sep 6-8. [10th International Seafood Summit](#), Hong Kong

Sep 17-18. [NPMFC Observer Advisory Committee](#), AFSC Seattle

Oct 7-12. [North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission-20th Annual Meeting](#), St Petersburg Russia

Oct 1-9. [NPFMC](#), Anchorage

Oct 9-10. [BOF Work Session](#), Anchorage

Oct 11-14. [BOF Pacific cod for PWS, Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Chignik, and S AK Peninsula](#), Anchorage

Oct 15. [Comments due on NOAA SSL EIS scoping](#)

Oct 16-18. [Pacific Salmon Commission Executive](#), Vancouver BC

Nov 13. [Proposals due for Joint Board of Fisheries and Game \(Advisory committees and subsistence\)](#)

Nov 27-29. [Pacific Marine Expo \(aka Fish Expo\)](#), Seattle

Dec 3-11. [NPFMC](#), Anchorage

Dec 3-5. [World Ocean Council's second "Sustainable Ocean Summit" \(SOS\)](#), DC

Dec 4-12. [BOF Bristol Bay Finfish](#), Naknek

Fish Calendar 2013

Jan 14-18. [Pacific Salmon Commission](#) Post-Season Meeting, Vancouver BC

Jan 15-20. [AYK Finfish](#), Anchorage Sheraton

Jan 22-25. [IPHC Annual Meeting](#), Victoria BC **Update: dates, location**

Jan 21-25. [Alaska Marine Science Symposium](#), Anchorage 🎉

Feb 4-12. [NPFMC](#), Portland, OR

Feb 10. [Symphony of Seafood](#), Anchorage

Feb 11-15. [Pacific Salmon Commission](#) 28th Annual Meeting, Portland, OR

Feb 14-18. [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#)

Feb 26-Mar 3. [AK Peninsula/Aleutian Islands Finfish](#), Anchorage Sheraton

Mar (TBD). [3RD National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium](#), Tacoma

Mar 19-24. [Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues](#), Anchorage Hilton

Mar 26-29. 28th Lowell Wakefield Fisheries Symposium: [Biological Responses of Arctic Marine Ecosystems to Climate Change, and Strategies for Adaptation](#), Anchorage

Apr 1-9. [NPFMC](#), Anchorage

May 7-9. [Managing Our Nations Fisheries 3: Advancing Sustainability](#), DC

Jun 3-11 or Jun 10-18. [NPFMC](#), Location TBD

Sep 30 - Oct 8. [NPFMC](#), Anchorage

Oct 22-24. [Pacific Salmon Commission](#) Executive, Alaska

Dec 9-17. [NPFMC](#), Anchorage

2014

Jan 20-24. [IPHC Annual Meeting](#), Seattle Area